

**In Times of Great Global Transformations,
What Are the Role and Duties of Future Leaders?**

**Koc University
Commencement Address by Dr Victor K. Fung
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Introduction

I am honoured to be with you on this important occasion and very happy to be visiting one of my favourite cities. Istanbul is truly remarkable, straddling two continents – bridging the east with the west and the west with the east. As a Hong Kong born and raised person, I am by default representing the east and while I am firmly grounded in eastern values my views have been shaped from being a multilateralist and a believer in a flat world where business and commerce have no borders. President Inan, thank you for inviting me to deliver the commencement address – it is indeed a privilege to address future leaders in whatever will be their chosen field of endeavour. Members of the Koc University faculty, parents, spouses, relatives, friends of graduates and distinguished guests we are gathered today to also pay tribute to you for the guidance, support and nurturing you provided to the students. I know it means a great deal to them. I also would like to acknowledge Mr Vehpi Koc, the Koc family and my dear friends Rahmi and Mustafa for their vision in establishing the Koc University and their unwavering commitment to the pursuit of excellence in teaching and research.

Never Give Up

Graduates of 2011, this moment is one the proudest of your lives. And may I congratulate you on your fine achievement. Today is about looking forward. You are embarking on a new journey – some of you will have secured jobs and some of you will soon begin the process of applying for jobs while others may go down the path of an entrepreneur. Whatever your circumstances, it is about making your dreams come true. Along the way to fulfilling your dreams you will undoubtedly face obstacles and what will seem to be impossible situations. Here I will pass on to you the words of wisdom from Winston Churchill: “Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense”. And Confucius best expresses the eastern approach to the same dilemma: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in getting up every time we do."

An Open World Economy

To know where we are going, we have to remember from where we have come.

The openness of the world economy and the ease with which knowledge and skills are transferred has been a critical force behind the global transformations we have witnessed for the last half-century. This has been too much taken for granted without sufficient recognition of how dramatically significant it has been.

This openness that prevailed allowed the emergence of very powerful outward looking economies contributing considerably to greater global integration. You are now part of that integration and your opportunities are not only local but global as well. My own company employs 370 number of Turks, many of whom work in several economies around the world. We are a mini United Nations.

An open world economy is also a key driving force in the rise of Turkey and the newly industrialising economies of Asia - Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan - and later of other emerging economies including China and India as well as other parts of the world.

The communist world and much of the third world had for decades rejected joining the open global market economy. But then in 1979, in one of the most dramatic moments of world economic history, the Chinese government embarked on a radical programme of economic reform. From then on China embraced globalisation instead of rejecting it. And today, all over Asia I see young Turks working for Turkish as well as for local and international companies – some of whom are proficient in Mandarin, Japanese and other Asian languages.

The Threat of Protectionism

In addressing graduates of Koc University in 2011 it is possible to say: the world is your oyster. That was not the case when I graduated. It would also not be the case if the world were to start closing. This is a threat which we must not allow to happen.

The changing global economy has created new realities and complexities and it is inevitable that there should be tension, anxiety and fear of the unknown and of the outside. Thus the temptation to turn to isolationism and protectionism is strong. As these transformations continue, the forces of resistance to globalisation will also increase. These forces need to be

addressed and countered. The world economy must remain open. And you have a role to play in keeping it open by remaining a local citizen but a becoming a global one as well.

The Role of Future Leaders

In a global environment what are the roles and duties of future leaders?

First and foremost is to be articulate, active and passionate agents of an open world.

Secondly, to understand the 21st century world, to adapt to it and ultimately to influence the course of world events, you have to know that world. In the 19th century, leaders wishing to know the world and understand its trajectory flocked to Europe. In the 20th century America became the prime destination. Today I would paraphrase the famous words attributed to the 19th century American journalist and politician Horace Greeley, and say: “go East, young person”.

While the US is and for the foreseeable future will remain the dominant established global economic power, China is and will remain for the next several decades the dominant rising global economic power. This is not to diminish in any way the potential force and power of Turkey and other big emerging economies, especially India and Brazil. But at the moment, China has accumulated a number of forceful competitive advantages that should see its influence increase.

Your third important role as future leaders will be to have a broad global outlook. When you look at your horizon, make sure that it encompasses forces, developments and trends throughout the world. Commit yourselves to help ensure that globalisation be inclusive. As the former Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan said, “if we cannot make globalisation work for all, in the end it will work for none”.

The Global Citizen

Those of you venturing overseas be assured you are not abandoning Turkey. In addition to gaining valuable exposure to things new and learning about other societies and traditions, you will be playing an important role, representing your country – as ambassadors of your country if you will, creating a better understanding and appreciation of your culture, way of life and for the opportunities that exist in this land of plenty. In the audience today there is a young Turkish man who went east and for twelve years lived and worked in Hong Kong. He learned about the dynamics of Asia, understood

how enterprises are run in the region, how business is conducted, developed enduring friendships and built a strong network of business contacts. And he represented Turkey with great pride. I for one learned a great deal about Turkey from him. He has now returned to Turkey in a key leadership position harnessing all of what he learned to help his company better compete in the global market place. His name is Hakan Bulgurlu - a global citizen with Turkish roots.

And for those of you who remain in Turkey, I would say use the tools of the IT revolution to keep yourself connected with the world: though the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, Skype. Be curious of what is going on in the world, keep learning from others, exchange ideas and develop friendships. And grab every chance you get to travel.

Sustainable Morality

Lastly, in addition to global knowledge and a broad vision, as future leaders you will also need to make sure you have a strong and reliable ethical compass. The global open economy and society will develop and be preserved ultimately on the basis of strong ethical foundations and behaviour. There is no sustainable economy without sustainable morality. And in the words of Kemal Ataturk "Do not be afraid of telling the truth".

A Salute

As proud as you are, I also am very proud to have been given this opportunity to stand before you today. I salute you for your achievements so far and wish you well for the many great achievements that lie ahead. I feel also reassured that as a new generation of Koc University alumni and future leaders emerge, there will be prospects for a better world.

Thank you.