

Big Powers' Perspective of Cultural Organizational Norms and Leadership: USA, China and Russia

Ionel Sergiu Pirju¹

Abstract: Technological changes are affecting most of the people, but in the same time, the top important players: USA, China and Russia are using their cross-cultural strengths to coerce the others and seduce potential partners. The aim of the paper is to present the cultural organizational norms and the leadership style in these nations to understand their behaviors as big rivals and successful international powers.

Keywords: norms; cultural values; big powers; leadership

Introduction

General Considerations about the Three Big International Powers

United States of America (USA), China and Russia are large countries with natural beauties, big cities which are attracting visitors from all over the globe. United States is recognized for the contemporary technological advances, its military might and the research and development (R&D) achievements are well known all over the globe – 4 of 10 of the Noble prizes were awarded to the American teams (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

In the historical and cultural development of USA we identify the following stages:

- Colonial America (1580-1750) when a group of non-conventional persons in search of independence and religious freedom created small enterprises and put the basis of a new political identity.

¹ Senior Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of Communications and International Relations, Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., Galati 800654, Romania, Tel.: +40372361102, Corresponding author: pirjusergiu@univ-danubius.ro.

- Revolutionary America (1750-1850) and Democratic America (1815-1850) created the basis of American culture on the fight for independence credo. The Constitution of USA (1787) and the Bill of Rights (1791) developed the frontier spirit, hard work and collective consciousness. Civil War America (1850-1870) was a time when slavery was abolished, and the Emancipation Proclamation had been developing a new social orientation.

- Industrial America (1870-1912) and Melting pot America (1912-1929) was characterized by the evolution of “big business”: steel (Carnegie), railroads (Vanderbilt), cars (Ford) and continued the assimilation from all the world in a unique but contrasting American new society.

- Superpower America (1929-1960) and Economic Superpower (1960-present) witnessed the great Depression but also turned the USA into an economic and international superpower. After the collapse of Communism (1997) the country ascends to the technological and military leadership all over the world (Johnson, 1997).

Religious life is of supreme importance and the recent surveys imply that about 95% of the Americans believe in God, compared to half of the Europeans (Chokar et al., 2008).

After the Fall of Communism, Russia has been struggling to overcome important changes in macro and microeconomic systems, political freedom and in the behaviors of its society in the new global context. Under the communism era, the state was the only entity capable to exploit the economy and the Communist party created politically loyal directors for state companies or Party “nomenklature” leaders. The post-Soviet era was characterized by the attempts to catch up the economy of the West but also the new leaders pursued the former imperial ambitions to the east and south (Caucasus, Central Asia etc.). In this period, under President Putin (2000-present) when the selling of state property is over, the government is supporting large business and the main task for business is to manage capital effectively (Grachev et. al., 2008).

The economic growth of China it is ideologically connected with the Confucianism, but we can find an influence from the Communist ideology and Western management scholastic research. The Confucianism is based on „five constant virtues”: benevolence (ren), righteousness (yi), property (li), wisdom (zhi) and fidelity (xin), but when conflict occurs the doctrine of avoiding extremes and

moderation is the principle to handle it. The virtue of “renqing” (being kind, benevolent or respecting the feelings of the people) is more important than the laws because the laws can force a person to be kind only for a short period of time, but the moral virtues can teach people to be kind and have the sense of shame. The economy of China is based on: State ownership, central planning, local government involvement, dominance of the Communist Party, but the excellent economic development has lifted millions of people out of poverty in this nation (Fu et.al., 2008).

GLOBE Perspective of Cultural Organizational Norms in USA, China and Russia

Organizational culture is manifested as beliefs and values but also it is reported as practices of families, schools, organizations, political and legal institutions, and economic systems. Culture consists on a set of unwritten rules and it is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguish the members of one group of people from others” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004).

The GLOBE program is measuring 9 dimensions of culture in form of judgements or what *should be* and also as assessments of what is right to do regarding the institutional practices and behaviors in a company – *as is* (Chokar et al. 2008). In the next table there are presented the current norms “as is” according to GLOBE classification between USA, China and Russia (minimum value it is 1, maximum it is 7).

Table 1. GLOBE Societal Cultures Scores in Russia, China, USA

As is	USA	China	Russia
Assertiveness	4,55	3,76	3,68
Future orientation	4,15	3,75	2,88
Gender egalitarianism	3,34	3,05	4,07
Human orientation	4,17	4,36	3,94
In group collectivism	4,25	5,80	5,63
Institutional collectivism	4,20	4,76	4,50
Performance orientation	4,49	4,45	3,39
Power distance	4,88	5,04	5,52
Uncertainty avoidance	4,15	4,95	2,88

Source: Chokar et. al. 2008 & House et. all., 2014.

Performance orientation is describing the degree in which a society rewards and constantly encourage the members of a group for increasing the excellence (House et. all., 2014). In US culture (4,49) there is a great emphasis on appreciating national test scores for the children and to reward the top performers is very common. In sport the recognition is the introduction in „Hall of Fame” and there is a common belief that the individual is capable of anything he/she wants to accomplish (Hope & Bhagat, 2008). There are many motivational books: In Search of Excellence (Covey), A search for excellence (Peters & Austin), Good to Great (Collins).

In Russia it is reported a poor performance orientation (3,39) because in the past the managers were not rewarded for high results and during the privatization from 1990s many managers made their fortunes not by improving enterprise performance but by capitalizing it according to their goals (Grachev et. all, 2008). In conclusion success can be achieved by ignoring the ethical goals, thus making performance is not seen as a key for abundance.

In China the score it is among the highest (4,45, Rank 13) and it is supportive for the traditional Chinese culture in which hard working is highly valued. The scores of Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong are among the highest-ranking countries (Fu et all, 2008).

Assertiveness is reflecting the degree to which individuals are aggressive and confrontational in the relations with other humans (House et. all. 2014). The GLOBE results suggest that US society is more assertive than many of the other countries (4,55 from 7) and there is a strong propensity to work hard and be number one, a preference for strong leaders and a short and to the point communication style. There is an obsession with discipline and winning, for example during the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 a Nike billboard presented: “You don’t win the silver, you lose the gold” (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

The Russian society is having a low position (rank 59) because the French influence from the 18th and 19th centuries added some feminine characteristics to the community, especially the respect for the women and romanticism. In the communism era the feminine culture increased by promoting official policies as: full employment, free education and carrying for the people (Grachev et. all, 2008). In present interpersonal networks as family connections, Mafia or nepotism are creating a different approach from the Western assertive management.

China was traditionally a masculine society and being a woman in China meant being a servant in front of the men from their lives (father, brother, husband). Chinese managers have stronger desire for society to promote assertive behaviors, but the cultural concepts as “mianzi” (maintaining the respect for the others) and “renqing” (being kind) do not totally encourage the people to be assertive (score 3,76, ranking 51) (Fu et al., 2008).

Future orientation is expressing the extent to which the persons are engaging in future orientations activities as: planning and investing in future development (House et. al. 2014). The Americans are putting great emphasis on the future, they are always planning ahead, the concept of time is lineal, flowing from past to the future, with a preference from the present and the future (Hope & Bhagat, 2008) and the speed has become a competitive advantage in the international market.

After the fall of Communism, Russia had transformed in a nation with limited future orientation. Generally, people do not rely on savings, but some managers expressed a strong belief in values related to the stability in the economy and society (Grachev et. al., 2008).

The score in China is ranking among the middle because the country was exposed to many schools of thoughts in the past. Confucius encouraged the people to be long term-oriented but the founder of Taoism, Lao Zi considered that the cosmos it is uncertain, and planning is unnecessary and against the nature (Fu et al., 2008).

Human orientation is expressing the degree to which a community rewards the persons to be fair and generous (House et. al. 2014). The Americans are described as generous and friendly, although there are differences between north and south or between the rural or urban areas. The volunteering it is integrated into the American mentality and there is a civil duty to contribute for the welfare of the community (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

Russian it is among the nations with weak human orientations values, in the Imperial governance there were no laws supporting the less unfortunates, in present poverty and social exclusion are widespread and suspicion and mistrust are general rules (Grachev et. al., 2008).

Being humane is consistent with the Confucian principle of moderation and the Chinese score is among the highest in the world (4,37, rank 17). The Chinese are thinking traditionally that it is more important to live in harmony than to get a job done in time. Human orientation is having a strong sense of “requing” which implies

an „implicit set of rules” based on reciprocity in money, goods, status, information or affection. But many traditional values are being challenged by the realities and the people find more important to be more assertive in order to achieve excellence ((Fu et all, 2008).

Institutional collectivism: the degree to which a company or a societal institution encourage the collective actions and collective distributions of resources (House et. all. 2014). US mentality encourage the individual achievements, and politically the State democracy is found on the base that only independent and well-organized citizens (small power distance, existentially equals) can prevent the tyranny of the few (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

In Russia, institutional collectivism is relatively high (score 4,50, rank 17 among 61 Globe countries), and the social culture as it is seen by the respondents reflects traditional collectivistic practices rooted in historic traditions of the Communist era (Grachev et. all, 2008).

In China, for centuries the network of obligations as a group member of the nation was compulsory and the Chinese people think of themselves using more group related concepts such as attentive to others than Americans do, so the score of collectivism is very high (rank 7 in GLOBE research) (Fu et all, 2008).

In group collectivism is expressing the degree to which the persons are expressing the pride, loyalty regarding their families and organizations (House et. all. 2014). The Americans are spending between 1 and 3 months more time to work than any other developed country in the world which it is related to the strong assertiveness and performance orientation in society (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

In Russia in group collectivism it is also relatively high (5,63, rank 17) and the explication is that Russian are living since the down of their history in large open spaces and were forced to work together to survive. The Orthodox Church is supporting the traditional family and the collectivistic behavior was important for the national survival during the Second World War (Grachev et. all, 2008).

The concept of family has been always important for the Chinese culture (rank 9), and altruism and loyalty for the parents are highly evaluated and the current practices reflect the influence of traditional society in current practices (Fu et all, 2008).

Gender egalitarianism is expressing the degree to which a collective minimizes the gender inequality (House et. all. 2014).US society has creating equal opportunities for men and women; 4 out of 10 doctorate degrees are awarded to women. In USA

exists the interest in promoting women as leaders, the national literature tends to describe them in leadership roles as more relational, participative, empathetic and the proportion of them in administrative, managerial and administrative roles reached 46% (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

The Russian society is already higher egalitarian (Rank 2), more than USA and China. In the medieval period the roles of men and women were very separated, but during the Soviet period, after the Second War World the number of men decreased and the Communist party facilitate equal access for men and women to education and controlled the right balance of men and women in political and economic positions (Grachev et. all, 2008).

Gender egalitarianism is very low in China, a large part of the society is still poor and the women are still discouraged in education and employment. Women are still behind the men in terms of salary and work benefits and the bias in favor of men remain (Fu et all, 2008).

Power distance is expressing the degree to which members of a community are involved in distributing the power equally (House et. all. 2014). USA is a very equalitarian society where the constitution guarantees the existential equality between men and women but the empirical studies when are comparing with Western European countries (Denmark, Finland, United Kingdom) shows larger hierarchical differences in US. There is a „legitimate” inequality between the manager and employee which is expected to be honored. The managers are expected to run the business very efficiency to enhance the investments of the shareholders (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

Power distance it is in Russia very high (5,52) and it is based on the system of slavery which had existed until the mid of the 19th century, the weak middle class, and the poor interest for the democratic values. The new opportunities linked with education may modify in time the behavior of the people toward more democratic management style even the political privileges are still strong in contemporary Russia (Grachev et. all, 2008).

In China, present managers are striving for equality in power according to the Western approach of democracy. They break away the traditional ways and restricted behaviors such the absolute obedience for the seniors and no longer have to work in the same places where they were born. It is important to say that people holding

official titles are still addressed formally and social rights are still tied to one's status (Fu et al., 2008).

The uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which the members of a society are relying on rules, procedures, or social norms to alleviate future events and unpredictability. American society accepts uncertainty as normal part of life and it is described as open to change and a leader is admired for taking great risks without any guarantee (Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

Russian ranks lowest among GLOBE countries (2,88 last position) on Uncertainty avoidance practices. There is not a risk-oriented behavior from the managers, a preference for planning system and a need for security in times of transitions (Grachev et. al., 2008).

The high Chinese score it is related to the traditional value of order and starting with Confucius, the people are seeking the peace and security. The Chinese's strong desire to see more order in a society is reflecting the anxiety caused by unprecedented changes going on in China. Some of the Chinese are even wore clothes from the same color, making the country or „a sea of blue” or „a sea of green” (Fu et al., 2008).

Leadership Style in USA, China and Russia

Leadership it is a recent topic of study and the core concept it is about influence – the leaders are influencing the others to accomplish the organizational objectives.

Leadership, according to GLOBE study is described as; “people in an organization and industry who are exceptionally skilled at motivating, influencing, you, other or groups to contribute to the success of the organization or task” (House et. al. 2014). Leadership it is also the ability of an individual to influence and enable the others to contribute to the success of the organizations (House & Javidan, 2004). It is important to mention that the GLOBE project it is about the organizational leadership and not about the leadership in general.

USA it is perceived as an individualistic culture, where everybody has the right to pursue its non-conditional happiness. Achievement motivation is highly valued and the slogan “live to work” has a “masculine” orientation in contemporary life. In terms of leadership we can find a focus on career, performance and competition

“going extra mile” and decisiveness are characteristics demanded by a leader (Hofstede, 2002).

Informality in speech and behavior are encouraged, hierarchies are established on the principle “to get the job done” since the time of revolutionary America when Alexis de Tocqueville wrote “the greatest equality seems to reign, even among those who occupy very different positions in society” (Chokar et. all., 2008).

Flexibility and openness to change are elevating the need for long life learning, creative, innovation and thinking out of the box are encouraged but there is also a strong preference for data because the measurable facts are rooted in the assumption that „rational thinking is based on an objective reality where measurable results can be attained” ((Hope & Bhagat, 2008).

In USA, as in Germany for example, exists a monochronic orientation to time, because time it is seen as a scarce resource that needs to be used with rationality. In summing the US organizational culture there are some important leader characteristics:

- To get things done and succeed;
- To be result driven and competitive, work hard and be action oriented;
- To take the risks, be creative and flexible;
- To be objective, practical and informal (ibidem).

The leaders from Russia were traditionally associated with the State, Orthodox religion and military power. In the past there was repeated attempts to catch up with the Western Europe economically, politically and culturally. The Russian monarchs pursued their imperial and „divine” ambitions to the south and east (Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East and Siberia).

Peter the Great (1696-1725) started the “Occidentalization” of the nation by autocratic rules, proclaiming the county as an Empire (1721) and constructing St. Petersburg as its new capital. One of the most famous Russian scholar, Chadaev described the contradictive Russian character by features as “brutality and inclination to violence, impersonal collectivism, messianic, internal freedom, kindness, humanism and the search for truth (Chadaev, 1991; Grachev et. all, 2008).

In the Soviet period, most of the resources were under the rule of small coalitions and the needs of the society were sacrificed for the sake of stability and the welfare

of these monopolistic coalitions. In present, business leaders from Russia are motivated by the following business philosophies:

- Bureaucratic, based on initiatives under the state control;
- Pragmatic, based on technology and profit;
- Predatory, based on achieving the success by all the means, including Mafia connections;
- Socially responsible, based on promotion the national interest and solving the social problems (Ibidem).

If in the Western World the morality is depending on the personal conscience of the leaders, in China the morality fixes social norms and individual codes of behavior. For Confucius morality and government are closely related „lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them with laws and punishment and they will avoid wrongdoing, but they will have no sense of honor and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by rules of property and they will have a sense of shame and moreover, set themselves right” (Confucius, 1992; Fu et all, 2008).

The Chinese central government has been trying in the last decades to separate the government from the business practices. State companies had lost their support having to become more economically independent entities, and as a result the term leadership has gained in China more substance. The main characteristics of the Chinese leaders are:

- A good leader knows how to balance between being conservative and aggressive – looking for new ideas to surpass himself, a transition from Confucian doctrine to the market strategy;
- A good leader must have a vision – this is not related with the obsolete hierarchical power structure, where the managers have no vision;
- A good leader must be humane - „Confucius businessman” means to be human, while being profit oriented;
- A good leader knows what works for the Chinese while learning from the West (Ibidem).

Conclusions

In USA culture emphasis the meritocracy but also the sanctity of private property and a hierarchy based on ability. In Russia the market it is still dominated by a monopolistic system and there is no carrying for human motivation and modesty in leadership. Chinese society is going through important changes and although the traditional values are still respected the new leaders are pushing their doing business approach toward Western ideology, encouraging the challenge of traditional norms.

In all these big powers work is necessary and there are incentives for the increasing the people's organizational capacities in international market. Peoples are generally not rejected by their societies but high positions in all these nations are protected by social conventions. In China and Russia tradition is seen as a source of wisdom but in USA the experience of change in life is seen as a natural fact. The capacity to lead people is traditionally seen as a non-sharing decision making attitude but there is an increasing tendency that the employees should participate more in the decisions taken by management.

References

- Chokar, J. S.; Brodbeck, F. C. & House, R.J. (2008). *Culture and Leadership across the World*. Publisher: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Grachev, M.V.; Rogosky, N. G. & Rakitski, B.N. (2008). Leadership and Culture in Russia. The case of a Transitional Economy. *Culture and Leadership across the World*. Publisher: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Fu, P.P.; Wu, R. & Yang, Y. (2008). Chinese culture and leadership. *Culture and Leadership across the World*. Publisher: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hope, M. H. & Bhagat, R. S. (2008), Leadership in the United States of America: the Leader as Cultural Hero. *Culture and Leadership across the World*. Publisher: Taylor & Francis Group.
- House, R. J.; Dorfman, P. J.; Javidan, M.; Hanges, P. J. & Sully de Luque, M. (2014). *Strategic Leadership across cultures*. Sage Publications, Thousands Oaks.
- Johnson, P. (1997). *A History of the American People*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- House, R. J. & Javidan, M. (2004). *Overview of GLOBE*. Thousand OAKS, C.A. Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (2002). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Thousand OAKS, C.A. Sage.