

## Effective Leadership and Culture in Iran: An Empirical Study

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On analyse dans cet article les caractéristiques du leadership efficace en Iran, puis on envisage les liens possibles entre ce profil de leadership et les dimensions culturelles du pays. A partir des données fournies par 300 managers provenant de plus de 60 organisations relevant de trois secteurs industriels, on commence par utiliser les dimensions du projet GLOBE pour évaluer la culture iranienne dont les scores sont comparés à ceux d'autres pays. S'appuyant à la fois sur l'*emic* et l'*etic* du leadership, les auteurs développent sept dimensions du leadership: encourageant, dictatorial, visionnaire, familial, modeste, loyal et réceptif. Ils soutiennent que certaines de ces dimensions traduisent les aspects universels (ou *etic*) du leadership (encourageant, dictatorial), alors que d'autres procèdent de l'*emic*, c'est-à-dire de la spécificité culturelle du leadership (modeste, familial, loyal). Les résultats sont discutés en terme de positionnement de la culture iranienne entre des entrelacements fondamentaux et des traditions culturelles complexes. On aborde enfin la question des retombées sur les recherches à venir.

### A GLANCE AT THE LEADERSHIP LITERATURE

There is no shortage of writing on leadership. Thousands of papers and books have been written on what it means, why it is important, and what

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it takes to be successful. The earliest stream of work is the trait theory of leadership, which concluded that genealogy was at the root of great men reaching positions of power. The overall theme of trait theory is that leaders are special individuals with intelligence, scholarship, persistence, adaptability, and status (Stogdill, 1948, 1974). In the late 1940s and 1950s, researchers started to focus on leaders' behavior rather than traits. The behavioral school converged on four common themes among leaders; support for employees, interaction facilitation, goal emphasis, and work facilitation (e.g. Halpin & Winer, 1957; Katz & Kahn, 1952).

The contingency school of leadership is another school of thought and is focused on situational factors such as the task performed by the group, the leader's discretion, and role expectations (e.g. Yukl, 1981). The most recent genre of leadership theories is a confluence of the previous schools of thought. It is alternatively referred to as charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985, 1997; Tichy & Devanna, 1986), visionary (Sashkin, 1988), or inspirational (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). The fundamental premise of this wave of theories is that leaders elevate the needs, values, and aspirations of followers away from self-interest and towards collective interest. Charismatic leaders have strong self-confidence, are believed to be competent, are role models, articulate engaging visions and high expectations, and build subordinates' trust (House, 1977; Conger, 1989). Bass (1985) and Yukl (1989) proposed that transformational leaders demonstrate individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation. Burns (1978) suggested that transformational leaders elevate their followers from "everyday selves" to "better selves".

## THE ETIC AND EMIC OF LEADERSHIP

Most of the literature on leadership is based on research in industrialised countries. We have a substantial pool of knowledge from North American and European countries, but our understanding of leadership in other cultures and countries is quite limited. A review of the literature on leadership in other countries prompted Chen and Velsor (1996) to conclude that "there is only a very limited knowledge base regarding leadership behaviors of nontraditional and non-Western leaders". The lack of rigorous research on leaders in other countries poses the question of universality of leadership; to what extent is the Western knowledge on leadership generalisable to other cultures and countries? Over the past 20 years, cross-cultural scholars have been striving to find the answer to this question.

Many researchers have argued for a direct impact of culture on leadership styles. They believe in the "emic" of leadership, arguing that specific cultural traditions, values, ideologies, and social norms are "bound to differentiate as much as or even more than structural factors between societies" (Lammers

& Hickson, 1979, p. 10). Hofstede and his colleagues provided further evidence that leadership style varies according to cultural clusters, as measured by how an individual scored on his four original cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) and his subsequent fifth dimension (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Erez and Earley (1993) have also argued for the impact of culture on leadership style and employee behavior. They suggested that cultural norms help shape the manager's and the employee's psychological experience of self-identity and help generate the criteria that are used to assess a manager's performance.

On the other hand, there are those researchers who believe in the "etic" of leadership, arguing that at least some aspects of leadership transcend national cultures and are universally accepted. They maintain that increasingly common technological imperatives (Woodward, 1958), common industrial logic (Adler, Doktor, & Redding, 1986), generally accepted accounting principles, and global institutions all serve to harmonise management practices and structures (Child & Tayeb, 1983; Levitt, 1983; Yavas, 1995). Bernard Lewis (1995) provided an interesting account of cultural convergence in his description of a man sitting at a table in a coffee shop in a Middle Eastern city: "Drinking a cup of coffee or tea, perhaps smoking a cigarette, reading a newspaper, playing a board game, and listening with half an ear to whatever is coming out of the radio or the television installed in the corner." On a closer look, this coffeehouse man, "probably wears Western style clothes—sneakers, jeans, a T-shirt. The chair at which he sits, the coffee he drinks, the tobacco he smokes, the newspaper he reads, all are Western imports. The radio and television are Western inventions. If our relaxing friend is a member of his nation's army, he probably operates Western or soviet weapons and trains according to Western standards; if he belongs to the government, both his bureaucratic surroundings and the constitutional trappings of his regime may owe their origins to Western influence" (*The Economist*, 1996). Lewis's conclusion is that "In modern times, the dominating factor in the consciousness of most Middle Easterners has been the impact of Europe, later of the west more generally, and the transformation—some would say dislocation—which it has brought" (1995, in *The Economist*, 1996, p. 26).

Perhaps the most comprehensive and consistent set of research evidence for this school relates to the work on transformational leadership (Bass, 1985, 1997). The strength of the empirical support for transformational leadership led Bass to conclude that while cultural influences do exist, "nonetheless, certain generalizations appear warranted. The ideals and implicit theories of leadership tend to be transformational rather than transactional" (1997, p. 137). While these two observations indicate some degree of acceptance of the concept, universality has not generally enjoyed strong support in the management literature and the debate goes on.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

### The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to help improve our understanding of the etic and emic of leadership by examining the implicit theory of leadership in a non-Western society. Our intent is not to conduct a cross-cultural study, rather to provide an in-depth understanding of leadership effectiveness in a society with a widely different culture from Western societies. We will show the profile of effective organisational leaders as described by a large sample of Iranian middle managers in different industries. We will then compare our findings with the Western leadership literature to identify similarities and differences.

### Present-day Iran

Iran has long served as a nexus for trade and culture between East and West. The largest and most populous nation of the Middle East, it harbors in its 1,648,000 square kilometers a wide assortment of climates, landscapes, and ethnicities. The country shares over 1,500 kilometers of its northern border with the formerly Soviet Central Asian Republics and Caucasus region, some 650 kilometers of which comprise the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. The Azerbaijan highlands divide Iran from Turkey, its neighbor to the north-east while further to the south the Zagros Mountains tower over Khuzestan, Iran's rich oil producing region. To the east, the vast Dasht-e-Kavir and Dasht Lut deserts sweep into Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Iran's role as a major trade route can be traced as far back as the fourth century BC when during what was known as the Persian Empire, the forerunner of modern Iran, the Silk Road was established linking Iran to China, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Always known for its rich culture and abundant resources, Iran's geographic position has placed it as a primary link between civilisations.

Iran possesses the largest market in the Middle East, with a population exceeding the combined total of all countries in the Persian Gulf region, sharing borders measuring some 2,000 kilometers with the newly independent Central Asian Republics representing a further market of some 100 million people, Afghanistan to the east and the Persian Gulf states to the south, presents a potential market of over 200 million people.

According to the last census in 1989 the population of Iran stood at 58 million people. The figure for 1996 stood at 60 million (United Nations, 1997). The population is mostly urban (35 million, UN Statistical Yearbook, 1997), very young (70% of the population is under the age of 30, UN Statistical Yearbook, 1997), and evenly distributed in terms of gender

(UN Statistical Yearbook, 1997). The country's GDP in 1995–96 was almost 61 billion US dollars, and the per capita GDP stood at \$1,000 US dollars. During 1994–95, it exported almost 20 billion US dollars while its imports amounted to almost 12 billion US dollars. Oil and gas accounted for the lion's share of its exports, at 75 per cent (1999 *Britannica Book of the Year*). Iran's three biggest partners are Italy, Germany, and Japan (*The Europa World Year Book*, 1997, Vol. 1).

Tehran, Mashad, Tabriz, Isfahan, and Shiraz are the most populous cities in Iran. Iranian society comprises various ethnicities each with their own specific traits. The Persians, Turks, Turkomans, Lors, Baluchis, Kurds, and Arabs account for the major ethnic groups. These various ethnicities share much in history; however, they maintain cultural and language differences. It is important to recognise that Iran is not ethnically homogenous, although to the outside world it may seem to be the case.

According to Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution, the common language and alphabet of the Iranian people is Farsi (Persian, as it was previously known). All official documents, texts, and textbooks are written in this language, while the use of local dialects and other ethnic symbols in the press, popular media, and educational system alongside the Farsi language is widespread. Moreover, according to Article 16 of the Constitution, teaching and learning of the Arabic language is mandatory as the language of the Holy Quran and as part of the Islamic education curriculum in all grades. Aside from the Farsi language, Lori, Baluchi, and other dialects common to various tribes and ethnicities are widely spoken.

According to the 1986 census, 99.4 per cent of the population of Iran adheres to Islam and according to Article 12 of the Iranian Constitution, the "Ja'afari Ithnee Ashari" (simply identified as Shiite Muslim by the West) branch of Islam is the official religion of the country. In addition to this and other Muslim sects, as per Article 13 of the Constitution, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians are officially recognised as religious minorities and are free to practise their faiths and adhere to their customs.

## The Literature on Iranian Leadership

The extant literature on Iranian leadership is rather sparse. A computer search on the topic produced a very small number of publications. In a comparative study of Iranian and Canadian managers, using a sample of 106 Canadian and 158 Iranian managers, Javidan and Dastmalchian (1993) found that there are some significant differences in effectiveness criteria and roles for the managers in the two cultures. In a survey of 143 Iranian executives, Javidan (1994; Javidan & Dastmalchian, 1995) and Dastmalchian and Javidan (1998) found the concepts of visionary and high-commitment leadership as developed by such authors as Kotter (1988), Conger (1989),

and Tichy and Devanna (1986) was confirmed within the Iranian sample. They showed that the Iranian view of a visionary leader is one who has a mental map, shares a new paradigm, has a global outlook, is enthusiastic about and dedicated to his/her vision, and is a credible communicator. These findings also showed that visionary leaders are highly valued and respected by their subordinates. These findings were also reinforced in a study comparing Iranian and Taiwanese managers (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 1995). In another study, Javidan (1996), in a survey of over 100 Iranian executives, found strong empirical support for Conger and Kanungo's concept of empowerment (1987). The results also showed that those executives who performed these practices left a strong emotional impact on their subordinates and built a loyal workforce.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: THE GLOBE PROJECT

The data for this paper were collected as part of the GLOBE research project. A detailed account of this project is provided in House et al.'s recent article (1999). GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness) is a multi-phase, multi-method project initiated by Robert House in 1993. Over 170 social scientists and management scholars from 61 countries in all major regions throughout the world have been engaged in the study of the relationship between culture and leadership. GLOBE was designed to investigate the existence of universally acceptable and universally unacceptable leadership attributes, and to identify those attributes that are culture specific. The theoretical base of this research program is grounded in the notion of implicit theory of leadership which argues that individuals have implicit theories about the attributes and behaviors that distinguish leaders from others, effective leaders from ineffective leaders, and moral from evil leaders (House, Ruiz-Quintanilla, Dorfman, Javidan, Dickson, & Gupta, 1999). The GLOBE team reached consensus on the definition of the two central concepts: societal culture and leadership. They defined leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members" (House et al., 1999, p. 10). Societal culture was defined as "the commonality among members of collectives with respect to the psychological attributes ... and the commonality of observed and reported practices of entities such as families, schools, work organizations, economic and legal systems, and political institutions" (House et al., 1999). Expanding on Hofstede's (1980) work, GLOBE focused on eight cultural dimensions: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, societal collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, and performance orientation.

The leadership instrument was a comprehensive list of 166 leader attributes and behaviors. The details of scale development and the rigorous psychometric analyses are provided elsewhere (House et al., 1999; Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman, 1999). The leadership questionnaire asked each respondent to use a scale of 1 to 7 to indicate the extent to which a particular attribute helps or hinders effective leadership. The following are a few examples:

Autocratic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Charismatic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Decisive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### *Scale*

- 1 = This behavior or characteristic greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader.
- 2 = This behavior or characteristic somewhat inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader.
- 3 = This behavior or characteristic slightly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader.
- 4 = This behavior or characteristic has no impact on whether a person is an outstanding leader.
- 5 = This behavior or characteristic contributes slightly to a person being an outstanding leader.
- 6 = This behavior or characteristic contributes somewhat to a person being an outstanding leader.
- 7 = This behavior or characteristic contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader.

## Sample and Data Collection

As part of GLOBE, 300 Iranian middle managers in three industries participated in this study. They were from banking (37%), telecommunications (31%), and food processing (32%). The reason for the selection of these particular industries was the consensus among GLOBE researchers that they exist in all the participating countries. All the questionnaires were translated into the Iranian language, Farsi, and back-translated to English. The respondents were from over 60 organisations, occupying middle to high-level managerial positions (55% department heads or equivalent, with 30% in positions higher than a department head and the remaining 15% mostly staff professionals). The average age of the respondents was 42.1, with an average of 19.3 years of work experience, and an average of 12.6 years in the same organisation. Over 85 per cent of those who responded to the education level question had a university degree. (The number of

responses to the demographic questions ranged from 189 to 229.) Responses per organisation ranged from 1 to 30. The average size of the organisations represented was 6,944 employees. The data collection process was completed during 1994 to 1996.

## RESULTS

In this section, we will present the findings of our research in two parts: the first part will report the findings on the Iranian culture, and the second part will report the findings on the profile of effective Iranian leaders.

### Findings on Iran's Societal Culture based on GLOBE's Dimensions

As previously indicated, GLOBE measured societal culture using nine cultural attributes. The results of the societal culture for our sample are shown in Table 1. As shown in the table, for all the cultural dimensions except for power distance and in-group collectivism, the "should be" scores are higher than the "as is" scores. That is, the respondents feel that, on balance, the societal culture in Iran should change in that more uncertainty

TABLE 1  
Societal Culture Dimensions

	<i>Iranian Data</i>				<i>Overall GLOBE Data<sup>a</sup></i>			
	<i>As Is</i>		<i>Should Be</i>		<i>As Is</i>		<i>Should Be</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Highest Score</i>	<i>Lowest Score</i>	<i>Highest Score</i>	<i>Lowest Score</i>
1. Uncertainty Avoidance	3.67	0.98	5.36	0.76	5.37	2.88	5.61	3.16
2. Gender Egalitarianism <sup>b</sup>	2.99 <sup>a</sup>	1.02	3.75 <sup>b</sup>	0.56	4.08	2.50	5.17	3.18
3. Collectivism I: Societal Collectivism	3.88	0.93	5.54	0.72	5.22	3.25	5.62	3.83
4. Collectivism II: In-Group Collectivism	6.03	0.57	5.86	0.76	6.36	3.18	6.52	4.06
5. Humane Orientation	4.23	0.98	5.61	0.72	5.23	3.18	6.09	3.39
6. Power Distance <sup>b</sup>	5.43 <sup>b</sup>	0.93	2.80 <sup>b</sup>	0.80	5.80	3.25	4.35	2.04
7. Performance Orientation	4.58	0.86	6.08	0.60	4.94	3.20	6.58	2.35
8. Future Orientation	3.70	0.92	5.84	0.63	5.07	2.88	6.20	2.95
9. Assertiveness	4.04	0.73	4.99	0.65	4.80	3.36	5.56	2.66

<sup>a</sup> Based on data reported on GLOBE's Home Page

<sup>b</sup> These scales have fewer items than the GLOBE scales



avoidance, more gender egalitarianism, higher levels of societal collectivism, more humane orientation, more performance orientation, more future orientation and assertiveness should be the norm in the society. Power distance on the other hand is perceived to be high and the perception of the individuals surveyed is that the emphasis on this aspect of culture should be reduced. In-group, or family, collectivism is another cultural dimension that according to the data should be less emphasised.

Table 1 also shows the range of scores for “as is” and “should be” scales for the entire GLOBE sample of 61 countries. Comparing the “as is” scores of the Iran data with the GLOBE, it is evident that the Iranian sample score fairly high for *power distance* and *in-group collectivism*. In fact in terms of in-group collectivism, Iran’s mean score for the “as is” scale was 6.03 as compared with the overall GLOBE range of 6.52–4.06. Iran in fact has the third highest score on this dimension (after the Philippines and Georgia). A prominent feature of the Iranian societal culture is the extent to which they demonstrate loyalty, express pride and cohesiveness towards family, organisations and other in-group collectivities. This is a sharp contrast to the picture that emerges when we considered *societal collectivism*. Iran scored comparatively quite low on this dimension with a mean score for “as is” societal collectivism of 3.88. The overall GLOBE range for societal collectivism was 5.22–3.25 (Iran in fact was the 13th lowest country in terms of ranking on this dimension). Therefore, the results show that Iran has one of the lowest scores on societal collectivism while it shows one of the highest scores on in-group collectivism.

On *power distance*, given that the scale for Iran data has one fewer item than the GLOBE scale (one question had to be deleted due to its sensitivity), one cannot make the same comparison as in the case of collectivism dimensions. However, it is apparent from Table 1 that Iran scores comparatively quite high on this dimension (Iran’s score of 5.43 compared with the maximum of 5.80; the ranking was 14 out of 61). That is, according to the respondents the present societal norm reflects an unequal sharing of power in the society. The “should be” score on this dimension of culture is equally quite revealing, in that the desire of the society to alter this aspect of the culture is by far the greatest among all the dimensions of culture under study (the absolute difference between the “as is” and the “should be” scores is highest for power distance, and lowest for in-group collectivity).

The results also show that Iran scored in the lower range in the GLOBE sample for *assertiveness* “as is” (Iran’s mean score was 4.04, which was the 24th country from lowest in the GLOBE list). That is, Iranians are less confrontational and aggressive in social relationships (the other countries which scored close to the Iranian sample were: Canada 4.05; the Philippines 4.00; Slovenia 3.92; Ireland 3.92; and Taiwan 3.91). The lowest assertive nation was Sweden (3.38) and the highest was Albania (4.80).

Among the other more interesting observations regarding societal culture was the finding that *gender egalitarianism* is not highly emphasised (in a comparative sense, allowing for the fact that this dimension has fewer items than the GLOBE measure, Iran's score on gender egalitarianism is 8th lowest score among the 61 countries). That is, the norm in the society is to maximise, or at least not to minimise, gender role differences and gender discrimination. Another noteworthy observation is that there does not appear to be a strong desire in the society to change this (the absolute difference between "as is" and "should be" scores is 0.76—the second lowest among the nine dimensions). *Humane orientation*, on the other hand, is a strong societal cultural norm in Iran in that being altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others is highly emphasised and rewarded (Iran's score is 4.23 which is in the top 30% of the ranking of the 61 countries). The results reported in Table 1 also show that the societal norms in Iran support *performance orientation*, improvement, and excellence (Iran's score on performance orientation "as is" was 4.58, while the maximum score for all the countries was 4.94—Iran ranked 8th). *Future orientation* as a cultural value receives relatively low emphasis in Iran (score of 3.70 for "as is"—ranks 20th from the lowest in the GLOBE sample) indicating that planning, investing, and future oriented behaviors are not highly emphasised. However, comparing the difference between "as is" and "should be" scores from Table 1 indicated that this dimension received the second highest absolute value. That is, the desire to make future orientation a societal norm is very high according to the respondents. Similarly, *uncertainty avoidance* as a cultural value is not highly emphasised (Iran scored 3.67, 8th lowest score amongst the 61 GLOBE countries). However, there appears to be a desire to change that (as reflected in the "should be" score, and the absolute difference between "as is" and "should be" scores).

In summary, the data reported in this study show that the societal culture in Iran is characterised by a strong cultural value on in-group collectivism, low uncertainty avoidance, high performance orientation, high power distance, and low societal collectivism. A moderate emphasis on humane orientation and moderately low assertiveness and future orientation are also among the cultural attributes of Iranian society.

## Findings on Leadership

In order to measure the attributes of effective leadership among the Iranian managers studied, the initial leadership items in the GLOBE list were measured using a pilot study. As a result a final list of 166 leadership attributes were included in the final questionnaire (this process followed Phase I and Phase II of Globe as described by House et al., 1999). In an attempt to examine the patterns of leadership identified by the Iranian

sample, the items were factor analyzed using varimax rotation. The results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
Summary of Leadership Results from Factor Analysis

<i>Examples of Items</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Factor 4</i>	<i>Factor 5</i>	<i>Factor 6</i>	<i>Factor 7</i>
	<i>Supportive</i>	<i>Dictatorial</i>	<i>Planner</i>	<i>Familial</i>	<i>Humble</i>	<i>Faithful</i>	<i>Receptive</i>
1. Encouraging	0.73						
2. Robust	0.71						
3. Sincere	0.71						
4. Understanding	0.70						
5. Socially Supportive	0.70						
6. Egotistical		0.70					
7. Non-cooperative		0.68					
8. Non-delegator		0.68					
9. Autocratic		0.64					
10. Ruthless		0.64					
11. Plans Ahead			0.74				
12. Foresight			0.66				
13. Orderly			0.62				
14. Informed			0.60				
15. Visionary			0.58				
16. Home-oriented				0.63			
17. Loyal I				0.50			
18. Familial				0.49			
19. Habitual				0.47			
20. Domestic				0.44			
21. Humble					0.61		
22. Subtle					0.53		
23. Custodial					0.52		
24. Self-effacing					0.48		
25. Hard-working					0.41		
26. Faithful						0.76	
27. Religious						0.74	
28. Devout						0.68	
29. Orthodox						0.67	
30. Patriotic						0.55	
31. Clear							0.55
32. Anticipatory							0.49
33. Benevolent							0.48
34. Administratively-skilled							0.44
35. Aesthetic							0.39
No. of Items	46	38	12	11	10	8	10
Eigenvalue	26.3	13.0	6.3	5.8	5.0	3.6	3.5
% of variance explained	16.6	24.8	28.8	32.5	35.7	38.0	40.2

As shown in Table 2, the initial outcome was a seven-factor solution involving 112 of the items. These were: *supportive*, *dictatorial*, *visionary*, *familial*, *humble*, *faithful*, and *receptive*. Table 2 shows sample items from each factor, number of items for each factor, eigenvalues and percentage of variance explained for each factor. Table 3 shows additional information on each of these seven Iranian leadership scales. It shows number of items for each scale, means and standard deviations, range and the coefficient alpha (internal consistency reliability coefficient). More detailed information including details of all the items for each factor is provided in the Appendix. As shown in Table 3 all the leadership scales have high internal consistency reliability coefficients (alphas) and are quite acceptable.

The first two factors (supportive and dictatorial) resemble the GLOBE leadership factors of "value-based" or charismatic and "narcissistic" leadership attributes (House et al., 1999; Den Hartog et al., 1999, 2000), which have also been reported in GLOBE's specific country or region findings (e.g. see Ashkanasy, Kennedy, & Trevor-Roberts, 2000, for findings relating to Australia and New Zealand). They refer to the "etic" aspect of leadership and may provide further evidence on the universality of certain configurations of leadership behaviour (see the Introduction to the GLOBE Project in this issue by House, Javidan, & Dorfman).

The third factor, which we called *planner*, refers to the future and planning orientation of the leader's behavior. Given the earlier comments regarding the future orientation dimension of Iranian culture and their desire to place this at the forefront of their list of "should be" cultural traits, this leadership dimension portrays a particular type of attribute that is tied into the post-revolution organisational and social issues in Iran (e.g. Goreishi & Zahedi, 1997; Fairbanks, 1997; Rouleau, 1995). That is, if the desire to instill and cultivate more future orientation is indeed paramount,

TABLE 3  
Means, Standard Deviations, Range, Reliability Coefficients of Leadership Factors

<i>Factor</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>No. of Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Reliability Coefficient (<math>\alpha</math>)</i>
1. Supportive	286	46	5.92	0.33	4.8–6.5	0.96
2. Dictatorial	273	38	2.42	0.92	1.3–6.3	0.94
3. Planner	294	12	6.18	0.39	5.3–6.6	0.82
4. Familial	288	11	4.17	0.58	3.5–5.5	0.74
5. Humble	290	10	4.97	0.70	3.8–6.1	0.72
6. Faithful	288	8	5.69	0.57	4.7–6.3	0.83
7. Receptive	288	10	5.71	0.76	4.5–6.6	0.73

as shown in our data and as discussed and predicted by the above mentioned authors, then relating leadership effectiveness to planning and to the concern for future makes more sense. The fourth factor, *familial*, refers to an attribute emphasising one's willingness to sacrifice personal gains for the sake of family interests, being involved and enjoying home and family life, and being devoted to home and family and so on. According to a number of historians and biographers (e.g. Forbis, 1980; Hillman, 1990; Adams, 1972), family has had a major impact on the historical development of Iranian culture. Family has been the cornerstone of Iranian social structure and order. In order to preserve the basic building block of society, tradition has required that "the family be led by an all powerful leader commanding unquestioning obedience from every member of the kinship group. In effect, [this] . . . creates in a miniature the Iranian hierarchical structure of ruler and subject" (Mackey, 1996, p. 95). This particular feature of the Iranian culture helps explain other aspects of the leadership and its interaction with cultural values. For example, the role of the senior male in ruling the family, the role of women members of the family and the cultural value of gender egalitarianism, the value placed on the system of patriarchy and the resultant role of the leader in this context. All of these help develop a fairly complex picture of interrelationships among leadership preferences and the cultural values and assumptions embedded in two and a half millennia of history.

The fifth factor, which we called *humble*, refers to the attribute of attaching low estimation to one's importance, using subtle ways of communicating this to others, presenting oneself in a humble and modest way, and being hard working, caring, and down-to-earth. The sixth factor was termed *faithful*. This factor referred to the leadership attribute of believing in religion, acting according to the standards of religious doctrine and morals, being earnestly religious, foregoing self-interest and making personal sacrifices, and following established procedures. Both of these latter leadership factors refer to a particular set of attributes that are related to culturally specific leadership behaviors in Iran. The connection between leadership and religion has always existed in Iranian culture. From the ancient Zoroastrian times to the Islamic era, the concepts of leadership and charisma in Iran have been connected to the possession of either a sign bestowed on the leader by the Zoroastrian's force of good and Sire of Truth, Ahura Mazda, or a deep belief in religion (Shia Islam) and support from the Shia Moslem religious communities (Forbis, 1980; Mackey, 1996). The final leadership factor was *receptive*. This referred to the leader being: anticipatory, benevolent, clear, administratively skilled, conscious of status and class in social setting, and amicable.

The first two factors (i.e. supportive and dictatorial factors) were further analyzed, as they include larger number of items. The second-order factor analyses of these two initial factors are shown in Tables 4 and 5. As shown

TABLE 4  
Summary of Factor Analysis for "Supportive" Leadership Items

<i>Examples of Items</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Factor 4</i>	<i>Factor 5</i>	<i>Factor 6</i>	<i>Factor 7</i>
	<i>Dynamic</i>	<i>Considerate</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Collaborative</i>	<i>Tactful</i>	<i>Modest</i>
1. Robust	0.687						
2. Daring	0.644						
3. Dynamic	0.627						
4. Encouraging	0.564						
5. Improvement-oriented	0.561						
6. Socially sensitive		0.734					
7. Socially supportive		0.690					
8. Understanding		0.623					
9. Considerate		0.538					
10. Normative		0.516					
11. Fraternal			0.660				
12. Just			0.622				
13. Honest			0.571				
14. Kind			0.546				
15. Compassionate			0.538				
16. Positive				0.720			
17. Peace-maker				0.703			
18. Prepared				0.607			
19. Performance-oriented				0.546			
20. Inspirational				0.539			
21. Calm					0.695		
22. Mediator					0.615		
23. Collaborative					0.595		
24. Cooperative					0.533		
25. Consultative					0.486		
26. Graceful						0.711	
27. Group-oriented						0.564	
28. Status-conscious						0.416	
29. Diplomatic						0.406	
30. Non-excessive							0.648
31. Non-excitabile							0.584
32. Modest							0.415
No. of Items	9	8	8	6	5	4	3
Eigenvalue	16.45	1.96	1.83	1.53	1.38	1.32	1.23
% of variance explained	35.76	40.01	44.00	47.32	50.31	53.18	55.85

in Tables 4 and 5, these yielded a number of unique factors that represented dimensions of leadership from the perspective of the Iranian managers studied. Table 4 shows the results of a varimax-rotated factors analysis for the supportive leadership scale. It produced seven factors accounting for over 56 per cent of variance. These were: *dynamic*, *considerate*, *fair*, *positive*, *collaborative*, *tactful*, and *modest*. These factors in many ways portray attributes of a caring, credible, socially capable, modest, humble, collaborative, and dynamic leader that Iranian culture has supported over the centuries (Mackay, 1996).

TABLE 5  
Summary of Factor Analysis for "Dictatorial" Leadership Items

<i>Examples of Items</i>	<i>Factor 1 Deceitful</i>	<i>Factor 2 Self-Important</i>	<i>Factor 3 Individualistic</i>	<i>Factor 4 Vindictive</i>	<i>Factor 5 Willful</i>
1. Hostile	0.752				
2. Dishonest	0.724				
3. Cunning	0.660				
4. Distant	0.640				
5. Provocateur	0.610				
6. Directive		0.653			
7. Demanding		0.643			
8. Egocentric		0.603			
9. Egotistical		0.599			
10. Domineering		0.591			
11. Individually-oriented			0.753		
12. Individually competitive			0.679		
13. Aloof			0.560		
14. Non-delegator			0.543		
15. Asocial			0.492		
16. Unchanging				0.745	
17. Tyrannical				0.604	
18. Vindictive				0.547	
19. Secretive				0.488	
20. Skeptical				0.451	
21. Unique					0.671
22. Strong-minded					0.663
23. Willful					0.626
24. Communicative					0.523
No. of Items	9	7	8	6	5
Eigenvalue	12.26	2.24	1.76	1.63	1.48
% of variance explained	32.26	38.16	42.79	47.07	50.96

Table 5 shows the same procedure for the dictatorial factor. The analysis shows five factors accounting for about 50 per cent of the variance. The second-order factors were: *deceitful*, *self-important*, *individualistic*, *vindictive*, and *willful*. Most of these attributes bear resemblance to Zoroastrian's force of destruction, the spirit of darkness, and the Destroyer—Ahriman (Irving, 1979, p. 19; Dhalla, 1922, p. 33). The deceitful, vindictive, and self-oriented leader is the one most closely associated with Ahriman and will need to be redeemed. Under the Zoroastrian guides, men and women's primary role in society is as redeemers and perfecters of a flawed world—a world in which the fate of an individual or a leader "... depends on how well he or she acts in the cosmic balance between the powers of light and powers of darkness" (Mackey, 1996, p. 16). Due to the considerable influence of Zoroastrianism on Iran's subsequent move to Islam, and thus the creation of Shia Islam, many of the same beliefs were carried forward and have become deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Iranians and the way they think about effective leadership.

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This study has embarked on empirically examining the culture and leadership in Iran. To our knowledge, there is no other published work that has addressed the same issues. The conceptual and methodological aspects of the study have been guided by the GLOBE project (House et al., 1999; see also Hartog et al., 1999). The data were collected from 300 middle level managers from over 60 organisations in three industries (telecommunications, food processing, and banking). The primary purpose of this paper was to examine the etic and emic aspect of leadership in Iran and to develop a profile of effective leadership for Iran. The paper also reported and elaborated on the dimensions of Iran's culture using GLOBE categories.

In terms of the leadership, the results showed seven scales: *supportive*, *dictatorial*, *planner*, *familial*, *humble*, *faithful*, and *receptive*. The first two factors were similar to the "etic" charismatic and narcissistic dimensions of leadership found in other GLOBE studies (e.g. Den Hartog et al., 1999; Ashkanasy et al., 2000). When these two factors were further analyzed, a number of second-order factors were generated that require further analysis. The remaining five leadership factors from the main factor analysis are regarded as "emic" aspects of leadership. Attributes such as familial, humble, and faithful have more of a historical root and can be linked to the role of family and religion in the long history of the country. The others, planner and receptive, we argued, may be more readily related to more recent social changes that Iranian society has been going through since the revolution in 1979 (e.g. Wright, 1992, 2000).



When we examined the societal culture using the nine GLOBE dimensions, Iran appeared to have the lowest score on *assertiveness* among all the 61 countries, and had relatively lower scores on uncertainty avoidance, societal collectivism, future orientation, and gender egalitarianism. On the other hand, Iran had the third highest score on *in-group collectivism*, and had relatively high scores on performance orientation, power distance, and humane orientation. In terms of the desires to change the culture, the data showed that Iranians are most interested in reducing the power distance and increasing the future orientation aspects of the societal culture.

Further analysis will shed more light on the complex interconnectedness of the effective attributes of a leader and the culture of Iran. However, this paper has demonstrated a number of unique and interesting aspects of leadership. The results need to be understood within the modern day context of Iran as well as the historical-cultural background of this country. According to the historians, Iranians have always lived within overlapping orbits of powerful authority figures. For centuries, Iranian culture has had a deep-rooted authoritarian tradition (Mackey, 1996; Hillman, 1990). In addition, the notion of leadership has historically been very closely associated with this tradition. "In the Iranian concept of leadership, a leader possesses charisma because he [she] is endowed with supernatural powers, or at least exceptional qualities, that set him [her] apart from ordinary humans. . . . [The leader] commands a special grace, and otherworldly quality that engenders trust, commitment, and an irresistible desire to follow. The reality that charismatic figures bearing a new dynasty often appeared during pivotal points of history to sustain the Iranian nation reinforced the concept of the hero king. Thus monarchy becomes a function of personality where authority flowed to the charismatic leader rather than being imposed by the institution of the throne. Furthermore, this ideal and expectation of charismatic leadership constitutes one of Iranian culture's defining characteristics" (Mackey, 1996, p. 96).

Given this background, we maintain that the study has demonstrated leadership attributes and factors that would not have appeared as an outcome of our study had it not been for (i) the unique aspects of the Iranian culture (the emic aspects of leadership), and (ii) the generalisability of some attributes of leadership that could be regarded as culture free (the etic aspect of leadership). Nevertheless, the cultural dimensions and the leadership attributes that emerged from this study point to the juxtaposing of Iranian culture between two complex but interlocking traditions. One has its roots in ancient Persia, the other in Islam. Iran since the seventh century has survived these balancing forces with its Persian and Islamic faces sometimes relaxed in harmony but as often creased with tension (Mackey, 1996; Wright, 2000). These initial findings of our work are a small step toward exploring such deep cultural tensions and traditions.

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Appendix  
Complete Factor Analysis for Iranian Leadership Scales

<i>Current Item</i>	<i>Characteristic or Behavior and Definition</i>	<i>Factor 1 Supportive</i>	<i>Factor 2 Dictatorial</i>	<i>Factor 3 Visionary</i>	<i>Factor 4 Familial</i>	<i>Factor 5 Humble</i>	<i>Factor 6 Faithful</i>	<i>Factor 7 Receptive</i>
E55	Encouraging: Gives courage, confidence or hope through urging and advice	0.733						
E135	Robust: Not fragile, strong, healthy	0.715						
E146	Sincere: Means what he/she says, earnest	0.713						
E159	Understanding: Understands others and shares feelings	0.704						
E149	Socially Supportive: Shows concern for the feelings of others	0.695						
E148	Socially Sensitive: Aware of the feelings of others	0.673						
E66	Fraternal: Tends to be a good friend of subordinates	0.657						
E96	Kind: Friendly and understanding	0.655						
E115	Nurturing: Behaves in a caring way	0.639						
E77	Humane: Compassionate, concerned with welfare of others	0.639						
E28	Considerate: Respects others' needs and feelings	0.637						
E93	Intuitive: Has extra insight	0.612						
E110	Non-excitabile: Not easily psychologically aroused, excited or upset	0.612						
E86	Industrious: A hard worker	0.606						
E80	Improvement-oriented: Seeks continuous performance improvement	0.600						
E26	Compassionate: Has empathy for others, inclined to be helpful or show mercy	0.589						
E68	Generous: Willing to give time, money, resources and help to others	0.585						
E71	Group-oriented: Concerned with the welfare of the group	0.580						
E29	Consultative: Consults with others before making plans or taking action	0.566						
E36	Daring: Shows courage	0.555						

E109	Non-excessive: Does not go to extremes, moderate	0.546	
E128	Prepared: Is ready for future events	0.539	
E41	Diplomatic: Communicative acumen, skilled at interpersonal relations, tactful	0.537	
E48	Dynamic: Highly involved, energetic, enthused, motivated	0.526	
E95	Just: Acts according to what is right or fair	0.523	
E104	Modest: Does not boast, presents self in a humble manner	0.519	0.357
E70	Graceful: Having or showing grace, elegance	0.517	
E31	Cooperative: Willing to work in a collaborative way with others	0.515	
E152	Status-conscious: Aware of others' socially acceptable status	0.502	
E121	Patient: Has and shows patience	0.499	
E124*	Performance-oriented: Sets high standards of performance	0.496	0.377
E23	Collaborative: Works jointly with others	0.491	
E151	Sports-oriented: Interested in sports	0.485	0.479
E32	Coordinator: Integrates work of subordinates by codirection and communication	0.484	
E92	Intragroup Face-saver: Ensures that other group members are not embarrassed or shamed	0.478	
E150	Spiritual: Places emphasis on spiritual, not material matter	0.468	
E112	Non-manipulative: Does not use deceit or trickery to gain personal advantage	0.463	
E88	Inspirational: Inspires emotions, beliefs, values, and behaviors of others; inspires others to work hard	0.462	
E114	Normative: Behaves according to the norms of his or her group	0.456	
E155	Sympathetic: Has sympathy for others	0.447	
E127	Positive: Generally optimistic and confident	0.424	
E102	Mediator: Intervenes to solve conflicts between individuals	0.400	
E123	Peace-Maker: Adept in resolving social disputes among groups or individuals	0.399	
E19	Calm: Not easily distressed	0.399	

## Appendix (contd)

<i>Current Item</i>	<i>Characteristic or Behavior and Definition</i>	<i>Factor 1 Supportive</i>	<i>Factor 2 Dictatorial</i>	<i>Factor 3 Visionary</i>	<i>Factor 4 Familial</i>	<i>Factor 5 Humble</i>	<i>Factor 6 Faithful</i>	<i>Factor 7 Receptive</i>
E75	Honest: Speaks truthfully	0.388						
E165	Win/Win Problem Solver: Able to identify solutions which satisfy individuals with diverse and conflicting interests	0.377						
E51	Egotistical: Conceited, convinced of own abilities		0.696					
E107	Non-cooperative: Unwilling to work jointly with others		0.682					
E108	Non-delegator: Unwilling or unable to relinquish control of projects or tasks		0.675					
E14	Autocratic: Makes decisions in dictatorial way		0.644					
E157	Tyrannical: Acts like a tyrant or despot; imperious		0.644					
E138	Ruthless: Punitive; having no pity or compassion		0.638					
E137	Ruler: Is in charge and does not tolerate disagreement or questioning, gives orders		0.632					
E162	Vindictive: Vengeful; seeks revenge when wronged		0.628					
E50	Egocentric: Self-absorbed, thoughts focus mostly on one's self		0.620					
E164	Willful: Strong-willed, determined, resolute, persistent		0.610					
E40	Dictatorial: Forces her/his values and opinions on others		0.583					
E9	Asocial: Avoids people or groups, prefers own company		0.582					
E130	Provocateur: Stimulates unrest		0.580					
E35	Cynical: Tends to believe the worst about people and events		0.566					
E33	Cunning: Sly, deceitful, full of guile		0.559					
E142	Self-interested: Pursues own best interests		0.557					
E42	Directive: Tends to give orders, commands, and directions		0.553					
E38	Demanding: Requires subordinates to do as he/she says		0.548					
E94	Irritable: Moody; easily agitated		0.547					
E43	Disagreeable: Tends to state opinions that are opposite to the opinions of others		0.547					
E47	Domineering: Inclined to dominate others		0.541					

E139	Secretive: Tends to conceal information from others	0.537		
E147	Skeptical: Doubts the reliability of information and people	0.537		
E76	Hostile: Actively unfriendly, acts negatively toward others	0.536		-0.438
E84	Individually Competitive: Prefers to compete as an individual rather than as a member of a team	0.531		
E113	Non-participative: Does not participate with others	0.528		
E8	Arrogant: Presumptuous or overbearing	0.525		
E44	Dishonest: Fraudulent, insincere	0.510		-0.464
E85	Individually-oriented: Concerned with and places high values on preserving individual rather than group needs	0.509		
E12	Authoritarian: Gives orders and does not accept any questions or discussion about them	0.490		
E98	Loner: Works and acts separately from others	0.485		
E153	Strong-minded: Strong convictions, willful	0.483	0.398	
E58	Excellence-oriented: Strives for excellence in performance of self and subordinates	0.426		
E45	Distant: Aloof, stands off from others, difficult to become friends with	0.407		
E160	Unique: An unusual person, has characteristics or behaviors that are different from most others	0.388		-0.387
E3	Aloof: Reserved and detached from others	0.376		
E25	Communicative: Communicates with others frequently	0.366		
E158	Unchanging: Steady, consistent, behaves the same way over time	0.364		
E126	Plans ahead: Anticipates and prepares in advance		0.743	
E64	Foresight: Anticipates possible future events		0.655	
E118	Orderly: Is organised and methodical in work		0.619	
E87	Informed: Knowledgeable; aware of information		0.603	
E163	Visionary: Has a vision and imagination of the future		0.601	
E67	Future-oriented: Makes plans and takes actions based on future goals		0.582	
E119	Organised: Well organised, methodical, orderly		0.551	



## Appendix (contd)

<i>Current Item</i>	<i>Characteristic or Behavior and Definition</i>	<i>Factor 1 Supportive</i>	<i>Factor 2 Dictatorial</i>	<i>Factor 3 Visionary</i>	<i>Factor 4 Familial</i>	<i>Factor 5 Humble</i>	<i>Factor 6 Faithful</i>	<i>Factor 7 Receptive</i>
E166	Worldly: Interested in temporal events, has a world outlook			0.525				
E53	Elitist: Believes that a small number of people with similar backgrounds are superior and should enjoy privileges			0.440				
E52	Elegant: Graceful, precise in movement and appearance			0.436				
E117	Obsessive: Extremely preoccupied with almost all work tasks			0.394				
E60	Extremely Confident: Thinks of one's own ability as exceptionally high in almost all matters			0.366				
E74	Home-oriented: Likes to be at home, enjoys home life				0.629			
E99	Loyal 1: Stays with and supports friends even when they have substantial problems or difficulties				0.504			
E62	Familial: Willing to sacrifice personal gain for the sake of his/her family's interests and welfare				0.489			
E72	Habitual: Given to a constant, regular routine				0.472			
E27	Compromiser: Willing to yield own demands to meet preferences or requirements of others				0.438			
E46	Domestic: Devoted to home and family				0.434			
E65	Formal: Acts in accordance with rules, conventions and ceremonies				0.429			
E103	Micro-manager: An extremely close supervisor, one who insists on making all decisions				0.407			
E54	Emotional: Expresses emotions frequently and openly				0.396			
E82	Indirect: Does not go straight to the point, uses metaphors and allegories to communicate				0.374			
E134	Ritualistic: Uses a prescribed order to carry out procedures				0.373			
E78	Humble: Holds and shows low estimation of his/her own importance					0.611		

E154	Subtle: Communicates in an indirect manner, uses metaphors and allegories to communicate			0.533	
E34	Custodial: Protective, enjoys caring for others			0.519	
E30	Controlling: Likes to determine the behavior of others			0.506	
E141	Self-effacing: Presents self in a modest way			0.481	
E37	Decisive: Makes decisions firmly and quickly			0.421	
E73	Hard working: Willing to work hard, not lazy			0.413	
E63	Family-oriented: Values family			0.411	
E136	Rule-oriented: Respects, strictly enforces, and follows rules			0.375	
E18	Bossy: Tells subordinates what to do in a commanding way			0.366	
E61	Faithful: Believes in religion				0.758
E131	Religious: Believes in religion, acts according to standards of religion				0.736
E39	Devout: Earnestly religious				0.678
E120	Orthodox: Follows and believes in historically accepted opinions concerning religious doctrine and morals	0.381			0.670
E122	Patriotic: Loyal to his or her nation, group, or organisation				0.546
E144	Self-sacrificial: Foregoes self-interests and makes personal sacrifices in the interest of the leader's vision	0.369			0.414
E57	Evasive: Refrains from making negative comments to maintain relationships and save face				0.399
E129	Procedural: Follows established procedures			0.369	0.378
E22	Clear: Easily understood	0.539			0.549
E7	Anticipatory: Anticipates, attempts to forecast events, considers what will happen in the future		0.423		0.489
E17	Benevolent: Performs helpful actions	0.419			0.482
E1	Administratively skilled: Able to plan, organise, coordinate, and control work of large numbers (over 75) of individuals		0.431		0.435
E2	Aesthetic: Appreciates beauty and art				0.394
E21	Class-conscious: Is conscious of class boundaries and acts accordingly				0.389

## Appendix (contd)

<i>Current Item</i>	<i>Characteristic or Behavior and Definition</i>	<i>Factor 1 Supportive</i>	<i>Factor 2 Dictatorial</i>	<i>Factor 3 Visionary</i>	<i>Factor 4 Familial</i>	<i>Factor 5 Humble</i>	<i>Factor 6 Faithful</i>	<i>Factor 7 Receptive</i>
E24	Collectively-oriented: Sacrifices self-interest to the interests of the group to which he/she belongs							0.387
E6	Amicable: Has a friendly attitude							0.385
E11	Athletic: Good at sports							0.370
E10	Assertive: Tends to declare her/his rights, preferences, or opinions firmly							0.363
Number of items per factor		46	38	12	11	10	8	10
Eigenvalue		26.30	12.96	6.31	5.79	5.04	3.60	3.52
% Variance (cumulative)		16.65	24.85	28.84	32.51	35.69	37.97	40.20

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