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Abstract
This exploratory study examined the responses of Central Eurasian corporate, government, and non-governmental organization managers regarding their perceptions of work-related values of effective organizational leadership. The respondents were participants in a 2-week leadership development program held in Istanbul, Turkey. Two inter-related research questions regarding leadership concepts and challenges were explored through content analysis of program intake interview protocols. The participants' pre-program perspectives on what constituted *effective* organizational leadership were found to be consistent with the GLOBE Project's culturally endorsed leadership dimensions. Moreover, several common patterns of behaviors and challenges were uncovered that could be attributed to particular idiosyncrasies in the socio-political/cultural environment of the region.
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Introduction
The economic liberalization of the Central Eurasian post-Soviet countries has invited many Western foreign companies to enter the region in order to take advantage of its attractive natural and human capital resources (Ardichvili and Gasparishvili, 2001).[1] While the region has a lot to gain from these business opportunities, it has yet to overcome some big hurdles before it can fully reap the benefits from the increased attention it has received in the past 15 years. As Holt *et al.* (1994) have correctly observed, "at the core of the change process in the region is nearly 75 years of deep-rooted socialist doctrine" (p. 124). This doctrine, in the past, has encouraged highly bureaucratized and autocratically managed organizations, with minimum opportunities for personal growth and creativity for the employees and effective organizational leadership. However, these very attributes are required to allow the organizations in this region to take advantage of the enormous opportunities that lie ahead of them, and to allow them to face the challenges of the highly turbulent environment that surrounds them.

For our purposes, Central Eurasia is defined as the five Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) and three southern Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) that surround the Caspian Sea. Georgia and Armenia are Christian nations, while the other six are

moderate, secular Islamic states. A heavy responsibility lies in the hands of the leaders and managers of the organizations in the region. It is essential for them to provide exceptional leadership in order to lead their organizations through this phase of uncertainty and transformation from Soviet rule to a post-Soviet society. This requires a considerable amount of change in managerial behavior and values (Holt *et al.*, 1994). However, as De Vries (2000) observed, ''many executives who have the *will* to change lack the *skill* to change'' (p. 74). Further, given the critical role and challenges that leaders of these countries face in helping their organizations deal with uncertainties and opportunities prevalent in their environment, many Western organizations and scholars have felt the need to introduce leadership development and training programs in the region. The Central Eurasia Leadership Alliance (CELA) program, with its mission ''to enhance leadership skills in the Central Eurasia region and form an international network of leaders working toward peace, prosperity and improved cooperation through an exchange of ideas and a respect for cultural diversity'' (EastWest Institute, 2002), is an example of one such training effort.

Yet, in order for leadership training programs to be fruitful in the region, one must understand that leadership values, profiles, and attitudes of the managers in the region are rooted in the distinct history of the region and are significantly different from those in the West (Puffer and McCarthy, 1995; Ardichvili and Gasparishvili, 2001; Ardichvili and Kuchinke, 2002). One must also understand that many people in the region may not be too familiar with the leadership qualities that are considered to be universally endorsed by many Western scholars (Smith *et al.*, 1989; Bass, 1999; House *et al.*, 2002).

Given the importance of effective leadership in the region, it is unfortunate that very few research studies are available on the topic of leadership in this part of the world because few scholars have included these countries in their cross-cultural research studies on the topic of leadership. Even the most comprehensive cross-cultural leadership study in recent years – the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) Project – only included two countries from the region. Additionally, a review of the most comprehensive resource available regarding Central Eurasian studies worldwide, a website maintained at Harvard University (CESWW-Dissertations in Central Eurasian Studies), revealed that neither business, management, leadership, nor organization studies were among the numerous topics, from anthropology to Turkic studies, for which dissertations and other references were provided.

The motivating factors for undertaking the current study are twofold: (1) to provide an overview of the nature of, and perspectives on, leadership in this region for Western firms interested in doing business in Central Eurasian countries; and (2) to gain an in-depth understanding of the attributes and perceptions of leaders in the region, which is a pre-requisite for introducing effective programs in the region. It is therefore hoped that the results and discussion of the exploratory analysis offered by this study will make two contributions. First, given the scarcity of empirical research on the topic of leadership in post-Soviet countries, this paper contributes to the literature and also aids our understanding of leadership perspectives in the region. Second, this paper also identifies patterns of region-specific leadership challenges that could help define future training needs and efforts in the region and also would allow foreign firms interested in doing business in these countries to better understand region-specific idiosyncrasies. This is especially important because while some aspects of leadership attributes and *attitudes* of leaders play out the same way across the globe and hence converge (cf. Smith *et al.*, 1989; Bass, 1997; House *et al.*, 2002), leaders' *beliefs* may still be strongly influenced by their socio-political and cultural environment.

Before discussing the details of the study, we provide a brief overview of the socio-political and cultural environment of the Central Eurasian region and review the existing literature on leadership in the region.

Socio-political and cultural environment of Central Eurasian countries

Cross-cultural researchers have suggested that culture plays a prominent role in shaping management practices, perceptions, and organizational behavior (e.g. Laurent, 1983; Nonaka, 1994; Newman and Nollen, 1996; Schein, 1996). Socio-political and cultural environment provides a context within which organizational behavior takes place (Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991; Doktor and Shi, 1991; Shenkar and von Glinow, 1994) and this context therefore shapes perceptions and preferences of the people working in the organizations within a particular kind of environment.

Even though the post-Soviet countries in Central Eurasia have different historical roots, they are "linked together by their common past: centralized planned economies, one-party system, Soviet influence, and dual hierarchy" (Bakacsi et al., 2002: 69). These countries have been under strong Russian influence in the past. The socio-political environment of the region is characterized by corrupt bureaucracies (e.g. De Vries, 2000), and the region's distinct cultural characteristics include high-power distance and high collectivism (Bakacsi et al., 2002), as well as high gender differentiation (e.g. Ashwin, 2002).

In collectivist societies, employees feel morally obliged to serve their company. Employees are more concerned with job security, and company policy and practices may vary according to relations. People from collectivist societies are very concerned about keeping/losing face in front of others and this may be a major incentive for them to fulfill their duties as it is expected of them Hofstede (1980, 1991). Collectivists have a long-term time perspective and have a strong need for harmony in their daily life and work environment. They have the desire to maintain close interpersonal relationships with the members of their identity groups (in-group members), and are concerned about the impact their actions have on others as well as about protecting their reputation, especially in front of their in-group members (Triandis, 1989).

Gender differentiation is the extent to which gender role differences prevail in a society. In societies with high gender differentiation, male members typically enjoy higher social status and hold higher levels of positions of authority than females (Javidan and House, 2001). In the post-Soviet societies, the Marxist ideology attributed the position of "worker mothers" to women, who were expected to work as well as perform their traditional domestic roles, while men had the responsibility of serving as leaders, managers, soldiers, and workers, without being expected to contribute to domestic duties (Ashwin, 2002). Consequently, women were concentrated in low-paying jobs that required heavy labor (Huland, 2001). While the main concern of working women was to maintain a combination of work and family and fulfill their "reproductive roles" (Einhorn, 1994; Harden, 2000), men's concern was to maintain their status at work as defined by their pay, position, and occupational hierarchy (Ashwin, 2002). Although gender roles are being redefined after the demise of the Soviet regime, as women are increasingly engaging in entrepreneurship and entering into business more enthusiastically, the gender-stereo-typical views still exist. Women are typically viewed as being inferior or inefficient employees, and it is expected that they will take maternity leaves and take time off to care for their family and domestic responsibilities. Men, on the other hand, are perceived as being more reliable, stronger, more practical, having greater intelligence, and better able to deal with the demands of the workplace than women (White, 2005).

Cultures with high-power distance have unequal distribution of power. Status hierarchy plays an important role in such societies, and upward mobility of individuals having lower social status is severely constrained (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Followers are expected to obey their leaders without question (House et al., 2002). High-power distance in post-Soviet societies is enforced by a history of bureaucratic administrative control that minimizes personal discretion (Luthans et al., 2000). Triandis (1998) distinguishes between horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism. While horizontal collectivist societies are characterized by low-power distance and high levels of collectivism, vertical collectivist cultures have high-power distance as well as high collectivism levels. The countries in the post-Soviet region fall in the latter category. In horizontal collectivist cultures, there is not only high emphasis on teamwork, but also leaders treat subordinates as their equals. There is a sense of oneness with the group. On the other hand, in vertical collectivist cultures, there is a high level of emphasis on group loyalty and harmony, and at the same time there is high emphasis on formal rules and status hierarchy (Triandis, 1998; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). Members are expected to serve their groups, and even put up with the oppressive demands of the in-group (Triandis, 1998: 15).

The institutional environment of the post-Soviet region is deeply rooted in bureaucracies, where ruling elites and authority figures held the reins of the whole society and suppressed personal initiative and freedom (Puffer and McCarthy, 1995; De Vries, 2000). According to Gibson, "Russian culture is characterized by broad, porous, and politically relevant interpersonal networks" (2001: 51). Similarly, Gratchev et al. (2007) state that the economic environment in Russia is dominated by state and large corporations. The economy is controlled by financial and industrial giants that have enough power to dictate legislation to the state according to their interest. Entrepreneurs

interested in starting their own business often have to rely on past acquaintances and support. As the economies open up, new firms that are interested in joining the block have to rely on some form of connection to the old system in order to get access to resources and client base (Sedaitis, 1998).

As a consequence, firms find themselves in a dense network of relationships that encourage corruption and restrict growth. With these types of arrangements, the rich and powerful agents get more powerful while less powerful agents have to depend on the powerful ones to gain access to resources else the chances of their survival get bleak. For example, Khan (1998) associates the root cause of corruption prevailing in many Asian countries with the political networks. According to the author, politically weak agents gain access to the strong agents by offering them bribes, while strong agents, in order to gain benefits, often offer political support to their patrons. Mostly, in order to gain access to state-controlled resources, firms have to go through state party personnel (Weiss, 1987; Khan, 1998). The survival of firms that do not have direct connections with the government or indirect connections through third-party links depends on the proximity to the firms that hold the central position. To gain this proximity, firms often rely on unethical practices such as bribery and corruption. According to Qinglian (2001), "those few companies that try to run their businesses in accord with the rules and regulations soon find themselves at an enormous disadvantage as their competitors are more willing to expend great amounts of funds on necessary bribes, and the like. In this sense, government power is viewed as a form of capital investment that if pursued properly will yield supra-economic profits" (p. 57).

It is therefore important for leaders and managers of the countries to initiate major restructuring in the business environments of their countries. The following section provides a brief review of leadership studies in Central Eurasian countries including the GLOBE Project and the CELA program.

Organizational leadership in Central Eurasian countries

The Central Eurasian region is of enormous geopolitical importance and holds considerable economic potential, but, at the same time, is threatened by domestic instability and trans-border conflict. All of these countries share a similar historic legacy of highly centralized, bureaucratized, and autocratically managed organizations that were characteristic of the Soviet era. Managerial behavior was marked by a lack of initiative, meticulous rule-following, and contentment with inferior product quality.

Very few studies have focused on organizational leadership in the Central Eurasian countries, and the few studies that have focused on the region have led to a variety of contradictory conclusions. For example, a study by Ardichvili and Gasparishvili (2001), based on the leadership styles of 695 managers in Russia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic, demonstrated that the managers of the former USSR countries, compared to the US managers, rated low on charismatic or transformational leadership, and higher on transactional and laissez-faire leadership dimensions. Similarly, Ardichvili and Kuchinke's (2002) study comparing the leadership styles of over 4000 employees in Russia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Germany, and the US also indicated that the dimensions of contingent reward, laissez-fair leadership, and management by exception received high scores in the former USSR countries compared to the US; yet, their results also indicated that inspirational motivation, which is an effective leadership behavior, also received the highest scores in the former USSR countries.

The focus of the GLOBE research is on behaviors and attributes of corporate leaders that are reported to be effective or ineffective across cultures (Hartog *et al.*, 1999; House *et al.*, 1999). The aim is to (1) identify universal as well as culture-specific leadership attributes and behaviors in the 61 countries and (2) develop empirically based theories to describe, understand, and predict the impact of specific cultural variables on organizational leadership and processes and the effectiveness of these processes (Kennedy, 2002).

As a part of the GLOBE study undertaking, the Eastern European cluster of GLOBE countries consisted of Albania, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russia, and Slovenia. Both within- and across-cluster scores have been reported for six second-order leadership dimensions that include charismatic/visionary, team-oriented, humane-oriented, participative, autonomous, and self-protective leadership styles. The results based on the average scores for the Eastern European cluster (within-cluster scores) indicated that transformational-charismatic and team-oriented leadership were the most highly endorsed leadership factors, while humane-oriented and autonomous leadership received relatively modest average scores. There was also a strong endorsement of

Table 1 Globe published results[a]

Leadership dimension	Grand mean	USA mean	Georgia mean	Kazakh mean
Charisma	5.83 (1)	6.12 (1)	5.65 (2)	5.54 (2)
Team-oriented	5.76 (2)	5.80 (3)	5.86 (1)	5.73 (1)
Humane-oriented	4.87 (4)	5.21 (4)	5.61 (3)	4.26 (5)
Participative	5.35 (3)	5.93 (2)	4.89 (4)	5.10 (3)
Autonomous	3.86 (5)	3.75 (5)	4.57 (5)	4.58 (4)
Self-protective	3.45 (6)	3.15 (6)	3.90 (6)	3.36 (6)

[a]Bakacsi *et al.* (2002).

participative leadership. Self-protectiveness was the least valued dimension for the Eastern European cluster. For comparative purposes, the means on the second-order leadership dimensions for Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the USA are provided in Table 1 (cf. Hartog *et al.*, 1999; Bakacsi *et al.*, 2002).

On the other hand, the GLOBE ranking of country clusters (across-cluster scores) reported by Dorfman *et al.* (2004) indicated that the Eastern European cluster received the highest rank among all clusters for autonomous leadership and was among the highest clusters for self-protective leadership. Moreover, in comparison with other clusters, it received average scores for team-oriented, charismatic, and humane-oriented styles, and the lowest scores for participative leadership. The authors concluded that ''a leadership exemplar for the Eastern Europe cluster would be one who is somewhat Charismatic/Value-based, Team-Oriented, and Humane-Oriented, but is his or her person, does not particularly believe in the effectiveness of Participative leadership and is not reluctant to engage in Self-protective behaviors if necessary'' (2004: 685). Additionally, the results for the Eastern European cluster, on closer examination, revealed several exceptions when the rankings based on absolute CLT scores for Georgia and Kazakhstan are broken out separately (cf. 2004: 682). That is, while the Eastern European cluster received average scores on humane-oriented leadership, Georgia was among the highest scorers on this leadership dimension while Kazakhstan's scores were comparable to those for the cluster. Further, Georgia's scores on the self-protective dimension were high and consistent with the cluster's scores on this dimension, but Kazakhstan's scores on self-protective were only in the average range. Therefore, these results indicate that there are subtle differences between Georgia and Kazakhstan, and between these two countries and the rest of the Eastern European cluster.

In conclusion, the contradictory results of the leadership studies conducted in the region point to a need to examine further the leadership values for managers from a broader cross-section of countries from Central Eurasia that are not confounded by including countries from Eastern Europe or Russia. The GLOBE results for the Eastern European cluster will serve as a ''benchmark'' against which to compare the present study's results.

The CELA program. In the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, a new global environment has emerged characterized by new threats, instability, and unpredictability, and the need to prepare leaders who possess skills appropriate for meeting new challenges (Walker, 2002). Against this backdrop, the CELA leadership development program was conceived. CELA is a first-of-its-kind joint undertaking, initially with the EastWest Institute (EWI) and the Society of International Business Fellows, but EWI is no longer involved in the Program. The Program is an ongoing, multi-year effort that seeks to train a comparable number of mid-career leaders each year over a 10-year period. Reflected in CELA's mission is the goal of building a new transnational network of forward-thinking business and political leaders who can help enhance regional cooperation, security, and prosperity (EastWest Institute, 2002). Additionally, within the context of globalization, an additional goal of CELA is knowledge transfer from East to West, that is, learning about Central Eurasian customs, values, norms, and practices by the American faculty and facilitators taking part in the program.

Approximately 40–45 participants, equally divided between men and women and drawn from the eight countries of the region, are selected annually to take part in the 2-week CELA Leadership Development Program held in mid-July of each year at Koc University in Istanbul, Turkey.

The participants are all professionals who represent the next generation of leaders in their nations and are drawn from a broad spectrum of society, including private business, government, civil society, media, education, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The CELA curriculum is organized around 11 separate modules, which are covered over a 2-week period. Modules include leadership perspectives, visioning, interpersonal skills, influence without authority, conflict management, organizational analysis, personality assessment, problem-solving, team building, growing talent, and managing dilemmas. The post-heroic model of leadership, stressing a shared leadership approach, is emphasized with the CELA participants as the prescriptive approach to leading, as contrasted with the "heroic" model of leadership, which is a leader-centered, directive approach to leading.

Research approach

Research questions
Based on the brief review of the literature cited above, the present study was undertaken as an exploratory study that takes an *a priori* look at the learning experiences of the participants in the first class of the CELA program by examining their perceptions of effective leadership prior to the start of the program.

Two exploratory research questions are examined in the present study:

1. With what leadership perspectives do Central Eurasian managers come to the CELA program, and how do these compare to the some of the GLOBE benchmark of culturally endorsed leadership dimensions?
2. How are the socio-political and cultural environmental characteristics of the Central Eurasian region embodied in the patterns of organizational leadership behaviors and challenges reported by the CELA participants?

The details of the study are discussed below.

Participants
This study is based on the leadership profiles provided by members of the first CELA class. The 38 participants were selected through a process that involved conducting structured interviews with more than 130 potential candidates for the CELA program between March and June of 2002. The candidates were in their late 20s to early 40s. As

Table 2 Profile of participants

● 38 Participants	● Armenia – 5
● 8 Countries	● Azerbaijan – 5
● Ages 25–46	● Georgia – 4
● 19 men and 19 women	● Kazakhstan – 4
● Sectors:	● Kyrgyzstan – 6
○ 13 from business	● Tajikistan – 3
○ 18 from NGOs	● Turkmenistan – 5
○ 7 from government	● Uzbekistan – 6

noted previously, they worked in the private sector, government, civic society, or NGO organizations in their respective countries. Their demographic information is provided in Table 2.

Procedures
The CELA program manager in Istanbul, Turkey, from the EWI, Mr. Adam Albion, conducted the interviews using an interview guide that asked the respondents their opinions about 13 different content areas: (a) perspectives on leadership (strategic leadership, entrepreneurship leadership, customer-focused leadership, how they earn respect as a leader, importance of integrity, courage, and change in a leader); (b) performance orientation and teamwork (how they foster teamwork, how they deal with poorly performing subordinates); (c) an exceptional leadership example; (d) a poor leadership example; (e) how the participant was perceived as a leader (how they deal with conflict in relationships); and (f) the participant's greatest leadership challenge and developmental focus area in the program. The interviews were tape recorded and the responses were transcribed for each of the 38 participants. The program chose not to incur the expense of transcribing the interviews of the 92 persons not selected for the program. Copies of the transcriptions were provided to the CELA program facilitators primarily as background information on the participants to help the facilitators become familiar with the participants. The facilitators, who included the second author, made no other official use of the transcriptions during the program. The participants' work experiences and fluency with the English language were key screening factors for selection to the program.

The responses of the participants were evaluated against the universally endorsed effective leadership dimensions determined by the GLOBE Project. That is, we content analyzed and coded for the present study the transcriptions of the interviews

using the six second-order GLOBE leadership dimensions and their items as a guide. Next, we re-analyzed the transcripts to seek evidence of leadership behaviors and challenges that could be attributed to each of the socio-political and cultural dimensions of: (1) power distance, (2) collectivism/paternalism, (3) gender differentiation, and (4) socio-political corruption. Once such behaviors were identified, we searched for common patterns of behaviors and challenges among these leaders from the Central Eurasian region.

The analyses offered by the present study are intended to point out how the CELA program participants' understanding of certain leadership concepts compared with the culturally endorsed leadership dimensions, and, hence, to point out the areas that should be given further attention by future leadership development efforts. As such, the study examines the participants' perceptions of effective leadership prior to their beginning the formal program training. Therefore, post-program assessment is beyond the scope of the present study, but we do acknowledge the necessity for such analysis in order to determine the extent of the participants' comprehension of the program content. We also acknowledge the limitation imposed by the study's sample size, which precluded an examination of the issues country by country, and recognize the need to replicate this study with a much larger and more regionally representative sample of participants.

Results

The results of the content analysis are listed in Table 3. They are based on 95 score-able comments about various aspects of effective leadership behavior. Of the 13 leader attributes for which participant statements were identified, integrity, collaboration, and humane orientation are clearly the most frequently mentioned outstanding leader attributes, followed by decisiveness, modesty, participative, and being diplomatic. These attributes are associated with the GLOBE leadership dimensions of charisma/visionary, team orientation, humane orientation, and participative, respectively. The frequencies of comments reveal a distinct desire for outstanding leaders to respect, appreciate, and deeply care for the dignity and humanity in the people with whom they work. Similarly, leaders are described as outstanding when they inspire and help others to grow. Further, there is an admiration for those leaders who include subordinates in decision making and those who are

tactful in dealing with people. These results mirror to some extent the GLOBE rankings for leadership dimensions reported for the two Central Eurasian countries included in the GLOBE samples (cf. Bakacsi *et al.*, 2002). It is interesting to note that an emphasis on performance excellence was not that pronounced in this sample of participants. Only two statements were identified that dealt specifically with employee performance.

These results offered by the qualitative analyses are strikingly similar to the GLOBE Project results. Preliminary findings from the GLOBE studies indicated that managers around the world agree that for leaders to be seen as outstanding, they need to have integrity, stress performance, and be inspirational and visionary (ratings above six). In contrast, they should not be malevolent, self-centered, autocratic, non-participative, and face savers (ratings below three). In addition, they should also demonstrate desires to be team integrators, decisive, administratively competent, diplomatic, collaborative, and self-sacrificial (ratings of five and above five) and not too autonomous, procedural, and conflict inducers (ratings below four) (Hartog *et al.*, 1999; Hoppe and Bhagat, 2007). Against this backdrop, the CELA participants considered it particularly important (top three) for outstanding and effective leaders to have a focus on charismatic/visionary leadership (frequency = 41%), a team orientation (frequency = 32%), and a humane orientation (frequency = 21%). At the same time, outstanding leaders were expected to show very low participative (frequency = 1%), autonomous (frequency = 0%), and self-protective (frequency = 0%) behaviors. That is, comparatively speaking, the CELA participants of this study described leaders as exceptionally good when they

- show compassion for the people who work for them *(Humane orientation)*;
- are open, supportive, and friendly *(Team orientation)*;
- take a courageous, team-oriented approach to the challenges and opportunities at hand *(Team orientation)*;
- can make decisions at critical moments *(Charismatic/visionary)*; and
- are honest, sincere, just, and trustworthy *(Charismatic/visionary)*.

Table 3 reinforces this profile. As indicated previously, it offers summary results and example statements based on GLOBE's six second-order

Table 3 CELA leadership profile content analysis

Leadership behavior	Total freq.	Quotes
1[a] Charismatic 1: visionary	4	''Her energy and enthusiasm for her vision is contagious. She also acts as an example for her subordinates''; ''She has many plans for the future…. She motivates others easily because her vision naturally excites people''; ''A leader is someone who can find followers whom he can train to be next generation leaders… who both shares the company's vision and has personal vision of his own''; ''It is important to think big… he sets strong goals and is good at achieving them.''
1 Charismatic 2: inspirational	5	''She invokes in them deep excitement for their jobs''; ''She encourages them, supports them, believes in them and this makes all the difference''; ''He had a role in changing/exciting/motivating an entire workplace… has a strong interest in developing human talent''; ''He inspires confidence… encourages his people, believes in positive feedback.''
1 Charismatic 3: self-sacrificial	3	''She often takes the responsibility of the group into her hands, including the consequences''; ''She will often perform tasks above and beyond what is expected, for which she will receive no credit''; ''Always tries to put organizational needs first… will accept responsibility of his people's mistakes when working with senior management.''
1 Integrity	15	''Would not sacrifice personal principles''; ''Integrity is one of the most important aspects of a leader''; '' She makes sure that she doesn't assign anybody more work than she does herself''; ''A good leader should be trustworthy…. She never promises to do something that she cannot do''; ''He is a person who relies on principles and who leads by examples''; ''They trust him and they can rely on him… he is also perceived as loyal''; ''He really values integrity… one of his most important values is that he always treats others how he would want to be treated''; ''Honesty is always of the highest importance.''
1 Decisive	10	''A leader should know where he is going… what he is doing. She is good at putting plans into action''; ''She has strong opinions''; ''A leader should be decisive. he is a strong leader and sets a good example for his subordinates''; ''Once they put something in his hands, they can be confident that he will deliver results''; ''He should be decisive and efficient to keep everything running smoothly''; ''He should be able to make decisions in critical moments… he knows what he is doing''; ''He is good at making quick decisions when needed''; ''(she) makes sure she is strong and her point comes across.''
1 Performance orientation	2	''Stresses that everything should be done the right way at the right time. She will not accept people who turn in late work''; ''She needs to make sure that the job gets done, and especially in pressure-filled situations, the needs of her employees do not come first.''
3 Modesty	6	''She is a very composed person, and is not pushy or loud, but always consistent''; ''Uses patience and is polite''; ''Others would say that she is kind and never hesitates to ask for help''; ''A leader needs to be a sober minded person''; ''He is able to stay cool and calm so that he can resolve the conflict.'';
3 Humane orientation	14	''Her natural personality is caring, and she would not try to be more efficient than caring''; ''They would describe her as thoughtful; She really feels that it is important to reach out to the people''; ''People think she is kind… she loves to help people… the efficiency will come when everybody is happy and cared for''; ''Has empathy…Tries to understand people''; ''She is very flexible and tries to understand everybody''; ''He feels that he is very sensitive… people often come to him with personal problems''; ''When someone in his team is having personal problems he is often asked for advice, and is happy to give it.''
2 Team 1: collaborative	14	''They share and are aligned in their vision… She enjoys the creative give and take between them''; ''It's hard in those times to be tough because she perceives these people as friends''; ''The team is also like a family and all people care for the others''; ''If everyone trusts each other, it is easier for them to work together as a team''; ''Is friendly to assistants and subordinates, and teaches them to be more friendly to others''; ''He also tries to include their input in finding a vision''; ''The best mentality is for everyone to want to help the team more than themselves.''

Table 3 *Continued*

Leadership behavior	Total freq.	Quotes
2 Team 2: integrator	5	''She is good at delegating responsibilities… good at starting new projects''; ''She informs them well. She also includes all of her subordinates in the decision process so that they are acting as a team from the very start''; ''One of the ways she fosters team work is by making everybody dependent on the work of the others.''
2 Diplomatic	6	''Tactfulness…(is) more innate quality that a leader should possess; When speaking to the foundation about her frustrations she tries to phrase her concerns diplomatically''; ''Sometimes he will play with words… he will show only the good side of the goal until people are into it and already realize the full benefits of the vision''; ''A leader should have tact… he tries to find a solution that is mutually beneficial to both sides''; ''He feels that compromise is important in conflict management… He is also a practical leader.'';
2 Administratively competent	5	''She can understand what is more important, and will do this first. She is not under pressure very often because she manages her time so well''; ''She does this by being extremely efficient''; ''She is a good organizer and works well with young people''; ''He has excellent organizational skills''; ''Likes to work very fast, because he likes to get to the next task quickly.''
4 Participative	6	''A good leader should have good values, be committed, and be able to delegate tasks''; ''A leader should be good at selecting people and delegating authority to match skills and personalities''; ''A leader should include subordinates in decision-making processes''; ''When I have a conflict with my subordinates and it doesn't work out well, often it is because I became too autocratic or bossy and did not want to agree with their ideas.''
6 Self-protective	0	
5 Autonomous	0	

[a]Second-order leadership dimensions: 1 = Charismatic/visionary, 2 = Team orientation, 3 = Humane orientation, 4 = Participative, 5 = Autonomous, 6 = Self-protective.

leadership dimensions and attribute subscales. Outstanding leaders were seen not solely as an individual ''warrior'' who is driven to stand out from the rest and succeed, but as a person who understands the organizational realities that work gets done *collaboratively* and that people need to feel important and to be taken seriously regarding their desire for personal growth and development.

The CELA participants in this study were middle to upper middle managers whose particular role as leaders in their organizations in ''economies in transition'' necessitates that they be people-focused and sensitive to others' needs.

Table 4 classifies the derived frequencies of content-analyzed statements associated with attributes related to the six GLOBE second-order leadership dimensions as high, moderate, or low/no frequency (second column) and also sheds additional light on the pre-program leadership predispositions of the CELA participants compared to the

GLOBE findings for the Eastern European cluster (last column) (cf. Ford and Ismail, 2006). Thus, for Research Question #1, it seems appropriate to infer that the CELA participants' *a priori* leadership perspectives were quite consistent with the GLOBE Project's culturally endorsed leadership dimensions, although several differences were noted.

With respect to the second research question, we did find evidence of leadership behaviors and challenges that were embodied in the socio-political and cultural characteristics of the region. The content analyses of the interview transcripts revealed patterns of several leadership behaviors that reflected the notion that the socio-political and cultural environment plays an important role in shaping individuals' perceptions and behavior (e.g. Laurent, 1983; Nonaka, 1994; Newman and Nollen, 1996; Schein, 1996). Table 5 reports summary results of the patterns of such behaviors and

Table 4 Relative ranking of GLOBE leadership dimensions based on leadership profile content statements compared to GLOBE rankings

Leadership dimension	Central Eurasia[a] (present study)	Eastern European[b] cluster (GLOBE)
Charismatic/transformational (39 statements)	H	H/M
Team-oriented (30 statements)	H	H/M
Humane-oriented (20 statements)	M	M/M
Participative (6 statements)	L	M/L
Autonomous (0 statements)	LL[c]	L/H
Self-protective (0 statements)	LL[c]	L/H[c]

[a]These rankings are based on content analysis frequencies.
[b]For letters separated by a ''/'', the first letter indicates aggregated responses of informants within the cluster; the second letter indicates ranking of the cluster scores in comparison with other clusters (Dorfman *et al.*, 2004: 684–685).
[c]LL indicates that the frequency of statements was very low or zero; L/H indicates that the aggregated responses of informants within the cluster were low, while the ranking of the cluster scores in comparison with other clusters was high.

challenges and provides example statements for each of the socio-political and cultural dimensions of power distance, collectivism/paternalism, gender differentiation, and socio-political corruption.

The results in Table 5 suggest that although the leaders in our sample expressed an interest and desire to provide non-work-related advice and support to their employees, their behavior also reflected the influence of societal power distance. For example, a number of respondents stated that they preferred to be stern in dealing with their subordinates and did not hesitate to use punishment as a motivating technique. Further, even though many respondents identified themselves as caring and relationship-oriented leaders, they were also very much aware of their superior position in the status hierarchy and demonstrated a lack of tolerance for criticism from subordinates. This observed pattern resembles closely the behavior patterns that exist in vertical collectivist societies that were previously noted in this paper.

Evidence of gender differentiation was also observed in the statements made by program participants. Some female respondents stated that they had to put in extra effort in order to prove themselves as being competent and equal to their male counterparts in business dealings. This ''gender inequity'' is similar to that observed for many female managers in the West.

Finally, one of the interview questions asked leaders to identify their leadership challenges. A majority of respondents in our sample expressed frustration with the corruption and bureaucracies that prevail in their institutional environment and identified: (a) maintaining personal ethical standards and integrity in a corrupt environment, (b) the stress associated with dealing with the government officials, and (c) reliance on bribery to get things done, as some of the major challenges that they were having to face in their daily lives.

Discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was not only to obtain a deeper understanding of how leadership is practiced in organizations in the Central Eurasia region but also to point out the areas that need additional attention by (a) focusing on how the perceptions of effective organizational leadership depart from the normative models of universally endorsed effective leadership dimensions, and (b) searching for patterns of organizational leadership behaviors that are embodied in the socio-political and cultural environment of the region. Surprisingly, the participants' pre-program perspectives on leadership and what constituted effective organizational leadership were found to be consistent with the GLOBE Project's leadership dimensions that are culturally endorsed across a wide range of countries and cultures. That is, charismatic/transformational leadership and team-oriented leadership dimensions were styles that the Central Eurasian Leadership Alliance program participants seemed to emphasize a great deal. They also put a good deal of emphasis on humane-oriented leadership as well, but shunned self-protective leadership, which is culturally endorsed in the GLOBE study as contributing to ineffective organizational leadership.

The study results also suggested that the socio-political and cultural environment determines the amount of responsibility or freedom managers can exercise, the types of controls they have, and the extent of bureaucracies they endure, all of which strongly influenced managerial psyche (Holt *et al.*, 1994; Calori *et al.*, 1997; Lubatkin *et al.*, 1998; Burt *et al.*, 2000). While the leaders in our sample did

Table 5 Examples of leadership challenges and behaviors that are influenced by the socio-political and cultural environment of the region

Environmental characteristics of the central Eurasian region	Patterns of leadership challenges and behaviors	Examples
Power distance	• Desire to maintain status hierarchy • Preference to be stern in dealing with subordinates • Lack of tolerance for criticism from subordinates • Use of punishment as a motivation technique	"She likes to be around people who are equal to her because she feels that they listen to her. She feels that people just obey her because she is the owner of the company, and it can be lonely"; "He has trouble being stern … this sends a poor message to people sometimes, especially to new workers"; "He has a tendency to be too polite. Sometimes, he allows too many questions from his subordinates, and will spend time explaining why he is right when he should not have to"; "Her subordinates also provide her with feedback. She is okay with it when it happens once in a while but it gets annoying when it happens often"; "He is open to criticism from his employees, but usually only receives criticism from one of the eight other high executives at the company"; "The subordinate told him that he was wrong, and he became very offended. He exploded at the subordinate."; "His greatest challenge as a leader is to be stricter. In most situations, it is inappropriate for a subordinate to criticize his supervisor"; "He would like to create a system of motivation and punishment within his organization"; "Also, he has to sometimes punish assistants to motivate them to do better"; "If a person is performing poorly because they are lazy, he will cut their salary as a consequence; this is a good way to motivate a lazy person"; "When there is a poor performer, she shows the work of the poor performer in the meetings to the rest of the company. Then this person's work can be criticized. If the work continues to be poor, the person can be released in the meeting."
Collectivism/paternalism	• Involvement in personal lives of the subordinates • Looking out for employees' welfare	"People often come to him with personal problems and he is always happy to offer advice to them"; "She feels that her team respects her. They can tell her their personal issues"; "When someone in his team is having a personal problem, he is often asked for advice"; "He has a good relationship with people in his workplace, and this helps to prevent conflict"; "… he is always there for his employees and cares for them"; "He also feels that he has good relationships with most people in his company. Many of them will come to him with personal issues and ask for advice"; "He also feels that it is important to be a good listener, so that people can trust him, and come to him with their problems"; "Efficiency is important but being caring helps her to manage people"; "She is a caring leader because when a leader stops caring about people, the business will be ruined"; "The team is also like a family and all people care for the others."
Socio-political corruption	• Maintaining personal ethical standards and integrity in a corrupt environment • Stress associated dealing with the government officials • Reliance on bribery to get things done	" … to open an organization, one must bribe many people in her country and within government. She felt that monetary bribes were wrong, yet she risked losing her company if she refused to play by the rules"; "He feels that his greatest leadership challenge is dealing with political figures and other influential people. It is very important to be able to deal with these people in his line of work, but they can be quite tricky";

Table 5 Continued

Environmental characteristics of the central Eurasian region	Patterns of leadership challenges and behaviors	Examples
		''Integrity is very important; however, it must sometimes be sacrificed for the good of the company''; ''In his zeal to encourage a move away from dependence on the old Soviet thought patterns (he) is constantly having to deal with government officials and policies which are slow to change and highly bureaucratic''; ''In the private sector in Georgia, a person just understands that he has to pay something extra to get what he needs''; ''… there are some extreme circumstances when a sacrifice (of integrity) must be made''; ''She really would like to make better lives for more people. She works to supply her product for many people. Right now this is very difficult because of the government situation. Her business is suffering, and she cannot receive orders from outside of the country''; ''It is difficult to be a good leader and to maintain honesty. Sometimes it is necessary to stay silent''; ''He feels that integrity is important. Unfortunately, there are times when he has to close his eyes, because it is a difficult business world''; ''Integrity can, however, sometimes be sacrificed for the mission''; ''However, in an organization that has many others who are not honest, it can affect him, and he finds himself doing things that he regrets''; ''She runs across corruption on a daily basis'';
Gender differentiation	• Stereotypical roles of women as being inferior to men in business dealings • Women having to make extra efforts in trying to prove themselves as being competent	''She is in a unique situation because very few women can be in her position''; ''It is very difficult for a woman to be an entrepreneur in Azerbaijan''; ''All of her colleagues are male'': ''She must win over the customers because she is female''; ''The first thing that she must do with a customer is to prove that she is just as adept as a man''; ''There are some gender issues in Georgia and so the fact that they can overlook her gender speaks highly of her abilities… .''

demonstrate examples of effective leadership styles as endorsed by the GLOBE Project, Table 5 revealed that some of their behaviors were a clear reflection of their socio-political and cultural environment, especially with respect to power distance. For example, even the relationship-oriented leaders who practiced participative styles expressed a desire that they wanted to learn to be strict and firm in dealing with their subordinates. This was illustrated by a respondent from Turkmenistan who expressed the concern that he is too polite and sensitive, and his greatest leadership challenge is to learn to be stricter. This is an interesting observation that echoes the notion mentioned in the introduction that even though leadership attributes may converge across the globe, leaders' beliefs tend to be strongly influenced by their environment-specific idiosyncrasies.

The results of the study should be interpreted with caution. Owing to the limitation of the study, we are hesitant to make any generalizations to larger populations and/or other settings. That is, the sample was admittedly small and was insufficient to examine the issues country by country. These are issues that should be addressed in future studies, and there is also a need to replicate the present study with a larger and more representative sample of participants from across the region.

One could readily ask whether the present study's results, which were generated by a group of highly educated and motivated professionals, would generalize to the populations in general in the Central Eurasian countries. While the sample may not be representative of all corporate, government, or NGO leaders from the region, they represent an important group of a rapidly growing segment of

the emerging generation of leaders from the region (Puffer *et al.*, 1997).

Nevertheless, the respondents were from a unique region of the world in which few leadership studies have been conducted or reported. Ideally, we would like to have had a sufficient number of respondents so that their results could be examined individually by country, rather than grouped together for a total Central Eurasian region result. That was not possible in the present study but will be undertaken in future studies as the population of the Central Eurasian Leadership Alliance program alumni increases in size.

An important extension of the study would be to conduct cross-cultural studies in order to understand the extent to which the patterns of behaviors and challenges identified in this study are different from, or similar to, other comparable socio-political and cultural environments such as Central and Eastern Europe – countries also formerly under Soviet rule. Such analyses would allow one to draw conclusions about the specific nature of relationships between the environment and organizational leadership behaviors that could not be drawn due to the limitations discussed above.

Another important area that should be examined more extensively in the future is the role of gender differentiation in impacting leadership and other organizational practices in behaviors in the region. While gender issues have been identified as prominent aspects of transition, Ishkanian (2002) argues that, contrary to widely held expectations from the region, women have not been adversely affected by the transition, and, instead, have played prominent roles in promoting social changes in their societies. Exploring these issues in detail could serve as an extremely interesting research avenue.

The content analysis of the interview transcripts provided fresh research ideas that could be explored in detail in future studies in the region. Two of the respondents in the sample pointed out the significance of age differentiation in impacting organizational practices and behaviors:

> She is somewhat pushy, and makes sure that she is strong, and that her point comes across. She uses her age to her

advantage, but if one of her younger colleagues were to try this, they would fail. Age is important in Soviet society (A respondent from Kyrgyzstan);

> She had problems with some people because… she was much younger than many of her subordinates (A respondent from Armenia).

Another participant recognized conflict management as the greatest leadership challenge:

> Her greatest leadership challenge is conflict management. This is not so often with the people in her company, but with conflicts from different organizations. There are many ethnic conflicts that she must deal with. There can also often be conflicts when traditional Soviet people get into conflicts with those who are more modern (A respondent from Kyrgyzstan).

These issues could be explored in light of the existing literature on conflict management, communication, decision making, organizational power and politics, and social network theories. For example, it would be interesting to examine the similarities and differences between networking patterns of modern and traditional Soviet-style leaders. It would also be interesting to study how employees' age and ethnic backgrounds influence organizational power and political relationships as well as their participation and influence in organizational decision-making processes. Another research avenue could be to evaluate the nature of conflict between traditional and modern employees who work under the same roof, and determine its effects on performance.

Note

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