

LEADERSHIP IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES IN A MULTIPOLAR ENVIRONMENT

Biljana Kovačević

Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

email address: biljana.kovacevic@fpe.ues.rs.ba

ORCID: 0000-0001-5253-3763

Ana Aleksić Mirić

Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Belgrade, Serbia

email address: ana.aleksic@ekof.bg.ac.rs

ORCID: 0000-0002-9368-6501

Katarina Božić

Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

email address: katarina.bozic@fpe.ues.rs.ba

ORCID: 0000-0003-1274-3402

Abstract: *This paper explores leadership styles in a multipolar world, focusing on USA, Europe Russia, China, and India. The research highlights how leadership approaches are shaped by the cultural, political, and economic contexts of these regions. Despite fundamental differences, several universal leadership traits emerge as key factors in the global landscape. This paper provides a systematic literature review on leadership styles in multipolar environments, comparing approaches across different geopolitical, corporate, and organizational contexts. Through an analysis of existing research, the study identifies key leadership characteristics that foster adaptability, collaboration, and strategic decision-making in a world where power is distributed among multiple actors. The USA adopts a predominantly democratic leadership style, encouraging innovation, employee autonomy, and transformational leadership. European leadership styles vary widely, balancing democratic and transformational approaches, though some regions still exhibit authoritarian tendencies. Russian leaders favor a mix of authoritarian and paternalistic styles, reinforced by strong political influence. Chinese leadership is often authoritarian and paternalistic, emphasizing centralized control and stability. Indian leadership combines authoritarian elements with flexibility, allowing for industry-specific adaptations. In a multipolar world, leaders must navigate complex environments, balancing stability with innovation.*

Key words: *multipolar environment, multipolar world, leadership style, comparative analysis.*

JEL classification: *M12, M14, F50, L20.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term multipolarity stands for a system in which global power and influence are not monopolized by one or two dominant forces, but are distributed among several states or economic blocs with significant economic, political and military capacities. In such a world, stakeholders such as the US, the European Union and the BRICS states have the ability to shape international relations, but none can fully dictate global flows. This distribution of power entails a more dynamic and complex international environment in which economic agents must carefully adjust their strategies to align their interests with different centers of influence. Over the last three decades, the distribution of power has changed worldwide. The model of world order has changed dramatically in the post-war period. From the bipolarity between the US and Soviet Russia characterized by the Cold War, it shifted to a period of unipolarity after the fall of Soviet Russia in 1989. During this time, the USA was the only global superpower. After the global financial crisis in 2008, we entered a period of complex multipolarity. The model of world order thus shifted from a bipolar configuration between 1945 and 1989 to a unipolar configuration between 1989 and 2008, and then to what we can now call "complex multipolarity" (Peters, 2023). These countries are analyzed because of their unique position in a multipolar world, as each country has a specific cultural, political and economic

framework that shapes their leadership style. Although all the three countries have significantly influenced global processes, their different historical, social and political traditions are reflected in different approaches to leadership, both nationally and internationally. Understanding these leadership styles helps consider their internal management strategies.

The aim of this article is to provide a systematic literature review on leadership in a multipolar world and to analyze different leadership styles and their application in the context of global change. The methodology is based on the PRISMA systematic literature review, which provides a transparent and comprehensive process of analyzing the existing research (Tranfield, Denyer & Smart 2003). The research engages in a comparative analysis of leadership in the context of a multipolar world, focusing on cultural characteristics and their impact on leadership styles. The research aims to answer the following research questions:

R.Q.1: What are the predominant leadership styles in a multipolar world?

R.Q.2: How do the national cultures in the countries of the multipolar world influence leadership styles?

R.Q.1 provides a broader look at leadership characteristics in today's multipolar world and analyzes the leadership styles used in different regions such as the USA, Europe, Russia, China and India. These questions research how global changes, such as economic instability, technological innovation, and climate challenges, affect leadership styles. R.Q.2 focuses on a deeper comparison of leadership through the lens of national cultures, using theories such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions model to analyze the impact of cultural values on leaders' decisions in different parts of the world (Hofstede, 2009).

Using literature review, this paper researches how leadership styles develop in different regions that counterbalance the unipolar world characterized by American dominance. This paper not only contributes to the understanding of leadership in a multipolar world, but also provides an insight into how cultural differences shape leadership practices.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES

This study employs a qualitative research methodology based on a literature review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The PRISMA model ensures a transparent, replicable, and rigorous approach to analyzing existing academic literature relevant to leadership styles in a multipolar world. The primary goal of this methodology is to synthesize and critically examine peer-reviewed theoretical and empirical research that addresses leadership practices within the geopolitical contexts of the USA, Europe, Russia, China, and India.

The literature search was conducted using two main academic databases: the Web of Science Core Collection (WOS CC) and Google Scholar. The selected keywords included: "leadership style," "leadership," "multipolar environment," and "multipolar world." The search was limited to publications from 2001 to 2025 to ensure relevance to contemporary multipolarity. Only English-language, full-text, peer-reviewed sources grounded in leadership or international relations theories were considered. Studies focused exclusively on minor states or lacking theoretical frameworks were excluded from the final analysis.

By applying comparative analysis within the selected sources, the study explores how national cultures and socio-political systems shape leadership styles across major global powers. The analysis is informed by theoretical models such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which provide valuable insight into the impact of cultural values on leadership behavior and decision-making.

Based on the research objectives and theoretical foundation, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: In a multipolar world, flexible and adaptive leadership styles prevail, enabling leaders to effectively navigate rapidly changing global conditions.

H2: National culture plays a significant role in shaping leadership styles, with authoritarian leadership being more prominent in countries with high power distance (e.g., China and Russia), while democratic leadership dominates in lower power distance cultures such as the United States and parts of Europe.

Table 1: The PRISMA model

Category	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/> Exclusion
Timeframe	2000–2025 (focus on contemporary multipolarity)	Before 2000
Language	English	All other languages
Type of Source	Peer-reviewed academic articles, theoretical and	Blogs, opinion essays, non-peer-

	<i>empirical studies</i>	<i>reviewed sources</i>
Countries/Regions	<i>Global powers: USA, EU, Russia, China, India</i>	<i>Studies focused only on small countries with no global interaction</i>
Theoretical Framework	<i>Leadership theories + international relations theories (realism, constructivism, etc.)</i>	<i>Studies with no theoretical grounding</i>
Access to Full Text	<i>Full-text articles available</i>	<i>Only abstracts available; full text inaccessible</i>

Source: the authors

3. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN MULTIPOLAR ENVIRONMENT

The environment of global diplomacy is undergoing significant changes as the world shifts from a unipolar order, predominantly led by the USA, to a multipolar configuration characterized by the emergence of various influential actors. Recent findings from the World Economic Forum 2022 show that 71% of world leaders see the current geopolitical environment as fragmented and unpredictable. This underlines the urgent need to address the challenges and opportunities arising from multipolarity (Ramjit, 2025).

The world today is multipolar, and the bases of for this argument are that there are many centers of power and that no single state has the greatest influence. Many world powers of moderate strength, from the Brics to Japan, have a significant global influence compared to the previous historical periods. Greater trade integration and closer are the main drivers of Brics expansion. In contrast, some Western countries impose sanctions on several key Brics member countries, leading to geopolitical rivalry and the division of the world into competing blocs (Thapa, 2025).

According to Acharya, Estevadeordal and Goodman (2023), scholars and policy makers use the language of polarity when analyzing international or the world order. The post-Cold War period, after the 1990s, was characterized by the dominance of the US and was described as unipolar. With the rise of China from 2010 onwards, the term bipolar is increasingly being used. When it comes to describing the future world order, the term multipolar is often used. Multipolarity means that power is distributed among emerging economies such as China, India, Russia and Brazil, as well as among regional powers in Africa and in the Middle East. The European Union unique position as a supranational entity ensures a balance of power between its member states, while at the same time engaging with global powers. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2023), emerging economies have contributed to global GDP growth in the last five years over 55% of, which indicates a fundamental realignment of economic influence

(ramjit, 2025). The idea of multipolarity itself dates back to the european system of balance of power, which was managed exclusively by great powers, including several multilateral institutions. Today the world order consists of a variety of global and regional norms and institutions that play a crucial role in organizing cooperation and the provision of public goods (Acharya, Estevadeordal & Goodman, 2023). According to Peters (2023), the world economic order consists of three dominant pillars: the USA, China and the European Union. On the one hand, China-US bipolarity is increasingly structuring the world system. On the other hand, there are strong regional political and military powers such as Russia and Turkey, which have no global economic power. In addition, between these two countries, there are global players such as the EU, which have considerable economic weight and seek to bridge the gap between economic power and geopolitical influence.

Research by Dorffman and colleagues (1997) has shown that supportive leadership, performance-based rewards and charismatic leadership are effective in all cultures studied. On the other hand, behaviors such as directive leadership, participative decision-making and performance-based punishment were found to be culture-specific – for example, participative leadership has a positive effect only in the US, while directive leadership has no effect in the US, Japan and South Korea. The conclusion is that leaders need to adapt their style to the cultural context in order to be effective.

Ashkanasy (2002) examines how leadership in Asia differs from leadership in other parts of the world, relying to the results of the Globe study, one of the most comprehensive international analyzis of leadership and organizational culture. Ashkanasy uses the data from the Globe study to distinguish between the Anglo-American cluster (usa, UK, Australia), the South Asian cluster (India, Malaysia) and the Confucian Asian cluster (China, Japan, Korea). His analysis clearly shows that:

- Anglo-American countries prefer participative and transformational

leadership, where inclusion and initiative are valued.

- Confucian cultures prefer authoritarian but caring leaders where respect for hierarchy, harmony and long-term thinking are expected.
- South Asian countries combine collectivism with high tolerance of authority and often associate leadership with moral responsibility.

In the context of a multipolar world, these differences mean that leaders cannot work successfully if they do not understand the cultural foundations of the other side. Otherwise, misinterpretations of intentions, communication styles or decisions can occur, further complicating international cooperation. For example, executives from the US may misinterpret their Chinese colleagues' reticence as indecisiveness, while Asian executives may perceive the directness of Western executives as excessive aggressiveness. We conclude that understanding cultural differences in leadership style is an important prerequisite for successful leadership in a multipolar world.

The work of Sanchez-Runde, Nardon and Steers (2011) examines the limitations of Western leadership models in a global context. The authors emphasize that many leadership theories are based on Western values and assumptions that may be inadequate in different cultural contexts. The paper emphasizes a universal approach, which assumes that leadership characteristics and processes are the same in all cultures. A normative approach focuses on the personal skills and capabilities that characterize effective global managers and suggests how managers should approach leadership in a global environment. Finally, a contingent approach assumes that there are no universal descriptions of effective leadership, but that leadership is a culturally rooted process that varies depending on the situation. The authors also emphasize that all these approaches have their limitations and suggest focusing on understanding leadership as a cultural construct and taking into account the different local expectations of leaders' behavior. This results in recommendations for global managers (Sanchez-Runde, Nardon & Steers 2011):

- Self-reflection: managers should reflect on their own assumptions about leadership and be aware of how their definitions may influence their behavior in different cultural contexts.
- Understanding local cultures: It is important to study and understand the

unique aspects of local cultures and adapt leadership style accordingly without losing authenticity.

- Avoid imitation: Managers should not try to imitate local behavior, but should act in a way that is consistent with local expectations while maintaining their own integrity.

3.1. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN USA

American leaders use five main leadership styles (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010):

1. Directive leadership – This style involves an authoritarian approach where the leader makes decisions and expects subordinates to follow. This style is often found in hierarchical structures, especially in traditional organizations.

2. Participative leadership – Managers in the USA often involve their employees in the decision-making process and thus promote teamwork and innovation. This leadership style is particularly prevalent in technological and creative industries where the sharing of ideas and flexibility is valued.

3. Charismatic leadership – American leaders often use their personal charm, vision and inspirational attitude to motivate their followers. Charismatic leaders are prevalent in politics and the business world (e.g. Steve Jobs, Elon Musk) where personal vision and the ability to inspire are emphasized.

4. Celebrity Leadership – This leadership style is characteristic of the US, where leaders often build a personal brand and become recognizable in the public eye. This style can be found in business, politics and the entertainment industry, where leaders use their image to attract attention and build loyalty.

5. Empowering Leadership – This leadership style focuses on giving employees autonomy, confidence and resources to take initiative, make decisions and innovate in their work. This leadership style encourages the development of employees' skills, increases their motivation and makes them feel more in control of their work environment (Kim & Beehr, 2023).

6. Parentalistic (paternalistic) leadership is particularly important in non-Western organizations, especially in China and Latin America. This leadership style involves close, individualized relationships between the leader and employees, with the leader not only directing business processes but also taking care of the personal aspects of their followers' lives and maintaining a clear hierarchy of power. In return,

employees show a high level of loyalty and often make additional commitments when required, regardless of working hours. This leadership model can be particularly effective in crisis situations, but its role in crisis management has not been sufficiently researched (Felzensztein, Tretiakov & Velez-Ocampo, 2024).

There is less freedom of action for executives in the US than in Asia, and the country's culture is not homogeneous due to the diverse migration backgrounds of its inhabitants. However, there are certain common features in American history, such as individualism, focus on the present and the future, the belief that people are either good or bad, and the attitude that nature can be controlled. Hofstede has described the US as the most individualistic nation, where success is measured by personal achievement, as opposed to collectivist societies such as China and Japan, where loyalty and group harmony are paramount. In addition, the wealth of natural resources and financial power have contributed to American sense of superiority and self-confidence, as well as to their belief that they are the leaders of the world (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010).

American leadership culture relies on individualism, entrepreneurship and meritocracy, which shapes the way leaders lead organizations. Dominant factors such as competition, innovation and market dynamics further influence leadership choices in different sectors. American managers value work and planning and believe that they can control their environment (Taleghani, Salmani & Taatian, 2010).

3.2. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN EUROPE

Europe is generally trending towards more inclusive and democratic leadership, with a focus on work-life balance, employee well-being and innovation. However, there are differences between regions – Northern Europe favors horizontal structures and flexibility, while in Southern and Eastern Europe certain hierarchical and paternalistic elements of leadership still prevail.

Democratic leadership (participative leadership) – is based on the involvement of employees in decision-making. This leadership style is typical of northern European countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. Democratic leadership is characterized by focus on horizontal hierarchies, collaboration and consensus (Lund, 2024). Classic leadership styles such as transformational and transactional leadership are predominant, with a particular focus on the role of digital leadership in the context of educational institutions. Transformational leadership

represents a functional universality, i.e. it is positively perceived in different cultural contexts, although reactions to it may vary depending on specific cultural factors (Caza, Caza & Posner, 2021). **Digital leadership** in European organizations, especially in higher education, is becoming a key factor for the successful adaptation and implementation of digital transformation. Research shows that transformational leaders, characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate their employees towards common goals, have a high correlation with the application of digital leadership. In the European Union, especially in educational institutions, leaders with specific digital skills, such as the use of mobile technologies, big data analytics and information security, play a crucial role in improving the performance and competitiveness of organizations. This trend shows that there is a need to introduce new skills and approaches for European organizations to keep pace with rapid technological change and the challenges of the digital age (Antonopoulou, Halkiopoulos, Barlou & Beligiannis, 2021).

3.3. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN RUSSIA

Research suggests that there are two basic types of managers in Russia today. However, the question remains whether this is sufficient to explain the differences in managers' values, attitudes and styles. Some authors attempt to broaden the understanding of these differences by introducing multidimensional typologies. For example, Fey Adaeva and Vitkovskaia (2001) identified four types of managers based on dimensions such as interaction with subordinates (democratic vs. authoritarian) and orientation (task-oriented vs. relationship-oriented). Balabanova and Efendiev (2015) proposed a different typology that included four main management styles: paternalistic, exploitative, achievement-oriented and passive, indicating the heterogeneity of Russian management styles which goes beyond simple dichotomies such as 'old' vs. new or Soviet vs. Western.

Over the last three decades, Russian managers and their leadership styles have developed in two main directions. The first direction analyzes the values, attitudes and orientations of Russian managers as a relatively homogeneous group and emphasizes their specific characteristics in comparison to Western managers. These studies largely agree that Russian managers are directive, control-oriented and authoritarian, with a pronounced "command-and-control" approach that entails centralized decision making, rigid hierarchy, obedience to authority and low employee involvement. These characteristics explain the dominance of the

transactional and authoritarian leadership style over transformational and participative leadership (Balabanova, Rebrov & Koveshnikov, 2018).

The other direction of research, on the other hand, attempts to overcome the simplified image of Russian managers as a homogeneous group and to investigate different leadership styles in Russia. This approach is based on the assumption that the transition from a state to a market economy has led to changes in management styles, with researchers distinguishing between “old” and “new,” “traditional” and “modern,” and “Soviet” and “Western” management types. This change has led to the emergence of a new generation of managers who are more entrepreneurial, open to change and innovation, and more willing to adopt Western management values (Kobernyuk, Stiles & Ellson, 2014). Key factors that have enabled this change include better education, participation in Western management training programs, collaboration with foreign partners and work experience in multinational companies and international joint ventures (Balabanova et al., 2018).

The work of McCarthy, Puffer and Darda (2010) analyzes the changes in entrepreneurial leadership style in Russia in the context of economic transition. The authors examine how Russian managers are adopting Western management practices while retaining certain traditional elements of management. Based on an empirical analysis, they show that younger generations of entrepreneurs are inclined towards more participative and flexible leadership, while older generations stick to hierarchical and centralized decision-making models. Key factors influencing this process include institutional changes, economic development and the Russian cultural context.

The authors also identify the following leadership styles in Russia (McCarthy, Puffer & Darda, 2010):

1. Open leadership style – Research shows that successful Russian entrepreneurs mostly use an open leadership style, which is similar to transformational leadership, as it inspires, motivates and encourages employee creativity. This approach enables decision-making through collaboration, strengthens the sense of responsibility and creates work environment where employees feel free to express their opinions and take initiative. Practical examples show that leaders with this style foster a team-oriented culture, loyalty and employee engagement, thereby developing organizations into flexible and innovative systems. Studies show that Russian entrepreneurs exhibit a higher degree of transformational leadership compared to traditional

managers, which contributes to a more successful implementation of new products and processes. This model differs significantly from the Soviet command and control system, where decisions were centralized and creativity and autonomy were limited. As Russia increasingly shifts to a market economy, this new leadership approach is gaining traction among entrepreneurs, enabling faster business growth and improved competitiveness. The approach, which combines transformational and authoritative leadership, enables Russian companies to adapt to the market economy and abandon outdated management models. Openness to innovation and modern management practices have become a competitive advantage in attracting talent and increasing employee loyalty. Successful entrepreneurs have realized that old hierarchical structures are no longer effective and that delegation of responsibility is the key to sustainable development. This change in leadership is one of the reasons why a growing number of Russian entrepreneurs are adopting an inclusive and flexible approach to business management.

2. Controlling management style – This style, inherited from the Soviet period, is based on strict hierarchical structures where only a close circle of trusted managers are given more freedom and benefits. This approach still dominates in non-entrepreneurial Russian organizations, while it is found only in a few cases among successful entrepreneurs. Some managers believe that strict control is necessary for effective management, leaving only the most creative and independent employees to develop innovations. Real-life examples show that such managers tend towards transactional leadership, where employees are rewarded in return for performing tasks accurately. While this style may be effective in certain industries or work environments, research has not revealed clear patterns that indicate universal application. Although some entrepreneurs have achieved significant success with a controlling management style, most modern Russian companies are moving towards more flexible and inclusive management models.

3. Balanced management style – This management style represents a hybrid approach that combines elements of the two previous styles. About a quarter of the entrepreneurs surveyed exhibited a balanced leadership style which combines elements of open and controlling approaches, similar to situational or contingent leadership. These leaders sometimes apply democratic principles, while in certain situations they adopt an authoritarian approach with most decisions made at the top of the hierarchy. Their style includes clear goals, employee motivation

through rewards as well as strict guidelines and performance control. Entrepreneurs with this style use both positive and negative motivation and balance between flexibility and discipline. Interestingly enough, many entrepreneurs practicing a balanced leadership style today, used to practice take only a controlling approach, but have gradually transitioned to a more open leadership model. This transition underscores the adaptive nature of the balanced leadership style, where leaders learn from experience and adjust their strategies to increase organizational effectiveness. Delegating responsibility and developing professional management often prove to be important steps in this process. This leadership style provides stability and predictability while allowing employees a certain degree of freedom to make decisions. Entrepreneurs with a balanced management style succeed in maintaining productivity and innovation in a dynamic business environment.

The literature increasingly raises the question of whether the American leadership style will be abandoned in 2024 or whether the challenging leadership style will prevail (Stoner, 2024). We are in transition from a post-Cold War unipolar world to a more complex, potentially multipolar world order, particularly with the rise of Russia and China as authoritarian powers. One of the most important aspects Stoner discusses is how Russia balances competition with the United States and the European Union with through its relations with developing countries, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. The author also points out that Russia is using its energy strategy (especially gas and oil) as political leverage, but that economic sanctions and internal problems are complicating its path to global leadership (Stoner, 2024).

3.4. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN CHINA

In Western leadership models, social exchange is seen as egalitarian, i.e. leaders and followers are considered equal in terms of power and status. The resources exchanged are usually work-related, such as the socio-emotional support provided by the leader in return for the follower's support or improved task performance. In contrast, in many non-Western cultures there is a more prominent power distance and the authority of the leader is more strongly legitimized and accepted. This leads to a hierarchical form of social exchange in which the leader has more power and authority over the followers. In this context, the leader provides not only work-related but also personal support, while followers are expected to be loyal and obedient (Zhou, Zhao, Tian, Zhang & Chen, 2018).

Employee creativity is the foundation of for organizational innovation and competitive advantage. Therefore, many organizations are exploring different leadership styles to encourage employee creativity. Although some studies suggest that leadership style plays an important role in fostering creativity, most empirical research has been conducted in Western contexts, while studies in non-Western cultures, such as China, remain limited. In many Chinese organizations influenced by Western educational and management practices, the question of the applicability of Western theories arises because Chinese culture, which is characterized by high power distance and collectivism, favors directive leadership (Mathisen, Einarsen & Mykletun, 2012). In Western cultures, such leadership is often seen as an obstacle to creativity, whereas in the Chinese context it can have a positive impact on employee creativity. In Chinese organizations, visionary leadership enhances employee creativity, but this effect depends on employees' learning objectives and knowledge-sharing practices. Visionary leadership is more effective when employees have a high learning goal orientation and less effective with employees who are performance risk avoidance oriented (Zhou et al., 2018).

It is concluded that national culture plays a key role in determining which leadership style is effective in a particular environment. For example, transformational leadership may be equally effective in all cultures, but the impact of leader-member exchange on trust, equity and employee satisfaction may be stronger in Western cultures than in Asian (Takeuchi, Wang & Farh, 2020). Employees of the newer generations prefer relationship-oriented leadership, i.e. participative and coaching leadership, rather than directive leadership, i.e. a style in which the leader makes decisions and gives employees clear, specific instructions on what to do, when and how to do it (Ren, Xie, Zhu & Warner, 2018).

Confucian leadership theory has dominated leadership studies in East Asia, but in socialism, the Chinese government systematically rejected Confucianism as an acceptable ideology. In the various stages of the transition from socialism to capitalism, Chinese business leaders have divided themselves into three groups: The first group consists of government-appointed leaders; the second group consists of former bureaucrats who became CEOs while maintaining their bonds with ties to the government; the third group includes new entrepreneurs with no government affiliation. The last group, which includes **leaders such as Jack Ma**, represents a new trend of entrepreneurship in China that emphasizes

professionalism and management skills and de-emphasizes guanxi with the government. This form of leadership reflects the dynamic nature of Chinese leadership styles, which are evolving towards a global and modernized market while maintaining a critical stance towards Western ideologies (Zhou, Kim & Rui, 2019).

Several dominant leadership styles in China can be identified from the literature review (Zhou et al., 2019; Mathisen et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2018):

1. Socialist, paternalism-based leadership style – This style is deeply rooted in the socialist tradition and favors leaders who provide protection and support to subordinates while emphasizing male dominance and centralized authority. It is prevalent in state-owned enterprises and some industrial sectors.

2. Bureaucratic leaders – At this stage, many leaders come from the government and understand the importance of maintaining bonds links with political structures (guanxi). Bureaucratic leaders act as a link between the private sector and the state and often have a high degree of authority and control.

3. Visionary leaders – Typical of the newer generation of leaders who have left the state or professional sector to become entrepreneurs. They favor professionalism and market-oriented management principles, with a focus on innovation and competitiveness. This style of leadership often incorporates elements of Mohist management and incorporates Chinese philosophies such as Taoism and Monism into leadership practices. The visionary leadership style has gained popularity in recent decades. It emphasizes leadership with a clear vision, innovation and long-term goals. Leaders who adopt this style aim to inspire and motivate their teams to achieve common goals, with communication and development playing key roles.

4. Participative leadership – This style is increasingly applied, particularly in private companies and entrepreneurial organizations, where leaders work more closely with their teams, supporting their development and allowing greater autonomy in decision-making.

Author Ni (2020) analyzes the concept of leadership in the context of global political relations, with a particular focus on the competition between the US and China. The author emphasizes that leadership should not be equated with dominance, as it is based on voluntary cooperation and mutual trust. In the context of leadership, the author argues that global political leadership today is increasingly linked to hard power and strategic objectives, as

demonstrated by the trade war launched by the Trump administration in 2018. Trump's policy is based on unilateralism and prioritizes the protection of US national interests, particularly in terms of security and economic positions. This is pursued through economic and political strategies, including trade measures against China, while attempting to reorganize global institutions to ensure that America benefits most from the existing global order.

On the other hand, China, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, is using its political legacy to expand its international influence and fill the leadership vacuum left by the US through its "One Belt, One Road" strategy. China is emerging as a serious challenger to the US on the geopolitical stage, as it has the resources, military power and growing economy to position itself as a global superpower (Ni, 2020).

The work of Vines (2016) analyses the role of China in shaping macroeconomic policy in today's multipolar world. Through an analysis of China's economic influence, the author analyses how China is becoming an important player in the global economic environment characterized by increasing competition between major world powers such as the US, the EU, Russia and others.

3.5. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN INDIA

Various leadership styles prevail in India and their application depends on the corporate culture, industry sector and social norms. **Authentic leadership**, which includes transparency, ethical behavior and consistency of the leader, has aroused considerable attention in Western organizations. However, studies on its impact in Asian countries, including India, are still limited. While some research examines the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement in the West, there is little empirical evidence from the Indian context. Moreover, previous research has shown that employee-manager relationships in Asia differ from those in Western countries, with culture playing a key role in shaping leadership practices.

The study by Sharma, Gautam, and Agrawal (2021) builds on previous studies that confirm that authentic leadership has a positive impact on workplace engagement, job satisfaction and overall employee productivity. Furthermore, the differences in leadership between East and West in the Asian context emphasize the need to study authentic leadership in India. As the hospitality industry is one of the leading sectors of the Indian economy, understanding the impact of leadership on employee behavior contributes to improving the working conditions and efficiency of the sector.

Authentic leaders are transparent, ethical and consistent, which enhances trust and teamwork (Sharma et al., 2021). In addition, the authors Mathew, Rajam and Nair (2024) analyze various leadership theories, especially **transformational leadership**, which emerged in response to criticism of transactional leadership, which focuses on exchange relationships and neglects individual personality. This style is becoming increasingly popular in India, particularly in multinational companies and in the technology sector. Transformational leaders inspire employees, set visionary goals and motivate teams through innovation and personal example. This style is associated with high levels of employee engagement and business growth.

Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) **Situational Leadership Theory** suggests adapting leadership style to employee readiness and other factors.

In addition to these styles, the following three are still widely used:

- **Autocratic** (strict instructions),
- **Participative** (involving employees in decision-making while retaining control) and
- **Delegative** (decision making is delegated to the team depending on their expertise).

However, the three most important leadership styles in India are transformational (TFM), transactional (TSL) and laissez-faire (LF).

1. **Transformational leaders** inspire their employees through vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual support, thus promoting development and innovation.
2. **Transactional leaders** lead through reward and punishment systems and ensure discipline and efficiency.
3. **Laissez-faire leaders** avoid decision-making and give employees full autonomy, which can lead to chaos and low productivity.

TFM is considered most effective for employee development, TSL works well in structured systems, while LF often leads to poor results due to the lack of active leadership (Verma, Bhat, Rangnekar & Barua, 2015). While Indian culture emphasizes hierarchy, discipline and authority, it is not authoritarian.

Research in the field of industry and organizations has relied on Western leadership theories for a long time. They have often been applied to all cultures regardless of their differences. However, recent studies suggest that Western models may not be effective in other cultural settings. As a result, there has been a growing interest in paternalistic leadership, which was originally developed in China but is now popular in other parts of the world such as Asia, the Middle East and Latin America (Rawat & Lyndon, 2016).

Paternalistic leadership is a prevalent style in India, especially in family businesses and traditional organizations. Leaders act as "family heads" who make decisions for the benefit of employees, but expect loyalty and obedience in return. This style is based on the concept of paternalism, which has its origins in Western societies. Historically, paternalism was associated with the transition from a patriarchal class society to a free society with equal and autonomous individuals (Rawat & Lyndon, 2016).

4. COMPARISON OF COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS MODEL

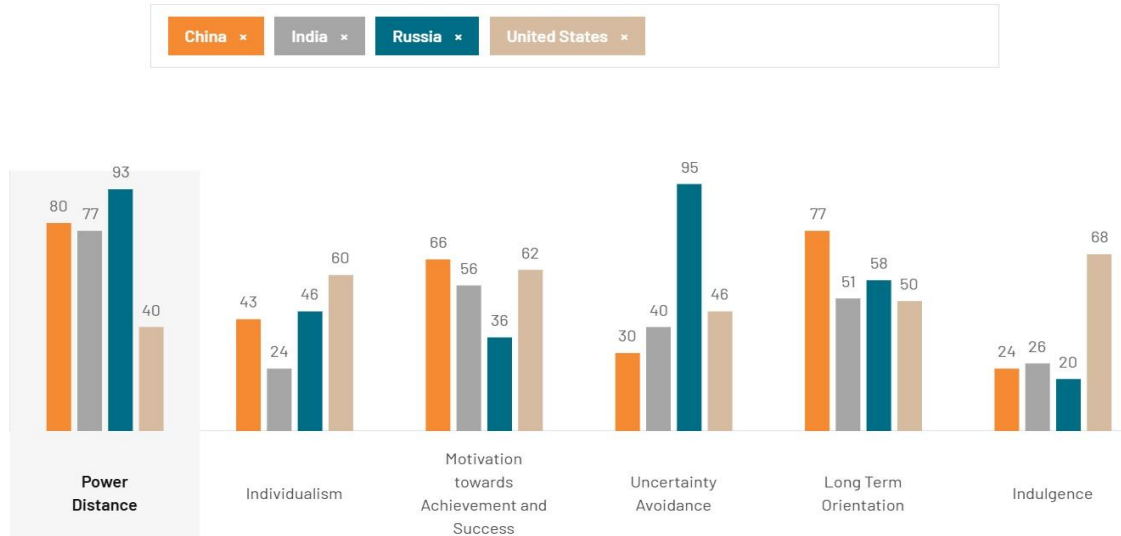
Geert Hofstede, one of the pioneers in the field of researching cross-cultural differences, developed a model that enables a systematic comparison of cultures based on several key dimensions. This model identifies various aspects that shape the behavior and values of people in different societies. By comparing these dimensions between different countries, we can understand better how cultural characteristics manifest in everyday life, business practices, educational systems, social and political relationships.

In this section, the following countries are analyzed: The United States, Russia, China, India, and in particular the EU countries.

These countries are examined through the lens of the Hofstede model (Figure 2). This approach provides a deeper insight into the way cultural values are shaped in each of these countries and how these values impact their business and social structures.

The aim of this analysis is to create a broader perspective on cultural similarities and differences and enable better preparation for international cooperation and intercultural understanding.

Graph 2: Country Comparison tool



Source: the authors according to <https://www.theculturefactor.com/>

4.1. POWER DISTANCE

The US has a low power distance, reflecting the cultural value of equality. Hierarchies exist for practical reasons, but they do not imply superiority. Supervisors are approachable, communication is direct, informal and often participative. Employees are expected to be consulted and to contribute to decision making. Information is shared openly and managers rely on the expertise of their teams. The European Union as a whole scores moderately in this dimension. In EU countries, power distance is not as pronounced as in some Asian or Latin American cultures. There is a strong tradition of democracy, equality and civil rights, which means that a balance between leaders and ordinary citizens is usually accepted. In countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany, authority and power are often more evenly distributed, while in some countries with more traditional structures (such as Spain or Italy) the power distance can be slightly higher. Russia has the highest level of power distance among the countries studied. Power is extremely centralized, which is also reflected in economic flows — almost all capital and influence are accumulated concentrated in Moscow. Status and symbols of power are very important, and behavior must reflect social position. The management style is strictly vertical, tasks are clearly and exclusively top-down delegated. There is a high degree of power distance in China, which means that society accepts inequality as something normal. The relationship between superiors and subordinates is clearly hierarchical and often leaves no room for questioning authority. People

rely on formal power, rules and sanctions. Initiative is not expected to come “from below” and individuals should not aspire to positions outside their social status. Similar to China, there is a high degree of power distance in India. People are dependent on their superiors for instructions and leadership. Unequal rights are accepted — managers are authorities, but often paternalistic figures who expect loyalty in return for rewards and security. Although direct superiors are approachable, higher levels are distanced. Control and hierarchy provide psychological security, and communication flows „top-down“.

4.2. INDIVIDUALISM

The USA is an individualistic culture. People focus on themselves and their immediate family. Independence, initiative and personal responsibility are expected. Business decisions are made on the basis of merit, and communication is open, direct and participative. Although Americans tend to join groups, deep friendships are rare. The European Union tends to be more individualistic than collectivist, but with significant differences among its members. In Scandinavia (e.g. Sweden, Denmark), for example, there are strong individualistic tendencies, with an emphasis on personal responsibility and independence. On the other hand, in countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal, collectivist factors are more pronounced, with a stronger focus on family, community and mutual support. Although there are both individualist and collectivist influences in the EU, European values generally favor individual rights and freedom, as well as mutual solidarity, especially through common political and economic

policies. Russia is in the middle of the scale, but shows strong collectivist tendencies. Family, friends and neighbors play a key role in daily life. Relationships are built gradually and must be personal and trusting before doing business. Communication is subtle and indirect, with personal relationships being very important. China is a collectivist culture. People see themselves as part of a group and not as individuals. Decisions are made in the interests of the collective — the family, the team or the entire community. Loyalty to the group is more important than personal ambition. Relationships with colleagues within the “in-group” are close, while relationships with “out-groups” are often cold. India is predominantly collectivist, but with traces of individualism. People are highly dependent on family, friends and the community. Being rejected by the group can cause deep emotional distress. In the workplace, employees are expected to be loyal, and in return employers offer protection — often in a ‘family-like’ way. However, the philosophy of Hinduism also provides for a certain degree of individual responsibility, so society has a certain ambivalence between individualism and collectivism.

4.3. MOTIVATION TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS

The USA is strongly oriented towards achievement and competition. Success is publicly flaunted, and the value system in schools, business and society encourages striving to be the best. There is a strong “can-do” culture and a belief in personal ability to succeed. Material rewards and visible progress are the most important indicators of success. The European Union generally tends to have a high level of achievement and success motivation, with focus on professional development, education and innovation. Germany, for example, known for its precision and high standards, places great emphasis on achievement and quality of work. The UK and France also support high standards of performance with focus on competition and meritocracy. However, in some EU countries, such as Italy or Greece, there are stronger factors that favor a balance between professional life and personal satisfaction. In the EU, success is often associated with achieving social stability, but also with personal development and education. Russia has a lower score, indicating a consensus-oriented culture. There are status symbols, but they are related to hierarchy (high power distance) rather than personal achievement. People are modest in presenting their achievements and dominant behavior among colleagues is not desired. Recognized professionals often lead modest lives. China is strongly oriented on performance and success. Success is defined as being the best, and

people are willing to sacrifice free time and family relationships to succeed at work. Students focus heavily on results and rankings, and workers, including migrants, stay longer at work to increase their earnings and chances of promotion. India is also success-oriented (albeit slightly less so than China and the US). There is a strong desire to show success — through branded clothing, luxury and status symbols. However, India is also a spiritual culture, so this external motivation is balanced by values such as modesty and spirituality. Therefore, success is sometimes displayed selectively and less openly.

4.4. UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

Americans can tolerate uncertainty relatively well. They are open to new ideas, technology and change, with freedom of expression and a willingness to experiment. They do not like too many rules and formalities, and rules are not perceived as strict restrictions. Most EU countries have a medium or high score in this dimension. Countries such as Greece and Portugal have a very high score on uncertainty avoidance, i.e. they prefer rules, norms and precise planning. These countries are more traditional and cautious when it comes to new situations. On the other hand, countries such as Denmark and Sweden have lower scores in this dimension, indicating a greater openness to innovation, change and flexibility in the economy and in society. Overall, the EU shows a mixture of tendencies in uncertainty avoidance, considering the diversity of its members with different approaches to rules and the unknown. Russian society finds it very difficult to deal with uncertainty. There is a strong need for rules, structures and detailed planning. Procedures are formal, bureaucracy is complex and interaction with foreigners is often distant. There are also two extremes with presentations: either they are not prepared at all because relationships are more important, or they are prepared in great detail. The Chinese are good at tolerating uncertainty. Practicality and flexibility in the application of rules are part of daily life, and truth is seen as relative. Language and communication are often ambiguous, and the society is pragmatic, entrepreneurial and adaptable to change. Indians are tolerant of chaos and unpredictability. Imperfection is accepted as part of life and people rely on flexibility and ingenuity. There are rules, but they are often circumvented. The concept of “adaptation” reflects a cultural willingness to find creative solutions rather than strictly adhering to procedures.

4.5. LONG TERM ORIENTATION

Americans do not have a clearly defined orientation when it comes to their attitude towards the past and the future. On the one hand, they value practicality and the “can-do” mentality, but on the other hand, short-term goals are often paramount, especially in business — performance is measured quarterly, which encourages a desire for quick results. The EU as a whole shows a high degree of pragmatism and long-term orientation, particularly in relation to education, sustainable development and economic stability. Countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden focus on long-term goals, savings, investments and the preservation of resources. They also invest heavily in educational systems and research to ensure global competitiveness. On the other hand, in some EU countries with a stronger tradition, such as Italy, the short-term orientation may be more present in business practices and social norms, with an emphasis on immediate goals and tradition. Russian society has a pragmatic view of the world. Tradition adapts to circumstances, and truth depends on context. Thrift, investment and perseverance in achieving goals are highly valued. This flexibility enables society to respond better to change. China is a very pragmatic culture. People believe that truth is relative and contextual. There is a strong focus on the future, saving and education as investments for tomorrow. Traditions are easy to change if they are useful, and patience and perseverance are highly valued qualities. India has a balanced attitude between preserving tradition and accepting change. The concept of karma and cyclical time influences a more relaxed attitude towards planning for the future. A spiritual and philosophical approach often dominates: there are many truths, and flexibility and tolerance are highly valued. Plans are often changed spontaneously and this is not seen as a problem.

4.6. INDULGENCE

The US is an indulgent society — people are encouraged to fulfill their desires and enjoy life. The “work hard, play hard” philosophy is present, but so are contradictions: although society can be moral (e.g. the war on drugs), it also has high rates of addiction and a strong need for personal pleasure. Pleasure and indulgence are socially accepted goals. Most EU countries fall into the category of moderation (indulgence), where there is a balance between control and freedom, enjoyment of life and social obligations. Spain, France and the Netherlands, for example, are more indulgent with place a high value on quality of life. Like China and Russia, the emphasis is more on social obligations and less on personal satisfaction.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of leadership styles across the five selected global actors—USA, Europe, Russia, China, and India—reveals a dynamic interplay between cultural values, political systems, and strategic leadership practices. The findings support the formulated hypotheses and highlight how global leaders adapt their approaches in response to the complexities of a multipolar world.

In line with hypothesis H1, the study confirms that flexible and adaptive leadership styles are increasingly necessary in an environment marked by uncertainty, rapid technological advancement, and geopolitical fragmentation. For example, U.S. leadership, characterized by transformational and democratic styles, emphasizes innovation, individual autonomy, and collaborative decision-making, which are essential traits in responding to global disruptions. Similarly, some European countries have demonstrated a shift toward hybrid models that blend democratic values with pragmatic, adaptive leadership depending on regional and organizational contexts.

Hypothesis H2 is also validated through the comparative analysis. Cultural dimensions, particularly power distance, significantly influence leadership behavior. In countries like China and Russia, where high power distance and centralized political control prevail, authoritarian and paternalistic leadership styles are more common. These styles reflect a preference for hierarchical structures, stability, and top-down decision-making. In contrast, lower power distance cultures, such as those found in parts of Europe and especially in the United States, tend to favor participatory leadership models that empower employees and encourage horizontal communication.

India presents a nuanced case, combining elements of both hierarchical and flexible leadership. This hybrid model allows Indian leaders to navigate complex domestic conditions while remaining responsive to global market demands. The diversity in leadership approaches within Europe also illustrates that even within one geopolitical bloc, leadership is not monolithic but varies based on national culture, historical legacies, and economic priorities.

The multipolar world with its different political and economic power centers creates challenges for managers who have to lead different teams and organizations. Although globalization and digitalization enable the spread of leadership ideas and practices, it is important to understand the cultural specificities of each country.

REFERENCES

- [1] Acharya, A., Estevadeordal, A., & Goodman, L. W. (2023). Multipolar or multiplex? Interaction capacity, global cooperation and world order. *International Affairs*, 99(6), 2339-2365.
- [2] Antonopoulou, H., Halkiopoulos, C., Barlou, O., & Beligiannis, G. (2021). Digital leader and transformational leadership in higher education. In *INTED2021 Proceedings* (pp. 9616-9624). IATED.
- [3] Ashkanasy, N. M. (2002). Leadership in the Asian century: Lessons from GLOBE. *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 5(3), 150-163.
- [4] Balabanova, E., & Efendiev, A. (2015). The voice of employees in Russian business organizations: conceptualization and empirical analysis. *Mir Rossii*, 24(3), 61-87.
- [5] Balabanova, E., Rebrov, A., & Koveshnikov, A. (2018). Managerial styles in privately owned domestic organizations in Russia: Heterogeneity, antecedents, and organizational implications. *Management and Organization Review*, 14(1), 37-72.
- [6] Caza, A., Caza, B. B., & Posner, B. Z. (2021). Transformational leadership across cultures: Follower perception and satisfaction. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(1), 32.
- [7] Dorfman, P. W., Howell, J. P., Hibino, S., Lee, J. K., Tate, U., & Bautista, A. (1997). Leadership in Western and Asian countries: Commonalities and differences in effective leadership processes across cultures. *The leadership quarterly*, 8(3), 233-274.
- [8] Felzensztein, C., Tretiakov, A., & Velez-Ocampo, J. F. (2024). Parentalistic leadership and crisis responses by small entrepreneurial firms. *Small Enterprise Research*, 31(2), 198-216.
- [9] Fey, C. F., Adaeva, M., & Vitkovskaia, A. (2001). Developing a model of leadership styles: what works best in Russia?. *International business review*, 10(6), 615-643.
- [10] Hofstede, G. (2009). Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions.
- [11] IMF, (2023). Available on: <https://www.imf.org/en/home>
- [12] Kim, M., & Beehr, T. A. (2023). Empowering leadership improves employees' positive psychological states to result in more favorable behaviors. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(10), 2002-2038.
- [13] Kobernyuk, E., Stiles, D., & Ellson, T. (2014). International joint ventures in Russia: Cultures' influences on alliance success. *Journal of business research*, 67(4), 471-477.
- [14] Lund, H. H. (2024). 'We are equal, but I am the leader': leadership enactment in early childhood education in Norway. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 27(6), 1228-1253.
- [15] Mathew, J., Rajam, K., & Nair, S. (2024). Leadership Style and Work Engagement: A Comparison of Private and Public Sector Firms in India. *Vision*, 28(4), 523-528.
- [16] Mathisen, G. E., Einarsen, S., & Mykletun, R. (2012). Creative leaders promote creative organizations. *International Journal of Manpower*, 33(4), 367-382.
- [17] McCarthy, D. J., Puffer, S. M., & Darda, S. V. (2010). Convergence in entrepreneurial leadership style: Evidence from Russia. *California management review*, 52(4), 48-72.
- [18] Ni, A. J. (2020). Leadership and power game in a multi-polarizing world: The competition between the US and China. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 10(2), 253-277.
- [19] Peters, M. A. (2023). The emerging multipolar world order: A preliminary analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55(14), 1653-1663.
- [20] Ramjit, D. M. (2025). Global Diplomacy in a Multipolar Era. *Law, Economics and Society*, 1(1), p107-p107.
- [21] Rawat, P. S., & Lyndon, S. (2016). Effect of paternalistic leadership style on subordinate's trust: an Indian study. *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 8(4), 264-277.

- [22] Ren, S., Xie, Y., Zhu, Y., & Warner, M. (2018). New generation employees' preferences towards leadership style in China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 24(4), 437-458.
- [23] Sanchez-Runde, C., Nardon, L., & Steers, R. M. (2011). Looking beyond Western leadership models: Implications for global managers. *Organizational dynamics*, 40(3), 207-213.
- [24] Sharma, N., Gautam, O., & Agrawal, P. (2021). Authentic Leaders for an Engaged and Satisfied Workforce: An Evidence from India. *Gurukul Business Review*, 17(1).
- [25] Stoner, K. (2024). Russia and the challenges of global leadership. *International Journal*, 79(3), 458-461.
- [26] Takeuchi, R., Wang, A. C., & Farh, J. L. (2020). Asian conceptualizations of leadership: Progresses and challenges. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 7(1), 233-256.
- [27] Taleghani, G., Salmani, D., & Taatian, A. (2010). Survey of leadership styles in different cultures. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management Studies (Formerly known as Iranian Journal of Management Studies)*, 3(3), 91-111.
- [28] Thapa, R. (2025). Uncommon Reality: Finding the Unipolar World in Bipolar and Multipolar Discourses. *Unity Journal*, 6(1), 184-201.
- [29] Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, 14(3), 207-222.
- [30] Verma, N., Bhat, A. B., Rangnekar, S., & Barua, M. K. (2015). Association between leadership style and decision making style in Indian organisations. *Journal of Management Development*, 34(3), 246-269.
- [31] Vines, D. (2016). Chinese leadership of macroeconomic policymaking in a multipolar world. *China Economic Review*, 40, 286-296.
- [32] Zhou, L., Zhao, S., Tian, F., Zhang, X., & Chen, S. (2018). Visionary leadership and employee creativity in China. *International Journal of Manpower*, 39(1), 93-105.
- [33] Zhou, Y., Kim, S., & Rui, D. (2019). Chivalrous idealist and pragmatic strategist: the influence of Mohist values on Ma Yun's leadership in China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 25(2), 273-287.
- [34] <https://www.theculturefactor.com/>