

Chapter 22

Connecting Desired Leadership Styles with Ancient Greek Philosophy: Results from the Globe Research in Greece, 1995–2010

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Abstract Is there an ideal leader? If yes, do the traits of this ideal leader vary by national culture or across time, or is leadership a uniform concept across cultures? In this paper, modal leader behavior patterns are explored in modern Greece, through the findings of a longitudinal research project carried out on 1000 middle managers. The identified as desired leadership traits are then studied under the light of ideal images of the leader, as depicted in the classic works of Ancient Greek thinkers, notably Plato. Believing that implicit fundamental values are, to their larger part, unchangeable, we assume that the Greek ideal leader remains the same across centuries. Our findings seem to support this assumption.

“The concept of a leader cannot be defined independently of what a “good” leader is expected to accomplish.” [(Kodish 2006), on Aristotle’s teleology]

22.1 Introduction

Leadership has been a topic of study for social scientists for much of the twentieth century, yet there is no consensual agreed-on definition of leadership. Leaders have existed in all cultures throughout history and the practice and philosophy of leaders and leadership can be found in very diverse writings, ranging from the Greek classics such as Homer’s Iliad, to the Old and New Testaments, to essays about Confucius in China, to Machiavelli’s rules and principles (Dorfman and House 2003b). An almost endless variety of definitions of leadership have been developed,

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perhaps as many as the persons who attempted to define the construct (Stogdill 1974). This goes hand-in-hand with the existence of different, across countries, “modal leader behavior patterns, in their emphasis on individualistic versus team orientation, performance versus maintenance orientation, authoritarian versus democratic orientation paternalism, reliance on personal abilities, subordinates or rules, leader influence processes, and consensual decision making and service orientation (Dorfman et al. 2003b:60).

Our aim in the current paper is to investigate the modal leader behavior patterns, as Dorfman and House (ibid.) put them, in Greece. Much about modern Greek reality is deeply rooted in ancient tradition and practice, which was often expressed allegorically in mythology. It is believed that Odysseus’s inventiveness, Zeus’s power, and Athena’s wisdom are still among the main characteristics Greeks are looking for in their leaders (Papalexandris 2007).

The word leadership, literally translated as “igesia” in Greek, is a word usually serving to describe the top-rank official in large institutions such as the army, ministries or political parties. Only during recent years, and after extensive use in executive seminars and business courses, has the term acquired the meaning it has in the English language.

On the contrary, the term leader, when used alone as a noun e.g. “he is a leader”, refers to the person who has some kind of special quality or charisma to guide people, while when used in combination with another word, “the leader of the party”, simply refers to the person who is on top of the hierarchy.

The distinction between leaders and managers is somewhat difficult for those not having studied management. In fact, there is no corresponding translation for “manager” in Greek language, which means that the English word is used extensively. For higher levels, the word most often used is “dieftintis”, meaning director. Indeed, many managers still carry out their jobs in a more directive and controlling approach than is commonly found in western companies (Papalexandris 2007).

However, even in family-owned companies which could be characterized as patriarchal, very rarely the directive style means harsh treatment to employees. According to Broome (1996), the successful Greek manager is expected to take care of employee needs as they arise, showing an interest in their family problems, as for most Greeks, the family is more important than work. The personal relationship with employees and the ability of the manager to develop and maintain personal connections with both subordinates and colleagues is often what distinguishes a manager from a leader, especially at the middle levels of hierarchy.

Very important at this level, is the ability of the leader to appeal to the “*philotimo*” or love of honor of his employees and create conditions which allow employees to show their creativity, diligence and dexterity, while creating a system that encourages and supports individual initiative. One must take into account that Greeks are very hard working people, when the situation requires it, and it is the personal quality of diligence, not work itself which is important (Lee 1959). Meaningless and routine work is viewed with disdain and this explains partly the low productivity of the public sector, which is nevertheless sought by employees since it offers job security. Yet many people, showing lower productivity in lower paid jobs of the public sector, will take an extra job to support their family.

Also critical is the ability of the leader to treat each employee as a person. As stated by Broome (1996), “in Greece you must manage persons, not personnel”. As shown in several previous research efforts (Papalexandris 2007), Greeks are both very individualistic and independent. According to Fermor (1958, 1966), an English author who fought in Greece during World War II and has studied Greek culture extensively, “every Greek may be said to comprise a one-man splinter-group”, while the Greek word for person, “*atomo*”, comes from the word which was believed by ancient Greek scientists to be the indivisible unit of the universe. In the work environment, employees are always inclined to fight against perceived limitations on their personal freedom, independence and individual rights.

In view of the above, being granted the attribute “leader” in a Greek organization is not a simple task, but rather a great achievement. Greeks do not like to be told what to do without proper explanations, dislike orders and are not at all intimidated by status. They face difficulties in cooperating and are very fast at questioning authority and mistrusting superiors. Therefore, only the person who can win approval, encourage teamwork and be recognized as superior due to his qualities, skills, fairness and integrity, can be characterized as a leader. Such a person can achieve levels of performance from his group, which far excel what would be considered as normal by international standards.

The ideals and values guiding modern Greek leadership, as this is described above, share important similarities with the ideal leader in ancient Greece, as depicted in the works of the classics. Would this suggest the existence of a universal notion of leadership that transcends time?

This overall picture of Greek leadership and the question raised regarding leadership’s universality will be further analyzed with the help of data from a research on preferred leader traits, carried out in 1995 and repeated for confirmation purposes in 2010.

More specifically, in connection to the above discussion, the current paper sets two major objectives:

1. To present the findings of a longitudinal study on the leadership style desired by Greek managers, and to discuss peculiarities of Greek leadership as compared with results from countries across the world.
2. To analyze findings under the light of ancient Greek philosophers’, notably Plato’s, views on leadership and identify elements which show common values across time.

22.2 Method

The data come from a longitudinal survey on desired leadership traits. The survey is part of the GLOBE - Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior – project, as run in Greece, since 1992. A major objective of the GLOBE study is to identify culturally endorsed leader behaviors, as a way to help individuals involved in substantial intercultural interactions (House 2003). The implied hypothesis is that what is effective or ineffective varies across cultures, so knowing different cultures

Table 22.1 The two Greek rounds of the globe research on desired leadership traits

1995 round	2010 round
235 Greek middle managers Banks and telecommunication	733 Greek middle managers Mostly from the banking sector
Globe questionnaire	
Private and public organizations	
Same questionnaire and data collection methodology	
112 questions on desired leadership characteristics	
7-point Likert scale	
21 leadership dimensions extracted according to the Globe directions	

and their values would facilitate conflict resolution and improve the performance of interacting individuals from different cultures (such as negotiators, managers, members of joint ventures or expatriates working in foreign countries) (Dorfman et al. 2003b).

The results of the 1995 round on Greece have been published and discussed on various occasions (Apospori et al. 2005; Papalexandris 2006; Papalexandris et al. 2002). The 2010 round findings come to further clarify and confirm the previous findings.

The two survey rounds are depicted in Table 22.1.

22.3 Results and Implications

Globe used 21 leadership dimensions, 12 of which included positive and nine negative characteristics. Respondents were asked to give a score on a seven-point scale declaring the extent to which each of the characteristics was hindering or contributing to effective leadership (Table 22.2).

Among positive dimensions, integrity ranks at the highest level among Greek respondents, something that was expected, since leader integrity has been shown in the past as universally perceived to guide to effective leadership. Integrity is an “end-value that is universally held in all cultures” (Dorfman et al. 2003a:673).

The other three dimensions ranking high in the Greek sample describe a leader as administratively competent, decisive, and team integrator. In all the above dimensions, Greece ranks among the ten first countries in the global sample of 61 countries participating in Globe.

Of the other positive dimensions, diplomacy ranks the highest among Greek respondents, if compared to the rest of the world, something quite expected since the ability to negotiate, to find a balance between opposite trends, to survive in changing circumstances and to take advantage of unexpected events require a great deal of “diplomatic” skills, which business leaders must by all means possess. Greece also ranks high if compared with the rest of the world, in the dimensions of self-sacrifice, collaborative team orientation, modesty, humane orientation. The

Table 22.2 Ratings on each of the 21 leadership dimensions (first-order factors), in 2010 and 1995

Leadership dimensions	Mean 2010	Std. deviation 2010	Mean 1995	International rank 1995	t-test for difference of means significance, between the two rounds
Integrity	6,34	0,693	6.27	20	
Team integrator	6,14	0,535	6.20	10	
Administratively competent	6,14	0,600	6.18	8	
Decisive	6,13	0,6110	6.18	9	
Charisma 2: inspirational	6,11	0,517	6.25	25	<i>P = 0.000</i>
Charisma 1:visionary	6,05	0,574	6.19	24	<i>P = 0.001</i>
Performance oriented	5,89	0,801	5.82	48	
Diplomatic	5,87	0,587	6.02	2	<i>P = 0.001</i>
Collaborative team orientation	5,63	0,626	5.77	12	<i>P = 0.004</i>
Modesty	5,49	0,725	5.28	20	<i>P = 0.000</i>
Participative	5,46	0,943	5.75	52	<i>P = 0.000</i>
Status- conscious	5,12	0,963	5.12	10	
Charisma 3:self-Sacrifice	5,05	0,955	5.42	10	<i>P = 0.000</i>
Humane oriented	4,97	1,082	5.02	22	
Procedural/ Bureaucratic	4,20	0,881	3.74	40	<i>P = 0.000</i>
Autonomous	4,00	1,127	3.98	23	
Conflict inducer	3,61	0,907	3.62	47	
Face saver	2,94	1,021	3.05	23	
Autocratic	2,15	0,913	2.14	51	
Self- centered	2,13	0,820	2.11	31	
Malevolent	1,56	0,557	1.55	53	

(st. deviations from 0.5 to 1.1)

only dimension in which Greece shows a low position (49th in 61 countries) is that of performance orientation. Greek leadership is still lacking behind in this dimension, in agreement to previous findings on societal culture (Papalexandris 2007). Generally speaking, Greek leadership ranks high in the 12 dimensions with positive values, as in eight dimensions it is classified in the highest level and in four dimensions in the middle.

In the second group of dimensions which have a negative value, Greek leadership ranks low in the malevolent behavior, as well as in non-participative, autocratic, conflict inducer and procedural behavior. However, relatively high scores appear in status consciousness, self-centered and autonomous (formerly individualistic) behavior. One can conclude that all negative dimensions have largely to do with the leaders’ “ego”, while fortunately they are outnumbered by the positive dimensions. Individualistic characteristics of Greek managers are deeply rooted, cannot change easily and seem to be reflected in their leadership style.

However, very encouraging is the high score given to participative and collaborative behavior, which is gaining ground in modern companies and is the only way for offsetting strong individualism in the work environment.

From the 21 leadership behaviors, following the GLOBE project instructions, six second-order factors, or “global leadership dimensions”, as mentioned in the GLOBE publications (Dorfman et al. 2003a) were computed. These global leadership dimensions are labeled as follows:

1. Charismatic/Value-based: this is a broadly defined leadership dimension that reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate and to expect high performance outcomes from others on the basis of firmly held core values. This GLOBE dimension includes six primary leadership subscales, i.e. (1) visionary, (2) inspirational, (3) self-sacrifice, (4) integrity, (5) decisive and (6) performance oriented.
2. Team Oriented: it is a leadership dimension that emphasizes effective team building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members. It includes five primary leadership subscales, i.e. (1) collaborative team orientation, (2) team integrator, (3) diplomatic, (4) malevolent (reverse scored), and (5) administratively competent.
3. Participative: A leadership dimension that reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions and includes two primary leadership subscales, i.e. (1) autocratic (reverse scored) and (2) non participative.
4. Humane Oriented: it is a leadership dimension that reflects supportive and considerate leadership but also includes compassion and generosity. It includes two primary leadership subscales, i.e. (1) modesty, (2) humane oriented.
5. Autonomous: A newly defined leadership dimension that refers to independent and individualistic leadership. It includes a single leadership subscale, labeled autonomous.
6. Self-Protective: this also newly defined leadership dimension focuses on ensuring the safety and security of the individual or group member. It includes five primary leadership subscales, i.e. (1) self-centered, (2) status-conscious, (3) conflict inducer, (4) face-saver, and (5) procedural.

Table 22.3 that follows, presents the scores on each of the six Global Leadership dimensions in Greece and other country clusters across the world.

A finding from the two research rounds that is worth mentioning was that the scores of the desired leadership behaviors were very consistent in the two rounds. This supports the high, as reported, reliability of the research instrument (Globe questionnaire) (House et al. 2001a; House et al. 2001b).

The following differences, though small, were significant and are interesting to investigate further:

- Higher importance attributed to modesty and procedure than in 1995, while
- Lower importance attributed to diplomacy
- Inspiration and vision, both attributes of the charismatic leader, though very important, are less pronounced than 15 years ago
- Self-sacrifice and being participative are less desired than 15 years ago

Table 22.3 Scores on each of the 6 s-order/Global culturally endorsed implicit leadership dimensions, in Greece and other country clusters across the world

	Charismatic/ value-based	Team oriented	Participative	Humane oriented	Autonomous	Self- protective
Mean- Greece2010	5.93	6.04	5.20	5.23	4.00	3.60
<i>Std. deviation</i>	<i>.47</i>	<i>.43</i>	<i>0.98</i>	<i>.76</i>	<i>1.12</i>	<i>.54</i>
Eastern Europe	4.4	5.88	5.8	4.76	4.2	3.67
Latin America	5.99	5.96	5.4	4.85	3.51	3.62
Confucian Asia	5.63	5.61	4.99	5.04	4.04	3.7
Nordic Europe	5.93	5.77	5.75	4.42	3.94	2.72
Anglo	6.05	5.74	5.73	5.08	3.82	3.08
Sub-Saharan Africa	5.79	5.70	5.31	5.16	3.63	3.55
Southern Asia	5.97	5.86	5.06	5.38	3.99	3.83
Germanic Europe	5.93	5.62	5.86	4.71	4.16	3.03
Middle East	5.35	5.47	4.97	4.80	3.68	3.79

Some tentative explanations using information from the external environment are offered in Table 22.4 that follows.

These small differences can be explained by changes in the country’s political and economic environment, showing that external forces can only slightly influence ways in which respondents view desirable leadership characteristics.

Having presented results from our research on desired leadership we will now look into ideal leadership as described by Plato, the Greek philosopher who has dealt most extensively with the subject and explore whether his ideas bear any resemblance with modern Greek reality.

22.4 Modal Leadership in Modern Greece and Its Link with Plato’s “Philosopher-King”

One of the main questions ancient Greek philosophers dealt with was “who should lead us”. This question was very important especially for Athenian Plato (426–348 B.C.). Plato is among other Greek philosophers the one who can without any doubt be defined as one of the most influential leadership-thinkers of all times in addition to his other merits (Takala 1998).

Plato in his description of the ideal State- the “Republic” -, argues that ruling a state needs an expert ruler who must be carefully selected, prepared and trained in making political decisions. He believes in the philosopher-king who should possess a number of moral, behavioral and practical qualities.

Looking back at our scores on the six second order/global culturally endorsed leadership dimensions, we can see that the dimension which received the highest

Table 22.4 Differences found between the two research rounds and an attempt to explain them

Differences found in the 1995 and 2010 rounds	Tentative explanation
<i>Inspirational and Visionary leadership</i> are somehow less desired	People are getting suspicious of leaders who may at first inspire people but who later prove that they cannot meet people's expectations Behavior of political leaders in the recent past has shaped this tendency among respondents
The characteristic of <i>diplomacy</i> in which Greece was very high (second in Globe) in 1995 is less important now	This may be due to the fact that diplomacy includes the element of manipulation or lack of complete frankness which people tend to despise
<i>Collaboration and team orientation</i> and participation are less important	This may be due to the fact that a lot of work assigned to teams or committees has produced poor results. Committees, especially where responsibility is spread to many members, often lack effectiveness
Less importance attached to the characteristic of <i>self-sacrifice</i>	This is due to the fact that over the past years there are no examples of similar behaviors shown by leaders. Even if such a behavior appeared, people would be suspicious and believe it is practiced for publicity reasons
Increase in desired <i>modesty</i>	This is due to the fact that many leaders over the past years have been accused for lack of modesty and have been criticized for receiving high salaries, leading luxurious lifestyles and disregarding problems faced by their employees
<i>Integrity</i> becomes more important	This is due to various economic scandals and cases of bribery which are believed to have contributed to the economic crisis the country is facing
More importance attached to the <i>Procedural/Bureaucratic</i> characteristic	This is due to the fact that, as organizations grow, a more systematic approach to management and procedures is needed. Globalization and EU participation requires better planning, meeting of deadlines and compliance to legal and international legal standards

preference in Greece is charismatic/value based leadership. This is also true for five out of the six country clusters presented by Globe study.

This shows that there is a universalistic truth about Charismatic/Value-based leadership which is also strongly endorsed by Greek respondents. This truth goes back to classical times since Plato's leadership criteria have many common elements with the notion of the philosopher-king.

Plato believes in leaders who are charismatic and excel above their fellow-citizens. They can inspire by being the wisest among them and they possess the greatest knowledge, skills and virtues of all kinds.

As for the particular characteristics which score high for Greece, these include in order of preference integrity, team integrator, administratively competent and decisive. Looking back at Plato's philosophical work we will examine how these characteristics fit his ideas about leadership.

22.5 Integrity

It is widely believed and well documented in the literature that the morality of leaders carries a greater weight and volume than those of non leaders (Ciulla 2004). It includes moral obligations related to justice, duty, honesty, fairness and responsibility to others and implies that the leader is free of all types of moral or material corruption.

According to Plato, the ideal leader will arise from the hierarchy and achieve the ruling position as the philosopher king following long years of proper training and education. Plato's philosopher king has as his principal aim to change the world in order to realize the good. To rule the just city leaders must have the capacity to acquire knowledge which is however not independent of moral character. Once he reaches this position he is expected to live an ascetic way of life dedicated to his duty.

He will have rational control over his appetites and prevent personal desires from upsetting his public responsibilities (Reeve 1988).

To avoid the situation which allows leaders to gather wealth for themselves, Plato proposes to eliminate property holdings from the leaders and his auxiliaries and forbid them from developing non-material private attachments that might corrupt them (Williamson 2008). The true leader must be primarily an ethical agent because of his honesty, sincerity and dignity.

It is obvious that what our Greek respondents ranked as the ultimate virtue for the desired leader is in the centre of Plato's description of the philosopher-king.

22.6 Team Integrator

Plato argues that, since the leader rules over a harmony-seeking entity, good leadership is that which advances the group as a whole and the interest of all within it. The ideal leader must be a philosopher whose main aim is to search for the good of all of his people instead of being an egoist who is motivated only by the gaining of power. Therefore a leader philosopher is forced to accept rulership not because he strives for his personal wealth or power but because it is his duty to serve the common good and be beneficial to his subjects. Leaders whose view of the world is distorted by honor-seeking desire will lack adequate knowledge of reality and such leaders cannot govern well.

The Platonic ruler does not derive his authority only from his expert knowledge but also from his impartiality and fairness. This fairness leads to friendship and cooperation among different parts of the city and is therefore for the advantage of all groups and members of groups in his City-State.

Although the notion of team-integrator is somehow different in modern leadership, the idea of Plato that the ideal leader due to his unselfish desire to serve his people and his superior knowledge of reality will achieve the unity and harmony within his team, applies across time and cultures.

22.7 Administratively Competent and Decisive

We will examine these two characteristics in combination as they are complementary in leadership practice. Leadership for Plato is not a “birth-right” but is grounded in the personal potential of each and every one, both women and men, in preparation for governing and administrative positions (Philipoussis 1999).

The Platonic leader is not a particular individual raised specifically to become a ruler. All children have the right and could equally be possible leaders of society. The only criterion for a child to become a philosopher king is his intellectual abilities and motivated character which will help him aim at and reach personal excellence.

Plato believes that the ideal leader is an expert individual who is able to govern because he is aware and has deep knowledge of eternal truths as well as of practical skills with great stress put on the latter (Takala 1998).

On the other hand, Plato’s lessons also have substantial implications for future work in the study of leadership. First, Plato puts onto the table in a compelling way the question of moral character and self-control. Therefore, attention to moral character should play a more central role in both the evaluation and education of leaders. Second, Plato argues that the decisive form of knowledge for leaders is knowledge of the good and the good life, i.e. both technique and moral knowledge. Third, Plato argues that we cannot expect either moral character or knowledge of the good to spring up on their own, in the absence of a supportive set of social and educational institutions aimed at producing such persons. So the question on how to nurture good leaders is linked to questions about the nature of the good life and the good society (Williamson 2008).

We can therefore draw the analogy between the administratively competent and decisive leader of our times and the well trained expert individual of Plato, who gained his position for his excellent qualities to rule.

22.8 Conclusion, Limitations and Further Research

The conclusions to which this paper has led us are manifold.

One very important conclusion has to do with the GLOBE project methodology. The currently presented research, as previous efforts in the past, has confirmed the high reliability of the research instruments adopted. The scales and dimensions used have demonstrated the same and consistent characteristics, across 15 years. On the other hand, the findings of the 2010 round agree almost perfectly with the ones of 1995, supporting in this way the omnipresent belief that values and culture are very difficult, if not impossible, to change, therefore, as desired leadership characteristics are culture bound, they change at a very slow pace, if at all, over the years.

Even the limited changes observed over the past 15 years can be well explained by the economic situation, globalization, and internationalization of firms that have shaped a different environment, in which managers are expected to function as leaders. At the same time, certain negative behaviors of top leaders serve as bad examples and influence desirable leadership characteristics across time.

Greece is a country with a complex past history where lessons from philosophers blend with modern reality. This has led to a vast and diversified pool of values, attitudes and behavioural patterns, from which individuals draw to form their own character and personality.

In Greece, as in any other part of the world, the ideal leader has elements expressed in the past, although they are difficult to find in the modern business world. Yet, the search for the ideal in writings of the past can help us in analyzing our present shortcomings and to educate our future leaders.

Certainly, there are several limitations in the current study, the most obvious one being the fact that although the research covered changes and results across time in Greece, there was not a possibility to perform, at the same time, a comparison with other countries and check how time has affected their results, in order to conclude on the diachronic nature of the values connected to the modal leader behavior. Another limitation of this study has to do with the inherent difficulty in generalizing results from a given empirical study that focuses on specific managerial behaviors and connecting them to the works and broad lessons from the classics and Ancient Greece.

A suggestion for future research, based on the results of the current study, is to study more thoroughly and with a larger, international sample, the relation of modal leadership behavior with societal culture and how this relation alters or adjusts over time.

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