

Gen Z Concepts of Leadership: Formulating Archetypes Based on Inter-Relational Business, Political, and Generational Characteristics

By Arthur Pantelides*

In a multiyear quantitative data-driven study that focused on the Gen Z demographic in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Central Asia, we discovered that a dichotomy in leadership thinking exists. Based on a significant amount of survey data, we found that our population, surprisingly, displayed a definitive propensity towards authoritarian political leadership. We theorize the rationale behind this authoritarian leadership thinking approach as a sincere desire for a developing country's leadership to produce efficient life-improving results for its population and a continued improvement in regional standing. The thinking suggests that such an authoritarian leader who focuses on their nation's well-being, at least in theory, gets things done, and improves daily living standards. This has in fact occurred specifically in Russia where GDP has risen significantly over the past 20 plus years and where a large portion of younger Russians have supported their leadership, at least up to the War in Ukraine. We found similar, quantifiable sentiment in our scope of research. However, the concept is reversed when Gen Z considers leadership ideas and concepts related to their own professional work environment; something that will affect them directly. Here young people favor a distinct democratic approach to work life with a leader that exhibits a democratic or laissez faire style of leadership in the workplace and where employees are integrated in corporate decision-making. This duality in thinking is investigated through direct data research in the region over a multi-year period from 2018-2021. A quantitative relationship archetype model is established that helps the understanding of the interrelated factors that lead Gen Z'ers in this approach to leadership.

Keywords: leadership, Gen Z, authoritarian and democratic leadership, Eastern Europe, Balkans, Central Asia, attitudes of business leadership

Introduction

Conceptualizing Leadership

Leadership is one of those terms that is difficult to define. Typical dictionary definitions of leadership, such as “*the office or position of a leader*”, “*the capacity to lead*”, or “*the act or an instance of leading*”, offer little insight. According to the business writer Susan Ward, leadership can be encapsulated as “*the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal*”. With fairly small variations,

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this definition, is used in various academic references including Peter G. Northouse's perennial text, *Leadership, Theory and Practice*.

His definition is similar to Ward's with leadership defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse 2022).

Conceptually there is a sort of duality in how individuals perceive leadership. There is a strong influence based on culture (where you are from) as well as generational affiliation (how old you are). This duality essentially establishes the idea that leadership stems from either (1) social influence, or (2) power and authority. When we talk about social influence we generally think about a democratic sort of approach. On the other hand terms like power and authority generally prompt us towards a more authoritarian way of thought. This duality also plays a role in both Ward's and Northouse's definitions that use terms such as "motivate" and "influence". Yes, a leader can motivate and influence others, but the question is how they will do that? Is this done utilizing a positive, constructive, and inclusive and democratic approach; or is it done through a coercive, forceful, perhaps negative consequential approach; all hallmarks of authoritarian leadership. Thus we feel that this duality with respect to the idea leadership is inherent within the concept itself; originally emerging from a definitional origin and developing historically as such, and continues to be nurtured based on cultural aspects of individuals and societies.

Our research focused on how young people, so called Gen Z'ers (born after 1995), in the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, perceived and personally defined leadership specifically from a dual-role perspective. In other words, what is their perception of national/political leadership (a leader leading a nation) vs. business leadership (a manager or CEO). More specifically we sought to research and analyze data that would shed light on Gen Z concepts of what they felt would be a "good" national leader based on their socio-cultural background, where they were from, and compare/contrast this with the sort of leader they would desire in a professional work setting in which they would like to participate.

The motivation for this study originated with several factors coming into play starting in 2016. The first factor was the author's strategic shift going from 25 years of mid-and-high level leadership experience in the international manufacturing industry, to academia, specifically research and teaching strategic leadership and management at the *American University in Bulgaria (AUBG)*. This provided the impetus for the research, initially based on first-hand business experience, and now utilized in management research in academia.

The second motivating factor originated with the author's own students at AUBG. These 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students seemed to exhibit a dual approach to their thinking of leadership. This was gleaned (unofficially at first) through countless hours of informal discussions. Because AUBG students were primarily from the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, there was a sense that their approach to leadership seemed to follow a sort of "strong-man" dependent model in their home countries; as opposed to a desire for a democratic or independent hands-off approach from their bosses at the companies they wished to work professionally upon graduation. This dichotomy was interesting and provided the foundation and starting point for the research question of how these students

perceived the concept of leadership and why it may have developed in this way; what were the driving factors and could these be modeled into reasonable archetypes.

The third factor for motivating this research was the socio-political shift globally towards a questioning of the democratic approach to government. The recent shift towards Populism and *Populist Authoritarianism* became a major environmental context for which to consider the thinking of leadership especially from the point of view of a regional generation completing their academic development and getting ready to enter society in a professional capacity.

These young people will either continue and strengthen the trend towards populism being seen in Europe or will they turn a corner and provide some new approach in national leadership, and perhaps in business leadership as well; a sort of hybrid approach.

Based on our conceptual framework, which is shown in Figure 1., our specific research objectives have been developed as: (1) identify distinct *perceptions of leadership* in our targeted population utilizing a controlled sample obtained from a survey tool; (2) analyze the data to identify *distinct consistent patterns of perception* from which to; (3) establish a reasonable first iteration *conceptual model* which relates these patterns; (4) utilize the model to better understand the *divergent nature of perception* of our population with respect to concepts of leadership between national leadership and corporate leadership.

Democracy, Leadership and a Dynamic Environmental Context

According to the Economist article, *How Democracy Dies*, indices of the health of democracy show alarming deterioration since the fiscal crisis of 2008. More than 80 countries show signs of regressing in democratic ideals in the period between 2017-2019 with only less than 30 showing improvement (How democracy dies. (2018, June 16). *The Economist*, Vol. 427, no. 9096, page 7). When we consider these statistics it is easy for us to conclude that such shifts in thinking are taking place in far-off countries other than the US. There is some justification in considering that these shifts towards an authoritarian “strongman model” occur in newly-formed fragile democracies such as those emerging in the early to mid-1990s after the collapse of the USSR. These democracies after all may not have the structural political mechanisms in place that a country like the United States has to provide checks and balances, to check the power of leadership. It is true that while, for example, a country like Bulgaria can trace back coherent sociological origins a thousand years thus making it an “old” country when compared to the relatively newly-developed United States; the US by contrast is a very “young” country but one of the *oldest democracies* where checks and balances on power have functioned continuously for over 200 years and constrain the power of presidential leadership. So, even though Bulgaria is listed as a “Free” state, we have statistics from Freedom House that report a continued deterioration of democratic governance in the country after 2009, citing reduced media independence, stalled reforms, and abuse of authority (Zankina 2018). Furthermore, the Democracy Index defines the country as a “*Flawed Democracy*” (Democracy Index 2017: Free speech under attack. The Economist Intelligence Unit. July 2018). This is just one example.

However, in demonstrating how this slide towards authoritarian leadership can in fact spread, the United States itself is not out of the woods. A number of surveys conducted between 2010 and 2015, have found an alarming statistic – less than a third of young Americans think it’s “*essential*” to live in a democracy. (Democracy’s retreat. (2018), *The Economist*, Vol. 427, no. 9096, page 51-53). This is an integral point within our research because it indicates direct sentiment towards national/political leadership not only in the US but *even more* towards authoritarianism in those fragile-system, newly-formed democracies, like Bulgaria, ripe for undermining.

The playbook for undermining liberal democracies essentially has four chapters: (1) there is a genuine popular grievance with the status quo; (2) a would-be strongman leader identifies “*enemies*” for angry voters to blame; (3) having won power the leader begins to chip away at established institutions and the rule of law while still pretending the country is free; (4) liberal democratic erosion takes place with election manipulation and other measures designed to cement continued power moving forward. This playbook has been used by leaders from Russia’s Putin, the first populist leader to take over a major country in the 21st Century, to Turkiye’s Erdogan, to Hungary’s Orban. One can even make a stretch and say that this playbook was *on the table* in the US just a short time ago.

Future would-be autocrats learn from each other’s experience and thus perpetuate the movement or at least try to; this was nowhere more apparent than in the 2016 US Presidential Election and subsequent events over the next 4 years culminating in the January 6 (2021) mob at the capitol building in Washington DC. According to an essay by The Brookings Institute’s Fiona Hill which appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, “.....*Trump came to more closely resemble Putin in political practice than he resembled any of his American predecessors.*” (Hill 2021). If forces shape potential populist/authoritarian inclinations, even in a country like the US which has fairly strong checks and balances on power, one can imagine the conditions and sentiment in the fragile democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia where our research was focused.

Evolution of Business Leadership and the Age of the Entrepreneur

Business leadership concepts have evolved since the industrial revolution, which we use as a starting point in our discussion. ***Trait Theory***, which considers personal qualities and characteristics that differentiate leaders from non-leaders, dominated thinking through the 1930s. Leaders were seen as charismatic, enthusiastic and courageous and you either had this in you or you didn’t. Followers generally accepted this framework and the resulting balance in organizations was, for the most part, harmonious with each group understanding their place in the hierarchy of things.

Behavioral Theory followed in the 1950s and 60s. It emphasized selection and training as the primary focus instead of the idea of being born a leader. This concept, coupled with the post-war economic boom at the time, enabled a significantly greater pool of workers to consider leadership positions and how they fit into the leader-follower relationship. Behavioral theory also ushered in the first primarily dual approach to leadership which in our opinion laid the initial foundation for the concept of democratic vs. autocratic approach in business leadership. Researchers

at the University of Michigan developed and identified two types of leadership behaviors: employee orientation and production orientation (Northouse 2022). **Employee-oriented** leaders emphasized interpersonal relationships by taking personal interest in the needs of employees and accepting individual differences among them; thus a more democratic approach. **Production-oriented** leaders emphasized the technical and task-oriented aspects of the job with little concern for the employees; thus a more impersonal and gradual move towards autocratic “*get things done*” approach and with decision-making being centralized. Followers now had a choice to work for either type of leader depending on the particular circumstances. And the choices were in fact plentiful because of the economic expansion enjoyed by a significant portion of the industrialized economies.

Contingency theories of leadership such as *Situational Leadership Theory* and the *Path-Goal Models* which emerged in the late 1960s emphasized the environment in which leadership takes place. This meant for example under conditions “A” your leadership style should be “X” and under conditions “B” leadership style should be “Y”. The factors that influenced this relationship included the urgency of the task at hand, followers’ ability and willingness to perform, available information and its dissemination to the team, perceptions of provided support or lack thereof, etc. With this leadership approach another important factor emerges in the evolution of leadership – leading based on what the situation at hand requires. This is important because it can and has been manipulated towards an authoritarianist approach in numerous situations.

In the 1980s **Charismatic and Transformational theories** emerged. These brought in several additional important dimensions primarily towards a sense of inspiration of the greater good of the organization and reaching objectives. Additionally, the articulation of a sense of vision and idealized overarching goal also characterize these theories and, interestingly enough, unconventional behavior. However charismatic and transformational leadership is not the same. The purely charismatic leader wants followers to adopt his/her charismatic world-view while the transformational leader wants followers to eventually question and improve upon **their own** established views...for themselves and to eventually transform into something better than their leader. The concept of charisma and leadership has always played a key role for many years and across multiple theories. Charisma has always been a short-cut to trust with respect to followers. Followers trust those they like, and charismatic leaders tend to be liked and followed, but not always for the right reasons. So this approach can, generally-speaking, swing both ways - towards a democratic or autocratic direction as long as charismatic factor(s) appeal to followers within the environmental context. Transformational leadership is interesting because it provides impetus for a “*something bigger and better than all of us*” approach which has been used in business and industry in the past from working towards an American ideal for example, to the entire mentality of Japanese business settings where the organization takes priority over the individual employee.

Around the year 2000 the concept of **Authentic Leadership** emerged and although this is still under development, it provides for a key factor in the leader-follower-environment equation – the central theme of **trust** which was begun over the previous two decades. Now, this theory put trust in the forefront. One can argue

that trust in leadership has always played a major role, but in authentic leadership it plays *the* major role.

Along with this, the new millennium, coupled with significant technological breakthroughs in the age of information also ushered in *the age of the entrepreneur/corporate entrepreneur*, the employee that is not necessarily tied to one organization or one leader, but is in a sense an independent contractor even if employed by a larger organization. We call this *Self-Leadership*.

This is significant because it has helped shape the thinking of followers on how they view leadership, corporate trust, and their individual roles within the larger organization. We also argue that over the past 2 years with the global COVID-19 pandemic, this sense of free-lance independence has been significantly reinforced. Thus further shaping the concepts and attitudes of younger generations towards work, professional independence within organizations, and overall organizational leadership. This, along with other socio-cultural factors has created the age of “*me*”..... “*I lead myself*”.

So the two dynamic factors that are important for our research and we see developing are:

(1) a questioning of a democratic approach to national leadership over the past 15 years and a tendency towards a populist strongman model; this being true primarily in political systems emerging from the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s but also making their way even to solid democracies such as the USA as has been evident since 2016; (2) an evolution of business leadership that emerged initially from leader-focused (autocratic), ➡ to team-focused (situational democratic), ➡ to eventually “me” focused. This evolution in business leadership has aligned initially with the greater industrialization and innovation of the past 200 years, then with the tech boom and entrepreneurship of the past 25 years, and even more recently has seen further development and acceleration by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this point it is fair to mention three additional factors that will impact the future thinking of the concepts outlined here. The 2022 war in Ukraine may have a lasting impact that reverses the trend towards a populist strongman/authoritarian approach to national leadership; this remains to be seen. In addition, the political and economic trajectory of China within the global stage will also play an important factor that will either reinforce the “*strongman model*” and lend credence to its viability or it will reverse it. This also remains to be seen and based on which way China is headed and how successful it will be. Finally we need to consider to what extent will the remote work trends emerging from COVID-19 last and continue to contribute to a greater sense of independence and “the self” in the workplace.

In Table 1, we summarize briefly the different theoretical approaches to business leadership over the past 150 years or so and the primary factors and contributors/business environment for each. It should be noted this table is not meant to provide a comprehensive outline of each leadership theory but a layman approach to what the individual theory essentially represents. Of course the foundations is rigorously supported in numerous references including Northouse (Northouse 2022).

Table 1. Key Leadership Theories, Foci, and Contributing Environmental Factors

LEADERSHIP THEORY	FOCUS	BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
Trait	- Either you have it or you don't - No Choice	- Industrialization period > social differentiation
Behavioral	- It's in your hands - You have a Choice	- Post WWII economic expansion (in the US and Western Europe)
Contingency	- It depends on Emotional Intelligence integration with the environment which you are working in - You have a Choice	
Charismatic and Transformational	- It's about something bigger than all of us; the greater objective - the choice should be obvious	- Globalization, the development of "big business" and global trade
Self-Leadership	- It's all about "me"	- growth in technology and entrepreneurship - social media and more recently the global COVID19 pandemic

Methods

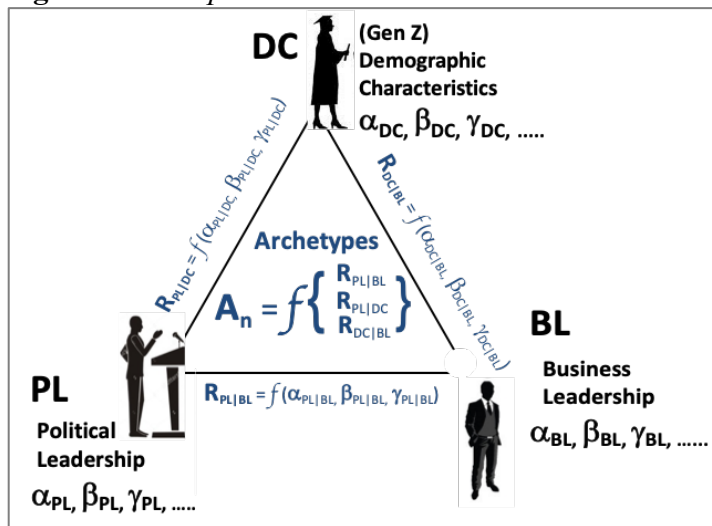
The research was conducted with a survey instrument used to gather data on which a correlational analytical methodology was utilized. "The correlational approach is effective in determining whether, and to what extent, a relationship exists between 2 or more quantifiable variables" (Gay and Diel 1992). The completely anonymous and institutional (AUBG) research-approved survey consisted of four sections: (1) introduction to and purpose of the research; (2) instructions; (3) six demographic questions that provided data on the respondent's background; and (4) thirty-five Likert Scale survey questions that provided the views/opinions of the respondent.

In addition to the survey a Qualitative Interview Protocol was developed and used for those respondents who wished to provide additional information via either a face-to-face or online video interview. The protocol consisted of a structured and standardized approach to:

(1) interview preparation; (2) actual Interview structure; process, and flow; (3) question wording, structure, and sequence; and (4) post interview process. There were small variations in protocol based on whether the interview was conducted face-to-face or online, but these were negligible. This approach overall is typically considered as "...an appropriate methodology in an initial research effort that is intended to develop some theoretical understanding..." (Henrie 2005). This multi-method, or what is referred to as *triangulation* has also been successfully utilized in research conducted by Stock and Greis (1996) and Jansen (2002). For our research this methodology was appropriate and applicable since the intent was to establish an understanding of the relationship among the three Primary Factor Groups (PFG)

associated with our Gen Z respondents: (1) Demographics, (2) Political Leadership views, and (3) Business Leadership views. Our conceptual model is shown in Figure 1. What this framework depicts is the *integrated relationship among the three PFGs - DC, BL, and PL* each of which maintains individual group characteristics; for example for the Primary Factor Group related to Political Leadership (PL), we have a set of group characteristics that will be identified by our model; these are depicted as α_{PL} , β_{PL} , γ_{PL} and so on. The relationship of these with respect to the Demographic PFG (DC) is shown as the relationship: $R_{PL|DC}$. If we extend the discussion around the entire model we establish the variable relationships among the three PFGs which combined become the Archetype Model A_n . Once data is gathered and analyzed and the mathematical derivation is complete, we obtain what is shown in Figure 5 which depicts the model. Figure 5 is essentially the end result of Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Development & Foundation

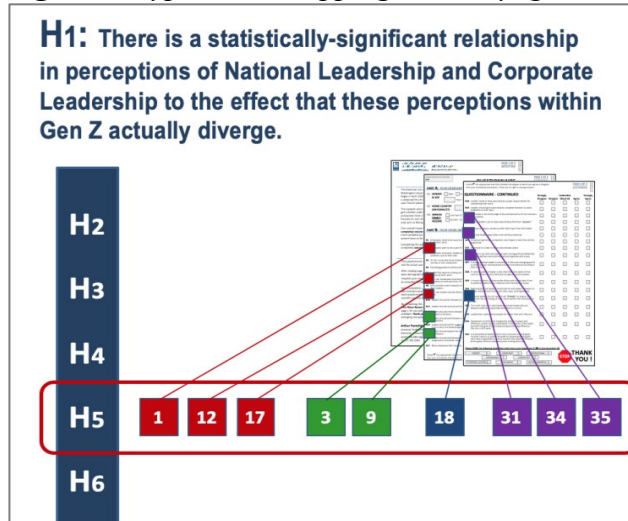
The primary assumption of the research is that there is in fact a correlation among the three primary factors DC, PL, and BL with regards to the Gen Z respondent population. There does exist a relationship which can be identified and used to describe an archetype model in terms of their concept of leadership. Furthermore, this concept of leadership will emerge as dichotomous. Based on this the primary hypothesis is stated here, along with the Null Hypothesis:

H_1 : *There is a statistically-significant relationship in perceptions of National Leadership and Corporate Leadership to the effect that these perceptions within Gen Z actually diverge.*

H_0 : *There is no statistically-significant relationship in perceptions of National Leadership and Corporate Leadership to the effect that these perceptions within Gen Z actually diverge.*

Several sub hypotheses which relate to specific demographic, corporate, and national factors in terms of leadership roles were developed and mapped to key survey questions this is shown in Figure 2. Essentially this figure provides a visual representation of the following link within our research: **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE** ➔ **HYPOTHESES SET DEVELOPMENT** ➔ **QUESTIONNAIRE RATIONALIZATION** (with respect to individual questions linked to individual sub hypotheses).

Figure 2. *Hypotheses Mapping to Survey Questions Approach*



Subsequently, hypotheses were tested using conventional methodologies - statistical analysis on a random sample of the population being analyzed, i.e., the data obtained by a survey questionnaire tool.

Respondents tend to favor a strong, nationalistic, even populist authoritarian approach to national leadership based on their home country experience, while expecting a much more democratic even laissez-faire approach when it comes to their professional work environment and dealing with those directly supervising them. Thus research development and analysis must follow along the two lines of national and corporate leadership coupled within the context of specific demographics, as outlined in Figure 1, so as to move forward with establishing the archetype model.

In following a correlational approach, we model our analysis in a similar way as Vincent Michel Ribiere's 2000-2001 research (Ribiere 2001). This methodology, as previously utilized by Gay,

“attempts to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables...prediction of some outcome or hypothesis confirmation is based on a strong relationship between the variables...” (Gay and Diel 1992).

Based initially on the Primary Factor Groups (PFG) of our conceptual framework, Table 2 constructs the specific attributes established and associated with the development of the eventual quantitative model.

Table 2. *Specific Factors and Attributes of the Research Framework and Model*

PFG	Attributes: $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \dots$
DC	A – Age I – Family Income W – Work Experience G – Gender P – Political View H – Home County
PL	IF – Strong “Internally-Focused” position on national issues DS – The leader as the primary D irection- S etter SRL – Assertive adherence to S ingularly-established R ules of L aw PS – Level of participatory P ower- S haring with other institutions in the government FA – F ocus on A ction rather than debate and discussion PE – Reliance of efficient P ower and E xpediency
BL	ES – E mployee S upervision SA – S elf- A ppraisal of work PWE – P erceived W ork E thic TA – T ask- A ssignment work self- EDM – E mployee E mpowerment, D ecision- M aking selection RW – R eward-punishment system SD – S elf- D irection

Population and Survey Design & Development

The survey distribution population for the research were 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students in the business department at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG). Students ranged in age from 19-23 which puts them in the category of Generation Z. They come from a number of different countries located in Central and Eastern Europe, The Balkans, and Central Asia. The direct benefit this population offers in terms of our study is that the majority, if not all, of the countries these students represent, fall under the category of newly-developed political systems after the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s. We have representation from Slovakia, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and others, including a significant percentage from Russia. Some of these nations are so-called fragile democracies, some have been and/or are currently led in an autocratic fashion.

Not all but a good number score high on global corruption indices, which means corruption is imbedded into their political systems and may influence a significant part of the daily life of the population.

The research instrument utilized consisted of a completely anonymous self-administered questionnaire designed to collect the required data. For analysis purposes individual questionnaires were distinctly identified using a Unique Questionnaire Identifier number, UQI. Student names were never documented nor utilized in any form. The questionnaire or survey was the preferred type of data collection instrument for our particular research because it provided for an economical and fast way for obtaining our data. Three key areas need to be considered in survey design: question wording, question coding, and survey appearance including flow. During the overall development of the survey, from textural, structural, and visual points of view, and because our student population came from diverse cultural backgrounds, design factors of the survey were obtained from referencing *Cross-Cultural Survey Methods*, by Harkness et al. (2003).

The language of the survey was English since every student accepted into the AUBG Program must demonstrate a high proficiency in English prior to enrollment; academic instruction (all classes) as well as all university life is conducted 100% in

English as well. Thus we felt language was not a factor for these international students and the survey instrument would successfully gauge true sentiment. We used a five position Likert Scale for the bulk of the survey associated with specific views on leadership. Likert scales are ordinal and statistical analysis for survey data such as ours examines response patterns—frequencies of different responses, what response occurred most frequently for each question within a group, variation in responses within a group, and differences in ways different subgroups (within the same survey) responded (Kasunic 2005)

In terms of actual question development, we wanted to maintain an academically-rigorous approach to our research which could directly link to previously well-established and reviewed leadership research methods. Therefore, our survey questions were taken from previous work by the well-known leadership researcher Peter G. Northouse. These have been published and can be found in several editions of the classical text *Leadership Theory and Practice* as well as related research articles by Northouse. The alternative to this approach was to establish new, original questions in identifying authoritarian vs. democratic, vs. laissez-faire types of leadership, and task vs. relationship leadership approaches, but we felt that this would not provide the appropriate level of rigor and foundational basis as has already been established and thus may lead to questionable conclusions based on these untested new questions. Trying to do this would lead us to scope creep and take away from the focus of the *relationship* between leadership thinking in a political vs. business sense. Thus, our use of previously established questions which have already been vetted. We felt that the two basic rules in formulating strong survey questions: *relevance* and *accuracy* have been met by previous extensive research. The survey questionnaire instrument is shown in Figure 3a.

Figure 3a. Survey Tool & Questions

The image shows two pages of a survey questionnaire. Page 2 of 3 (left) is titled 'QUESTIONNAIRE' and contains 'PART A: YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC INFO' and 'PART B: YOUR VIEWS ON LEADERSHIP & BUSINESS'. Part A includes questions about gender, age, home country, annual family income, political view, work experience, and preferred country to work. Part B contains 17 Likert-scale questions (B1-B17) regarding leadership styles and employee needs. Page 3 of 3 (right) is titled 'QUESTIONNAIRE - CONTINUED' and contains questions B18-B35, also using a Likert scale. At the bottom of page 3, there is a 'THANK YOU!' graphic and a 'STOP' sign, along with a request to rank leadership traits from most to least important.

Ten questions, **B1, B4, B7, B10, B12, B13, B15, B17, B20,** and **B23** measure propensity towards authoritarian business leadership (**AU**). Nine questions, **B2, B5, B8, B11, B14, B16, B18, B21,** and **B24,** measure propensity towards democratic business leadership (**DE**). And, six questions, **B3, B6, B9, B19, B22,** and **B25,** measure inclination towards laissez-faire type business leadership (**LZ**). This gives a total of 25 questions measuring business leadership style. Furthermore, we utilize 10 additional questions, **B26-B35** derived from Northouse and geared specifically towards political leadership with a delineation between autocratic vs. democratic style approach. Table 3b outlines the sections/sources from the Northouse text.

Figure 3b. Survey Tool & Questions Sources

SURVEY QUESTIONS	DIRECT SOURCE	LEADERSHIP STYLE	SURVEY QUESTION
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9, B17, B18, B19, B20, B21, B22, B23, B24, B25	Adapted from 3.1 Leadership Styles Questionnaire; Introduction to Leadership: Concepts and Practices, 2 nd Edition, Peter G. Northouse, Sage Publications, 2011	Authoritarian Learning	B1, B4, B7, B12, B13, B15, B17, B20, B23
B10, B11, B12, B13, B14, B15, B16	Adapted from Path-Goal Leadership Questionnaire; Leadership: Theory & Practice, 7 th and 9 th editions, Peter G. Northouse, Sage Publications, 2016, 2022	Democratic Learning	B2, B5, B8, B11, B14, B16, B18, B21, B24
B26, B27, B28, B29, B30, B31, B32, B33, B34, B35	Modified from Leadership Behavior Questionnaire; Leadership: Theory & Practice, 7 th editions, Peter G. Northouse, Sage Publications, 2016	Laissez-Faire	B3, B6, B9, B19, B22, B25
		↓	
		Applied to Political Factors/Leadership	→ B26, B27, B28, B29, B30, B31, B32, B33, B34, B35

Results & Analysis

A total of 667 surveys were distributed over a period of 3 years starting in April 2018 and ending in May 2021. The method used was initially hard copies distributed and completed anonymously in a classroom setting with the researcher not present. A student volunteer coordinated this process. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online learning, the last academic year of the research 2020-2021, surveys were done electronically online. The response rate with in-class hard copies was over 95% which is a significant achievement. It is felt that the respondents were a sort of “*captured audience*”.

in the classroom and this provided a high turn-in rate. In addition, we felt that the students themselves were very interested in the research and were willing to contribute. But, the response rate for the last year conducted online dropped to 67%. This was not very surprising as we felt overall student motivation in general decreased due to the shift to online learning because of the pandemic. Overall out of the total 667 surveys distributed, we received a total of 532 returns with useable data; this is an overall return rate of approximately 79% and is considered a strong response rate for these types of research. We feel that the sample collected is representative of the target population in which the research is focused.

In terms of demographics, 47% respondents were male, while 53% were female. 58.81% listed their age as 22 years old or younger while 41.19% designated their age as 23 or older. We felt these statistics provide for a fairly good balance. 42.77% responded a total annual family income of \$25K or less; 31.02% between \$25-\$50K; 18.31% between \$50-75K; and 7.9% over \$75K. Total response rate for

the annual family income question was 93%. Additionally, students were asked to select their political view. 52.85% listed this as “*Liberal*”, 41.65% as “*Moderate*”, and 5.5% as “*Conservative*.” This self-reporting is not surprising since these students chose to study at an American liberal arts institution; but it becomes interesting when we discuss the survey results.

The vast majority of students, over 93%, responded that they had 3 years or less of professional experience; this needs further explanation. Students were free to list their summer work and travel program trips to the United States as professional work. The majority of AUBG students participate in this program every summer as a means for funding their education. Students obtain summer work visas and work throughout the United States but a good percentage of AUBG students (about 60%) head to Cape Cod, Nantucket, and/or Martha’s Vineyard where they actually do have experience in a professional setting primarily as employees in the Service and Tourism/ Leisure sector. Additionally we felt that the students’ exposure to these *particular* locations also contributes to their rationale and thought process which we attempted to control within the analysis.

Respondent nationalities fell into four categories based on survey responses. Approximately **59%** listed themselves within the primary **Group 1** of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and from specific countries such as Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Russia, Belarus, Albania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Romania. An additional **33%** listed their home country affiliations within **Group 2** Central Asian and surrounding countries which includes Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The remaining 8% were from miscellaneous countries with only a handful of students enrolling at AUBG including through the EU’s Erasmus program; these included Lithuania, Latvia, Czechia, Moldova, and Poland. Finally, there was approximately half a dozen returned surveys from students from India, Spain, Greece, and the US (two transfer students). These were not considered in the analysis since they fell out of the research’s geographical scope area.

Finally, the survey asked for a preferred country which a responded wished to work/be professionally employed upon graduation. These were grouped by regions with the highest percentage of respondents (78%) listing the US, UK, EU including Holland, Austria, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, and Denmark as preferred destination. Note, some responded listed specific countries while others listed “*EU*”. The second group of countries was listed by 16% of respondents and included Canada, Switzerland, Russia, Iceland, Singapore and New Zealand. Approximately 6% of students had no preference or did not list anything. The results clearly indicated a propensity to work and make a career “*in the West*”.

Based on these responses and with some simple data filtering and weighing (selecting complete data and omitting several data sets which were incomplete; these represented less than 2.32% of the data) we were able to obtain a strong representative sample of a typical Gen Z’er from Central, Eastern and Balkan Europe as well as Central Asia, between the ages of 20-23 (on average), with an annual family income approximately between \$23-\$43K with about 8-12 months (total) work experience primarily in the US (summers) and who identify as primarily

“liberal” to “moderate liberal” This is our respondent so-called *persona*. With the additional important note that all respondents were Business Majors at the university.

Results - based on the specific grouping/mappings of the survey questions associated with types of leadership our research resulted in the following frequency distribution (bar graphs) shown in Figures 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d. For specific wording of individual survey question B1, B2, B3....., please refer to previous Figure 3. Our survey results have a **margin of error of that ranges between 2.52 - 4.39%** depending on the individual result. This was calculated in the typical fashion and based on a Z value at 90%. Additionally, all appropriate mathematical calculations were done according to established norms in statistical analysis; alpha $\alpha=0.05$ (less than 5% chance that the survey data being tested could have occurred under the null hypothesis) and a p-value of 0.037 (<0.05) indicated good support of our hypothesis and rejection of the null hypothesis. We felt that the data was relevant, reliable, valid, and representative of the population.

Measures of central tendency and dispersion, which we consider in our analysis, “...constitute the fundamental elements of descriptive statistics” (Rea and Parker 2005). They describe and summarize a large amount of data typically obtained through survey methodologies. These analyses are fairly simple and elegant because they provide description through single statistical values. Initial analysis was conducted on all fundamental survey questions in order to obtain a baseline of our data. This is important because the next step is establishing an analysis on the relationship among the data, specifically the relationship between variable established from the various survey questions. Therefore, an understanding of the initial data disposition prior to initiating such a relational analysis is important. If there already exists some initial relationship prior to our correlational methodology, it needs to be identified and accounted for within the subsequent analysis.

Figure 4a. Propensity Towards Authoritarian Leadership

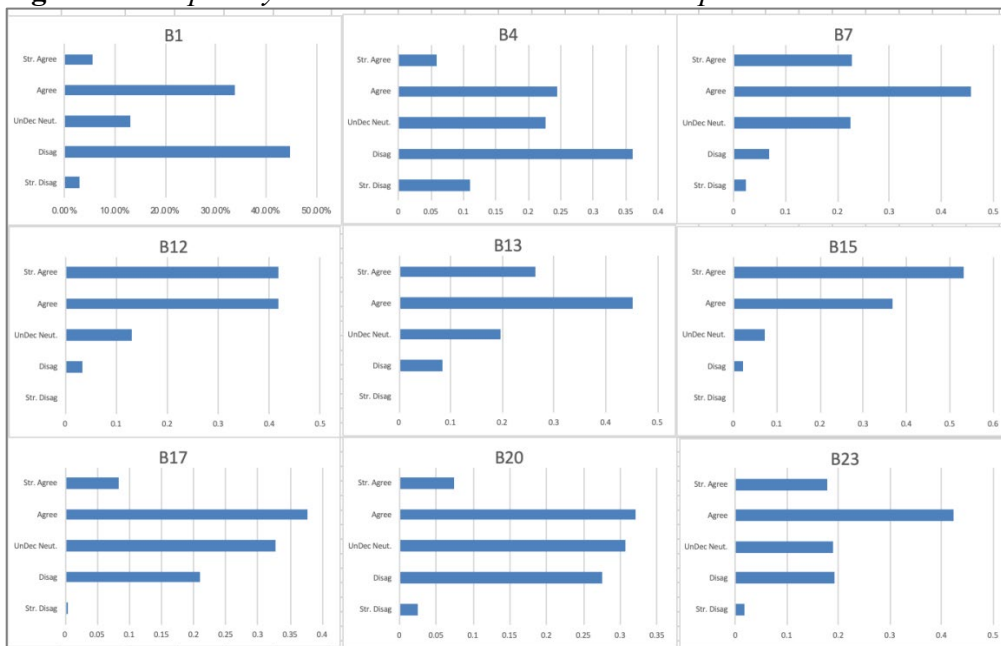


Figure 4b. Propensity Towards Democratic Leadership

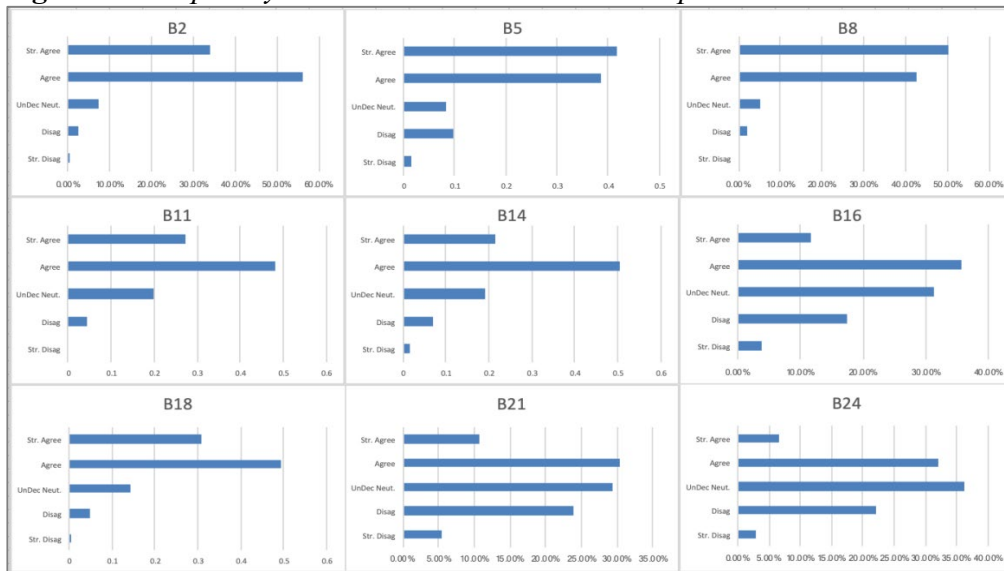


Figure 4c. Propensity Towards Laissez-Faire Leadership

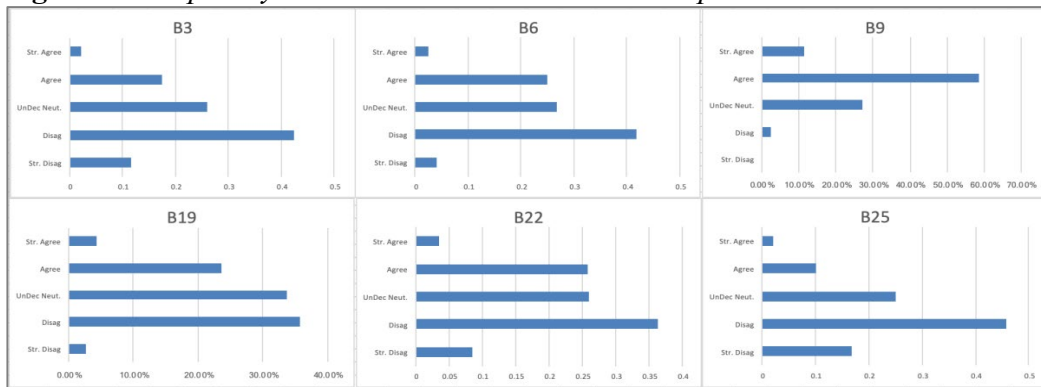
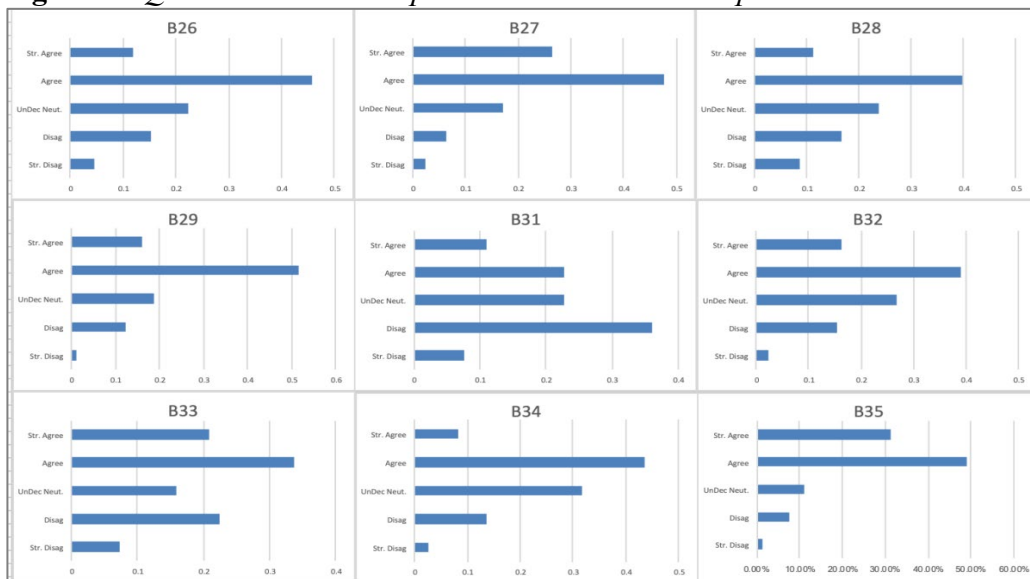


Figure 4c. Question Set with Respect to Political Leadership



The simple arithmetic mean was calculated to identify data located above and below the central point in addition to providing a relative distance of the data to that point. This is important in order to establish the baseline for each survey question from which subsequent analyses were handled. The median also was calculated to provide an additional measure comparable to the arithmetic mean. According to Rea and Parker, when working with cross-tabulated contingency tables, “...it is normal not to expect the median and the mean to coincide or even be close in magnitude to each other based on a scaled frequency distribution used such as a Likert Scale...” and the arithmetic mean seems to be the most appropriate measure to consider (Rea and Parker 2005).

The additional measure of central tendency is the mode which is useful in identifying the particular category (in ordinal scaled surveys) which is “most popular” with respondents, or most “typical” of the population surveyed. This calculation will help identify some beliefs and trends and add to our discussion and conclusions from an overall perspective. The well-known standard deviation measure was individually calculated in order to provide a good measure of dispersion that does not eliminate any outliers or extreme values yet is not overly influenced by them. Also, we included a simple chi-square calculation (χ^2) for all the distribution function data obtained for each survey question so that we could confirm that no initial relationship exists prior to initiating our correlational analysis relating to our hypotheses. Finally, fairly simple and versatile measure of association derived directly from the chi-square values is Cramer’s V. This test is used extensively in survey research. Statistical significance factor p was maintained at 0.05.

Based on this methodology and starting with cross-tabulation which was used because of our multiple nominal variables mapped directly to specific survey questions, we initialize our analysis; next, verifying statistical significance, a targeted correlational analysis was performed to establish and finalize our desired archetype leadership relationship model. The model is shown in Figure 5. Note, the factor/attribute variables are outlined in previous Table 2.

The model A_n is composed of essentially of 3 primary factors that align with our initial conceptual framework shown in Figure 1; these factors are: (1) the relationship (R) between Political Leadership (PL) and Business Leadership (BL) which is designated as $R_{PL|BL}$; (2) the relationship (R) between Political Leadership (PL) and the Demographic Characteristics of the respondents (DC) which is designated as $R_{PL|DC}$; (3) the relationship (R) between Business Leadership (BL) and the Demographic Characteristics of the respondents (DC) which is designated as $R_{BL|DC}$.

The model is refined and resolved into 2 final terms which relate the 3 primary factors mentioned and a necessary error term. The first of these term $[R_{PL}/R_{BL}]$ is of primary importance because it relates the two research factors in question Political and Business Leadership and establishes the primary relational function between the two; while the second term $[(R_{PL}+R_{BL})/R_{DC}]$, relates these leadership terms with the demographic data R_{DC} from the respondents. The analysis outlined above along with the empirical data obtained by the surveys provide the numerical weight factors for each of the attribute variables previously defined.

Finally, our analysis must take into consideration (through survey data responses and factor/ question relational analysis) the fact that the model is actually a set of 3

equations relating to the 3 types of leadership: Authoritarian (AU), Democratic (DE), and Laissez Faire (LZ), based on multiple iterations for n .

The model is, of course, preliminary and requires further refinement if you consider the fact that it is based on a fairly controlled population. We view this model as a first step in the continued evaluation and research.

Figure 5. Leadership Relationship Model Development

$$A_n = f\{R_{PL|BL}, R_{PL|DC}, R_{BL|DC}\}_n = [R_{PL} / R_{BL}] + [(R_{PL} + R_{BL}) / R_{DC}]_n + e$$

Where:

$n_1 = AU =$ Authoritarian tendency
 $n_2 = DE =$ Democratic tendency
 $n_3 = LZ =$ Laissez Faire tendency

$R_{PL, n1} = 0.53(IF)_{AU} + 0.61(DS)_{AU} + 0.67(SRL)_{AU} + 0.63(PS)_{AU} + 0.61(FA)_{AU} + 0.50(PE)_{AU}$
 $R_{PL, n2} = 0.26(IF)_{DE} + 0.18(DS)_{DE} + 0.12(SRL)_{DE} + 0.14(PS)_{DE} + 0.22(FA)_{DE} + 0.23(PE)_{DE}$

$R_{BL, n1} = 0.38(ES)_{AU} + 0.23(PWE)_{AU} + 0.84(EDM)_{AU} + 0.68(RW)_{AU} + 0.74(SA)_{AU}$
 $+ 0.82(TA)_{AU} + 0.67(SD)_{AU}$

$R_{BL, n2} = 0.88(ES)_{DE} + 0.59(PWE)_{DE} + 0.79(EDM)_{DE} + 0.61(RW)_{DE} + 0.76(SA)_{DE}$
 $+ 0.81(TA)_{DE} + 0.82(SD)_{DE}$

$R_{BL, n3} = 0.22(ES)_{LZ} + 0.70(PWE)_{LZ} + 0.70(EDM)_{LZ} + 0.12(RW)_{LZ} + 0.39(SA)_{LZ}$
 $+ 0.45(TA)_{LZ} + 0.36(SD)_{LZ}$

And,

$R_{DC} = 0.76(AG) + 0.61(IPH) + 0.32(W)$

where:

AG = aggregate factor combining and taking into account **A**ge & **G**ender
 IPH = aggregate factor combining and taking into account **I**ncome, **P**olitical View, **H**ome Country
 W = taking into account **W**ork experience

e = error term

Discussion

Political Leadership

Based on the data and subsequent analysis, respondents to our survey have a fairly strong tendency towards an autocratic approach to political/national leadership when they feel it serves their country's purpose both nationally and internationally. We can see this fairly clearly based on the responses to specific questions in our survey (raw data responses, pre-analysis).

Initially we see that 57% of respondents favor strong political leadership. This is not by any way unusual and would seem a normal desire for any nation's people. This sense of strong leadership is now coupled with, and related to, a desire for a

favorable image of the country's standing internationally; and in this sense 74% respondents make this connection and are in favor of this approach. This relationship however can be deceptive and in our view false; but nevertheless it plays a significant role in the perceptions of citizens of new, emerging democracies or pseudo-democracies after the end of the cold war as is evident from the data of those responding with agreement and/or strong agreement.

If we now consider taking a closer look at the leader as an individual we gain greater insight to perceptions of our respondents as to what constitutes *effective and reasonable behavior*.

About a third of respondents (33.58%) agree or strongly agree that a leader does not need to act "*friendly*" as long as they focus on the well-being of their nation within the international stage. Of course, "*friendliness*" is subjective and respondents can have several things on their mind including professionalism, but it opens the door to a deeper thinking of proper action of a national leader, and what can be acceptable to his/her citizens depending on situations, situations that can be easily manipulated with propaganda, the media, etc. Furthermore, in many situations the lines between what may be good for a nation and what may be good for an autocratic leader trying to stay in power, are often blurred, once gain by propaganda and media control. If one takes this concept of "*friendliness*" to an extreme one can argue that Russia's move on Ukraine of course not a "*friendly*" move by any means, would be acceptable to perhaps a third or more of the country's citizens as long as it is to their best interest, or at least they are convinced it is to their best interest and prestige, even though in many situations, including the situation in Ukraine, the opposite occurs, the prestige of the distinctly "*unfriendly*" leader/country is in fact damaged rather than enhanced.

Diving deeper into the concept of individual and exclusive control, approximately half (51%) responded favorably with agreement and strong agreement to a political leader being the chief direction-setter of both national and international agenda, and 67.7% favor direct and strong input towards these agendas, policies, direction, etc. The key thing here is that we are now moving from the relationship between strong political leadership and international status (which may be positive or negative), to a more sinister concentration of power into a single individual with little if any consideration of other government entities such as parliament, the courts, etc. More than half of respondents (55.26%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "*too much sharing or participative leadership can become inefficient....*"

This closely reflects the belief by some who define leadership as essentially "*getting things done*." Problems arise as to **how** we get things done. In a democracy the means **do** in fact justify the results, while in an autocracy one can argue the opposite.

Next, we have over half of respondents, **51.88%**, agree or strongly agree with the statement, Survey Question **B34**:

"...benevolent authoritarian leadership relies on power and efficiency: power clearly-established in the hands of the leader and with the goal of improving and guaranteeing efficiency; this can in fact work."

This question now directly links the concept of authoritarian leadership through specific wording to the idea of positively affecting efficiency of “*getting things done*” but even more importantly the statement goes on to state that “...*this can in fact work*” at which more than half of respondents actually agree! So we have made a direct link to getting things done with authoritarianism and tied in a fairly positively-leaning response from those taking the survey. First off we feel this demonstrates that respondents from the countries we targeted demonstrate a real need and strong desire to improve their nations; the problem becomes once again, *how* this can be done.

Our research indicates that a majority of individuals feel that strong leadership that borders on authoritarianism is OK. Secondly it’s interesting to note the percentage of respondents who disagreed with this statement – only **16.35%** with a substantial number **31.77%** undecided. Now, we refer to this statement as a sort of “*overt*” statement because it specifically uses the term ‘authoritarian’ and even though we have over half respondents agreeing, we have some caution as demonstrated in the high number of undecided responses.

The last survey question dealing with political leadership has been designed to encompass several previous points such as setting vision & goals, outlining a path (plan) for reaching these, ensuring everyone does their part (compliance) and all these centered around the national leadership’s individual control of this process. Survey Question **B35** states the following:

“...it is the political leader’s role to set up a common vision & goals for the nation; to outline the path to achieving these goals with clear responsibility; and to monitor the accomplishments of the goals while ensuring everyone is doing their part.”

This question was listed last because it offers a summary of some of the previously developed concepts in previous questions; it nicely packages everything together in a sort of concluding comment for the survey taker to consider. It also is a “*covert*” question whereas as the previous one (B34) was “*overt*” in that it mentioned authoritarianism; this one does not, but in closely scrutinizing this last question B35, one can see that it pretty much encompasses all aspects of authoritarianism from planning, to execution, to monitoring and all set up and controlled by an individual. The interesting thing is that whereas before, with overt question B34 we had a cautious 31.77% undecided....now, it seems, those undecided respondents have clearly come to an agreement with this question so that a significant **80.08%** agree or strongly agree!

We have shown that not only do a significant number of respondents tend towards an authoritarian approach as long as they think or feel things are getting done to a positive effect for their nation, but this number of support actually grows if one tends to deemphasize the fact that this is in fact an authoritarian approach. Thus we feel we have also proven to some point that the modus operandi, the methods that authoritarian leaders use to camouflage their approach, or spin it to a favorable light, actually works within their population. This is interesting even though we surveyed young people Gen Z, who predominately identify as liberal leaning, and who have gone through at least 3+ years of liberal arts higher education. The conclusion?.....*in this part of the world, under this environment of these young*

democracies, it may be a relatively easy thing to get individuals to support a more authoritarian approach to national leadership depending on how you “spin it”.

Business Leadership

Now, what about respondents' ideas in business leadership? We begin with those questions in the survey that measure tendency towards authoritarian leadership. Here we see that because of the relative inexperience with professional work and general insecurity of young people ready to enter the job market, with certain questions which relate to authoritarian style leadership the respondents tended to answer in agreement; for example, 90.17% agreed that work bosses need to explain level of required performance expected and 60.15% agreed that work bosses are the ones that give orders and clarify procedures. We feel that these respondent values are indicative of the Gen Z group in a sense that they do in fact want direction, initially, but then desire greater independence with their professional duties on the job. Almost half of respondents (47.74%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that employees must have close supervision or they will not do their work. And equally (47.18%) disagreed with the idea that employees are generally lazy and non-productive.

What we can glean specifically from the response data here, and what was analyzed into our model and compared with the authoritarian approach to national leadership is that in aggregate (64.2-69.9%) we have a population that indicates a propensity towards authoritarianism. The conditional factors are that this approach should, at least in theory, benefit a relatively new, fragile, but what is only thought about as a democracy. But if an authoritarian leader effectively camouflages their approach and essentially creates a (pseudo-democracy) in which populism and media control reign, then the potential for agreement with this approach may reach upwards of 81%. On the other hand, in a business setting, and especially in a publicly-traded organization where transparency is not only the norm, but also a financial requirement, where annual reports are published, financials are audited, and performance overall is open for scrutiny, we have a tendency for authoritarian leadership of only 33.5-38.2% based on aggregate analysis of the data. This is still significant (approximately a third of respondents) but we feel that the major reasons for this are: (1) cultural/historical; (2) the lack of real professional experience of these young people in a sort of anxiety about what comes next after graduation, and thus manifesting itself into positive (authoritarian-leaning responses) with questions on direction of work (of course a new employee will most likely always feel that he/she will need more direction than say someone with a number of years of experience); (3) a real need for initial job stability professionally which manifests itself through a decrease in a democratic approach/response and a slight increase in a sort of autocratic leadership approach that will result in a more stable environment, so the thinking goes. Now whether this actually happens in reality or not is another question.

If we consider the responses which indicate a favor towards democratic/participative style leadership, we see a significantly strong indication from the data and corresponding model. A significant majority of respondents (89.95%) agree or

strongly agree that employees should be part of the decision-making process in organizations. Furthermore 80.45% say that providing guidance without pressure is the key to good corporate leadership – the key to being a “good boss,” while 92.83% responded that supportive communication from their bosses would be strongly desired. Furthermore, 72% and 75.61% respectively indicate that bosses should ask for suggestions from followers on how things get done in the organization and solicit advice (from followers) on issues and problems that the organization may face, even though such concerns may not impact followers directly.

So, what we can see from these responses is a clear propensity, or at least a strong desire, of followers/potential employees towards a real inclusive type environment within their future professional work environments. When analyzed, the level of these responses is greater in magnitude to any tendency towards an authoritarian approach by a factor of 1.4< favoring democratic/participatory leadership. Interestingly though, we still see a sense of inexperience, anxiety, and insecurity within the responses when we consider the following; when asked to respond to this statement, only 38.72% agreed or strongly agreed: “...people are generally competent; and if given a task they will do a good job.” In our opinion this is due to the general lack of professional work experience of the respondents, as previously mentioned. If we utilize our model in multiple iterations and analyze results further we see that a significant aggregate response towards democratic business leadership takes shape favorably, upwards of 94.1%

Finally, we need to consider the responses for those questions that indicate a more relaxed laissez-faire type of leadership approach to business which responses, we feel, would probably strengthen and complement the democratic model. Here we start with responses to the question (B19) that leaders should give subordinates complete freedom to solve problems on their own. 38.42% disagree with this statement, while only 27.87% agree, which strengthens the democratic, participative style as opposed to a complete hands-off approach. This is reinforced with responses to the next question (B22): “..... workers prefer little input from the leader.” Once again the majority 44.74% disagreed with this while only 25.94% agreed. When asked, more directly, whether it’s better to leave subordinates alone, a greater majority at 62.78% disagreed with only 12.22% agreement. And finally a significant percentage of 70.11% did agree to the question of whether leaders should allow subordinate to appraise their own work, to some extent.

With respect to the demographic factors we accounted for, namely age, gender, income, political view, home country and work experience, we identified the aggregate factor for age and gender to provide the biggest impact. Slightly older female respondents tended to favor a more participative/democratic business environment but also to a national approach to leadership, somewhat more than their male counterparts which tended to lean towards authoritarianism.

The second factor we aggregated for easier modeling was based on income, political view, and home country. Here we saw a corresponding trend, hence the particular methodology we used to combine these. As income increased we saw a tendency towards more liberal views and this also corresponded well to the political view factor as well. With regards to home country we utilized published democratic index factors previously mentioned in the introduction of this paper that corresponded

with the respondents' home country and we incorporated the average time that country was considered "*free and democratic*" a sort of experience with democracy. However, one of the limitations we ran into was that even though some countries may have for example say 25+ years of democratic elections (Bulgaria for example), it was difficult to tie in any factor for corruption, thus this was omitted and the primary measure was the number of years since the first free elections; this being the years of experience with a liberal form of government.

The final factor was work experience which, based on the fact that overall work experience of the entire population was rather limited, we really could not provide for a significant impact to the model. The number of years, actually measured in months rather than years was consistently limited for all student respondents so this factor's impact was low. But, this actual limitation, as discussed above, we feel did provide an impact we feel overall to the input data we received we just could not account for variation because the variation was low across the board.

Conclusions

Based on what we set out to accomplish within our specific scope of objectives, we feel we have successfully met those objectives. This research set out to *measure* national leadership and business leadership concepts and ideas of a specific population of Gen Z'ers coming from former authoritarian countries such as the Eastern Block, former republics of the Soviet Union in Central Asia and other similar regional countries, and including Russia itself. Some of these countries today would be considered "liberal democracies" while others we would still consider authoritarian to some extent or so called "pseudo-democracies" catering to populism. We feel our research accomplish this goal of measuring ideas of leadership in these two areas from a statistically significant population of young people.

Next we *analyzed* our data to see if we could identify a significant relationship and prove our hypothesis that Gen Z'ers from our population tend to feel one way in terms of political leadership, leaning towards a strong authoritarian model, while at the same time favoring a significantly more liberal approach towards their own work life expectations of leadership (i.e., their boss). Here they desire a more democratic and hands-off approach as it pertains to them and their work. Thus we identified this inverse dichotomous relationship - ***strong national leadership bordering on authoritarian***, if it can bring desired results, ***but a democratic professional work environment approach with respect to them directly***. Here our respondents wished for overall more freedom, personal recognition, and opportunities to design, plan and execute their own work without too much interference from above after initial consultations with "the boss". This is the opposite of their national leadership thinking approach.

Finally, we used our data to *establish an archetype model* for this sort of thinking taking into account the various factors for national leadership, business leadership, and the key demographic data provided by our respondents. We compared our analysis and model with published research and attempted to fit into the narrative that is taking place today in a significant number of countries and regions in the world.

In 2018 The Economist magazine conducted interviews of dozens of 18+ year olds across Russia in the months leading up to the elections. These young people, referred to as “Puteens” (Gen Z’ers) were the first of a generation in Russia that have no memory of life before President Putin. According to the subsequent article in the Economist, these Puteens have come of age at a time of unprecedented prosperity in Russia with GDP increasing by more than sixfold (Meet the puteens, (2018, March 17). *The Economist*, page 23). Furthermore, the Economist survey identified that these 18–24-year-olds are more likely than any other cohort to approve of Mr. Putin’s performance; more likely to say the country is headed in the right direction. But, most importantly the Economist research indicates that: **“.....when presented with a choice between a Soviet-style political system, the current Russian system, and Western-style democracy, these young people are most likely to prefer the current Russian system.”** (Meet the puteens, (2018, March 17). *The Economist*, page 24). Our research confirmed this thinking fairly well in terms of the political aspect. A significant number of young people do favor this approach and not only in Russia, but in a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, The Balkans and Central Asia. The question may well be, “.....how deep is this thinking rooted and will this continue, and if so to what extent ?”

Following the conceptualization of Daniel Goleman (Goleman et al. 2013) who described the importance of fit between leadership competencies, followers’ demands, and the environment, we identify the very significant factor here – **context**, the environment in which leadership takes place. Boyatzis primarily focused on *business* leadership environment, however, we extend this to the socio-economic/political environment created not in a country a business is operating in, or a particular industry, but with a particular *event*. Here what we are considering, in order to answer our hypothetical question of whether this thought of leadership is rooted deeply or not, is whether world events are able to shift this thinking of a strongman national leadership to any significant level? The onset of the war in Ukraine, how will this affect thought on leadership?

Which brings us to a potential follow-up extension of our study over the next 3-5 years to measure any significant shifts in thinking, which, by the way, we feel will in fact occur in ideas of national leadership. Numerous recent articles in the Wall Street Journal (Bisserbe et al. 2022) as well as CNN Online (McGee 2022) describe how President Putin’s decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine is testing the support of Europe’s populist leaders and thus impacting how their young people will also view national leadership in the coming years. However, a counter to this is how the situation with China plays out in terms of its authoritarian politics vs. its standing in the global stage as well as the robustness of its economy. Many will argue that China has been successful in its strongman authoritarian leadership approach. Will this endure?

One can argue that China is not within our research scope (Europe), but we feel that China’s presence will be felt more and more on a global scale which will influence national leadership thinking of generations to come.

From the business side however, we reiterate that the sense of independence of younger employees will only grow stronger in the coming years - a trend that is accelerating due to both technology and COVID-19. Although not a huge demographic

today in the workplace, Gen Z'ers are expected to account for nearly a third of the US workforce by 2030; and for the most part, these digital natives don't want to go into the office full time. In interviews done several months into the COVID19 pandemic, 69% said they would like to work remote at least half of the time. (A generation that may never work in an office. What will that mean for them? (2022, February 22). *The Wall Street Journal*, R6-R87). We feel this directly integrates with increasingly growing attitudes on liberal leadership in the workplace. Out of the office means greater independence, less control, more freedom for the workplace and work overall.

By 2036 Gen Z'ers will also make up almost 55% of voters in the US. So, we have a demographic pressure growing and impacting the workplace attitudes of leadership and with recent events such as the war in Ukraine and the growing power of China affecting the political aspect and thinking of leadership. It is difficult to which way sentiment will shift, if it will shift at all. Based on our detailed research, based on world events, the growth of technology, the realities of the workplace and needs to workers, we feel that it will be the democratic and further independence thinking will prevail to the extent that this duality we established in our research will eventually fade. Nevertheless, this idea, this logic of power, whether authoritarian or liberal is most likely to continue to evolve in the near-term. An interesting follow-up research initiative can be identifying trends in Gen Z'ers in the US and comparing their attitudes with those of the respondents in our current research.

One specific point to consider is that the scope of our research focused primarily within a *regional* environmental setting, that is, Group 1 (Europe) and Group (2) Central Asia. Focusing into individual countries was not part of the scope and the differences among these countries, as they relate to the specific demographic was assumed to be minimally impacting to what we set out to do. Based on an environmental and historical scan we felt the cultural context within regions was, to a certain level, fairly homogeneous in the bigger scheme of things. Our scope would have been significantly greater, expanded, and more complex, if particular country factors were considered beyond the regional level. Deciding to focus as we did initially within this initial regional geographic level phase can provide the foundation and further opportunity to study and delve into greater details within each region as a second phase of the research to further enhance and optimize our model. This, in fact, is currently already underway as of 2023.

Finally, one very interesting vector for continued future research is in the area of **leadership education** - how to develop a wider, more comprehensive higher education curriculum in leadership at the *undergraduate* level. Most leadership curriculums focus at the graduate level, for example with MBA students. Our research can provide the initiative to establish a more *integrated leadership development* approach for undergraduates which explores different facets of leadership and is not purely focused either on business or political science, but in a more encompassing approach. This can continue to shape the thinking of young people so that they can think critically and holistically.

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