

## ORIGINAL PAPER



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## Cross-Cultural analysis of Managerial and Cultural Values in Russia and China

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### ABSTRACT

**The subject** of the study is the differences in managerial and cultural values that are important for mutual understanding and interaction between Russia and China, countries with significant influence on the world economy and international relations. The study is particularly relevant in the context of business negotiations and management, where respect for values and beliefs inherent in other cultures is critical to successful cooperation. **The purpose** of this analysis is to examine the methods of G. Hofstede, R. Lewis, P. Ghemawat and others in the field of cultural differences and to compare their findings and conclusions with the results of a survey of Russian managers to verify the cultural characteristics contained in the literature and to prove their viability in practice. The results of the work confirmed the conclusions made by the above-mentioned academicians. The authors of the study defined the Russian culture as multi-active, highlighting the similarities and differences between the cultures of Russia and China. In both countries, the younger generation prioritizes personal career goals and financial success, which significantly changes the work process in terms of shifting values and orientations. The findings could provide valuable information for businesses and policymakers in these countries. The need to identify the cultural characteristics of Chinese managers and to better understand the cultural differences between Russia and China necessitates further research.

**Keywords:** organizational behavior; Russia; China; organizational culture; cross-cultural analysis; national differences; Lewis; Hofstede; Ghemawat

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## INTRODUCTION

Business culture has a significant impact on organisational behaviour, i.e., relationships (inter-ethnic, inter-national) within and outside the company, as well as on the methods and forms of communication between its employees.

When considering an organisation as part of a socio-economic system, the analysis of its internal elements allows us to realise that its most valuable and productive resource is a person who not only works according to a certain algorithm, but is also capable of self-development and bringing in fresh ideas and suggestions.

The purpose of our study is to review the works of leading scholars in the field of cultural differences and to compare their findings with the results of interviews with Russian managers.

The study of cultural differences between countries has always been relevant (especially in the context of globalisation); their role is very significant in the context of business negotiations and managerial decision-making, where successful cooperation requires an understanding of the values and beliefs inherent to other cultures.

This is particularly important with respect to Russia and China, as both countries have a notable influence on the world economy and global politics. Russia is a major oil and gas exporter and a member of BRICS, while China is the world's second largest economy and a major player in international trade. Moreover, when considering the current geopolitical environment, the particular significance of their union can be highlighted in the desire of both states to realise the format of a multipolar world. Therefore, understanding the cultural differences between these countries is important for successful co-operation in the spheres of business and international relations.

This paper attempts to evaluate and analyse current studies by G. Hofstede, R. Lewis, P. Ghemawat, etc.; as well as to assess the cultural characteristics described in them by interviewing Russian managers and investigating their satisfaction with their living standards. The results obtained can add to the knowledge about cultural differences between Russia and China and become valuable information for the enterprises of these countries, as well as be of interest to policy makers. Further research should focus on the cultural characteristics of Chinese managers in order to compare and contrast them with the data obtained in Russia. This would provide a better understanding of the differences between these countries and contribute to more effective international co-operation.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN THE FIELD OF MANAGEMENT

As mentioned above, this study was based on the works of Dutch sociologist G. Hofstede, who made a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge about cross-cultural differences between countries. His works are the basis of numerous scientific works and are an extremely important source in the study of cultural aspects. He identified six groups that differentiate a country's culture, known as Hofstede's dimensions of national culture [1]:

**1. Power Distance.** Characterises the degree to which members of society accept the hierarchical order (correlates with the analysis of the political system). Each member of the society occupies the place assigned to him, which generates different voting rights, and those who are in a lower position on the hierarchical ladder show respect and obedience towards the leader.

**2. Individualism** (versus collectivism) is a preference for a narrow or broad social

structure where either the individual goals of each member of society are prioritised or group goals take precedence over them and the value of group loyalty is promoted.

**3. Masculinity** versus femininity measures a preference for either a more competitive or co-operative society: contrasting material orientation, competitiveness, striving for success and solidarity, caring for the weak, modesty.

**4. Uncertainty avoidance** refers to the feeling of discomfort from ambiguity or uncertainty. This indicator determines the propensity to form clear rules and intolerance to broadcast deviant behaviour.

**5. Long-term orientation**, added by the author in 1991, represents Confucian thinking and has to do with how a society deals with its past and the problems of the future.

**6. Indulgence of desires versus restraint** – the sixth dimension, added in 2010 by M. Minkov [2], determines whether society allows free expression of feelings or not.

G. Hofstede's work continues to inspire researchers to analyse the impact of these dimensions on project management, for example in the field of communication. Some scholars, such as R. Muller and J. R. Turner [3] and R. Lewis [4], have used an empirical approach to investigate the importance of dimensions.

In his book, R. Lewis provides a classification of cultures, according to which the world can be divided into 3 components [4]:

**1. A linear-active culture**, represented by elements such as planning, scheduling, doing one task in one period of time and sequencing. It is characteristic of the Germans, Dutch and Swiss.

**2. A multi-active culture** is characterised by sociability, a lack of the habit of leaving conversations unfinished, an appreciation of the value of the present moment and a

disregard for strict schedules. People of this culture form their priorities based on the attractiveness of tasks, prefer to perform them several at a time and get satisfaction from the number of tasks completed. This group includes Arabs, Hispanics, and Italians.

**3. Reactive culture** is characterised by respect and politeness in communications, lack of the habit of living according to a schedule, and actions depending on circumstances. Representatives of this culture are considered excellent listeners, as they are attentive to the interlocutor, respectfully wait for the moment when he or she finishes, and only then gently and delicately express their position. This group includes Chinese, Koreans, Japanese and Finns.

Despite possible problems of co-operation between different cultures, they have not only distinctive, but also common features (*Table 1*).

Lewis' model is designed so that each national culture is analysed in terms of four factors: **general facts** (geography, history, politics and economics), **culture** (general classification, values, cultural black holes, concept of time, concept of space, self-concept), **communication** (communication pattern, body language, listening habits, audience expectations) and **interaction** (concept of status, gender issues, leadership, management, motivation factors, meetings, negotiations, contracts and commitments, manners and taboos, how to empathise).

When using this model for stereotyping, the key factor to consider is cultural distance, which can be represented as the edge of a triangle. If the base category of stereotypes, represented by the apex of the triangle, shifts, the distance will change and managing cultural differences may be more challenging. Another model that allows analysing differences between countries and their impact on international business is

Table 1

## Common features of linear-active, multi-active and reactive culture

Linear-active culture	Multi-active culture	Reactive culture
Introvert	Extravert	Introvert
Patient	Impatient	Patient
Does one thing at a time	Does several things simultaneously	Reacts to circumstances
Punctual	Unpunctual	Punctual
Quiet	Talkative	Silent
Likes privacy	Sociable	Good listener
Schedules prevail	Schedule is unpredictable	Responds to partner's schedule
Work – oriented	People-oriented	People-oriented
Sticks to plans	Changes plans	Makes small changes to plans
Sticks to facts	Juggles facts	Statements are promises
Limited body language	Unrestrained body language	Subtle body language
Separates social/professional	Intertwines social/professional	Connects social/professional
Does not like to lose face	Has ready-made justifications	Can't lose face

Source: compiled by the authors based on [4].

proposed by P. Ghemawat [5]. It takes into account four dimensions (distances): *cultural, administrative, geographical and economic*, which are denoted by the abbreviation CAGE.

The CAGE model has its origins in the works of such economists as P. Krugman [6] and M. Porter [7], who focused on the concept of “clusters” of industries in certain regions or countries. P. Ghemawat developed this idea by emphasising the importance of distance, i.e., the existing differences between countries, and how it affects trade and investment. He developed the CAGE system to help companies assess potential risks and opportunities to enter new markets.

The cultural dimension takes into account differences in language, ethnicity, religion and social norms that can cause communication barriers, misunderstandings and mismatches between reality and expectations in relation to business practices.

Administrative distance refers to differences in the legal and regulatory environment, including government policies, laws, and bureaucracy, which can lead to difficulties in complying with regulations and managing business operations.

Geographical distance is physical remoteness and differences in time zones, climate, and transport infrastructure. They

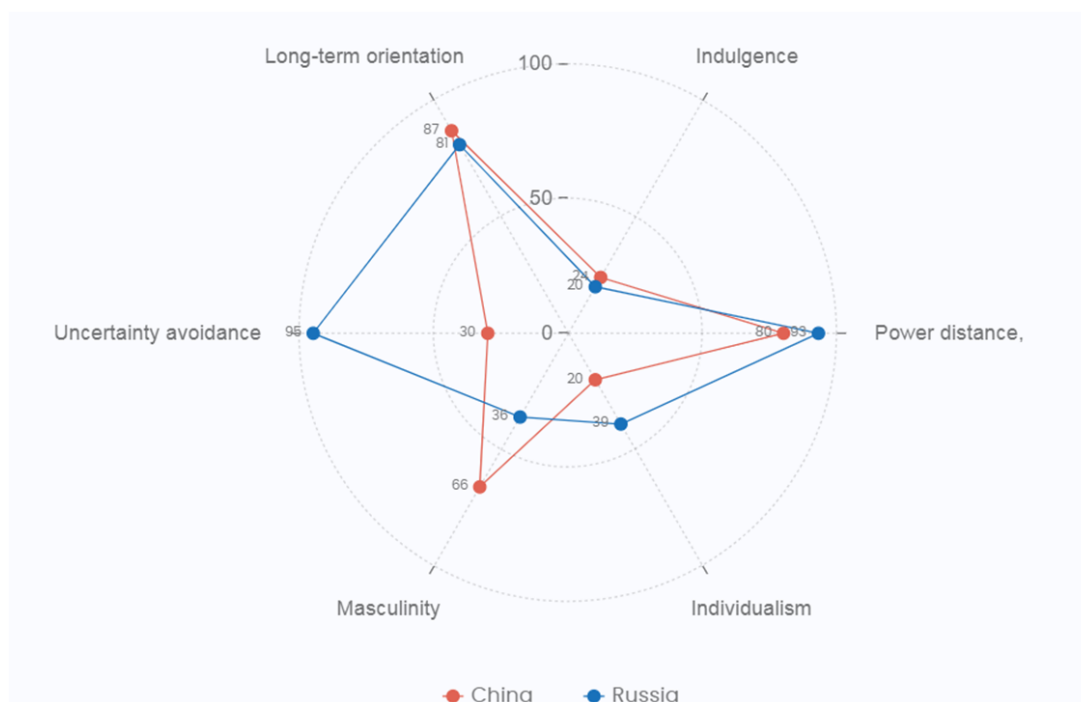


Fig. 1. Cultural values of China and Russia by G. Hofstede

Source: compiled by the authors based on [9].

can lead to logistical problems in supply chain management, distribution, and transport.

Economic distance is the difference in economic development, market size and wealth that can affect the attractiveness of foreign markets and the ability to compete in them.

The CAGE model suggests that the extent to which countries differ along these dimensions affects the level of competition and the potential for success in international business. The greater the distances, the greater are the difficulties faced by firms seeking to operate in these markets.

### CULTURAL VALUES OF RUSSIA AND CHINA

Let us compare the cultural dimensions of Russia and China, two large countries with different histories, cultures, and political systems, using the cultural models of G. Hofstede, R. Lewis, and P. Ghemawat.

Despite some similarities, they also have significant differences — these are presented in Fig. 1 using Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

China has higher masculinity, long-term orientation, and indulgence, although the latter two factors are only slightly ahead of Russia, which in turn scores high on power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance.

Emerging problems in Russian culture include high power distance, a culture of fear, and low employee involvement in decision-making processes; it is also characterised by low employee awareness and the possibility that managers may use important information for their own purposes [8].

One reason for the high rate of masculinity in China is the traditional emphasis on male dominance and power. This is reflected in social norms such as the expectation of men to be strong, assertive, and competitive. For

example, studies have shown that they are more likely to use aggression to resolve conflicts than women, a trend influenced by traditional gender-role expectations [10]. In addition, Chinese culture places a high value on achieving success and status, which is consistent with masculine culture. Thus, Chinese employees have recently placed an increased emphasis on personal achievement and success, and have used more aggressive strategies to resolve conflicts (especially men). In most cases, leadership positions in China are held by men, asserting their dominant position in the organisation.

In terms of leniency, China's assessment reflects a shift in cultural values towards individualism and self-expression, especially among the younger generation. This is reflected in the growing popularity of individualistic values such as self-actualisation and creativity. For example, studies have shown that Chinese millennials are more likely to favour personal goals and interests rather than traditional values such as family, social harmony, and commitment to others [11]. Therefore, it can be assumed that it is these that the Chinese, especially the younger generation, place in the workplace above collective decisions and social harmony. Although Chinese people are traditionally known for their cohesion and collectivist culture, young people are moving towards individualism and self-expression. In addition, workers tend to challenge authority and express their opinions, which can lead to a more democratic and open organisational culture, but it is also likely to conflict with structures based on hierarchy and traditional norms of respect for authority characteristic of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Russia's high score on individualism reflects the country's transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy, which has led to a greater emphasis on personal

achievement and interests. This cultural shift is particularly evident among students, who now prioritise career goals and financial success [12].

Russians in the workplace are focused on their own goals and needs, resulting in a more competitive environment in which workers focus on outdoing each other rather than co-operating.

The focus on self-interest is also responsible for more transactional relationships between employees and their employers, where loyalty to the organisation is secondary to personal gain. Finally, the prioritisation of career goals and financial success leads to higher staff turnover, as they are more likely to leave their current activities for promotion and greater financial rewards elsewhere.

Russia's high score on uncertainty avoidance reflects the country's history of political and economic instability, which has led to an emphasis on the need for rules, regulations and formal procedures. Research has shown that Russian managers will generally be more willing to avoid risk than their Western counterparts, placing greater emphasis on bureaucratic procedures and control mechanisms [13]. Due to the increased emphasis on the need to comply with rules and regulations, Russian workers prefer clear instructions and procedures. This leads to a more structured and formal work environment with a strong emphasis on compliance with rules and regulations. In addition, Russian managers' tendency to avoid risk also affects organisational behaviour, as workers will behave more cautiously and avoid situations that could lead to negative consequences for themselves or the organisation. This is the reason for a more conservative approach to decision making and a slower pace of change and innovation in the organisation.



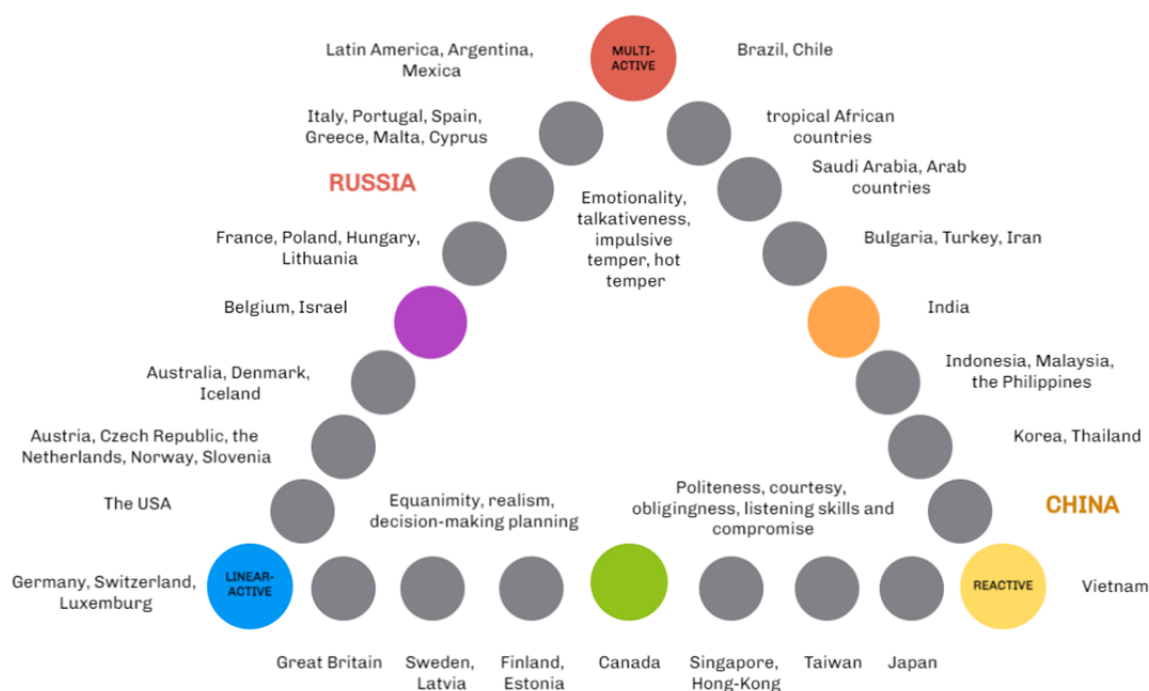


Fig. 2. A triangle based on the R. Lewis model

Source: Compiled by the authors based on [4].

So, according to N. V. Latov's ethnometric analysis of heterogeneity and homogeneity, the desire to avoid uncertainty was influenced by the socio-economic environment and long-term crises that began in 2014. It is heterogeneity that "indicates the presence of certain value contradictions in the public consciousness" of the population [14].

The power distance and long-term orientation of Russians and Chinese are similar, and the reason for this is their cultural values and historical background. Both countries have a history of strong centralised rule (which has contributed to a large power distance). In addition, their cultures value long-term planning and emphasise the importance of the past in shaping the future.

In Russia and China, significant power distance contributes to high levels of inequality in power distribution, which people tend to accept as the norm of life. For

example, in Russia, the concept of "vertical power" is deeply entrenched, meaning that citizens are loyal to the granting of significant power to their leaders and the right of the latter to make decisions with little or no input from subordinates [15, 16]. A special place in Russian society is occupied by status, which is favoured over salary. Such a position is determined by respect and honour from subordinates, as well as the possibility of easier and more efficient resolution of issues [17]. Similarly, in China, the concept of "guanxi" (or personal connections) is crucial in business and politics, and people with a higher social status are often given preference [18].

In terms of long-term orientation, both countries scored highly, indicating an inherent desire for long-term planning and future-orientation in their cultures. For example, in Russia, the concept of "patrimony" or the accumulation of wealth

and property over time is highly valued, and the population often favours stability and continuity over immediate benefits [16]. In China, the influence of Confucianism has favoured a focus on long-term planning, and the idea of “face” or reputation is important for maintaining relationships and securing future opportunities [19].

Thus, the high scores of Russia and China on power distance and long-term orientation can be explained by their cultural values and historical backgrounds that emphasise centralised rule and long-term planning.

Next, another study by R. Lewis was considered, where he analysed countries using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (*Fig. 2*). He developed a questionnaire to collect quantitative data on cultural dimensions such as communication style, attitudes towards time and emotional expression, among others. In addition, the scholar carried out qualitative research through interviews and observation to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances and behaviours of the respondents. For example, he interviewed executives and business-people from different cultures to explore their communication style and preferences, and observed interactions in different cultural contexts to identify patterns of nonverbal communication and social norms [4].

According to the R. Lewis model, China is closer to the reactive end of the spectrum, while Russia is closer to the multi-reactive end. This is due to various factors. Chinese culture highly values relationships and harmony, which can lead to a less direct style of communication and a desire to avoid confrontation [20]. In addition, patience and perseverance are respected in China, which is evident in the approach to business and negotiation [20]. These cultural traits are reflected in Chinese organisational behaviour,

where hierarchy is important, and decisions are often made collectively.

In contrast, Russia’s multi-active culture is characterised by a direct type of communication, and it is often perceived as straightforward, with less emphasis on avoiding confrontation. In addition, the high-power distance in Russia means that hierarchy is important, but here it is more flexible than in China. Russian organisations are often led by strong leaders who make decisions quickly and independently.

Comparing Russian business practices with the culture of the Asian cluster countries using T. Cottle’s “Circles of Time” test, which determines the attitude of the country’s residents to the future, present and past, it can be seen that Russia is among the countries oriented towards the past, while China belongs to the group of states with an even flow of time [21].

These cultural differences can have a significant impact on how companies operate in these countries: in China, for example, they need to adopt a more patient, relationship-orientated approach, while in Russia they need to prepare for more direct communication and work in a hierarchical environment.

Researcher D. Ralston and colleagues [22] argue that Russian and Chinese managers share more commonalities in their work values than differences: both value managerial authority and job security, reflecting their cultural emphasis on power distance, and place greater value on interpersonal relationships and personal loyalty to colleagues than do American or Japanese managers.

One possible reason for this similarity may be related to the similarities in the historical and political backgrounds of Russia and China, which has led to a similar cultural emphasis on power distance and personal relationships. In addition, both countries have undergone



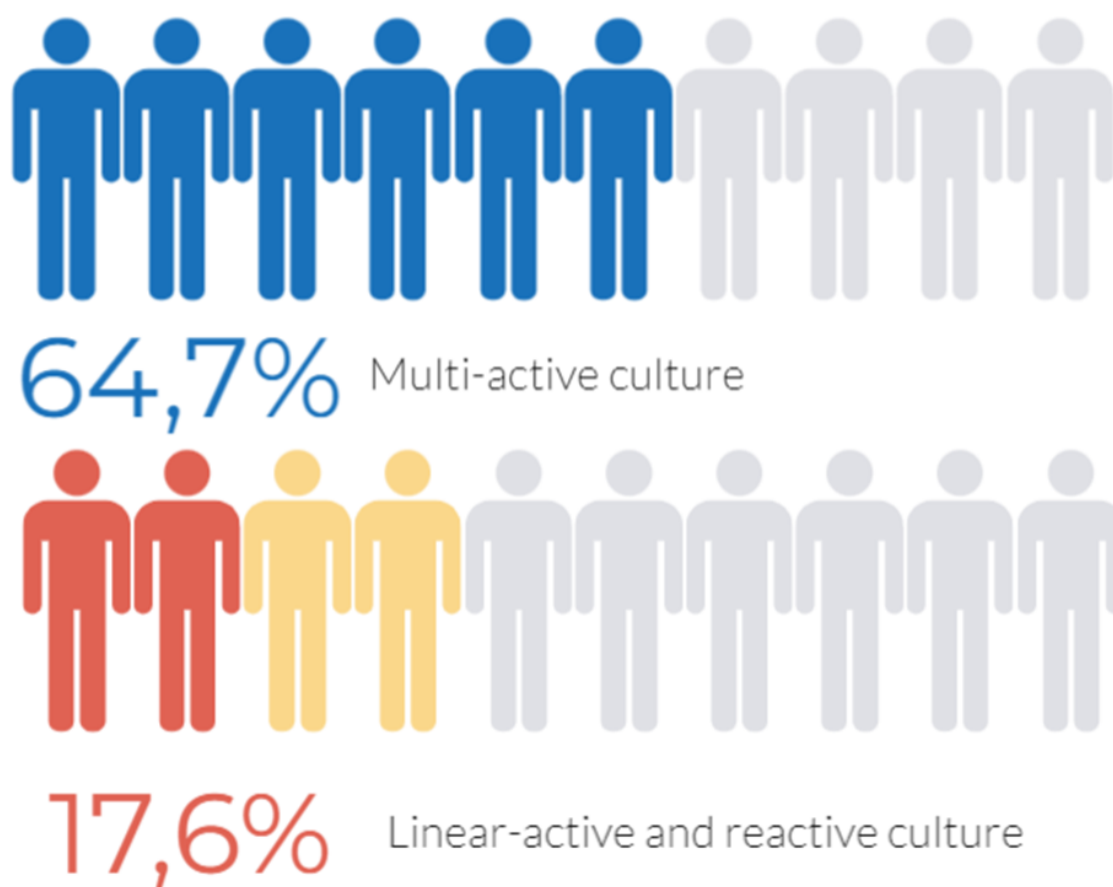


Fig. 3. Results of the study of Russian managers

Source: compiled by the authors.

similar economic reforms that have caused an increase in job insecurity and the need for personal ties to secure employment.

A study by Taiwanese scholar Tu Yu-Te shows that both Russian and Chinese representatives tend to build relationships and reach mutual understanding during negotiations, which is consistent with their high-context cultures [23] and prefer to use indirect communication styles and avoid confrontational tactics. However, the Chinese are more patient and willing to negotiate for longer periods of time, while the Russians are more assertive and competitive orientated.

CAGE model developer P. Ghemawat argues that many companies overlook the importance of the four distance measurement

factors (cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic) in global expansion, which can lead to costly mistakes.

The first dimension, — cultural distance, — includes factors such as language, religion, social norms, and values. For example, in Russia, the culture is likely to be collectivist rather than individualistic [24], which may affect the way businesses operate and the success of certain types of products and services. As for China, the concept of maintaining “face” (reputation) and social status is important in establishing business relationships and negotiations.

The second dimension, — administrative distance, — involves factors such as political systems, legal frameworks, and bureaucratic

rules. In Russia, the legal system is often criticised for being opaque and inconsistent, which can create problems for foreign companies. China has complex rules regarding foreign investment and intellectual property that can be difficult to navigate.

The third dimension, — geographical remoteness, — includes factors such as time zones, infrastructure, and transport costs. For example, Russia's large territory and harsh climate can make travelling and logistics difficult, while China's rapidly developing transport infrastructure has facilitated access to remote parts of the country.

The fourth dimension, — economic distance, — which includes indicators such as income level, market scale and degree of development. In Russia, the economy is heavily dependent on natural resources such as oil and gas, which can cause instability and risks for businesses. In China, on the one hand, the size and growth potential of the market is attractive, but on the other hand, entry is challenging due to rather fierce competition.

To apply the CAGE model in practice, companies must first identify relevant factors for their industry and target market, and then use the model to assess potential risks and opportunities. For example, a Russian company planning to expand into China should consider the cultural characteristics of the country, as well as administrative and economic factors that may affect the business.

### EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In the autumn of 2022, the authors conducted a study to identify the characteristic features of organisational behaviour in Russia in order to identify the correspondence between its historically defined features and contemporary realities. Forty-five people were interviewed, including 34 women and 11 men.

Respondents were spoken to in private and answered all the questions frankly, first

general, and then more specific (depending on the answers they received).

All interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained for analysis.

According to the study, 64.7 per cent of Russian participants identified themselves as belonging to a multi-active culture, while the rest identified themselves as belonging to a linear or reactive culture (*Fig. 3*). This result indicates that Russian culture is indeed closer to a multi-active culture and, according to the R. Lewis model, emphasises high-context communication, a preference for personal interactions and a flexible approach to time management.

This conclusion is supported by other studies that have examined cultural aspects of Russia. Such arguments that Russians have a more high-context and indirect communication style, which is characteristic of multi-active cultures compared to other cultures, have been confirmed and analysed by many scholars. At the same time, the importance of emotions in communication is emphasised and it is assumed that the communication style of Russian citizens is more expressive [25, 26].

During the interviews, in addition to questions related to cultural orientation, participants were also asked about their overall life satisfaction. More than half of the respondents answered positively, while a third rated their life satisfaction as average.

Despite the current situation in Russia, characterised by economic and political problems, cultural factors and individual mechanisms contribute to their overcoming. Russian culture emphasises family, social relationships and community support, which can be an emotional support for people even in difficult times. In addition, research has shown that individuals are able to adapt to difficult circumstances by applying positive psychological strategies such as optimism, resilience and self-efficacy.

According to the above-mentioned study by R. Hofstede, there are some similarities (in Power Distance, Restraint and Long-Term Orientation) and differences (in Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity) between Chinese and Russians in cultural values. This suggests that absolute adaptation to each other's characteristics may not be possible up to the point of conflict. Therefore, it is not at all clear to what extent Russians are willing to co-operate with the workers from China, and how quickly the parties will be able to adapt to mutual cultural differences.

To avoid potential conflicts between workers from Russia and China, the authors of the study propose to:

1. Conduct more in-depth surveys/ interviews with them to understand their cultural values, communication style and job expectations.
2. Analyse the historical and social contexts of each country to identify factors that shape their cultural values and norms.
3. By observing the behaviour and interactions of citizens of both countries in the workplace, identify potential areas of conflict and opportunities for collaboration.
4. Conduct cross-cultural education or training programmes to help Russian and Chinese representatives develop cultural intelligence and adapt to each other's work styles.
5. Analyse examples of successful and unsuccessful cooperation between workers in both countries to identify best practices and lessons learned.

Overall, the results show that, although the current situation in Russia is characterised by certain problems, cultural and individual factors may contribute to life satisfaction among part of the population. Nevertheless, further research is needed on cultural factors, their interaction and individual coping

mechanisms to achieve life satisfaction in the Russian context.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of our study show that there are significant cultural differences between Russia and China, especially in terms of communication and working styles. Despite this, the cultures of the countries in question also share common characteristics due to their similar historical and political backgrounds.

Guided by the findings of G. Hofstede, R. Lewis, and P. Gemawat, the authors proved by conducting interviews and analysing their results that Russian managers are indeed closer to R. Lewis' multi-active culture. In addition, it was found that despite the current situation in Russia, the majority of respondents are satisfied with their lives.

However, it should be noted that Chinese employees were not interviewed during the study, which did not allow us to generalise the findings. Further work is needed to explore the cultural values and work ethics of Chinese managers to better understand the cultural differences between the two countries. In addition, the views of Russian managers only were analysed, and it would be useful to increase the sample size in the future to include representatives of different professions to ensure a wider coverage of the population.

The conducted study adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing information about Russian managers and identifying the priorities of the younger generation, such as achieving personal career goals and financial success. The findings can be useful for businessmen and politicians in both countries. However, further work is needed to identify the cultural characteristics of Chinese managers and to better understand the differences in this area between the two countries.

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