Consultative Authority Decision Making: On the Development and Characterization of Arab Corporate Culture

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Abstract

Does culture make business organizations, or do business organizations make their own cultures? The question underlies all debates about the impact of national culture on corporate culture. Moreover, Inquiries into this impact have ranged in response from determining effect to shaping effect. Whether determining or shaping, analysis of the effect presupposes that the corporation is the predominant form of business organizations in a given culture. What if the predominant form were not the corporation? Indeed, it is estimated that over 90% of Arab business entities are family businesses. Consequently, the study of Arab corporate culture must take into consideration the dynamics of such pattern of ownership-management. Combined with various factors and forces characteristic of Arab-Islamic culture, this pattern of ownership-management has historically shaped the development of Arab corporate culture. This paper is an attempt to propose a characterization of Arab corporate culture in the framework of analyzing the historical development of the Arab business organization as shaped by Arab-Islamic cultural factors and forces. Using methodologies of literature review and historical analysis, we will demonstrate that the strongly patriarchal and collectivist Arab-Islamic culture has historically produced what we call Consultative Authority Decision Making (CADM) model that places power and prerogatives in the hands of the individual. Unlike conventional wisdom, this model is not totally authoritarian, but it sure is far from being democratic. The first part of the paper will address the historical development of the Arab decision making model along with the cultural and religious factors that have shaped it. Meanwhile the second part will be devoted to a characterization of Arab corporate culture in light of the CADM and as shaped by Arab-Islamic cultural factors and forces.

Keywords: Organizational culture, corporate culture, culture, arab world, middle east, MENA

Introduction

Does culture make business organizations, or do business organizations make their own cultures? The question underlies all debates about the impact of national culture on corporate culture (Aziz 2003). Moreover, Inquiries into this impact have ranged in response from determining effect to shaping effect (Trompenaars, 1993; Schein, 1992). Whether determining or shaping, analysis of the effect presupposes that the corporation is the predominant form of business organizations in a given culture. What if the predominant form of business entities were not the corporation? Indeed, it is estimated that over 90% of Arab business entities are family businesses. Furthermore, many Arab corporations amount in reality to no more than incorporation of family members and their extended circles. Consequently, the study of Arab corporate culture—maybe the term business culture is more reflective, must take into consideration the dynamics of such pattern of ownership-management (Huff, 1993).

Combined with various factors and forces characteristic of Arab-Islamic culture, this pattern of ownership-management has historically shaped the development of Arab corporate culture. The "way we do things around here" in the Arab World today can not be clearly understood and subsequently characterized and modeled in isolation from the family business pattern of ownership-management and dominant characteristics of Arab-Islamic culture. Moreover, the relative position of Arab corporate culture vis-à-vis what may be thought of as the emerging global or globalization-related perspective of corporate culture in terms of convergence or cross-vergence may be crystalized only in the framework of shedding light on the development of the business organization in the context of Arab-Islamic culture. Such development involves study of not only culture, but also management style, decision making, structure, systems, accountability and legal regulations. Venturing into mostly unchartered territory, this paper is an attempt to propose a characterization of Arab corporate culture in the framework of analyzing the historical development of the Arab business organization as shaped by Arab-Islamic cultural factors and forces. Using methodologies of literature review and historical analysis, we will demonstrate that the strongly patriarchal and collectivist

Arab-Islamic culture has historically produced what we call Consultative Authority Decision Making (CADM) model that places power and prerogatives in the hands of the individual. Unlike conventional wisdom, this model is not totally authoritarian, but it sure is far from being democratic. The first part of the paper will address the historical development of the Arab decision making model along with the cultural and religious factors that have shaped it. Meanwhile, the second part will be devoted to a characterization of Arab corporate culture in light of the CADM and as shaped by Arab-Islamic cultural factors and forces. Nonetheless, a couple of limitations should be noted here. First, although the cultural fundamentals of Arabs are essentially the same or similar, diversity exist in practices, traditions and values from one Arab country to another. The Arab world of today consists of 22 countries which exhibit similarities and differences in their historical experiences. For instance, it would be interesting to include the 15 countries excluded and examine similarities and differences among the 22 Arab countries along the Hofstede dimensions. Consequently, any attempt to characterize Arab corporate culture will have to be based on some extent of generalization. Second, Arabs have not been static in the face of globalization and other changes that have challenged their world (Baraket, 1993; Hill et al., 1998). In fact, Arab corporate culture, much like other aspects of Arab society, has entered into a period of transition the results of which remain premature to characterize.

I-Consultative Authority Decision Making

The decision making process plays an important role in shaping various aspects of the business organization including its culture. Meanwhile, the decision making process itself is shaped in no small extent by cultural values, beliefs and other influences. In the context of Arab- Islamic culture, decision making is not only shaped but also determined by cultural and religious influences. While it does not neglect the effect of other factors, this strong association between cultural influences and decision making in the framework of the Arab business organization is due to the non emergence of a business organization largely independent of its socio-cultural context as has historically been the case of the corporation in the West (Huff, 1993). Moreover, the family which constitutes the main link between Arab society at large and Arab business life has historically turned the business organization into an extension of Arab and Islamic values, beliefs, traditions and norms. This occurs because the family continues to be the fundamental organizational unit of both Arab society and business life. By contrast, the corporation in the West has essentially distanced business life from its socio-cultural context, the basic organizational unit of which is the individual.

Benefiting from a relative degree of independence, the corporation has historically taken a life of its own thereby allowing it to innovate and develop practices which exert influencing pressures back on the Western socio-cultural context. Accordingly, corporate practices have become an integral part of Western culture. Therefore, an important dimension of the Western culture of today are corporate practices, among which is democratic decision making characterized by representation of stockholders and stakeholders interests channeled through structures of conventions and boards of directors, regulated by corporate governance rules and exercised in the context of freedom to pursue one's own economic and social interests. It may be said then that the story of corporate culture in the West is the development of the corporation which has historically built upon and further reinforced a tradition of democratic decision making processes. By contrast, the story of business culture in the Arab World is the development of the family which has historically built upon and further reinforced a tradition of consultative authority decision making practiced in the framework of pursuing collective interests.

I-A-Historical Development of Consultative Authority

This part of the paper is not meant to be a disciplined historical account of Arab history. For our purposes, we intend to highlight those events, trends and\or periods which have combined over time to make Arab decision making processes what they are today. Prior to the emergence of Islam, Arabs lived in tribes composed of families and clans, and as far back as documented history allows us to go, Arab society has been known to be patriarchal. The tribe distinguished itself from others as a collective pursuing the common good and interests of its members as a group and not as individuals. At the level of this collective, one individual distinguished on the basis of age or wisdom or bravery or a combination thereof assumed the position of chief or sheikh of the tribe. Ultimately, the chief made decisions and choices concerning not only the pursuit of the tribe's common goals, but often the pursuit of individual tribe members' interests. In modern terminology, the chief embodied the ultimate legislative, executive and judiciary authorities. Living in a patriarchal society, he was always male and head of his family. Yet tales of Arab history indicate that the chief had to exercise his power and authority within the confines of building consensus whenever possible or reverting to majority rule. This same process of decision making also applied at the level of the families and clans which constituted the tribe. Yet if consensus and majority rule implied participation of others in an organized decision making process, such implication must be qualified in two important ways. First, participation was limited to individuals in charge of their families, or are well-off in terms of resources, or have a record of bravery.

Second, the participatory process was informal and involved expression of views and opinions that were not binding. It is because of these two qualifications that participation in decision making is more accurately labeled consultation. Nonetheless, consultations did play a role in shaping final decisions. This portrait of Arab life, prior to Islam points out to the early cultural roots of decision making and subsequently to the dynamics of organizational culture. Four characteristics in particular stand out. First, power, authority and decisions were the prerogatives of male members of society. Second, the family constituted the fundamental unit of social organization. Third, the interests of the collective superseded those of the individual. Fourth, decision making was top-down authority moderated by consultations. To summarize decisions on behave and in the best interest of the collective were made by authoritative males following consultations and channeled from top to bottom where consultations intensified at the top and weakened at the bottom. The emergence of Islam was bound to impact the early Arab decision making process because Islam was not only proposed as a religion that regulates the relationship between the individual and God, but also to manage the relationship between the individual and the rest of society. The impact of Islam has been controversial especially with respect to the difference between principles and practices.

The principle teaches something that may in practice turn into its complete contradiction. For instance, the Holy Quran states," when kings enter a town they destroy it and disrespect its honorable people." Yet many Arab states have monarchy systems of governance. In fact most Muslim scholars hold that Islam favors election of rulers where authority remains subject to the consent of the ruled (Hawi, 1982; Jasim, 1987). Another example, more relevant to decision making, may be cited with respect to the Islamic concept of Shura (mutual consultation). Some scholars argue that consultative management in the Arab World is derived from the principle of Shura in Islamic governance (Huyette, 1985; Abdalati, 1975). In this regard, Abdalati asserts, "the principle of mutual consultation is so fundamental in Islam that not only has one to speak up his mind, but also to do so in the sincerest and most effective manner for the best interest of society" (Abdalati, 1975: 135). Yet again, the practice differs from the principle. According to Ali and Pateman, Arab managerial behavior reflects intention to create an impression of consultation rather than to engage in true consultation (Ali, 1993; Pateman, 1970). In fact, this led Ali to describe it as pseudo-consultative. The issue of divergence between principles and practices deserves some attention at this juncture due to its implications with respect to the influence of Islam on Arab organizational culture. There is universal agreement in the Arab World that Muslims (practices) do not practice what Islam (principles) teaches.

This divergence led Mohammed Abdo, noted Egyptian religious reformist, to declare, "in France I found Islam but no Muslims, in Egypt I found Muslims but no Islam". In his characterization of this phenomena, Ali states," doublethink, a term used by Georges Orwell for holding two contradictory beliefs simultaneously, in Arabia depicts a condition where the ideal (Islamic principles) is held officially but violated in practice" (Ali, 1993). The implication of this divergence with regard to Arab business culture revolves around the question of what does really impact the culture. Is it Islam or Muslims? We suggest that what is widely believed to be the effects of Islam in the literature is in fact due to culturally based manipulative interpretations of the religion that reinforces what had already been practiced in Arab society prior to Islam. Manipulative interpretations of Islamic principles permitted Arabs to religiously legitimize and reinforce what they had already practiced in their early tribal culture. In particular, various Islamic principles helped justify the essential dimensions of the early Arab decision making process which are authoritarianism moderated by consultation, collectivism based on the family as the basic unit of social organization, and patriarchy which favored the authority of the individual male.

It would be worthwhile to point out some of these religious principles as mandated by religious texts. Islam mandated consultations by proposing the concept of Shura. This was evident in such explicit Quaranic texts as" and consult them with respect to the matter", "consult them in affairs of the moment, then, when you reach a decision trust God". With the post Sept. 11 American campaign to "democratize" the Arab World, debate about the Shura has recently re-intensified amongst Arab and Muslim scholars. In particular, the issue is whether Islam advocated democracy under the name of Shura or proposed an alternative to it. Islamic principles were also clear and explicit with regard to obedience. In this regard the Quran states," O believers obey God, the prophet and those of you who are in charge." The notion of obedience has also spurred controversy in the Arab World, especially with regard to whether subjects should or should not revolt when the leader is unjust. Some Islamic schools of thought such as the Wahabi and the Hanbali schools advocate obedience even when the leader is unjust. A high degree of power distance is another Islamic principle (or manipulative interpretation thereof to be exact) that is evident in the Quaranic text" we created you in levels" implying justification and acceptance of hierarchical order and different social classes. With regard to male dominance, the family and the collective, Islamic principles are too numerous to cite. In the aftermath of the death of the prophet Mohamed, Arabs had to face the question of leadership and governance.

Mohamed's status as the chosen prophet and the last of the prophets facilitated the establishment of his rule over spiritual as well as human aspects of the life of a Muslim. During his reign, ultimate authority remained in the hands of the prophet over religious, social, political, military and economic matters of society. Nonetheless, Mohamed consulted with a number of key figures mostly with regard to non-religious and non-spiritual aspects of life. Islamic history cites various situations in which the prophet went along with the opinion of others against his own judgment. What is of interest to us here is that Mohamed's ability to combine spiritual leadership and human leadership was questioned after his death when it came to his succession. In other terms and using today's terminology, this was an early debate about the separation of the mosque and the state, a notion which bears significance with regard to decision making processes in a given culture. Unlike Western culture, Arabs have not been able to clarify the distance between the mosque and the state and this debate is as lively today as it ever was. The death of the prophet prompted the development of the Caliphate institution in Arab-Islamic culture. Designated the successor to the prophet, the Caliph assumed leadership and authority over spiritual and human aspects of life for Muslim society until Mustafa Kammal Ataturk declared the end of the Caliphate institution in the early twentieth century (1924). Yet the extent to which the Caliph was able to exercise his authority varied between contraction and expansion from one historical period to another.

Nonetheless, the separation between the mosque and the state, which greatly contributed to the modernization of western culture and consequently helped open the doors to the development of democratic and participatory decision making processes, never occurred in Arab-Islamic culture. One more aspect of Arab\Islamic history, which contributed to shaping the consultative authority decision making process, is the disproportionate significance given to the power and prerogatives of the leader along with the institutionalization of hereditary accession to power and leadership. To borrow a term from popular culture, leadership in the Arab world is a "one-man show" conducted in the framework of dynastic families. In old times, it was the Omayyads, the Abaasids, the Ayoubis, the Hamadanis, and others. Today it is Al Saoud, Al Thani, Al El- Soubab, Al Nhayan, Al Kabauss, Al El- Assad, The Hashimites and others. Even when the Caliph was weak, the Caliphate as an institution always retained spiritual significance which played an important role in distinguishing the leader from the rest of society. The unquestionable authority of the Caliph turned over time into a tradition of leadership religiously sanctioned by Sunni Muslims who subscribed to the notion of absolute obedience and Shiite Muslims who believed in the notion of the rule of the Imam (Welayat El Fakih). However, hereditary succession was first established by the Omayyad dynasty and religiously legitimized by Al Jabry school of thought who built a tradition of interpretation based on fatalism.

I-B-Consultative Authority: The Cornerstone of Arab Culture and Corporate Culture

These historical and religious developments contributed, in one way or another, to the establishment of consultative authority as a model of decision making. Accordingly, CADM can be defined as an informal top-down hierarchal decision making process in which male leaders at the top, who retain relatively unquestionable authority, make decisions after consultations that range from appearance of to resemblance of participation. The lower one goes in the hierarchy, the less meaning consultations take and in most cases they are non-binding. Although, in social settings consultations are relatively more binding due to the consensual nature of submission to the leader who in turn cares to build and reflect consensus, managerial authority and ownership of economic resources in the context of business organizations render consultations less binding especially at lower levels of the organization. Yet some qualifications have to be made about the characteristics of consultative authority. Authority was characterized by Ali as Pseudo-consultative, in order to differentiate it from true-consultative, and because managerial behavior aims to prepare subordinates to go along with decisions already made by managers and to improve the manager's image (Ali, 1993). Yet participative decision making is regarded by Arab managers as the ideal form even when such forms are known to contradict with reality (Ali, 1990). Moreover, Arab managers influenced by Western management philosophy are faced with a problem of duality of principle and practice. The participative aspect of Western management philosophy which they learn as adults contradicts with the authoritarian aspect of Arab culture which characterizes their socialization process as children.

Another qualification is due here with respect to the patriarchal nature of Arab society. In Europe, political philosophers substituted the father with the brother to create fraternal patriarchy (Pateman, 1988). Accordingly women are subordinate to men as men, rather than to men as fathers (Joseph, 1996). Feminists have then generalized this notion to the extent of understanding patriarchy as the power of men over women, (Jones, 1993; Philips, 1993). By contrast, Arab patriarchy according to Krauss originates in the family (Krauss, 1987). As such the women of the family submit to the authority of the father who controls economic resources and income generation (Barakat, 1993).

II-Characterization of Arab Culture and Corporate Culture

Whether the impact of national culture on corporate culture is of determining or shaping scope and nature, it remains in both cases significant. The conventional wisdom has historically been to build constructs of all aspects of Arab life, corporate culture being no exception, on the basis of an orientalist view of Arab culture. Evidently, or so it seems to many orientalist, Islam is the most important determining factor of Arab culture. Accordingly, any study of Arab culture begins with a portrait of Islam and its values as perceived by orientalists, most notable and influential among them in modern times is Bernard Lewis, as if nothing existed before or after the rise of Islam. Moreover, one can't help but notice the absence of interest with regard to Arab countries in organizational and management studies (Dedaassis, 2004; Miller and Sharda, 2000). Indeed, Robertson et al. note that out of 236 articles published between 1990 and 1999 in a prestigious international journal, less than 1% involved study of Arab countries (2001).

II-A- The Orientalist View of Islam

In-depth analysis of the orientalist view of Islam is beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, it suffices to highlight the main notions of this view. In general, Islam has been regarded as a Jihadist religion intolerant of the beliefs of others. As such, it provides a legitimizing ideology for Arabs to be in conflict with the West. It is in the framework of this conflict that Arabs reject modernization and consequently react to globalization pressures by reverting back to and retrenching in radical salafi, fundamentalist and revivalist movements. The attacks of 9\11 reinforced this general overview and turned it into the cornerstone of an American neo-conservative ideology advanced to legitimize the "war on terrorism" and the campaign to democratize the Arab world by force if necessary. (Salameh, 2004; carothers, 2003; Kristal W 2000; Kristal I, 1995; Wolfowitz, 2000 and many others). Underlying this overview is a set of key notions implicitly or explicitly evident in most Western literature on Islam. This set includes the following notions:

1) Islam is static and backward. Islamic values and practices have not kept up with change overtime and space. The traditional middle-age interpretations of Islamic principles have remained largely intact due a tendency to believe that all what needs to be interpreted has already been interpreted. The Wahabi movement has recently surfaced as the obvious demonstration of the static and backward nature of Islam. It is for this reason that the Wahabi Saudi regime has been under attack and criticism among American intellectuals in the post 9\11 era.

2) Islam is intrinsically anti modernization. The religion's anti-modernist stance is obvious in its unrelenting opposition to separation of the mosque and the state. Ahmed holds that Islam has not entered the post-modernist era because it has not been secularized (1992). In addition, Arab and Islamic societies have not seen democratic governments because Islam is by nature authoritarian and totalitarian.

3) Islam is oppressive of women. The status of women in Islam and in Arab societies has recently moved to the forefront of debates and discussions in the West. Phenomena such as women not being allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia are cited as evidence of the oppressive nature of Islam with regard to women. Moreover, the literature is rather extensive in this respect because this issue has in particular received disproportionate attention in the works of orientalists. (Al- Shaykh, 1989; Joseph, 1996; Krauss, 1987; Merker, 1976)

4) Muslims are homogeneous. Islamic values are assumed to be strong and deep rooted that they bond Muslims together in one common Islamic identity regardless of race, gender, nationality or even interpretation of the religion itself. Needless to say then, if Islam is anti-modernist and oppressive of women, then all Muslims are backward and oppressive of women whether they are Arab or Indonesian, Sunnite or Shiite, male or female, educated or illiterate. It is against a background of this orientalist view of Islam that a characterization of Arab culture and then consequently of Arab corporate culture is Constructed. Needless to say, most studies of Arab culture and corporate culture rely on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence. For instance, in his critique of Bernard Lewis' readily accepted views of Islam, Edward Said pointed out that Lewis did not set foot in the Middle East for some 40 years. Moreover, the infamous Hofested Study included only seven of 22 Arab Countries (Hofested, 1984). It wasn't until recent years that some authors from the Middle East worked on testing the conventional wisdom on culture using empirical data and evidence (Ali,1998,1993; Al Faleh, 1987; Al Rasheed (2001).

II-B-Arab Culture: Authoritarianism, Collectivism and Centralization

Al Yahya and Vengroff indicate that the literature on comparative management and organizational behavior classifies the Middle East as a single cluster, or includes the region in oriental groupings of Asian countries (2005). Generally speaking, these groupings tend to score high in Collectivism, Power Distance and avoidance of responsibility. The table below shows the high scores of Arab countries. The high Power Distance (80) and Uncertainty Avoidance (68) scores point to authoritarian leadership that develops strict rules, laws and regulations to reinforce its authority and control.

Country	Power Distance	Individualism	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity	Long Term Orientation
Arab Countries	80	38	68	53	
Argentina	49	46	86	56	
East Africa	64	27	52	41	
France	68	71	86	43	
India	77	48	40	56	61
Japan	54	46	92	95	80
Mexico	81	30	82	69	
Turkey	66	37	85	45	
USA	40	91	46	62	29

Ultimately, this creates a caste system that hinders upward mobility of citizens. Accordingly, people are resistant to change, and when the latter occurs, it results from armed struggle ratter than democratic processes. Moreover, the region scores 52 on the Masculinity index, slightly higher than the overage of all countries included in the Hofstede Masculinity dimension. The only Low score for the region is on the dimension of Individualism and it is significantly lower than the 64 world overage. In other terms, Arab culture is strongly collectivist where people are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty and where harmony should always be maintained (Hofestede, 2008). Kluckhohn and Strodbeck argued that cultures can be compared on the basis of orientation of their members toward the world and other people (1961). These two dimensions translate into relationship to others and temporal focus of human activity. In a cross-culture comparison of organizational culture between the Arab World and Japan, Dedaussis argues that Arabs' relationship to others tends to be hierarchical and collectivist (2004).

This is revealed by respect for seniority and authority as determined by age, family and sex and preference for hierarchical communication and bureaucratic organizations characterized by systems and structures that binds the individual to the group. Consequently, members of a given group tend to be reserved and conservative toward outsiders. With respect to temporal focus of human activity, Al Rasheed states that Arabs are mostly past-oriented (2001). This is revealed by respect for precedence, age and the authority associated with it, need for continuity and reliance on past experience and an extent of resistance to change. Arab culture may also be characterized in terms of context, verbal interaction and nonverbal communication (Dedaussis 2004). Arabs score high on context. In essence, this translates into implicit and indirect expression of feelings, thoughts, and key information. Consequently, people depend on non- verbal behavior in communication where one needs to read between the lines and interpret covert clues. Deresky states that Arabs avoid going directly to the point. Instead they prefer to loop around; they begin with social talk, discuss business for a while, loop round to general issues, and then go back to business (1994).

In his book on the Arab World and its culture, Baraket proposes a comprehensive cultural characterization much closer to the reality of things, at least in this author's judgment, and more reflective of Arab culture and its dynamics (1993). The author points out a portrait of culture in transition due to various values and orientations conflicts. The following summarizes a number of social characteristics highlighted by the author:
- Social diversity resulting from an interplay of a homogeneity- heterogeneity continuum, conflict-accommodation- assimilation processes, and social class cleavages.
-Hierarchical and pyramidal class structure based on lack of political power.
-Patriarchal relations particularly in the family which is the basic economic and social unit.
-Spontaneity and expressiveness in social relations and interactions.
-Social alienation and weakness of civil society organizations.
-Underdevelopment which widens the gap between rich and poor and creates consumption based rather than production based development.

As far as values and orientations conflicts are concerned, Hill et al. conclude that although Arab culture places emphasis on fatalism, conformity, obedience, clarity, collectivity and vertical values, counter forces are placing significance on free will, creativity, open mindless, rebellion, justice and horizontal values (1998). Moving away from the macro level of national culture to the micro level of the Arab business organization, one ought to address issues relating to management style, decision making process, communication flows and other aspects of organizational life. The leadership style of Arab managers is often characterized as one of theory X style of management. McGregor's theory X holds that a manager's behavior and leadership style is motivated by three fundamental assumptions (2005). First, managers assume that workers are basically lazy, do not like to take responsibility and have a preference for following directions. Second, the primary motivator for workers is money and job security. Third, managers must implement tight control measures and use threats of punishment in order to make workers attain organizational goals.

It is irrelevant whether these assumptions are realistic or no. What is more important is the fact that managers lead in accordance with what they assume. Consequently, Arab managers' leadership style is highly dictatorial and authoritative. Although some recent studies have questioned this conventional wisdom, Arab managers are still assumed to align much more with theory X rather than theory Y or theory Z. Closely consistent with this management style is a top- down decision making process where people at the bottom of the pyramid participate little if any in decision making and a one- way downward flow of information that take mostly the form of directives and instructions.

II-C-A Profile of Arab Corporate Culture

The preceding sections on the historical development of consultative authority decision making and characterization of Arab culture and corporate culture permit us to sketch a profile of Arab corporate culture at the risk of engaging in some generalization. Yet such a somewhat generalized sketch will still be beneficial because the fundamentals are the same. We should also point out here that the sketch will not observe a clear distinction between culture and corporate culture due to the influence of the first on the second. The profile that we will present here is going to be organized along the following dimensions, in no particular order: the family, the collective, social relationship norms, consultative authority, centralization, past orientation, fatalism, informality, power distance and communication.

1) The Family and Patriarchy are closely tied together because the second is established in the framework of the first. The family remains the strongest and fundamental unit of social and business organization in the Arab World. Belonging in this context extends beyond the immediate family to include relatives. It is not unusual for two Arab individuals to bond on the basis of having the same family name. Moreover, family members form family associations which organize activities and hold regular meetings to care for the affairs of the family and its members. This is all done of course by the males of the family and on rare occasions one or two females may be involved.

2) The collective in Arab society may take various forms and expressions. But the idea is always the same, which is belonging to a group. Pursuing one's own individual interests is often regarded with suspicion. In many Arab societies, the religious sect is a collective that may be more powerful than the state as is the case in Lebanon. Typical collectives include the family, the tribe, the neighborhood, the town, the sect, the party, the club and the company.

3) Social relationship norms are traditions and values that regulate daily social interactions. Arabs are trained in their early childhood socialization process to observe specific norms of behavior and play their social roles. Children are taught to listen when adults talk, take part in social ceremonies, respect older persons and obey authority. Social relationship norms are strong in Arab culture. In some instances and situations, they count so much that emphasis shifts away from the content of the behavior to its context.

4) Consultative authority is the style of decision making used in Arab society. Consultations are usually informal and non-binding. Nonetheless, in social organizational settings such as the family and the tribe, the authority of those in charge is subject to limitations imposed by the consensus of the collective under rule. As for business organizations, consultations seem to be superficial in the sense that the manager seeks to obtain the agreement of organizational members on decisions already made. Still, this would be done in the context of projecting an image of true consultation and participation.

5) Centralization of power and authority is evident in the context of a leader making decisions after consultations in the best interest of the collective. As such, the leader turns into an individual possessing dictatorial power and authority reinforced by followers' unquestioning loyalty and trust. This mode of centralization is based on a basic managerial subscription to the assumptions of theory X in management. In other terms, followers or workers are lazy, do not want responsibility, motivated my money and must be tightly controlled using threats and methods of punishment.

6) Past Orientation in the time and space outlook of Arabs shows the most as they reconsider their view of themselves in comparison with others in the face of current crises they face. Having stopped short in their march toward modernization, Arabs have been having difficulty coping with globalization and its associated rapid pace of change. The result has been one of an identity crisis intensified by a perception of being under attach from the West especially with regard to their religion. Accordingly, Arabs turn to their past where they find comfort in their ancestors' glories and achievements.

7) Fatalism in Arab culture emanates from interpretation of religious principles that seem to require total submission to the power and will of god. Even though, such principles do exist, their implications are in fact taken out of context because they ought to be understood and interpreted in balance with other principles that urge Muslims to make choices and expect them to impact their destinies. Islamic scholars have for long engaged in philosophical debates regarding the question of choice versus submission and schools of thought have argued for one or the other.

What seems to be certain though is that the Caliphs of the Omayyad dynasty contributed in no small extent to the spread of a submissive culture in order to prevent questioning the legitimacy of their rule. Apparently, this tendency to legitimize ruling by way of submission continues to be invoked in contemporary times by Arab rulers just as well.

8) Communication in Arab culture is subtle, indirect and non verbal. Indeed, it is customary for Arabs to use terms and phrases that have double meanings, descend from the very general to the specific, start a conversation with a small talk, go around and about an issue, call upon proverbs and poetic expressions and speak with their face, eyes and hands. We believe this subtleness to be grounded in the inability to be clear, direct and to the point caused by cultural values. It is our suspicion that people develop indirect ways of communication as venues of expressing what they may not be able to express under cultural pressures of authoritarianism, belonging to a collective and obedience.

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