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# Personality profiles of managers in former Soviet countries

Personality profiles of managers

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## Problem and remedy

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### Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, former Soviet Union (FSU) countries were faced with the need to make a rapid transition from a centralised "command" economy, to a "market" economy. The difficulties this transition has created in terms of obsolete plants, outdated products, over-staffing, loss of guaranteed markets have been documented in detail (Poznanski, 1992); the present research focuses on human resource implications (Cook, 1993, 1998), in particular the suggestion that the selection and promotion methods formerly employed in FSU states did not place in senior positions those persons most able to increase the organisation's efficiency and productivity. We will then go on to explore some ways in which psychology can help speed up the "transition" process.

Little is known about personnel selection practices in former communist countries. Enquiries suggest that appointments were made in a fairly haphazard way, and that party loyalty and personal acquaintance, even nepotism, played a larger part than demonstrated or scientifically assessed ability to do the job efficiently. The Soviet Union did not approve of tests of intellectual ability, on ideological grounds, and had prohibited their use in 1935 (Malofeev, 1998). This implies that managers probably were not selected in FSU

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countries on the basis of accurate assessments of intellectual level. However it appears that some psychological tests, including translations of western measures, were being used in the FSU for some types of testing.

Randlesome (1992) describes how managers were selected in communist East Germany. Managers were recruited from universities and colleges, entry to which depended on party loyalty and willingness to serve extra time in the army. These managers were technically very competent (e.g. as engineers) but lacked many qualities regarded as important in managers in the West. They lacked interpersonal skills and were unable to work in teams. They lacked the ability to motivate or inspire their staff, being used to a system in which every one waited for, and obeyed, orders from the next level up the hierarchy. When a sample of 250 East German managers were "surveyed for their suitability as management board members in West German companies" by a management consultancy, only seven were considered suitable. Randlesome's account also mentions that personnel managers in communist East Germany were regarded as little better than party spies, so were perhaps unlikely to have played a useful role in scientific selection of staff.

Our research first explores whether the communist period has left FSU managers ill suited to cope with the new changed environment, using British managers as the "model". British managers have been operating in a very definitely "market" economy, since the beginning of the 1980s, so a present British managerial sample should consist largely of individuals who can function effectively in that environment, and who will therefore make an appropriate comparison group for the FSU samples. We then make suggestions about how to use psychological assessment to help FSU countries make a more rapid economic recovery.

Our research covers three countries of the former FSU: Lithuania, Ukraine, and Georgia. These three FSU countries were selected as representing a geographical cross section of "new independent states", one from the Baltic region, one from the "core" of the FSU, and one from the eastern area, bordering on Asia. We also have some data for the Czech Republic. Lithuania was an integral part of the USSR from 1940 to 1941, and from 1944 to early 1991. Lithuania had previously been independent from 1919 to 1940, and had been part of the Russian Empire before that. The Lithuanian government, which is socialist but not communist, is moving fairly cautiously towards social and economic change. Georgia was an integral part of the Russian Empire and of the Soviet Union from the early 19th century, with a brief period of independence at the beginning of the Soviet period. Georgia achieved independence on the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukraine had also been an integral part of the Soviet Union for some considerable time. Ukraine also achieved independence on the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Czech Republic was part of Czechoslovakia until 1992. Czechoslovakia was prosperous and industrialised before World War II, and possessed knowledge of scientific personnel selection methods. The country became a Soviet satellite from February 1948 until November 1989. Since independence the Czech Republic has embraced the idea of the market economy with enthusiasm.

This research uses a personality inventory, the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). The CPI has 462 questions, and measures 22 traits, such as Dominance, Managerial Potential, Work Orientation, Flexibility, and Empathy. The scales of the CPI are listed in Table I, and described in greater detail by Megargee (1972) and Gough and Cook (1996). The CPI uses the method of empirical keying, by criterion groups; for example the original Dominance scale was constructed from the answers given by persons nominated by their peers as high or low in willingness and ability to take the lead with others (but has been extensively cross-validated in many studies since). The CPI was chosen for this research because it has been extensively used in cross cultural research, and assesses a set of traits that are familiar to people in all developed societies. The CPI can be used to assess both strengths and weaknesses. A recent meta-analysis (Hough, 1988) indicates the CPI achieves very high validity for some classes of work-related behaviour. Translations into Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Georgian were prepared by teams from the participating organisations, in consultation with the British authors, who advised on the meaning and intention of items where necessary. The Czech translation was already in use.

## Method

### *Subjects*

Four samples of managers were assessed: 107 British, 99 Lithuanian, 180 Georgian, 360 Ukrainian. Most subjects were male, reflecting the composition of the workforce; males and females are not analysed separately in this report. All managers completed the CPI. In Britain, data were collected from a steel works, an electronics components factory, a packaging manufacturer, and an electric supply company. In the British sample, the mean age was 37.1, SD 11.3, and 26 per cent were female. In Lithuania, data were collected in a refrigerator plant and an electronics components factory. In the Lithuanian sample, the mean age

<i>Do (dominance)</i>	higher: confident, assertive, dominant, task-oriented lower: unassuming, not forceful
<i>Cs (capacity for status)</i>	higher: ambitious, wants to be a success, independent lower: unsure of self, dislikes direct competition
<i>Sy (sociability)</i>	higher: sociable, likes to be with people, friendly lower: shy, feels uneasy in social situations, prefers to keep in the background
<i>Sp (social presence)</i>	higher: self-assured, spontaneous, a good talker, not easily embarrassed lower: cautious, hesitant to assert own views or opinions, not sarcastic
<i>Sa (self-acceptance)</i>	higher: has good opinion of self, sees self as talented, and attractive lower: self-doubting, readily assumes blame when things go wrong
<i>In (independence)</i>	higher: self-sufficient, resourceful, detached lower: lacks self-confidence, seeks support from others

(Continued)

**Table I.**  
The scales of the CPI  
and their intended  
meanings

<i>Em (empathy)</i>	higher: understands others' feelings lower: ill at ease in many situations, unempathic
<i>Re (responsibility)</i>	higher: responsible, reasonable, takes duties seriously lower: not concerned about duties and obligations, may be careless or lazy
<i>So (socialisation)</i>	higher: comfortably accepts rules and regulations, finds it easy to conform lower: resists rules and regulations, finds it hard to conform; not conventional
<i>Sc (self control)</i>	higher: tries to control emotions and temper, takes pride in self-discipline lower: has strong feelings and makes little attempt to hide them when angry
<i>Gi (good impression)</i>	higher: wants to make a good impression, tries to do what will please others lower: insists on being him/herself even if this causes friction or problems
<i>Cm (communality)</i>	higher: fits in easily, sees self as a quite average person lower: does not have the same ideas, preferences, etc., as others
<i>Wb (well-being)</i>	higher: feels in good physical and emotional health, optimistic about the future lower: concerned about health and personal problems, worried about future
<i>To (tolerance)</i>	higher: is tolerant of others' beliefs and values even when different from own lower: not tolerant of others, sceptical about what they say
<i>Ac (achievement via conformance)</i>	higher: has strong drive to do well, in settings where tasks are clearly defined lower: has difficulty in doing best work in situations with strict rules
<i>Ai (achievement via independence)</i>	higher: has strong drive to do well, in settings that encourage initiative lower: has difficulty in situations that are vague, or poorly defined
<i>Ie (intellectual efficiency)</i>	higher: efficient in use of intellectual abilities, can complete tasks lower: has a hard time getting started on things, and finishing them
<i>Py (psychological-mindedness)</i>	higher: good judge of how people feel and what they think about things lower: more interested in the practical and concrete than the abstract
<i>Fx (flexibility)</i>	higher: flexible, likes change and variety, easily bored by routine lower: likes well-organised life, may be stubborn and even rigid
<i>F/M (femininity/masculinity)</i>	higher: sympathetic, helpful, sensitive to criticism, often feels vulnerable lower: decisive, action-oriented, takes the initiative, unsentimental
<i>Mp (managerial potential)</i>	higher: well organised, efficient, good at communicating with others lower: poorly organised, inefficient, poor at communicating with others
<i>Wo (work orientation)</i>	higher: values hard work, dependable, conscientious lower: tends to lose interest in things easily, not very dependable

Table I.

was 44.1, SD 10.4, and 11 per cent were female. In Georgia, data were collected from a locomotive works, and from tobacco, wine and wool factories. In the Georgian sample, the mean age was 45.3.1, SD 9.67, and 43 per cent were female. In Ukraine, data were collected from steel manufacturers, engineering manufacturers, and building materials manufacturers. In the Ukrainian sample, the mean age was 39.6, SD 10.3, and 39 per cent were female. Additionally data were available for 111 Czech managers, from a white goods factory, a truck manufacturing company, and a chemical plant. In the Czech sample, the mean age was 41.7, SD 9.4, and 11 per cent were female.

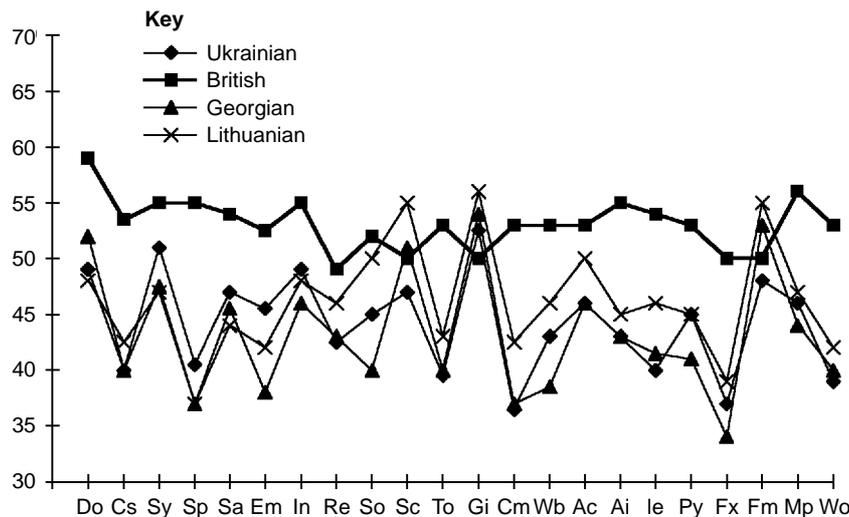
**Results**

The CPI scores in Figures 1 and 2 are in T score form, in which the mean is set at 50 and the SD at ten. The reference group on this occasion are the basic normative samples described in the *Administrator's Guide* (Gough, 1987).

CPI scores were analysed by one-way ANOVAs, in which the main factor was country (Table II). Significance of differences between countries was tested by the Tukey test.

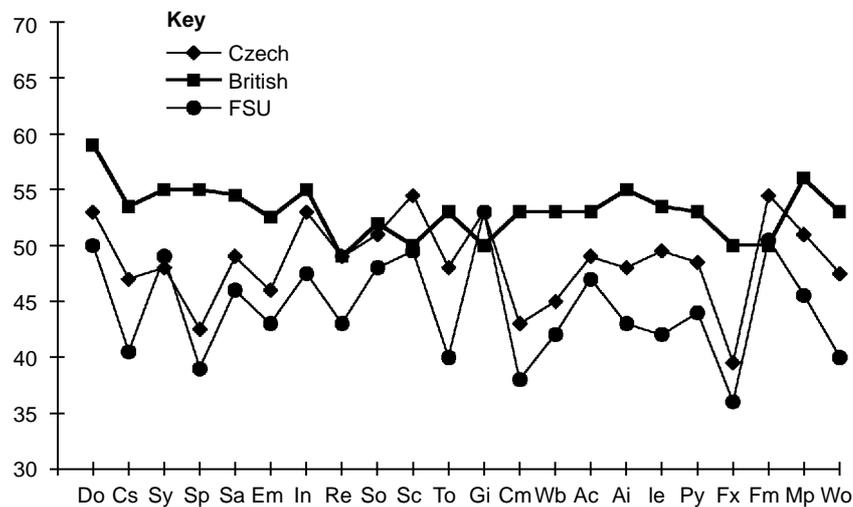
*Within FSU differences*

Some differences were found within the three FSU countries. The Ukrainian group scored significantly higher on sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, empathy and independence; the Georgian group scored higher on dominance; the Lithuanian group scored higher on achievement via conformance, intellectual efficiency, psychological mindedness, flexibility and managerial potential. For the well-being scale, the Lithuanian group scored



**Figure 1.** CPI profiles of British, Ukrainian, Georgian and Lithuanian managers

**Figure 2.**  
CPI profiles of British,  
former Soviet Union  
and Czech managers



	<i>F</i> and <i>p</i>	Order or means
Dominance	27.1 ***	UK/GA/LT and UA
Capacity for status	64.6 ***	UK/rest
Sociability	28.9 ***	UK/UA/LT and GA
Social presence	72.8 ***	UK/UA/LT and GA
Self acceptance	23.1 ***	UK/UA/LT and GA
Empathy	78.0 ***	UK/UA/LT/GA
Independence	24.5 ***	UK/UA/LT and GA
Responsibility	20.8 ***	UK/rest
Socialisation	14.4 ***	UK and LT/GA/UA
Self control	23.7 ***	LT/GA and UK/UA
Tolerance	92.1 ***	UK/LT/UK and GA
Good impression	8.2 ***	LT/GA/UK and UA
Communality	55.8 ***	UK/LT/GA and UA
Well being	54.2 ***	UK/LT/UA/GA
Achievement via conformance	27.1 ***	UK and LT/UA and GA
Achievement via independence	83.5 ***	UK/rest
Intellectual efficiency	70.3 ***	UK/LT/GA and UA
Psychological-mindedness	60.2 ***	UK/LT/UA/GA
Flexibility	88.8 ***	UK/LT/UA/GA
Femininity/masculinity	21.1 ***	LT/GA/UK and UA
Managerial potential	58.6 ***	UK/LT/UA/GA
Work orientation	78.6 ***	UK/LT/GA and UA

**Table II.**  
*F* values, probability  
and one-way ANOVAs  
across countries  
(UK, Lithuania,  
Ukraine and Georgia)

**Note:** The third column gives the order of the means and indicates which differ significantly. Thus UK/LT/UA and GA means that the UK mean is significantly higher than the Lithuanian mean, which in turn is higher than the Ukrainian and Georgian means, which however do not differ significantly

significantly higher than the Ukrainian group, who in turn scored significantly higher than the Georgian group.

*British/FSU differences*

For responsibility and socialisation, the British group did not differ significantly from the Lithuanian group but did score significantly higher than the Ukrainian and Georgian group. For self-control, good impression, and femininity/masculinity, the Lithuanian group scored significantly higher than the Georgian group, who in turn scored significantly higher than the British and Ukrainian groups, which did not differ significantly.

Given that within FSU differences were generally small, a pooled FSU profile was calculated (Figure 2). A further set of one way ANOVAs (Table III) shows that the British managers scored higher than the FSU managers on all CPI scales, except responsibility, socialisation, self-control, good impression, and femininity/masculinity.

*Czech managers*

Table III also includes, besides the British and combined FSU samples, the Czech group. One way ANOVAs in Table III and Figure 2 show that for most

	<i>F</i> and <i>p</i>	Order or means
Dominance	30.7 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Capacity for status	107.8 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Sociability	27.4 ***	UK/FSU and CZ
Social presence	96.3 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Self acceptance	31.5 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Empathy	60.5 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Independence	39.6 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Responsibility	39.4 ***	UK and CZ/FSU
Socialisation	14.5 ***	UK and CZ/FSU
Self control	15.9 ***	CZ/FSU and UK
Tolerance	158.2 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Good impression	6.4 **	FSU/(CZ) UK
Communality	77.1 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Well being	55.3 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Achievement via conformance	29.7 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Achievement via independence	132.1 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Intellectual efficiency	108.6 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Psychological-mindedness	83.1 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Flexibility	111.5 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Femininity/masculinity	9.3 ***	CZ/FSU/UK
Managerial potential	90.5 ***	UK/CZ/FSU
Work orientation	136.9 ***	UK/CZ/FSU

**Note:** The third column gives the order of the means and indicates which differ significantly. FSU/(CZ)/UK means the FSU mean differs from the UK mean, while the CZ means does not differ significantly from either UK or FSU mean

**Table III.**  
*F* values, probability and one-way ANOVAs across countries (UK, FSU and Czech Republic)

CPI scales, the British group scored significantly higher than the Czech group, who in turn scored significantly higher than the FSU group. The exceptions were independence, responsibility, and socialisation, where British and Czech groups did not differ significantly but were both significantly higher than the FSU group, self-control, where the Czech group scored higher than the British and FSU group, who did not differ significantly, femininity where the Czech group scored higher than the FSU group who in turn scored higher than the British group, and good impression, where the Czech mean did not differ significantly from either the FSU or UK means, which two however did differ significantly.

### **Discussion**

Figure 1 shows that the British managerial group have fairly typical (Western) managerial profiles, elevated on dominance, capacity for status, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, independence, tolerance, achievement via conformance, achievement via independence, intellectual efficiency, and managerial potential. They are outgoing, dominant and forceful; they are ambitious and well organised. They are not however, collectively, above average in the "character" scales of the CPI: responsibility, self-control, and socialisation (absence of delinquent tendencies).

Figure 1 also shows the results for the three groups of FSU managers. The average managerial profiles obtained in Georgia, Ukraine and Lithuania are very similar (and very different from the British managerial profile). Some differences between FSU means do achieve statistical significance, but are nevertheless small when compared with the FSU/British differences. The within FSU differences are generally three to four *T* points, i.e. less than half a standard deviation (using the Western normative data). There are however some themes to the within FSU differences. The Ukrainian group score slightly higher on CPI scales relating to social relations, sociability, empathy etc., while the Lithuanian group score slightly higher on scales, flexibility, psychological mindedness, etc., that relate to a more open-minded outlook. Given that the within FSU differences are generally fairly small, even when significant, we thought it justified to pool the three FSU groups (Figure 2) for further comparisons.

Figure 2 makes it very clear that the main difference – in terms of size – is between the British and FSU groups. Differences of more than ten *T* points, i.e. of one standard deviation using the Western normative data, are found for ten scales: capacity for status, social presence, well-being, tolerance, communality, achievement via independence, intellectual efficiency, flexibility, managerial potential, and work orientation. The other significant differences between British and FSU managers are between four and ten *T* points in size. The differences between British and FSU managers may be summarised under five main themes.

*Ambition*

FSU managers score much lower than British managers on capacity for status and achievement via independence. This indicates they are less willing than British managers to make personal sacrifices to further their own careers, and may not be happy in settings where autonomy and independence are needed. It also suggests they may not do very well in an entrepreneurial environment.

*Influencing others*

FSU managers score much lower than British managers on social presence and empathy, and lower on dominance and self-acceptance. These differences suggest they are less willing to take the lead, and take control of others, that they are less good at motivating staff by force of personality, and that they lack self-confidence. They probably lack “charisma”, and the ability to make themselves felt in formal and informal groups. They may also be poor at making presentations to audiences. The difference in empathy suggests the FSU managers are less good at understanding other people’s feelings, and reactions, both at an individual level, and collectively. Poor “collective” understanding suggests they may have difficulty assessing the general mood of the workforce, or may find it difficult to anticipate the workforce’s reactions to management decisions.

*Open-mindedness*

FSU managers score much lower than British managers on tolerance, psychological-mindedness, and flexibility. FSU managers may be more suspicious of new ideas, or of people with unfamiliar ideas than British managers, and are probably slower to adapt to new ways of doing things. They may lack interest in people and their motives in particular, and may possibly lack intellectual curiosity in general.

*Adjustment*

FSU managers score much lower than British managers on well-being and work orientation. This suggests they have poorer personal morale than British managers, and that they may lack perseverance with some aspects of their work, especially the less exciting and more routine aspects. It is interesting that the well-being score shows a linear decrease from Britain, through Lithuania and Ukraine, to the lowest mean for Georgia. This approximately parallels the degree of prosperity of the four countries.

*Organisation*

FSU managers score much lower than British managers on intellectual efficiency and managerial potential. This suggests they may be poorer at organising themselves, their work and their time.

*Overall personality differences*

FSU managers, judged by a Western personality measure, appear to lack the ability to motivate others, to be reluctant to assert themselves or to make

themselves felt socially, to be inflexible and resistant to change, to be poor at organising themselves and their work, to be overcautious and to lack initiative, and to be unambitious. They tend to lack key management skills, such as the ability to enthuse others, or to understand others' points of view. These findings confirm – empirically – some of the suggestions and observations made by Randlesome.

The FSU groups do not differ from the British group so much in the “character” scales: responsibility, socialisation, self-control and good impression. Indeed for good impression, the FSU mean is significantly higher than the British mean. The results also show that FSU managers seem overly concerned with following correct procedures, and with making a favourable impression on important people. The self-control and good impression scores suggest that FSU managers may be loath to express dissent or displeasure, and tend to wait to see what important people say before committing themselves. These trends may reflect the FSU countries' history of centralised control, which did not encourage individuals to stand out in any way, nor to generate new ideas.

#### *Czech managers*

The results for the Czech manager group place them in an intermediate position between the British and FSU group for most scales of the CPI. They show a similar pattern to the FSU group, but to a less marked degree. They too do not “look like managers” to Western eyes, and share the same features of being inflexible, of lacking social presence, and being overly concerned with making the right impression. The fact that they do not differ so much may reflect their greater contact with the West, even during the Communist period, or their shorter time under Soviet control (although Lithuania also was not under Soviet control before 1940).

The three FSU countries have completely different languages, so different translations of the CPI are involved in each (and a fourth for the Czech Republic). The fact that the same profile is found, in all three FSU countries, suggests the differences between British and FSU managers cannot be attributed to problems in the translation of the CPI. It seems more likely that the three profiles reflect the common experience of being in the Soviet Union.

#### *The way forward*

As we had predicted, FSU managers are not at all like British managers. However they now find themselves having to operate in the same sort of competitive market economy. This implies they, and the industries they are trying to manage, will face considerable difficulties. If FSU industries have presently got the “wrong” people in charge, what should be done to remedy the situation? Three possibilities suggest themselves:

- (1) select new managers using more accurate methods;
- (2) “trawl” through their existing workforce to identify persons with untapped talent; and

- (3) institute a program of management development and training, to help both existing managers and new managers adapt to their role.

Of the three strategies, the second may be the easiest and quickest way to effect a rapid change. It is likely that many persons with potential managerial abilities are languishing unrecognised in relatively lowly positions, perhaps because their “faces did not fit” under the former regime, or – what is probably more likely in many cases – because no one ever tried to assess their potential abilities.

Two caveats should be expressed. First, we are suggesting that FSU countries use Western psychological tests to select “more of the same”, where “the same” is Western managers, “1990s model”. Critics argue that this makes the organisation vulnerable if the nature of their business, or of the environment they are operating in, changes drastically. However in the short term, the proposed strategy should prove effective in enabling FSU organisations to adapt to the sudden major changes they have already experienced. Second, organisations should avoid instituting any sort of “purge” of existing management, to “weed out” those who are unsuitable in terms of psychological test data. This will lower morale, and create a climate of distrust of psychological assessment.

*Management development implications*

The research also suggests a basis for training existing managers to suit them to the new environment. Existing managers can be assessed, to identify areas where some training assistance to function in the changed environment is needed. The same can be done for those persons identified by the trawl through the workforce. The same psychological assessment that is used to identify those presently non-managerial persons with managerial potential can also used to shape a training and development program for each potential manager, by identifying each person’s strengths and weaknesses.

The CPI profile lends itself very well to serving as the starting point of a program of training and development for managerial skills. The personality differences between British and FSU managers appear to group into six main themes, from a training and development point of view. For five of these, management development and training initiatives may be identified. Note that we are inferring from personality profile to management development need. It might be argued that the CPI assesses aspects of temperament, with a heritable element (Carey *et al.*, 1978), which would imply that scope for modification by training might have limits. We consider however that individuals can be helped to adapt to the demands of their work, and that, again within limits, it is useful to attempt to do so.

- (1) *Social presence.* FSU managers are poor at motivating others by force of personality, and may also be poor at making presentations to audiences. Possible management development initiatives include training in presentation skills, and in self-assertion.

- (2) *Tolerance/flexibility/psychological-mindedness*. FSU managers are not very open to new experiences or to new ideas. Possible management development initiatives therefore include training in strategic vision, lateral thinking.
- (3) *Achievement via independence/responsibility*. FSU managers are not very good at making decisions, and acting independently. Possible management development initiatives therefore include training in decision making skills, designed to boost self-confidence.
- (4) *Managerial potential/intellectual efficiency*. FSU managers are not good at communicating with others, or organising themselves. Possible management development initiatives therefore include training in oral communication, written communication, and time management skills.
- (5) *Empathy*. FSU managers are not good at understanding what other people are thinking and feeling. Possible management development initiatives therefore include training in non-verbal behaviour, or in role reversal.
- (6) *Capacity for status*. FSU managers are less ambitious than British managers. This aspect of the difference may not be so easily dealt with by training individuals.

The benefits to FSU countries of these types of interventions could be substantial. The main benefit will be that, with highly competent individuals occupying the key managerial positions, the resulting increase in productivity will help to shorten the transitional phase of the economy, and direct change successfully toward marketisation. This will enable FSU countries to prosper economically, and to be able to resist foreign competition both abroad and at home.

### **Summary and conclusions**

Our research finds that people managing manufacturing industries in the former Soviet Union differ from their counterparts in Britain in many aspects of personality. This implies that they may find it difficult to function effectively as managers in the post-Soviet era, which in turn implies the need for improved selection methods to identify the next generation managers, and for an extensive training and development programme to enable the present managers to cope.

### **Future developments**

Further research in this area could usefully explore three avenues. First, research should extend the present analysis to other sectors of the FSU economy besides manufacturing industry, covering service industries which will probably be much more important in the future, and what in Britain would be called "the public sector", of central and local government. It has been suggested that more talented individuals in the FSU looked for careers in administration, rather than in manufacturing. Second, research could extend

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the present analysis to other parts of the FSU, and to other former Soviet satellites. In particular, it would be important to study the former centre of the Soviet Union, in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as well as the Moslem countries of former Soviet Asia. Finally it would be useful to make a more systematic examination of the role of age, to ascertain which age ranges still remain in the Soviet mould, and which are finding it easier to adapt to the new environment, as this will give an estimate of the likely time span of the adjustment period.

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