

# Leadership and Management Philosophy of “Guzaara” or Cooperating to “Get Along” in South Asia’s Afghanistan

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## Abstract

Cultural homogeneity can make socialization, training, developing, and decision-making a little easier and more predictable. Afghanistan is homogeneous in some respects but it is a culturally diverse country, which has a rich heritage of “guzaara” or getting by, getting along, surviving, and avoiding excessive risks to make progress in life and profession through cooperation, win-win thinking, and compromises. The conditioning of “guzaara” comes with certain weaknesses that might discourage critical thinking and encourage the acceptance of the status quo. Interestingly, the concept of “guzaara” is learned; and it is used by over two billion individuals living in countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This conceptual paper suggests that effective guzaara education along with better skills in “edaara” (managing through task-orientation) are especially crucial for management and leadership practices in South Asia and other countries around the world.

Using cultural experience, leadership practices, and case examples, this article explains the concept of “guzaara” (relationship-orientation) and its shortcomings, externalities and unintended consequences linked to mismanagement, violence, discrimination, cronyism, bribery, and other forms of corruption. Using literature, management, and leadership models along with cases, the paper provides reflections and suggestions that are useful for managers, expatriates, government officials, and educators who are expecting, promoting, creating, and trying to sustain a growing and prosperous political and ethical economic climate in Afghanistan.

**Keywords:** Afghan management skills; guzaara; edaara; rahbariat; inclusion; heterogeneity, homogeneity; ethics.

**JEL Classification:** J24, M00.

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## Introduction

As a child and teenager growing up in Afghanistan, I often heard the terms guzaara, edaara, and rahbariat from my parents, teachers, and others in society. My mother and grandmother used to say, be quiet and “*guzaara kun*”, meaning to “get along and get by to make ends meet” with others and to watch what you say, how you say it, and when you say it. My teachers said “*edaara kun*”, meaning “manage” your tasks and assignments in a disciplined, qualitative and timely manner. High-level officials in the public and private sectors encouraged us to show “*rahbariat*”, or leadership, in various elements of our actions and service to the community.

We know that history keeps moving forward throughout the world; unfortunately, the history of Afghans seems to have regressively gone backward over the last four decades (Mujtaba, 2013). Nonetheless, their rich history of socialization, literature, poetry, and proud culture are unrivaled. The customs, norms, and traditions of people in Afghanistan go back thousands of years. Afghans are diverse and made up of people from many ethnic backgrounds that have come from many continents in this universe. In addition, Afghans now live in all continents and probably in most countries around the world due to the four decades of brain drain and emigration out of Afghanistan caused by violent wars and political instability.

The word “*Afghan*” represents all individuals who were born in Afghanistan, descendants of Afghans, and those who are official citizens of the country, as agreed upon by the country’s 1964 constitution. Afghanistan is a small country located in southwest Asia in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. Afghanistan is bounded on the north at the Amu River by the former Soviet Union countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan), on the east and south by Pakistan, in the northeast by China, and on the west by Iran.

There are people of different backgrounds in Afghanistan and some of the common ethnicities are Pushtuns, Tajiks, Hindus, Sikhs, Baluchis, Nuristanis, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Turkmans. Pushtuns and Tajiks make up the largest groups of Afghans. There are more than twenty different languages being spoken in Afghanistan,

with the main ones being Persian (Dari or Farsi) spoken by most Afghans on a regular basis. However, almost all Afghans speak either Persian or Pushtu as well. Most Afghans speak two or more languages. The dominant religion is Islam, practiced by about 99% of the population, with the other one percent making up the minority religions such as Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jews, and Buddhists.

Afghanistan has an approximate population of 36 million people and the ratio of men to women is higher as for every 100 women there has been 106 or higher number of men. Literacy rate is about 30 percent and around 80 percent of Afghans have no formal schooling experience due to the poor economy, lack of proper security, and several decades of war. Consequently, people are informally conditioned by the cultural norms such as guzaara (getting along and people-orientation) and edaara (managing and task-orientation) throughout their lives, especially during their socialization as young children, in hopes that they grow up to become effective rahbars (leaders).

### Leadership/Rahbariat

Over the centuries, all the diverse Afghan ethnicities have accumulated a rich tradition of guzaara, edaara, and rahbariat for all citizens of Afghanistan who are socialized into this system of management and leadership regardless of their tribal connections, languages spoken, or cultural differences. Afghans apply these concepts to their daily interactions with others in society. If we can effectively apply the concepts of guzaara, edaara, and rahbariat in our personal lives, then we can also apply them to the workplace as well for management development.

We know literature defines *management* as the process of achieving organizational goals with and through people using available resources in the most efficient manner possible (Mujtaba, 2014; Jones and George, 2017). The functions of management include planning, organizing, *leading*, and controlling (POLC). The management functions can be used to classify the manager’s job and responsibilities at different levels in the hierarchy such as entry level managers, middle-level managers, and senior managers. All professionals and managers use some or all of these management skills to get their work done. Overall, while there are some overlapping elements of the management functions with the skills of guzaara and edaara, the planning and leading functions of management closely parallel guzaara skills, but the organizing and controlling functions relate more to the edaara skills in Afghanistan. In this paper, we focus on the “leading” function of management as our aim is to better understand rahbariat (or leadership).

*Leadership* is the process of influencing an individual or a group of individuals while providing an environment where personal, professional, or organizational objectives can successfully be achieved (Kaifi, Mujtaba, and Xie, 2009; Mujtaba and Kaifi, 2010). Leadership (or rahbariat) requires human skills (guzaara) and technical skills (edaara) while a person exerts influence over one or more individuals to inspire, motivate, and direct their behaviors toward the achievement of organizational goals. The individual or person who exerts any form of influence that guides behavior toward a predetermined objective is considered to be a leader (rahbar). Effectiveness, in the context of leadership, is doing the right things for the right reasons at the right times (Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy, 2019); and Afghanistan has many qualified individuals with such potential (Nouri, 2012). Effective leadership can greatly enhance and increase the ability of the individual, the group and the organization to successfully meet both its current and prospective challenges as well as opportunities in the areas of gaining a competitive advantage, fostering ethical behavior, providing a motivational work environment, and recruiting and retaining a competent and diverse workforce.

A person’s leadership style is formed by the specific ways in which he or she chooses to influence other individuals. A person’s leadership style shapes the way an individual approaches the various functions of management. All individuals working in professional organizations have their own personal leadership styles that determine how they lead others and how they perform the concomitant management functions.



Figure 1. Pillars of Rahbariat/Leadership

Source: Own elaboration

In the behavioral perspective of leadership, there are two clusters of leadership behaviors discussed that focus on the people and tasks. First, *people-oriented* behaviors (guzaara kaardan) include showing mutual concern, trust and respect for others. People-oriented leadership tends to result in higher job satisfaction among subordinates, as well as lower absenteeism, grievances, and turnover compared to using task-oriented style. An unintended consequence or side effect of people orientation is that job performance tends to be lower than for employees with task-oriented leaders (Hersey and Campbell, 2004). Second, *task-oriented* leadership styles (edaara kaardan) generally include behaviors that define and structure work roles to ensure that everyone follows company rules in order to reach performance capacity and meet the established standards. An unintended consequence or side effect of task-oriented leadership is that it can result in lower job satisfaction as well as higher absenteeism and turnover among subordinates (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, 2001). Behavioral leadership scholars conclude that some people are high or low on both styles, others are high on one style and low on the other, and most individuals are somewhere in between in the continuum (Hersey, 1984 & 1997). The key is to be a flexible leader and use whatever orientation or skill is best for a given situation (see Figure 1).

Let us begin by looking at the definitions of guzaara, edaara, and rahbariat from the perspective of those who are born and raised in Afghanistan.

“**Guzaara**” is the willingness, attitude of people-orientation, and skill to get by, get along, make ends meet, remain patient, think win-win, cooperate, avoid unnecessary risks, curbing one’s indulgences to be financially savvy (restraint and conserve funds to avoid overspending), being sustainable, negotiating, and doing whatever is necessary to preserve important relationships. In reality, due to the years of cultural conditioning, most Afghans become very good at “getting by”, but as can be seen from the actions of politicians in the country, some people do not always do well in “getting along”. The term guzaara is usually followed by the words “*kun*” which means “do”, or “*kaardan*” which means “doing”. In general, “*guzaara kaardan*” is a very comprehensive Afghan (Persian) concept which implies that one’s actions should be aligned with and complementary to getting by, getting along, making ends meet, cooperating, and proceeding without being entangled into prolonged arguments. Another view of guzaara kaardan is “*rooz tir kaardan*” or passing the day (i.e., getting by). It can imply surviving, perhaps maintaining the status quo when necessary, exercising patience, and preserving relationships for the long-term to “save face” (make “*beenie khameerie*”) for all stakeholders involved, and to keep everyone happy. It can also imply that one should take the path of least resistance and exert the least amount of time and effort to move forward or accomplish certain goals. Consequently, because of prolonged societal conditioning, people are intrinsically conditioned not to challenge higher-ranked and older individuals’ opinions and extreme practices even when they are clearly wrong. The reality is that the upcoming young Afghans are very smart and they can and must go beyond just getting by to become effective leaders locally, nationally and internationally.

As shown in Figure 2, the two main elements of guzaara kaardan are “getting by” and “getting along”. Most Afghans are good at the “getting by” part of guzaara kaardan. Some examples can be seen from expatriate Afghan medical doctors, architects, lawyers, and engineers who are living in foreign countries (such as in Russia, Europe or North America) and are driving taxies, operating food carts, doing carpentry, painting, and/or serving as cooks in restaurants just to make a living and get by. Similarly, while most Afghans are good at “getting along” as well, unfortunately, this has not been the case when it comes to unity in politics by following one common vision (“*yaak eraada*”) for the country. The challenge for Afghan leaders and all working adults in Afghanistan is to cause a significant paradigm shift in the will and motivation of everyone in the country, through proper socialization and conditioning, so they can work on slowly making a transition from just “getting by” to actually “getting along” in the years to come.



Figure 2: Two Elements of Guzaara Kaardan

Source: Own elaboration

“**Edaara kaardan**” is having the ability to effectively manage, discipline, and keep order while expertly performing specific tasks (task-orientation). It is about the application of existing or applicable laws, norms, and effective people management skills. It is about correcting personal performance problems and misbehaviors while managing each situation in a structured manner toward excellence. Once again, using

edaara skills, it is important to develop and encourage Afghans to think critically and transition from “getting by” to “getting along” through strategic planning, collaborations, and effective leadership (rahbariat). While most Afghans learn to work well with different people groups and build trusting relationships for “getting by” through guzaara kaardan, it is time for them to move beyond it to “getting along” using their accumulated technical expertise, discipline, organizing, controlling, and task-orientation skills which are all important elements of effective edaara kaardan.

People do good things and take action in society with the assumption that effectiveness in “guzaara kaardan” (getting by through people-orientation) and “edaara kaardan” (managing and remaining disciplined through task-orientation) can lead to “rahbariat” or leadership in all elements of one’s life in society.

“*Rahbariat*” (leadership) is the ability to lead, decide, and act by diagnosing the root causes of problems while separating them from the effect. Rahbariat is one’s conceptual skill to critically think and strategically plan for the long-term using a balance of relevant guzaara and edaara kaardan skills. As Benjamin Franklin’s axiom goes, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. Rahbariat is about strategically planning and working hard today to make the future more productive, fruitful, and easier for everyone. A good rahbar knows that he or she must at times be a good follower or a good soldier depending on what is needed at a given situation, while at other times he or she must be the innovator, motivator, instigator, and/or transformer. An Afghan proverb states “*Besooz wa besawz*” meaning “burn or suffer and construct” to make it right. Besooz means empathize with others by taking the hardship on yourself even if it means personally “burning” or suffering; and, simultaneously, you can compose, construct, organize, and build a better system, a better team, a better future, or a better institution for others. The term “besawz” means compose, construct, fix, and arrange.

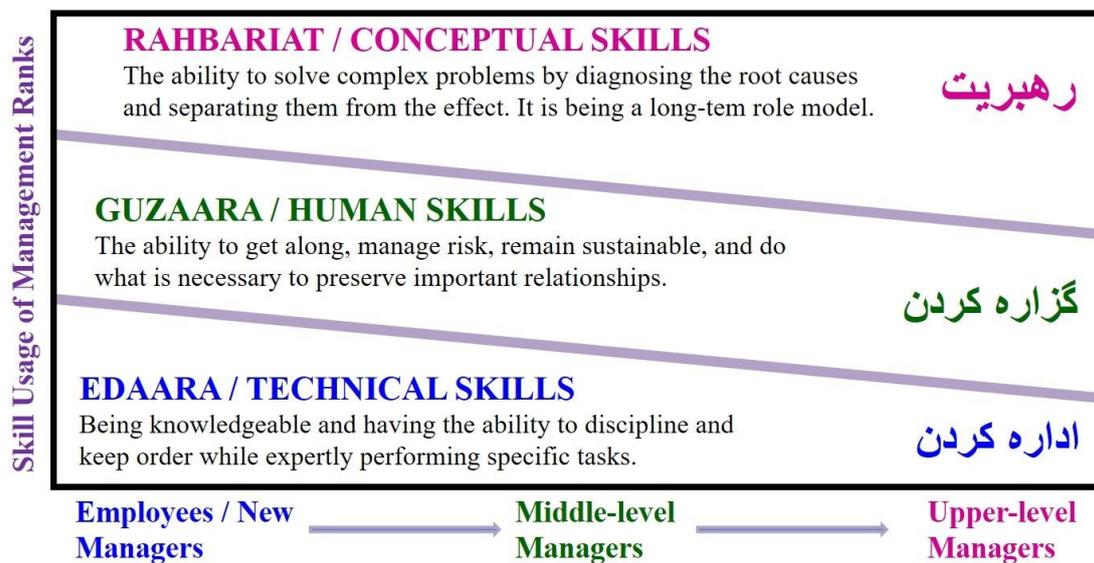


Figure 3. Afghan Societal Management Skills (ASMS)

Source: Own elaboration

As demonstrated in Figure 3, rahbariat skills are used at all levels of management, but more so at senior levels where managers have to think and plan strategically for the long-term success of their organizations. Rahbariat requires *knowing the way* (acquiring knowledge and wisdom), *showing the way* (coaching and guiding), and *going the way* (leading by example as a role model).

“*Rahbariat*” is the ability to differentiate between causes and effects or symptoms, while focusing on the long-term. It is about making sure that one’s actions are effectively aligned with the concepts of guzaara and edaara kaardan, while making sure one thinks critically to avoid the negative unintended consequences of societal conditioning. For example, while the concept of courage (“*ghairat*”) tends to condition people to stand up for good causes, it can also drive emotionally-charged individuals to seek revenge and commit atrocious acts that are not necessarily aligned with one’s deeply-held universal values; this is usually done based on the stimulus-response conditioning of the brain without much critical thinking about the concomitant consequences. In Afghanistan, most public officials and true leaders console and calm down the victims of terrorist attacks while consistently emphasizing that these attackers are being brainwashed, conditioned and programmed by political militant groups to cause havoc and hatred among people based on religious and ethnic differences. Therefore, we must refrain from emotional outbursts and thoughts of revenge as that cycle only makes the future worse for everyone. The government representatives like the police officers, army personnel, and national guard members must all defend the public’s interest and deliver equitable justice for all the victims; and

simultaneously work on reducing the main causes of how and why people are brainwashed to commit atrocities. Afghan leaders must know the attackers’ intentions and exercise extreme caution in not allowing the enemy to reactively drive their decisions and actions since violence only begets more violence. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind”. Just because one militant group intentionally commits an atrocity does not mean that we have to stoop down to their level and do the same wrong acts, which will provide additional fuel to continue the vicious cycle of violence. Such thoughts and decisions are examples of diagnosing the root causes of problems (militant groups interfering with politics for their own personal benefits), separating them from the effect or symptoms (radicalized young kids and adults who are brainwashed and paid to attack innocent individuals), and figuring out ways of effectively dealing with root problems to permanently eliminate the symptoms from reappearing. Overall, rahbariat is about *knowing the right way, showing the right way to everyone, and going in the right way.*

There are interdependencies among the three skills of guzaara kaardan, edaara kaardan, and rahbariat. All individuals, workers, managers, and professionals use these three skills at home and in the workplace. The more effectively we use them, the more likely that we achieve a higher level of real or perceived leadership (rahbariat) in the eyes of those around us at home, at work, and in the community. Rahbariat is both a skill and a privileged rank usually imposed onto the best and brightest in the family, department, organization, or community. People who become a *rahbar* (leader) with the requisite skills of guzaara kaardan and edaara kaardan usually serve their constituencies well by being role models of what they expect from others. Professionally, rank or position in the workplace requires that one spend more or less time using each skill based on the needs of each situation.

As managers and public sector officials, one must remember that there is an interdependent relationship between these three essential societal skills. Having great skills in the various elements of “guzaara kaardan” and “edaara kaardan” are essential for “rahbariat”. Effectiveness in “guzaara kaardan” and “edaara kaardan” can lead to “rahbariat” (leadership). While rahbariat can be gained as a position or rank through populism, cronyism, nepotism, connections (“*wasita*”), or other corrupt means without having the relevant qualifications, such individuals bring little or no long-term progress for the country as they spend most of their energies to stay in power while maintaining the status quo.

There is a significant level of interdependence among guzaara kaardan, edaara kaardan, and rahbariat. However, guzaara kaardan, edaara kaardan, and rahbariat are separate and distinctly different skills. Yet, it should be mentioned that guzaara kaardan, edaara kaardan, and rahbariat are not mutually exclusive skills; as such, they all can happen simultaneously by the same individual. A person’s ability to do well in one area or skill (guzaara, edaara or rahbariat) heavily influences his/her success in the other two. There is no guarantee that being effective in guzaara kaardan and edaara kaardan can lead to rahbariat since there are other situational variables that may come into play. Nonetheless, effectiveness in guzaara kaardan and edaara kaardan are foundational pillars for rahbariat.

There are individuals who are excellent in the implementation of edaara skills (task-orientation), but not necessarily sufficiently admirable in guzaara (people-orientation). Similarly, there are individuals who are excellent in guzaara skills (people-orientation), but not necessarily sufficiently admirable in edaara (task-orientation). As shown in Figure 4, effective leaders are those individuals who are excellent in both the skills of guzaara (people-orientation) and edaara (task-orientation) in a balanced manner and use whichever skill is needed the most at any given situation. As such, guzaara kaardan is closely aligned with the concept of situational leadership, as espoused by Drs. Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, where one has to decide whether he or she needs to be more or less relationship-oriented or more or less task-oriented depending on the specific needs of those who are being influenced.



Figure 4. Pillars of Rahbariat/Leadership

Source: Own elaboration

One can be a good professional manager and leader by learning the concepts of guzaara, edaara, and proper rahbariat in order to better serve his/her colleagues, employees and the people of the world.

If you want to achieve excellence in rahbariat, you develop the habit in guzaara kaardan and edaara kaardan through everything you do every single day. *Effective rahbariat* is about creating harmony and consistency in one's *head* (thoughts), *heart* (feelings), and *habits* (behaviors) every single day by acting based on the concepts of guzaara and edaara as relevant for each specific situation.

## Societal Conditioning

Afghans, especially young children, are conditioned by their society in guzaara and edaara every day at home, with their friends, through the education system, by religion, and through media on a regular basis. While the conditioning is aimed at programming young children with good habits that will enhance their ability to effectively interact with others and become productive members of the society, it can also have some counterproductive externalities or unintended consequences (side effects) if not managed properly. The negative side effects are especially prevalent when people are regularly conditioned and programmed by various internal and external political groups and foreign interventions toward radicalization as to serve a specific purpose without much critical thinking.

According to the *Pashtun Times* (January 12, 2019), textbooks for Afghan refugee children in school during the Cold War era aimed to condition and "brainwash" them with the idea of war against the Afghan government (which was communist at the time) and the Russian Army in Afghanistan as being "Holy" or "Jihad". The textbooks for young kids in first and second grades, which were created, designed and prepared by educated officials from around the world, were distributed among Afghan refugee students in Pakistan. The big powers wanted to wage war on Afghan soil and as a result, millions of Afghans were killed, bombarded, displaced, became homeless and refugees, and are still sufferings today. It is truly sad to see how young children and illiterate adults who were trying to learn to read and write were purposely conditioned toward war and radicalization. The impact of such conditioning and brainwashing is long-lasting – and still causing havoc in Afghanistan. Many of the elders and adults from that era of 1980s, who were conditioned with the so-called "holy war", still believe that those who fought against the communist Afghan government and survived should automatically be in privileged positions of political power because of their sacrifices. They do not realize that victory in war does not necessarily mean that they were right or even good politicians; but only that they survived due to the inferences of foreign governments and some luck. It has been said that "War does not determine who is right – only who is left" – Bertrand Russell.

The continuous sources of conflicts in Afghanistan can be at least partially attributed to the years of radicalization, socialization, cultural conditioning, misinformation, and stereotypes toward different political and people groups. During their adolescent years, individuals learn much factual and useful information along with some misinformation about people who are different from them, which tends to form their stereotypes or "mental tapes" about others. Mental tapes are early learned stereotypes gained through socialization, which affect people's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and decisions. In other words, mental tapes affect how individuals autobiographically respond to people who are different from them, often without much critical thinking (Mujtaba, 2013).

Even without wars and stereotypes, one must become cognizant of the fact that cultural socialization of guzaara and edaara concepts can have both positive and negative consequences on people's behavior. Figure 5 shows that the unintended consequences (side effects) and the concept of edaara kaardan might make individuals to be perceived as pushy, forceful, and rude while increasing conflict and stress for all parties involved, especially younger and impressionable individuals as well as direct reports. Similarly, the concept of guzaara kaardan might condition people to maintain the status quo even if it is not sustainable for the long-term and to avoid calculated risks which must be taken to make progress. Furthermore, being strongly conditioned by the concept of guzaara might discourage critical thinking, while encouraging compliance through unquestioned loyalty.

While individuals cannot do much about the conditioning they received as young children during the war in Afghanistan, as adults they do have the power to change those beliefs about different people groups by replacing them with relevant facts. This transformation requires critically thinking, learning the facts, being open-minded, and effectively managing each situation for win-win outcomes (guzaara) in both short-term and long-term. Conditioning is a very powerful influence and most people receive it throughout their lives. Conditioning is very easy and can take place in even just a few seconds. Imagine the conditioning of Afghan

children and young working professionals who have witnessed wars, animosity, mistrust, and violence for over four decades (Abdali and Haidari, 2010).

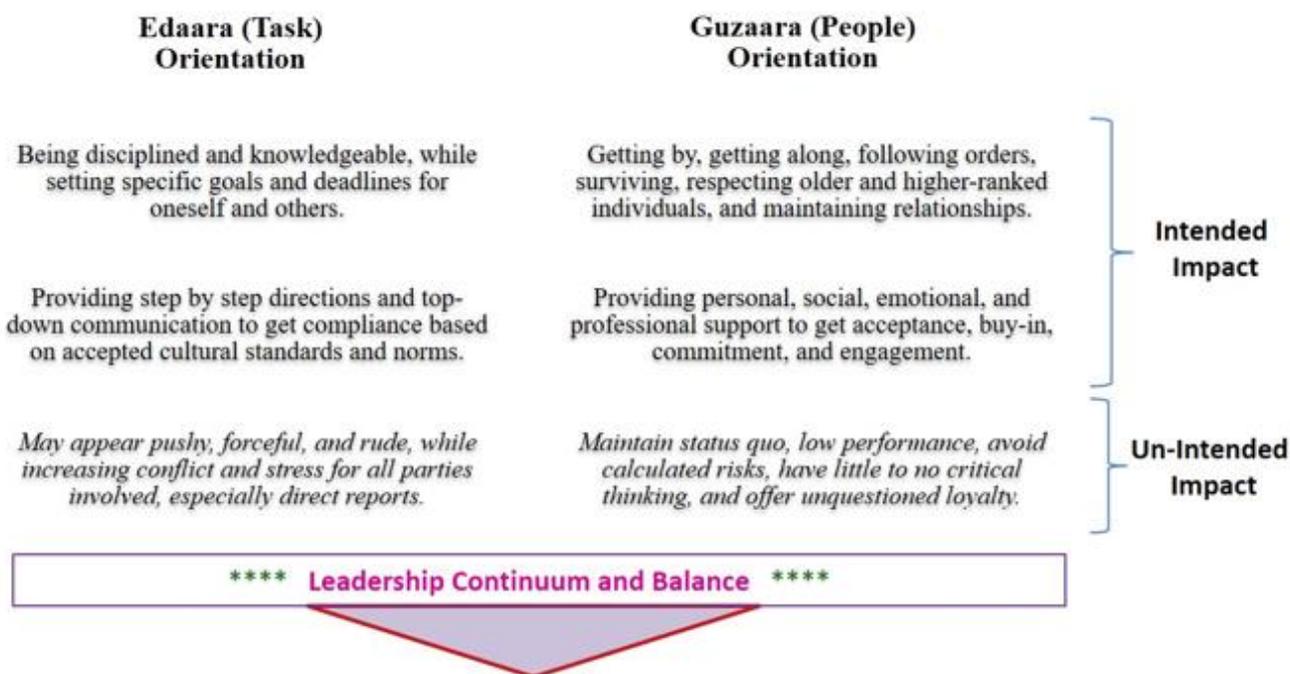


Figure 5. Leadership (Rahbariat) Balance

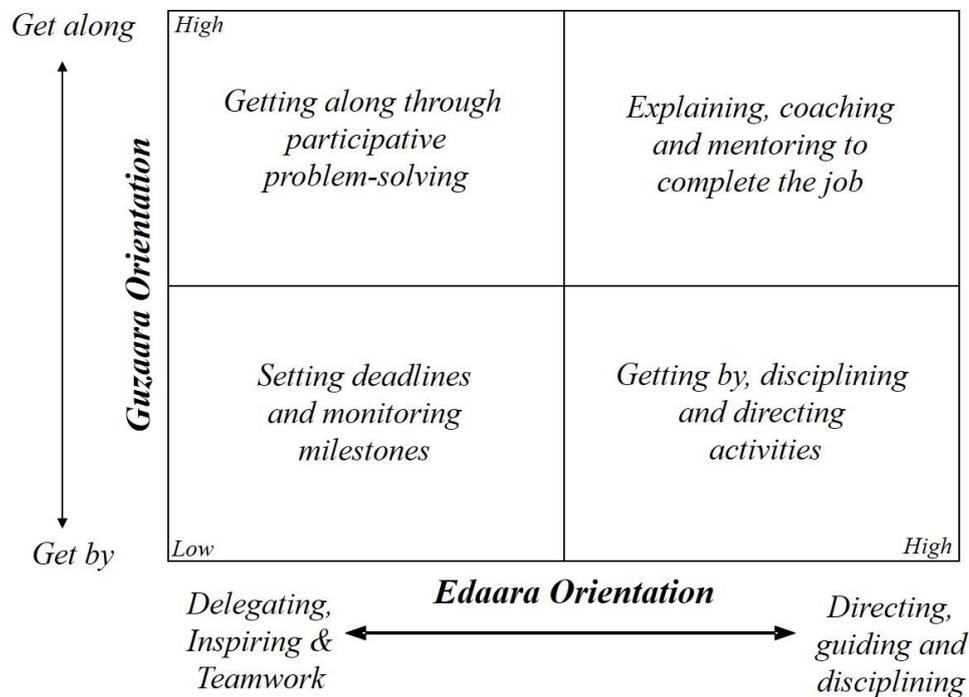
Source: Own elaboration

On the negative side, we know that cultural socialization can program even smart and educated critical thinkers to suffer from escalation commitment by offering unquestioned loyalty to a lost cause. Escalation commitment is a person's tendency to continue going in the wrong direction while investing more and more resources in it just to save face and/or align one's position with previous decisions, despite the fact that everyone knows it is not going to end well as data does not support this irrational obligation. In addition, the years of socialization in guzaara kaardan and other such ideologies have negatively conditioned some people toward radical views regarding risk-taking, distrust, acceptance of corruption, and other unethical behaviors in Afghanistan. A corrupt business culture not only leads to inefficiencies, but also to lack of trust between the citizens of a country and legitimate officials in the government (Kelman, 2000). Naturally, in such an environment, distrust is often exacerbated by high levels of diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, age, political views, and business climate. The nearly four decades of war based on the "divide and conquer" strategy along with the fear of the unknown are the main culprits for the demise of Afghanistan. The decades of wars have especially conditioned many Afghans in learning how to fight against strong and technologically powerful enemies, while not always thinking for themselves based on the relevant facts in any given situation. They do not always think critically since a large percentage of the population does not know how to read and write, and because they have not learned formal critical thinking skills through academic institutions. Educational and institutional infrastructures have a lot of work ahead of them throughout Afghanistan in preparing the future workforce for effective rahbariat through critical thinking while maintaining a balance in guzaara and edaara kaardan.

Afghan leaders need to understand and replace unfounded conditioned influences and unintentional programmed behaviors with conscious thoughts and rational decisions. Afghan leaders should not allow others to control them through the divisions of different ethnic groups. The divide and conquer strategies created long-term animosities among diverse Afghans since they were treated differently or were conditioned to simply perceive discrimination and animosity. Unfortunately, the conditioning from stereotypes, prejudices, and biases over time impact the society in many ways. One way is that human beings, as individuals, may not treat some people very well because of societal conditioning and autobiographical responses based on their own socialization and biases. Since there are so many different ethnic groups who are living in Afghanistan, Afghan leaders must make sure that unpleasant and biased memories do not exist in their cities/country by emphasizing personal, religious and professional obligations to the community and achievement of synergy through the effective application of guzaara and edaara concepts.

In an environment where levels of education are not high, homogeneity is likely to produce better unity than heterogeneity. However, when the diversity of various dimensions is present, people need continuous training and education about their differences and commonalities, their expectations and values, and regarding proper interpersonal communication and conflict management practices. They need training, education and critical thinking about the effective application of guzaara, edaara, and rahbariat concepts in all their personal and professional activities.

This paper proposed that effective leadership (rahbariat) is the successful implementation and achievement of guzaara kaardan and edaara kaardan (see Figure 6). As previously discussed, the range of guzaara kaardan is from just ‘getting by’ to ‘getting along’. In terms of edaara kaardan, on the one side of the continuum is the “Auhinger” (Blacksmith) style of management where one uses a “hammer” to manage by discipline, fear, and force to make sure that tasks are done in a timely manner. This is a situation where the manager serves as a “negahbaan” or the keeper (like a babysitter) of the department by applying the existing rules to make sure that status quo is at least preserved. On the other end of the edaara kaardan continuum is the “Zaargar” (gemologist) style of management where one judiciously manages through the strategic and progressive development of each employee through teamwork, inspiration, delegation, and positive reinforcements to make sure all tasks are qualitatively completed in a positive work environment.



**Figure 6. Afghan Leadership (Rahbariat) Continuum**

Source: Own elaboration

Effective leadership (rahbariat) is about the successful implementation and achievement of guzaara and edaara through a balanced application approach based on the needs of the situation and the readiness of followers or employees. For example, when an employee is unable, unprepared, and/or demotivated to complete a task or job by himself or herself, then the manager should lead by example while being high on edaara orientation to explain the task and monitor each activity (low guzaara and high edaara). This means that the manager must be “hands on” and/or provide on-the-job training; it also implies that the manager or trainer explicitly tells the worker what needs to be done, how it should be done, shows how the work is done through step-by-step explanations and explains the expected standards. However, when the employee is not skilled in performing the task but he or she is motivated to learn and do the job, the manager should explain, monitor and closely coach the worker to make sure the activity is completed in a timely manner based on the expected standards (high guzaara and high edaara). On the other side, the manager should attempt to be high on guzaara skills to build a strong relationship by participating with employees who know how to do the job successfully but lack confidence or motivation (high guzaara and low edaara). Finally, managers should lead using low levels of guzaara and edaara with employees who have successfully completed the job in the recent past and are motivated to perform the job on their own; in such cases, one should properly delegate the job to the worker, set deadlines, and periodically monitor the results while providing relevant feedback as needed.

No management or leadership model is perfect; thus, they all have strengths and weaknesses. Educators and managers must focus on the strengths of each model, while circumventing or reducing the negative impact of its weaknesses. Since there are many limitations to this cross-cultural rahbariat model, future researchers are encouraged to test the model, assess its weaknesses and strengths, and develop its various other elements, that are not mentioned in this paper, so the skills of guzaara kaardan and edaara kaardan can be more easily and effectively applied in the workplace. The following are some possible research questions for future authors and studies:

1. What specific parts of guzaara, edaara and rahbariat skills should be taught and reinforced by parents at home?
2. What specific parts of guzaara, edaara and rahbariat skills should be taught and reinforced in the educational curriculums?
3. What specific parts of guzaara, edaara and rahbariat skills should be taught and reinforced in the workplace?
4. What are some of the other specific elements of rahbariat that are not mentioned in this paper?
5. What are some of the other specific elements of guzaara kaardan that are not mentioned in this paper?
6. Are there other milestones between the “getting by” and “getting along” continuum of guzaara kaardan?
7. What are some of the other specific elements of edaara kaardan that are not mentioned in this paper?
8. Are there other milestones between the “discipline, fear and force” and “developing, inspiring and teamwork” continuum of edaara kaardan?

The years of conditioning and cultural norms can be strong influences on personal and professional behaviors of managers and leaders, as it can dictate one’s decisions in the workplace. As cases of child labor practices demonstrate, one should think globally based on universal values, but may act locally in order to comply with the norms and expectations of one’s colleagues in the organization and community.

### **Implications and Suggestions**

In order to increase critical thinking and effective rahbariat, while also reducing ethnic conflicts and other forms of corruption, Afghan leaders need to create an inclusive culture for all citizens and develop everyone by offering advanced education. Nelson Mandela once said, “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he or she becomes your partner”. Using their conceptual skills, Afghan leaders must exercise patience when it comes to emotionally charged events by responding based on universal values and the Golden Rule or the Platinum Rule in order to repair and enhance ethnic relationships. One can treat others the way he/she would like to be treated or one can treat others the way they would like to be treated based on their own personal and cultural values.

Similarly, under John Rawls’s “veil of ignorance” concept, decision-makers and members of a society are not supposed to know the beneficiaries of their decisions, and this causes managers and leaders not to be selfish as they themselves might be on the receiving end. Applying the veil of ignorance concept would allow individuals, managers and all decision-makers in the society to see things from another person’s point of view, paradigm, or standpoint. For example, a senior manager or decision-maker that wants to engage in unethical operations would be able to consider the possible direct and indirect consequences that their decisions may bring to others in the department or community. According to Daskal (2016: 256), “Rawls’s idea is that by excluding this self-identifying information the veil of ignorance eliminates the possibility of self-interested bias, and thereby ensures that deliberation and choice within the original position give appropriate weight to the interests of all members of society”. While being aligned with the concepts of guzaara and edaara, the veil of ignorance concept permits everyone to try and follow actions that are moral by differentiating right from wrong, regardless of whether the benefits or harms go to others or one’s own family members.

Operating on such terms mean that a person must be fully aware of the fact that between stimulus and response human beings have the freedom to choose their responses based on their deeply-held values (such as those rooted in guzaara and edaara kaardan) instead of being driven by the stimulus and emotions in a given moment. Regardless of what has already happened to a person or where he or she might be, how one responds to any given situation can often have huge positive or negative consequences for the future. Of course, awareness or critical thinking does not necessarily mean one would always act based on his/her long-term values but it is a start for effective leadership in the creation of an inclusive culture where everyone is treated fairly based on the effective application of guzaara and edaara kaardan.

An inclusive culture requires individual, group and structural support. The creation of an inclusive culture requires socially responsible training and development programs with various ethnically diverse Afghan tribes through multilevel strategies and frameworks (Syed and Kramar, 2009). Tribal members and group leaders within each diverse group need educational programs in order for them to develop cultural competency beyond simple awareness and understanding about inclusion and conflict management skills. Furthermore, structural changes, such as discrimination laws that penalize people for inequality in promotions and hiring or for harassing others because of their language or ethnic differences, can further encourage and force individuals to adjust their behaviors toward the ideal culture. Creating an inclusive culture will allow everyone the opportunity to participate in their own wellbeing and the improvement of their country without being discriminated against based on their ethnic background, language differences or other such dimensions. The creation of an inclusive workplace is a start in order to effectively facilitate the reduction of mismanagement, discrimination, and corruption throughout Afghanistan (Mujtaba, 2013). The reduction and elimination of corruption requires coherent strategic leadership and relevant strategies that are in alignment with the local cultural customs and norms of *guzaara* and *edaara kaardan*.

Influential leaders are ultimately responsible for establishing the strategy the country should develop and implement. Sanyal (2005 and 2006) mentions three elements of successful strategies, which are: 1) revolutionary thinking, 2) innovation, and 3) core competence. Each of these elements should be reflected in the environment of the culture if the goals are to be achieved. The decision-making process should integrate diverse revolutionary ideas in order to explore and eventually come up with the best available option for long-term value maximization for everyone. Afghanistan's strategy will be successful if people in the culture are thinking critically and constantly looking for better ways to innovate, build, create, and make incremental or radical changes to enhance their competitive edge. Above all, the appointed leaders must be trustworthy and culturally competent individuals with integrity and high ethical standards in *guzaara*, *edaara*, and *rahbariat*. These leaders must be role models and deliver what they promise to others in the community, country, region, and society by reducing and eradicating the existence of mismanagement and corruption (Cavico and Mujtaba, 2011).

While being *guzaara*-oriented, Afghans must decrease their level of tolerance for corruption, mismanagement, and discriminatory practices by creating transparency and disclosure laws that are practical and enforceable. Afghan officials need to work very hard in the creation of a business culture that is perceived to be fair, just, and transparent. Government officials can continuously and repeatedly communicate the laws against nepotism, cronyism, discrimination, bribery, and other forms of corruption. Government agencies should provide specific training programs for having high ethical standards and their enforcement strategies. People must learn *edaara kaardan* and critical thinking skills so they can use their economic prosperity and wealth in a balanced manner to enhance national productivity and the well-being of everyone in the community.

It is the responsibility of all public officials and private sector leaders to be culturally competent ethical role models. According to Prahalad, "managers must remember that they are the custodians of society's most powerful institutions... They must, therefore, hold themselves to a higher standard... Managers must strive to achieve success with responsibility" (2010: 36). Everyone must be role models of *guzaara*, *edaara*, *rahbariat*, inclusion, ethical standards, and managers should provide development opportunities for their employees and staff. It is a fact that specific training and educational programs can greatly enhance the level of human development and critical thinking that can lead to better economic developments and fewer chances for corruption (Husted, 1999). A better-educated Afghan society is more likely to be critical thinkers and intolerant of injustice, and seek high moral standards from all public officials while penalizing unethical behaviors (Zhang, Cao and Vaughn, 2009). Business leaders and managers must become critical thinkers and role models since employees are likely to imitate what they observe from their leaders and the elderly in the community.

Many of the individuals conditioned with the concept of *guzaara* are natural critical thinkers as they assess the impact of their decisions on others to preserve win-win relationships. However, critical thinking is a skill for different levels of analysis and assessment; as such, critical thinking skills must be regularly taught and developed in everyone's mind in order to have a critical thinking society in Afghanistan and other parts of South Asia. Critical thinking is about becoming skilled in Socratic questioning to analyze, assess, and improve one's own thinking and decisions, as well as in helping others to do the same. Effective critical thinkers are open-minded and self-directed as they discipline and monitor their own views before implementing a major decision. Critical thinkers purposely and explicitly go beyond their intuition or gut feelings to analyze and assess all the facts in a given situation so they can be consistently fair to all stakeholders in a decision. Critical thinkers live fairmindedly while internalizing and promoting universal values.

For practical examples related to critical thinking, mismanagement challenges, controlling one's emotions in order to act based on ethical values, and overall leadership effectiveness, the article now provides several case-based dilemmas for personal reflection and discussion purposes related to the culture and people of Afghanistan.

### **Child Labor Dilemma for Critical Thinking**

Let us assume that an executive finds that one of her managers in a specific branch of the company in Afghanistan has hired a 12-year-old girl to work on a factory floor, in violation of the company's prohibition on child labor. She tells the local manager to replace the child and to tell the child that she should go to school instead of working. The local manager tells the executive that the child is an orphan with no other means of support, and she will probably become a street child if she is denied work. What should the executive do? Should this executive be more concerned with *guzaara kaardan*, *edaara kaardan* or *rahbariat*?

The executive finds herself in an ethical dilemma. Ethical dilemmas are at times situations with two difficult or conflicting options, neither of which may resolve the situation in an acceptable manner. In such cases, legal guidelines can provide no satisfactory outcome for the manager who is trying to abide by societal norms, laws, and customs. However, the joint application of both *guzaara kaardan* and *edaara kaardan* might be one satisfactory option for the situation.

The executive is stuck in a difficult situation or in a "catch-22" (being caught between a rock and a hard place), as she has to figure out the right thing to do in this situation. If she understands the long-term effect of the decision to send the 12-year-old girl away into the streets to become homeless, the executive may choose instead to let the child work so she can be under the watchful eyes and supervision of responsible adults (Hill & Hult, 2017: 139).

If the executive chooses to allow the child to work, she would be in violation of the prohibition of child labor that is found in the company's ethical code. She must answer what the right thing is and figure out what her obligations are as an executive of the company. In this ethical dilemma, the situation has no alternative that seems ethically acceptable to all stakeholders. In this situation, employing the child, to begin with, was not acceptable because of the child labor ethical code of the company. Since she was already employed, to take away her sole source of income is not acceptable either. The executive needs to use a moral compass or ethical theory to guide her through the decision. Rights theories recognize that humans have rights and privileges that transcend national boundaries and cultures. Fundamental rights are what form the basis for the moral compass that the executive needs to use in this case because it has an ethical component. She should not take an action that would violate those fundamental rights (Hill & Hult, 2017: 145). Consequentialism ethical theories like utilitarianism are also valid options to consider; as such, this executive would go with a decision that minimizes pain and maximizes the positive outcomes...or a decision that produces the most benefit for the most number of stakeholders.

Based on the principles of "*guzaara kaardan*" and utilitarianism, the executive needs to figure out a way of keeping the child employed without violating the company's policy or universal principles of human rights. The executive understands that keeping the child in the company is perhaps the best option at this time for her survival and long-term development; as such, the executive and company managers must make sure that the child is treated fairly, that she is not abused, and that she is accommodated to complete her education while being formally employed. In other words, there must be fairness and a long-term plan for the child's success through the effective implementation of both *guzaara* and *edaara kaardan* principles.

### **Stadium Seating Design Mismanagement**

The National Sports Stadium in Kabul Afghanistan was built with the hard-earned money of taxpayers but most adults in the country cannot use it since ergonomically it is not comfortable to sit there for 2-3 hours of a soccer game (see exhibit 1). In the design process, the architects have tried to maximize the number of seats within the stadium so thousands of more Afghans can enjoy watching each game. However, the rows are too close together, and there is not enough space for an average adult for the extension of his/her body and legs. As such, it is not comfortable to sit there and watch a game when all the rows and seats are filled with people.

The leaders, architects, project managers, and workers naturally wanted to build a useful stadium that can be used by many Afghans in the coming decades for their national pride and sports entertainment. However, the result demonstrates that there was some mismanagement in the process. It makes one wonder which of the three skills (*guzaara*, *edaara*, and *rahbariat*) were used or lacking.

In this case, of building the stadium, we know that the skills of guzaara kaardan, edaara kaardan and rahbariat were all used, ignored, and perhaps abused at times. Through this stadium case, we can look at the learning possibilities and opportunities for improvement.

Out of all the engineers, project managers and workers responsible for building the national stadium, some probably were concerned about the ergonomics of the seating design and arrangements. However, they did not transparently speak up to raise their concern to the higher-level officials in a timely manner or they did not do it appropriately. On the other hand, if some individuals did bring up the issue with higher-level officials, they might have been scorned and forced to keep quiet as a sign of respect for the engineers and decision-makers (getting by). Furthermore, asking questions or raising the issue might mean delays in the project; as a result, people stay quiet and simply go on to “get by” (guzaara kaardan), as they complete their jobs without much critical inquiry. As stated by Dalai Lama, “A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity”.

Millions of dollars spent on the Afghan National Stadium (Kabul, Afghanistan), with over 21,000 seats like this which cannot be used by most adults.



**Exhibit 1. Afghan National Stadium Seats in 2018**

Source: Own elaboration

The workers did the job they were asked to do and perhaps most of them did not speak up due to the socialization of guzaara kaardan (respect for higher-ranked and educated individuals like the architects and engineers), and being fearful of retaliation. Some workers probably did not have the relevant edaara kaardan skill to speak their minds effectively or constructively in a timely manner. As such, the project continued and resulted in wasted resources, time and income in one of the poorest nations in the world.

We must be aware that the three skills of guzaara, edaara, and rahbariat have positive and negative implications when they are not used properly. Regarding the mismanagement of seating design in the Afghan sports stadium, the following are some questions for critical thinking and reflections:

1. What went wrong with the Afghan National Stadium case?
2. When and where were the skills of guzaara kaardan, edaara kaardan, and rahbariat applied successfully? Discuss your views and reflections.
3. Who is at fault for the outcome?
4. How could this mismanagement of the national stadium have been prevented? In other words, how can we prevent such mistakes in the future?

### **The Hot-Tempered Afghan Teenager**

Once there was a very smart and hot-tempered teenage girl living in Afghanistan. She wanted to study and accomplish great things quickly. She did not always agree with the way things were done in the local environment and often spoke her mind to create awareness. Her parents were scared that the local society is not open to such straight-shooting statements from a young teenager. So they tried to encourage her to be careful (guzaara kun) as to not offend adults or those in positions of power in society. They tried to condition her to watch her temper and speak with respect to everyone who is involved.

However, the smart teenager’s mind worked fast and, as a result, she often argued with her mother and father over little disagreements and ideological perspectives. One day she was very angry with her parents over an issue that was close to her heart and values; consequently, in the heat of the moment, she said some very hurtful things to her mom. She eventually regretted saying the hurtful things when she learned that her mother was correct, and, thus, apologized to her tearful Mom. The teenager said she was ready for her punishment.

As a form of punishment, her grandfather asked her to fix the fence on a hot sunny day by putting 500 nails on the wooden fence exactly one inch apart from each other on a straight line. It took her 3 hours to get it all done to the satisfaction of her grandfather. Then he asked her to carefully pull all the nails out, one by one. It took her another 2 hours.

When she was done, her grandfather checked it and said you did it well and your punishment is over now. She asked, what is the point of this? I did not do anything constructive or useful. Now, we have all these permanent holes on the fence that looks ugly.

The grandfather said, "The words you speak are like these nails and may cause an ugly hole or even break someone's heart permanently. You must learn (to make) *guzaara kaardan* (getting by) in order to have long-term, fruitful, and sustainable relationships with others. Yes, these ugly holes will remain on these wooden fences eternally. The words you speak and the actions you take are similar. Some actions and spoken words cannot be undone or taken back. Think before you speak, and reflect on the possible impact of the words you use. You must be strategic with your words and actions as the impact might be long-lasting."

All aspects of life are like this in the workplace. We must keep in mind that our words can have positive and negative consequences; once one says something or does something based on emotions, he or she may not be able to take it back and the impact might be eternal. We must learn proper *guzaara kaardan*, *edaara kaardan* and *rahbariat* skills which can serve one well in all aspects of life personally and professionally.

## Summary

This paper provided an overview of the culture and people of Afghanistan and most South Asians related to the concepts of *guzaara kaardan* along with the challenges and possible solutions regarding ethnic conflicts and corruption that they face today. *Guzaara* is an attitude of getting by, getting along, showing restraint for one's immediate impulses, win-win thinking, avoiding unnecessary risks, being sustainable, and doing whatever is necessary to preserve relationships and "save face" for elders and high-ranked individuals. The comprehensive concept of *guzaara kaardan* implies that one's actions should always be aligned with cooperating, getting along, and being frugal. The challenge for Afghan leaders and all working adults in Afghanistan is to move everyone from simply "getting by" to actually "getting along" in the years to come. As such, Afghan leaders must energetically enhance the education and development of the Afghan society and workforce toward effectiveness in *guzaara*, *edaara*, and *rahbariat* if they are to create competent professionals that are less tolerant of mismanagement and other unethical or corrupt practices. Without proper education, training, development, and the enforcement of high ethical standards with everyone, as they say in Afghanistan ("*aamoo kharak, aamoo darak*" meaning a donkey will continue its own view and will), people will keep doing what they have done in the past thereby continuing the same cycle of violence and corruption. It would be irrational to carry on doing the same things or continuing the same socialization while expecting different results.

Today's global and competitive work environment, especially in the developing economies such as Afghanistan, needs true leaders both in the public and private sectors. True leaders have the confidence to stand alone about their ethical convictions, the courage to make tough decisions when it comes to building a strong character, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others in the community. True leaders do not necessarily set out to be leaders, but become leaders due to the equality of their convictions, actions and the integrity of their intent and purpose. For true leaders, the best way to predict the future is to mentally and physically create it, plan for achieving it, and then work the plan on a daily basis through the effective application of *guzaara*, *edaara*, and *rahbariat* skills.

To create an inclusive culture, managers and government officials as leaders or *rahbars* can try to pluralistically integrate each distinct group into an inclusive Afghanistan, while allowing each group to retain their own unique differences. The creation of such an inclusive culture requires education and continuous training programs that focus on interpersonal relationships, conflict management, justice and fairness for everyone, and ethical behaviors. Management, leadership and ethics education should be about creating harmony in everyone's head, heart, and habits about people of diverse backgrounds. Management and ethics related development programs should impact a person's head, heart, and habits if they are to lead to long-term peace and prosperity in life. As demonstrated through their cognition, feelings and daily habits, Afghans have many differences among them, but nearly all of them share their common faith and belief system about *guzaara kaardan* and this is a great place to initiate and promote inclusivity in the country as well as in the South Asian region. As a public official or leader, be a role model of what you expect from *guzaara kaardan*, as people will do what you do!

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