



Psychological Profiles of Leaders

- <https://www.informs.org/ORMS-Today/Public-Articles/December-Volume-41-Number-6/Psychological-profiling-of-world-leaders>



Magic models aside, what might we expect to find? First, we would not be surprised to find differences among leaders from different cultures. Consider democracies with validly elected leaders, autocracies with leaders chosen from a power elite by the power elite, countries with inherited leadership and terrorist groups.

In democracies, it would not be surprising to find that most leaders are competitors, think well of themselves, are gregarious, are compromisers and are related to used car salesmen in matters of truth. Truly pathological candidates would stand a fair chance of being weeded out in the election process. However, moderate pathologies might include excessive narcissism and episodic mood disorders.

In autocracies, it would not be surprising to find that leaders are callous and ruthless, are self-interested, distrustful and uncompromising, and regard truth as a malleable tool. Pathologies could be expected to include sociopathic traits, excessive narcissism and paranoia.

In countries with inherited leadership, virtually any natural personality might pertain to a new leader. However, depending on the personality of the predecessor, the new leader's upbringing might produce a deep sense of entitlement, a slavish devotion to the predecessor or reactions

Profiles: Which is Correct?



against the predecessor. Pathologies could include paranoia, pathologic narcissism or fixity (deficiencies in seeing social complexity, harboring fixed preconceptions and world view).

In terrorist groups, one would expect the leaders to be pathological as classified by traditional categories; however, that appears not to be the case. Rather, characteristics of these leaders appear to involve stimulus seeking, extraversion, severe action orientation and fixity.

These characterizations illustrate some of the potential range of differences among leaders. However, even if the characterizations were right as generalizations, each leader is a unique person, requiring evaluation. In particular, producing a characterization of a particular person requires attempting to find neutral ground that avoids preconceptions. Practically speaking, approaching this requires multiple viewpoints in the model building process.

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-winner-effect/201403/the-personality-profile-leaders-who-make-war>



The Personality Profile of Leaders Who Make War

Ian H. Robertson, Ph.D.

Leaders with a high need for personal power, like Putin, go to war more often.
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World leaders who make war tend to have a particular personality profile called “high need for power”. American presidents who show this are, throughout history, more likely to take their countries into war than those who don’t. Dwight Eisenhower didn’t show it for instance, while George W Bush did.

“Need for power” was identified by the great psychologist David McLelland as one of three basic, largely unconscious drives, which motivate people to different degrees. The need for power—the others are the needs for affiliation and achievement—is where you are motivated to dominate and control what other people want, need or fear.

In simulations of the Cuban missile crisis where nuclear holocaust between Russia and USA was narrowly averted, people who are high in the need for power acting the role of war room decision makers tend to take actions which would, in 1962, have resulted in nuclear war.

All leaders need to have a certain appetite for power—leadership is too stressful otherwise, and power’s effects on the brain’s act as a sort of anti-depressant. But like all addictive drugs, too much for too long causes dangerous changes in the brain, which include reckless disinhibition, risk-blindness and difficulty in seeing things from other’s perspective: ex UK Foreign Secretary Lord David Owen has described this as the “Hubris Syndrome” which he diagnosed leaders Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and George W Bush, among others, as showing.

Few if any leaders can survive more than ten years of power without being tipped into this dangerous state of altered personality and increased desire for even more power. Most democracies have devised constraints—limited terms of office for instance—to counteract such dangerous changes to the brain. Even the Republic of China changes its leadership every ten years.

It is the neurologically-created conceit of many powerful leaders that—in the words of Louis XV of France—“après moi le déluge” (after me, the flood). Power fosters the delusion of indispensability and many political leaders have created havoc in fighting to stay in post because they genuinely believe their abilities are crucial for the survival of their country and that no-one else can do it.

President Vladimir Putin has held power in Russia as President or Prime Minister for approaching 15 years—too long for any man or woman’s brain to endure without dangerous changes which foster recklessness and a blindness to other perspectives. Saturday’s military incursion into Ukraine may be a particularly worrying symptom of this leader’s affliction.

Mother Jones

- <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/02/cia-psychological-profiles-hitler-castro-putin-saddam/>

The CIA’s Secret Psychological Profiles of Dictators and World Leaders Are Amazing

Psychoanalyzing strongmen, from Castro to Saddam.

Dave Gilson

Feb. 11, 2015

Vladimir Putin

Last week, *Politico* and *USA Today* reported about a secret 2008 Pentagon study which concluded that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s defining characteristic is...autism. The Office

of Net Assessment's Body Leads project asserted that scrutinizing hours of Putin footage revealed "that the Russian President carries a neurological abnormality...identified by leading neuroscientists as Asperger's Syndrome, an autistic disorder which affects all of his decisions."

Putin's spokesman dismissed the claim as "stupidity not worthy of comment." But it was far from the first time the intelligence community has tried to diagnose foreign leaders from afar on behalf of American politicians and diplomats. The CIA has a long history of crafting psychological and political profiles of international figures, with varying degrees of depth and accuracy. A sampling of these attempts to get inside the heads of heads of state:

Adolf Hitler

In 1943, the Office of Strategic Services, the CIA's World War II-era predecessor, commissioned Henry A. Murray of the Harvard Psychological Clinic to evaluate Hitler's personality based on remote observations.

Findings: In an unsparing 240-page assessment, Murray and his colleagues concluded that Hitler was an insecure, impotent, masochistic, and suicidal neurotic narcissist who saw himself as "the destroyer of an antiquated Hebraic Christian superego." Also:

There is little disagreement among professional, or even among amateur, psychologists that Hitler's personality is an example of the counteractive type, a type that is marked by intense and stubborn efforts (i) to overcome early disabilities, weaknesses and humiliations (wounds to self-esteem), and sometimes also by efforts (ii) to revenge injuries and insults to pride.

The report stated that Hitler had suffered from "hysterical blindness" while he was a soldier in World War I. "This psychosomatic illness was concomitant with the final defeat of Mother Germany, and it was after hearing of her capitulation that he had his vision of his task as savior. Suddenly his sight was restored." (See photo above.) It went on:

Sexually he is a full-fledged masochist...Hitler's long-concealed secret heterosexual fantasy has been exposed by the systemic analysis and correlation of the three thousand odd metaphors he uses in *Mein Kampf...and yet—Hitler himself is Impotent*. [original emphasis] He is unmarried and his old acquaintances say that he is incapable of consummating the sexual act in a normal fashion.

The dossier predicted eight possible finales for the Führer, including going insane, sacrificing himself in battle, contriving to be killed by a Jewish assassin, and committing suicide: "Hitler has often vowed that he would commit suicide if his plans miscarried; but if he chooses this course he will do it at the last moment and in the most dramatic possible manner...For us it would be an undesirable outcome."

The North Korean Dictator is Behaving Rationally

Kim Jong-Un is sane but absolute power can alter the brains' risk calculation

Ian H. Robertson, Ph.D.

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- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-winner-effect/201304/the-north-korean-dictator-is-behaving-rationally>

North Korean Dictator Kim Jong-Un is behaving rationally. The survival of his dictatorship depends on maintaining a sense of threat from the outside world, and empowering his impoverished people with images of military power. The 30-year-old is new leader of a gang which has taken over – nay, created – an entire country, and like any boss he wants to keep his gang in power and build its wealth and status.

He is no different from the Congolese warlords who rule country-size regions of central Africa or Mexican drug cartel bosses running parts of Mexico with private armies better-armed than the state's own forces.

Nor is his gang different from the House of Saud, a family which also contrived a country to boost its family fortunes.

Napoleon, self-crowned Emperor of France, plunged Europe into war and successive kings of England plundered Ireland, Scotland and Continental Europe during adventure-wars of the type that Mr Kim Jong-Un is now threatening against the USA, South Korea and Japan.

Kim Jong-Un is as sane. He is not a psychopath – he made good friends while in school in Switzerland - and is quite intelligent, being good at mathematics although lazy in his studying, according to his closest friend at school, Portugese diplomat's son Joao Micaelo.

He was the 'fiercely competitive' star of his school basketball team and 'hated to lose'. He also, according to Micaelo, listened to the North Korean national anthem 'thousands' of times and was proud of his country. He seems to have had a close relationship with his father.

In spite of the sneering rhetoric in the press – prominent BBC broadcaster Jeremy Paxman for instance last night described him as looking like a haggis – Kim Jong-Un is a world leader with enormous, albeit malign, influence. But he is little different from many other world leaders over the centuries, except in a couple of respects.

The first is the extraordinary personality cult which his family and its supporters have created through complete control over the media, education and civic life. Kim Jong-Un is essentially a god – or at least a demi-god on the way to full godship. Julius Caesar allowed statues of himself as a demi-god to be erected and the pre-democracy English monarchy perpetuated their family gang through the propaganda of ‘the divine right of kings.’

Absolute power changes peoples’ brains and makes them feel like gods, or at least in communication with gods. In June 2003, George W. Bush told Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen that God had told him to invade Iraq. Osama bin Laden also believed his actions to be divinely inspired.

Kim Jong-Un almost certainly feels god-like because of the drug-like effects — the chemical messenger dopamine is a key player — that power has on his brain. Power is an aphrodisiac which casts a spell of charisma around the holder and bewitches those he has power over, and if that be millions of people, so be it.

A former North Korean soldier interviewed on BBC’s Newsnight last night said that he and everyone else he knew completely believed the world view of the country’s leadership. This held that North Korea was poor because of the unfair persecution by South Korea, USA and Japan, and that it was in constant threat of being destroyed by these enemies, which is why it had to have its nuclear weapons.

And that is the second difference between Kim Jong-Un and other world gang leaders — his power is supercharged by nuclear weaponry. This not only affects his brain but also empowers millions of his soldiers and citizens whose otherwise drab and miserable lives are given this drug-like fix which is re-ignited every time they hear the national anthem played on television to images of ballistic missiles blasting off to destroy their enemies.

Animals low in a pecking order — powerless, in other words — are more likely to take and become addicted to cocaine if offered it than are those at the top of the dominance hierarchy. Cocaine acts on the brain in the same way as power does and to the powerless, impoverished North Koreans, these repeated images of mushroom clouds and military aggression are — almost literally — equivalent to repeated intoxicatingly-rewarding cocaine fixes which bind them emotionally to their leader and make everything else seem unimportant in comparison.

So, while Kim Jong-Un was a sane adolescent, power is such a strong drug that it will have changed him fundamentally. Excessive, unconstrained power makes people feel over-confident, blind to risk, inclined to treat other people as objects, tunnel-visioned, narcissistic and protected from anxiety. These are all real effects, as biologically driven as those caused by any powerful drug.

All gang leaders experience these effects. But there are two other symptoms of power which should give us special pause. The first is that excessive power so increases dopamine activity in the front part of the brain that it distorts rational judgment of cost and benefit: for instance. Hitler’s military decisions on the Russian front were an example of this.

The North Korean leadership's aggression and threats are a rational strategy within the twisted confines of gang-logic: they help keep a powerless populace in thrall to their nuclear-cocaine fixes, for whose continued efficacy a sense of constant threat is essential, and they also squeeze concessions out of the international community. They also provide international attention which feeds the power-kindled narcissism of its leaders.

But the most worrying symptom of power in the current crisis is its god effects. Gods are invulnerable. Gods are not constrained by the laws of nature. Gods are immortal.

We should be worried.