

Personality and Leadership

Consider the following leaders: Hammurabi, Cyrus the Great, Pericles, Asoka, Cleopatra, Augustus Caesar, Harun al-Rashid Saladin, Genghis Khan, Moctezuma II, Louis XIV le Grand, Shaka Zulu, Abraham Lincoln, Meiji Mutsuhito, Chulalongkorn, Vladimir Lenin, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Kemal Ataturk, Mao Zedong, Indira Gandhi, Idi Amin, and Fidel Castro. These names certainly represent a heterogeneous group of people with respect to such demographic variables as birth year, geographic origins, ethnicity, and gender. Notwithstanding this diversity, they all count as exemplars of a special form of political leadership: the head of state. All occupied the top power positions in their respective nations. Of course, some inherited that position, others were democratically elected, and yet others attained their country's highest power through usurpation, revolt, or rebellion. And some of these leaders might be considered far more successful than the others. Even so, they managed to rise to the top of their nation's political system in one way or another and stay there long enough to make it onto this list. These same heads of state have something else in common, something so obvious that it may be too evident to notice, something that they share with everybody else in the world: To wit, they all had personalities. That is, each could be characterized by a distinct profile of traits, motives, values, and interests. More critically, these personality profiles may tell us something about their performance as a national leader. For example, a highly ambitious head of state will probably be a different kind of leader in comparison to one who is far more complacent. The goal of this chapter is to review what is known about the relation between personality and leadership in heads of state.

Issues

1. *What personality variables are most pertinent to understanding leadership?* Human beings can be assessed on a large number of traits using a wide variety of psychometric measures. Although some of these instruments may not be applicable to the study of outstanding leaders, for reasons to be discussed further, it remains the case the inventory of candidate variables is rather large. Yet some of these variables may provide more powerful predictors of leadership than others do, and certain personality variables may prove irrelevant altogether. By weeding out the unimportant or trivial personality predictors, we can focus on what individual factors are most useful in understanding the nature of leadership in heads of state.
2. *Do these personality variables have an impact on leadership beyond what can be attributed to general intelligence alone?* This point is raised because general intelligence has emerged as the individual-difference variable that most consistently and strongly predicts leadership in a variety of contexts. Yet general intelligence can have positive or negative correlations with personality variables and thereby confound the effects of the latter. For instance, intelligence is positively associated with openness to experience, a personality variable that is strongly associated with leadership (see the Big Five factors described later in this chapter). Hence, we are compelled to ask whether openness still has predictive utility after controlling for general intelligence.
3. *Are the same personality variables equally germane to all top leadership positions?* As already observed, heads of state can assume many forms: elected prime ministers or presidents, hereditary monarchs, military usurpers, ideologically driven revolutionaries, and so on. It is conceivable that the personality profiles most characteristic of democratic leaders differ markedly from those of autocratic leaders. Complicating matters all the more, the personality variables that predict performance in one type of leadership might differ markedly

from those that predict success in another leadership type. Nevertheless, some personality predictors may prove useful across the board, just as holds true for general intelligence.

4. *Are the relationships between personality variables and various leadership criteria linear or nonlinear?* The simplest possible causal relation is linear, such as represented by a positive or negative correlation. Nonetheless, it is possible that sometimes personality and leadership are linked by a nonlinear relationship. For instance, the effect of personality might level off like the law of diminishing returns. Even more interesting is the possibility of a nonmonotonic function, such as one described by a U curve or inverted U curve. The latter would appear if there is an optimum level of a given personality variable beyond which a leadership criterion will decline.

5. *When there are two or more personality variables, are their effects on leadership variables additive or multiplicative?* Additive models are the simplest; the impact of each personality variable is added up. Multiplicative models, in contrast, permit the impact of one variable to be affected by another variable. In other words, the effect of one variable may be moderated by another variable (suitably called the *moderator* variable). The moderator need not be another personality variable but instead could be some cognitive ability factor, such as general intelligence.

6. *To what extent do personality variables have a genetic basis?* Put differently, to what degree can we say that leaders are born rather than made? Needless to say, this question will not be easy to answer. Psychologists have been trying to grapple with the nature-nurture issue for well over a century. Even so, once researchers assemble an inventory of personality predictors of leader performance, it becomes possible to combine this information with the heritability coefficients that have been calculated by behavior geneticists to produce a rough estimate of the genetic contribution.

7. *How are these personality variables affected by situational or contextual factors?* Personality researchers who study leadership tend to assume that it is a matter of finding the "right person." By comparison, social psychologists tend to assume that it is more a matter of being "at the right place and the right time." Naturally, the two views are not mutually exclusive. Both individual characteristics and situational factors may converge in the determination of leadership in heads of state. If so, the question then becomes whether they are roughly equal in influence or whether one completely dominates the other. It also may be that personality and contextual variables operate according to a multiplicative process. Effective leadership requires that a leader be the right person at the right place and the right time. If so, researchers should identify what is termed *individual-by-situational interaction* effects. The consequences of a personality variable might be moderated by the context. A personal asset might even become a deficit with a change of situation.

It must be stressed that these seven questions are not independent of each other. The empirical answer to one question will have implications for the answers to one or more of the others. This interdependence implies that a comprehensive response will not be easy to come by.

Approaches

Political psychologists have devised a large number of distinct strategies for studying the personality of heads of state. These approaches may be distinguished along two contrasts. First, some researchers prefer single case studies that concentrate on a single political leader, whereas others favor multiple case studies that include a large sample of political leaders. Second, whereas some investigators engage in qualitative assessments of personalities, others are committed to quantitative assessments of top-level political leaders. In theory, these two distinctions yield four different kinds of investigation: (1) qualitative single case, (2) quantitative single case, (3) qualitative multiple case, and (4) quantitative multiple case. In fact, the research literature includes examples of all four types. That said, two approaches have generated by far the most research: qualitative single case and quantitative multiple case studies. The former is most often termed *psychobiography*, the latter

historiometry.

Psychobiography

The very first personality studies of leaders applied qualitative analyses to single cases. Typically, these early investigations were conducted by psychoanalysts, and most of these inquiries are classed as psychobiographies. Sigmund Freud was among the first psychoanalysts to do so, publishing one of Moses and another on U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (posthumously with William C. Bullitt). Erik Erikson contributed psychobiographical studies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi; although neither is, properly speaking, a political leader, these inquiries provided a different model for carrying out such research. It is difficult to think of a famous or infamous head of state who has not been subjected to psychobiographical analyses. But among the vast collection, probably Adolf Hitler has attracted more attention than any other.

Needless to say, such investigations are not immune from criticism. The assessment of a leader's personality depends on being able to carry out a clinical evaluation from archival materials—speeches, correspondence, biographical records, and historical chronologies. This information may fall short compared to what is available from face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, too often the psychobiographer appears preoccupied with establishing that a given leader suffered from serious mental illness. That is why psychobiographies can sometimes be seen as “psychopathographies.” Finally, psychobiographers are seldom interested in discerning the general regularities relating personality and leadership. Instead, the goal is almost invariably to explain some unique feature of a leader's personality, such as why Great Britain's King George III went mad or why President Woodrow Wilson failed to secure passage of the treaty establishing the League of Nations. In brief, qualitative single case studies tend to have an idiographic rather than nomothetic orientation. That is, their aim is to explain distinctiveness rather than isolate broad laws of leader behavior. As a consequence, qualitative single case investigations are less equipped to provide answers to the seven questions posed earlier in the chapter. Those questions are clearly nomothetic in the sense that they concern empirical results that would apply to political leaders in general, not just to a specific political leader.

Historiometry

The second type of investigation tends to be highly nomothetic rather than idiographic. These studies begin with a fairly large sample of top political leaders. The sample needs to be sufficiently large to permit application of appropriate statistical analyses. Additionally, the sample must not only be large but representative as well. A sample is representative if it contains an unbiased collection of leaders. This requirement is most often satisfied by sampling all leaders who occupy a given position, such as all U.S. presidents.

Once the sample is fixed, the next task is to subject a leader to detailed quantitative assessments. To be more specific, the cases are assessed on important personality and leadership variables that yield numerical scores that can then be analyzed using the most relevant and sophisticated statistical techniques. In many respects, these quantitative multiple case studies are no different from other research on the relation between personality and leadership. The only difference is that these studies, like psychobiography, must rely on at-a-distance methods. It is extremely unlikely that contemporary heads of state will volunteer to take a battery of tests and inventories. Not only are most top political leaders too busy to take the time to do so, but they might worry that such research might reveal secrets about their character that they would rather remain concealed. Worse yet, many heads of state of prime interest may already be deceased and therefore unavailable for direct assessment, even if they might have been willing. This unfortunate reality is already true for almost all of the great leaders listed at the outset of this chapter.

Whatever the specific reason for resorting to at-a-distance measures, the researcher actually has more than one option available. The three most common means of measurement are content analyses, biographical assessments, and expert surveys.

Content Analyses

Political leadership is a highly verbal form of human behavior. Heads of state are often making speeches, and they are often engaged in press conferences, interviews, and debates. Although the formal addresses are often written by speechwriters, it can often be assumed that leaders hire writers who most accurately represent their personal views (and that leaders will make changes in a draft speech when the writer fails to do so). In fact, research has shown a high degree of correspondence between what leaders say in their orations and what can be discerned from alternative indicators, such as overt behaviors or private correspondence. Accordingly, these documents can be used to infer personality traits and leadership styles. All that is required is to devise a coding scheme that will infer psychological attributes from the text or transcript of any verbal communication. These coding schemes can come from two sources: They may be devised expressly for the particular content analytical problem, or they may be adapted from already-existing psychometric measures.

Coding Schemes Devised Specifically for Content Analysis. A researcher may begin with a variable that needs to be assessed and then conceive a way of extracting that assessment from available documentary materials. Most often this is done by compiling an inventory of words that are presumed to be indicative of a given personal orientation. Once this dictionary is established, the researcher can simply count the number of instances in a sample of text. This procedure is so straightforward that it is usually executed by computer programs specifically designed for content analysis. Sometimes these dictionaries are extremely rudimentary. For example, they might involve counting the number of "not's" or perhaps the number of absolute terms ("always," "never," "totally," "strictly," etc.). Other times the dictionaries might be rather complex. An example is the Regressive Imagery Dictionary (RID), which contains words indicative of concrete versus abstract thought. The RID has been used to assess the magnitude of charisma revealed in the speeches of U.S. presidents.

Although these ad hoc coding schemes have revealed much about the personality-leadership relation in heads of state, they also suffer from one disadvantage: They lack a standardized baseline for comparison. Leaders can be compared with each other but not with the general population. This problem is often overcome in the next type of content analytical method.

Coding Schemes Adapted From Standard Psychometric Instruments. Psychology has accumulated a huge number of instruments specifically designed to assess various personality variables. Sometimes these measures can be rather easily translated into content analytical coding schemes. A classic example is the Thematic Apperception Test, or TAT. Originally conceived as a projective measure applied to stories written about ambiguous visual stimuli, the method has since been modified into a coding scheme applicable to written text. The first application was to inaugural addresses of U.S. presidents, where it was used to assess these leaders on power, achievement, and affiliation motivations. Another illustration is the Paragraph Completion Test (PCT), a measure of conceptual complexity in the general population. With only minor adjustments, this instrument has been applied to both prepared speeches and spontaneous speech to assess leaders on integrative complexity, a closely related construct. This coding scheme has been used with a great variety of political leaders, including heads of state.

Although adapted coding schemes can often permit political leaders to be compared with the general population on certain key personality variables, such adaptations have one disadvantage: It is rare for the conversion to produce a method that can be applied by computer software. Instead, raters must be trained in applying the coding method, and at least two raters are used to content analyze a set of documents. Besides being much more laborious and time consuming, this requirement means that the sample sizes often are reduced.

Biographical Assessments

Biographies are filled with information that can be transformed into assessments of both personality and leadership. This methodological practice is actually very old; the first such applications were published by Frederick A. Woods in 1906, Catharine Cox in 1926, and Edward L. Thorndike in 1936 and 1950. The available

biographical information can be grouped into two categories: specific behaviors and personality ascriptions. In the former case, the biographer provides information about concrete actions or achievements indicative of a leader's personality. An example would be to infer openness to experience from the breadth of hobbies and recreational activities. In the latter case, the biographer offers personality descriptions based on the available evidence, such as specific behaviors and the observations of a leader's family, friends, and colleagues. In the biographer's own judgment, the sum total of these facts and remarks may lead to the conclusion that a leader displayed considerable openness to experience.

The problem then arises of how best to convert these subjective, qualitative data into objective, quantitative scores. One procedure is to consolidate such information from multiple biographical sources to produce a personality sketch for each leader in the study. Care should be taken to ensure that all identifying information is removed. If the sketches represent a succession of leaders in a particular country, such as presidents or prime ministers, then they should also be placed in random order. After this preparatory phase is completed, the sketches can then be given to two or more raters who are asked to evaluate the anonymous source of each sketch on some personality scale—often an already-established psychometric instrument. For example, such personality assessments have been carried out using adjective checklists that contain a large number of standard personality descriptors. The resulting assessments can then be subjected to appropriate statistical analyses to determine the central dimensions of leader personality.

Expert Surveys

Leaders who occupy top-level positions will often become the subject of scholarly expertise. Literally hundreds of scholars can be said to have some expertise with respect to the U.S. presidency. Certainly any scholar who has written a biography of one or more leaders has some claim to being an expert on that leader or leaders. In any case, researchers can send questionnaires to these experts to assess a set of leaders on certain attributes concerning personality or leadership. The following illustrations come from research on the U.S. chief executive.

Leadership. Ever since 1948, experts have been surveyed to obtain their evaluations of the overall performance of leaders who have occupied the White House. At first, the number of respondents was small, well under a 100; but later surveys have become ambitious, sometimes reaching several hundred historians and political scientists. These alternative assessments display a very strong consensus on the differential performance of U.S. presidents. The reliabilities are comparable to the best psychometric measures, such as intelligence. Moreover, the consensus transcends differences the respondents may have with respect to ideology, geography, age, profession, ethnicity, and gender. As a case in point, Lincoln is almost universally acclaimed as a great president, whereas Warren G. Harding is almost invariably viewed as one of the worst.

Although the earliest surveys only required respondents to supply global ratings of presidential greatness, later surveys began to ask for more narrow assessments. Hence, one 1970 survey asked 571 historians for evaluations of general prestige, administration accomplishments, strength of action, presidential activeness, idealism versus practicality, flexibility, and respondents' information. A later 1997 survey had 719 experts rate the presidents on leadership, accomplishment, political skill, appointments, and character and integrity. These ratings provide a more finely differentiated view of presidential performance. Even so, some of these assessments correlate so highly with global ratings as to be practically equivalent. In general, great presidents score high on general prestige, administration accomplishments, strength of action, and presidential activeness as well as leadership, accomplishment, political skill, and appointments. It should be noted that idealism versus practicality, flexibility, and character and integrity all have more ambivalent relations with overall performance rating.

Personality. It may have been noticed that idealism versus practicality, flexibility, and character and integrity might be better considered indicators of personality rather than leadership. After all, these are all character traits that apply equally well to private citizens as to chief executives. Other political psychologists have used

expert surveys to more explicitly assess U.S. presidents on personality dimensions that are well established in research on standard populations. The most prominent example is the effort that Steven Rubenzer and Thomas Faschingbauer (2004) devoted to assessing as many presidents as possible on the Big Five personality factors. These factors are: (1) openness to experience (i.e., wide interests, imaginative, intelligent, original, insightful, curious, sophisticated, artistic, clever, inventive, sharp-witted, ingenious, creative, and wise); (2) extraversion (i.e., talkative, assertive, active, energetic, outgoing, outspoken, dominant, forceful, enthusiastic, sociable, and adventurous); (3) agreeableness (i.e., sympathetic, kind, appreciative, affectionate, soft-hearted, warm, generous, trusting, helpful, forgiving, pleasant, good-natured, friendly, cooperative, gentle, unselfish, praising, and sensitive); (4) conscientiousness (i.e., organized, thorough, planful, efficient, responsible, reliable, dependable, conscientious, self-disciplined, precise, practical, deliberate, painstaking, and ambitious); and (5) neuroticism (tense, anxious, nervous, moody, worrying, touchy, fearful, high-strung, self-pitying, temperamental, unstable, despondent, and emotional). These five dimensions are as useful in describing leaders in high political positions as they are in characterizing the average person on the street.

It should be observed that expert surveys tend to yield personality assessments very similar to those of content analysis and biographical assessment. The three alternative methods can therefore be used to triangulate a leader's actual personal qualities. Nevertheless, expert surveys are the least common of the three techniques. The dearth of such assessments in part reflects the fact that suitable experts are not always available or willing to do the personality evaluations. For instance, Rubenzer and Faschingbauer were not able to obtain expert evaluations for nearly a fourth of the U.S. presidents.

Applications

The methods just outlined have been applied to an impressive variety of political leaders. Because the research literature is so immense, the following overview will concentrate on quantitative multiple case studies of heads of state. The bulk of the research falls into three broad categories: (1) modern heads of state, (2) European hereditary monarchs, and (3) U.S. presidents.

Modern Heads of State

Occasionally, researchers will examine all contemporary or recent leaders of whatever kind: presidents, prime ministers, dictators, monarchs, and so on. Sometimes the goal is to assess these leaders on some key variable and then determine that variable's correlates. For example, the aim might be to determine what distinguishes charismatic from noncharismatic leaders. Other times, the investigator wants to discern whether leaders occupying different leadership positions have identifiable personality profiles. Are the personalities of tyrants distinct from those of prime ministers? Is revolutionary leadership different from status quo leadership?

A good illustration of this latter approach is Arnold Ludwig's (2002) study of 377 heads of state from the 20th century. These leaders were then classified into six types: supreme monarchs, tyrants and despots, visionaries (social engineers), authoritarians, transitional democrats (or rulers of emerging democracies), and democrats (or leaders of established democracies). The investigator then showed that the individual's type of leadership could be discriminated according to such variables as scholastic performance, youthful leadership, sexual profligacy, graft and corruption, courage or bravery in battle, charisma, and such psychopathological symptoms as alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, mania, anxiety, paranoia, and cognitive impairment. In addition, after devising a measure of political greatness, Ludwig isolated seven predictors: dominance, contrariness, presence, agent of change, vanity, courage, and wary unease.

European Hereditary Monarchs

Only a minority of national rulers today can be classified as supreme monarchs. Still, in the history of most nations, some form of monarchy constituted the most common political system. That is, any comprehensive list of heads of state must be dominated by hereditary monarchs—rulers who inherit the throne from their parents

or other blood relatives. Furthermore, such national leaders have three distinctive assets from the perspective of researchers wanting to study personality and leadership. First, such monarchs typically have much more political and military power than most other types of leadership, with the possible exception of dictators. This enhanced power means that personal dispositions are more likely to have political manifestations (e.g., the need for power will have a higher likelihood of being converted to acts of power). Second, because monarchs inherit their position and often stay in that position until death, they often lead their country for a much longer time than most other types of leader. This expanded duration of tenure also provides more latitude for personality to leave an imprint on leadership. Third, because most monarchies are hereditary, the investigator has a unique opportunity to assay the genetic contribution to leadership. In effect, such an assessment can be seen as a direct test of an implicit presumption of monarchical systems: Great rulers will have heirs who presumably will be equally great on assumption of the throne.

Given these advantages, it should not surprise that the earliest empirical inquiries focused on this very group. In 1906, Frederick Woods published a study of how intelligence and morality are passed down in royal families; and in 1913, Woods published another study showing how the leadership qualities of absolute monarchs positively associated with the state of the nation during their reigns. In the mid-1980s, Dean Keith Simonton combined the data from the two Woods investigations with some additional data of his own to delve more deeply into the nature of political leadership. The sample consisted of 314 hereditary monarchs from 14 European nations (Portugal, Castile, Aragon, United Spain, France, Scotland, England, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Ottoman Turkey). This sample was first used to address the question of whether any personal qualities were indeed subject to genetic inheritance. Although evidence was found for the genetic transfer of intelligence and life span, morality and leadership was more subject to role modeling effects. Thus, some attributes are passed down by nature, others by nurture.

Simonton then dealt with the issue of the relationship between personal qualities and the monarchs. Intelligence emerged as the primary individual predictor of not just a monarch's eminence, but also the length of his or her reign and even life span. Morality, in contrast, displayed a curvilinear relation with the monarch's eminence and the level of historical activity during his or her reign. That relation was described by a U-shaped curve. In concrete terms, the most prominent hereditary monarchs were either extremely moral or extremely immoral. Highly idealistic rulers attain fame, while highly Machiavellian rulers achieve infamy. Interestingly, all of the research on hereditary monarchs has used biographical assessments but not content analyses or expert surveys. That measurement restriction does not hold in the last application.

U.S. Presidents

Beyond a doubt, one particular head of state has received more empirical attention than any other: the presidents of the United States. This focus has at least four causes. First, the U.S. chief executive has, for a century or more, represented one of the most powerful and influential of all national leaders. They are often viewed with either hope or dread by both U.S. citizens and the rest of the world. Second, because the U.S. presidency is a political position defined by the Constitution, presidents have all operated under a similar set of situational constraints. To be sure, the president's prerogatives and powers have changed since the time of George Washington, but these changes have been gradual rather than revolutionary and largely determined by precedent rather than constitutional amendments. Third, and in line with this rationale, presidents provide one conspicuous model of democratic leadership. Although parliamentary systems offer an alternative model in the guise of the prime minister, there is some democratic appeal of a national leader who is elected by the electorate at large rather than a more select group of parliamentarians. Fourth and last, most political psychologists conducting research on the relation between personality and leadership reside in the United States. Although Canadians and some Europeans have also investigated this topic, many of them have continued the practice of emphasizing the U.S. chief executive. Accordingly, what may have begun as an ethnocentric interest has become more an international emphasis. In any event, the relevant research on U.S. presidents can be loosely assigned to three groups: content analyses, biographical assessments, and expert

surveys.

Content Analyses

The very first personality studies of the presidents began in the 1970s when David Winter and his associates began to adapt the TAT into a content analytical measure of presidential motivation. Applied to presidential inaugural addresses, the researchers were able to score the chief executive on power, achievement, and affiliation motives. These scores were then shown to correlate with a large number of leadership measures. For instance, high power motivation is positively associated with (a) entering the country into a war and with gaining territory, (b) turnover in the cabinet, (c) the use of the veto power, (d) strong relations with the press, and (e) the probability of being the target of an assassination attempt. In contrast, high power motivation is negatively associated with the signing of peace accords with other nations. The need for affiliation is positively correlated with the appointment of friends and cronies to cabinet positions, whereas the need for achievement is positively correlated with the need for power. Indeed, great presidents tend to be high on the power and achievement motives but low on the affiliation motive.

The integrative complexity measure adapted from the PCT has also been applied to U.S. presidents, including their public addresses. This research is somewhat more complex than that on motivation because complexity functions as both a trait and state variable; although some leaders can be highly stable across time, many leaders are responsive to situational factors that may render them more or less complex in their information processing. In any case, scores on integrative complexity have a mixed relation with leadership criteria. On the one hand, higher complexity appears to be associated with superior performance, especially in decision making during international crises. On the other hand, presidential candidates who exhibit excessive integrative complexity may find it more difficult to get elected to that office. Simple, undifferentiated campaign messages are what most strongly impact the voters.

Before moving to the next section, another personality variable has been linked to electoral success in U.S. presidential elections: pessimistic rumination. This is the tendency to dwell constantly on the negative—a trait associated with depression. Presidential candidates whose speeches have this characteristic are less prone to get elected. The electorate favors upbeat, optimistic “pep talks” to prognostications of gloom and doom.

Biographical Assessments

The central advocate of applying this approach to the presidents has been Dean Keith Simonton. Beginning in the mid-1980s, he used this method to assess the chief executives on such variables as moderation, friendliness, intellectual brilliance, Machiavellianism, achievement drive, forcefulness, wit, physical attractiveness, conservatism, inflexibility, and pacifism. In the late 1980s, the same method was used to assess the same presidents on five leadership styles: charismatic, creative, interpersonal, deliberative, and neurotic. Some of the former measures exhibit important correlations with the latter measures. As just one example, highly charismatic presidents tend to score high on forcefulness, Machiavellianism, intellectual brilliance, and achievement drive, but low on moderation and conservatism. These biographical assessments also are associated with other leadership criteria. For instance, success as a legislator is more likely in those presidents who are Machiavellian, forceful, moderate, and flexible. Perhaps more important, chief executives who go down in history as great presidents are more likely to score high on intellectual brilliance. Ironically, intellectually brilliant presidents also find it more difficult getting elected to the presidency in the first place.

Simonton's research has also looked at the impact of situational or contextual factors. Often these play a more dominant role than individual factors such as personality. A case in point is the chief executive who serves as the nation's wartime commander in chief. Such a leader receives a higher global performance rating from the presidential experts regardless of whether he had any direct role in the initiation of the conflict. Individual-by-situational interaction effects render presidential leadership even more complicated. An example is the relation between a president's flexibility, his use of the veto power, and the electoral mandate he received in the general

election. If the president is highly inflexible, then the relation between the mandate and veto use becomes zero. That is, such chief executives ignore the support they have from the voters before deciding to veto a bill. But for highly flexible presidents, the correlation between mandate and veto becomes positive. Such leaders know when they have sufficient support from the electorate to engage in such confrontational behavior with Congress.

Expert Surveys

It was previously noted that experts have been repeatedly asked to assess the presidents not only on leader performance criteria but also on specific personality variables. Researchers using these survey data have teased out some fascinating findings regarding presidential leadership. Consider the two examples in the following paragraphs that are based on expert ratings already mentioned.

First, take the presidential evaluations on general prestige, administration accomplishments, strength of action, presidential activeness, idealism versus practicality, flexibility, and respondents' information, but ignore the latter because it says more about the experts than the presidents. It turns out that the remaining six assessments cluster into two distinct factors. The first is a measure of presidential performance consisting of prestige, accomplishments, strength, and activeness; the second is a bipolar indicator of dogmatism consisting of idealistic inflexibility at one pole and pragmatic flexibility at the other. The former assesses leadership, the latter personality. Although these two factors have no linear relationship, they do have a curvilinear relationship: Performance is a U-shaped function of dogmatism. The greatest presidents are either idealistically inflexible or pragmatically flexible. This result closely parallels the U curve describing the connection between the morality of hereditary monarchs and their historical eminence. High morality goes with inflexible idealism, low morality with flexible pragmatism.

Second, take the expert assessments of presidential openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism—the dimensions making up the Big Five personality factors. How do these five variables relate to presidential greatness? The answer is simply put: The only factor that predicts global performance is openness to experience. But it was already noted that intellectual brilliance predicted overall presidential leadership. Fortunately, these two assertions are not contradictory because intellectual brilliance is highly correlated with openness. Further, both variables are strongly associated with integrative complexity based on content analyses and with estimates of IQ based on biographical analyses. So the crucial question is: Which of these overlapping constructs actually predicts global leader performance? The tentative answer seems to be intellectual brilliance.

When the results from the expert surveys are combined with those from content analysis and biographical assessments, it can be concluded that we have learned much about the personality-leadership relation in the U.S. presidency.

Future Directions

The preceding section provides a brief overview of research results regarding how personality relates to leadership in heads of state. Clearly, many more questions need to be answered to more fully understand this phenomenon. Researchers should certainly go beyond the focus on U.S. presidents. Other heads of state have received much less attention than they deserve. Prime ministers are especially deserving of more research. Parliamentary systems are extremely common in the modern world, so there is no justification for neglecting this form of democratic leadership. The little that has been done to date has looked mostly at British, Canadian, and Australian prime ministers, a focus probably based on the availability of English-language materials. But perhaps as political psychology expands throughout the world, this narrowness of inquiry will be relaxed. Not all heads of state are presidents or even prime ministers, nor do the majority of leaders conveniently provide suitable data sources in English.

Moreover, it would be worthwhile for researchers to go beyond political leaders who manage to ascend to their

nation's highest government position. An enormous number of leaders exert influence over national affairs without ever attaining the apex of the political system. These leaders include legislators, advisors, diplomats, governors, activists, and even lobbyists. Admittedly, some investigators have already broadened their empirical inquiries to include these more marginal forms of political leadership. The examined groups include U.S. senators, British parliamentarians, members of the Soviet politburo of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), European and Middle Eastern diplomats, South African political activists, U.S. Supreme Court justices, abolitionists in antebellum United States, leaders of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and revolutionaries in the United States, Cuba, England, France, Russia, and China. But more can be done, particularly in the world beyond the United States and Europe. To be sure, one reason why researchers have concentrated on heads of state is that so much more information is usually available about them. Yet with the advent of the Internet as a major source of archival data, this limitation may prove less conspicuous in the future.

Besides extending the scope of the samples, researchers should attempt to expand the theoretical basis of the relation between personality and political leadership. The vast majority of investigations on this subject are purely empirical. The researchers begin with a set of personality variables as potential predictors and another set of leadership variables as potential criteria, and then statistical analyses are used to identify the statistically significant associations. In short, the studies are exploratory rather than confirmatory. This is not to say that there are no exceptions. The Ludwig study discussed earlier was predicated on the theory that top national leaders exhibit behaviors that closely parallel the "alpha male" in primate groups, including baboons, gorillas, and chimpanzees.

Another example is the interpersonal concordance theory that Lloyd Etheredge proposed in the late 1970s. The investigator assumed that a politician's view of international relations is based on his or her preferred pattern of interpersonal relationships. This assumption produced a fourfold typology: maintainers (low-dominance introverts such as Calvin Coolidge), bloc-excluding leaders (high-dominance introverts such as Woodrow Wilson), conciliators (low-dominance extroverts such as Warren G. Harding), and world-integrating leaders (high-dominance extroverts such as Franklin D. Roosevelt). Etheredge then tested this model on a sample of U.S. presidents, secretaries of state, and various foreign policy advisors. In line with the theory, a concordance was found between interpersonal preferences and foreign policy recommendations. One especially positive feature of this theory is that it encompasses several levels of leadership rather than just focus on the head of state.

Summary

This chapter concentrates on the personality-leadership association in a highly significant form of political leadership: the nation's head of state. Discussion of this important subject was broken down into seven central questions. This discussion was followed by a treatment of the main approaches that researchers use for answering the seven questions. Although these methods are very diverse, most research falls into just two categories: psychobiography (qualitative single case studies) and historiometry (quantitative multiple case studies). Where the former is most appropriate for addressing idiographic issues, the latter is most suitable for answering nomothetic issues, such as the seven core questions. Historiometric studies use one or more forms of personality and leadership measures: content analyses, biographical assessments, and expert surveys. The chapter then provides illustrations of how the latter methods have been applied to the study of top national leaders, namely, modern heads of state, European hereditary monarchs, and U.S. presidents. The subsequent section on future directions suggested the need for more research on political leaders operating at levels below the nation's top spot, such as legislators, diplomats, revolutionaries, and activists. In addition, research in this area would benefit from stronger theoretical foundations. With few exceptions, investigations tend to be purely empirical. All in all, the prospects remain positive that our scientific knowledge about the personality-leadership association should continue to expand.

—Dean Keith Simonton

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