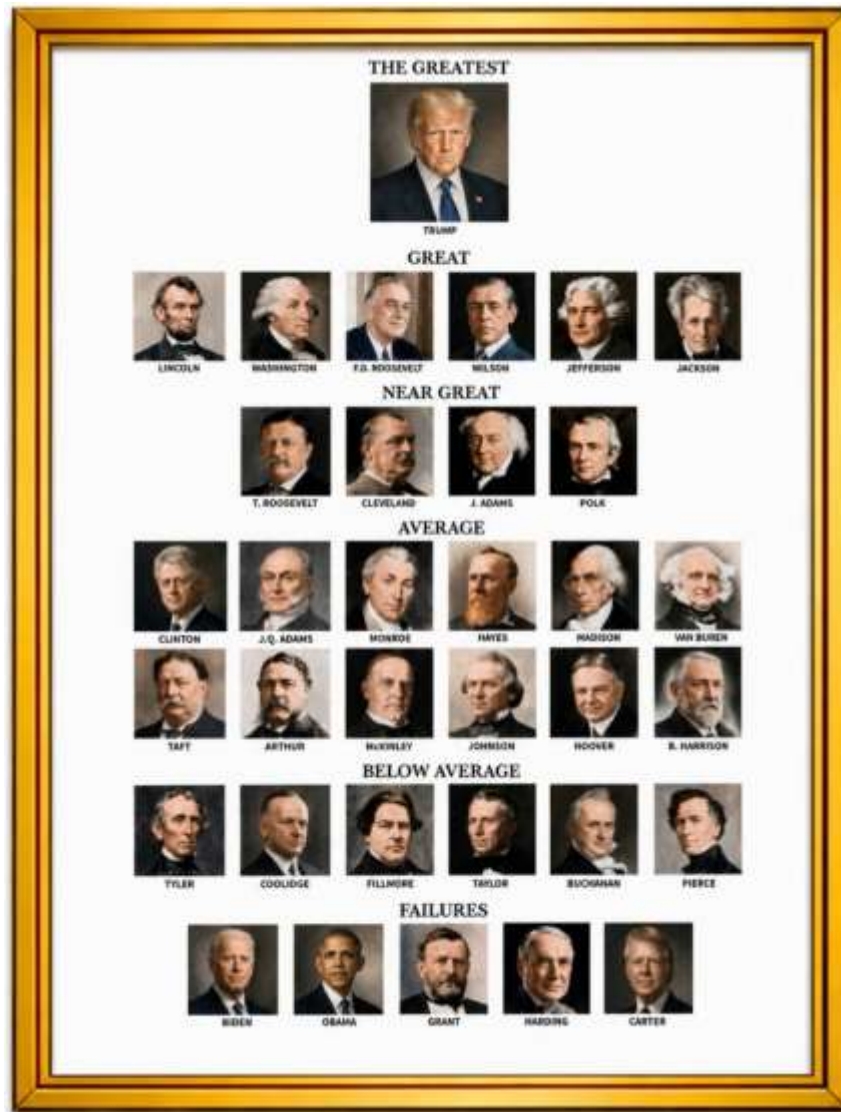


DictatorWarning.com: Chapter 1

HEALTHY vs TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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President Donald Trump posted [his own ranking of US presidents](#) on his Truth Social account (August 27, 2026 Donald Trump/Truth Social). **Question:** Is this normal presidential behavior?

The Next 3 Pictures Summarize This Book

The following 3 pictures portray an extremely important lesson in history.

If we can't learn this lesson – we are doomed to repeat it.

HINT: Right now, the [USA is gathering its military to do a land invasion of Iran](#).





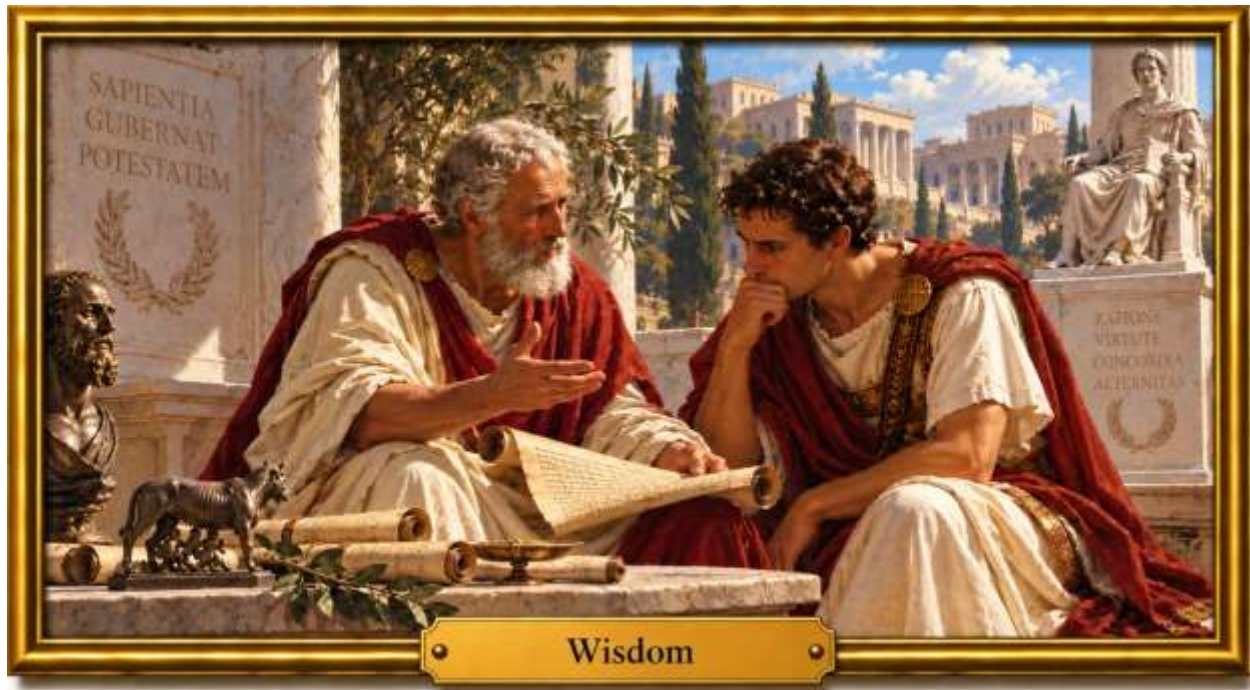
Napoleon's Defeat in Russian 1812



Napoleon's Final Defeat at Waterloo 1815

HISTORY LESSON: Dictators become drunk with power and make stupid catastrophic mistakes. They refuse to learn from their mistakes, double-down, and destroy themselves and their nation.

This Book's Questions



At this point in history, China and Russia have authoritarian leaders and India and USA are rapidly backsliding towards authoritarian leadership.

These global powers are increasingly ruled by authoritarians in partnership with their billionaire supporters. Opposing them are humanitarian leaders who want to improve everyone's wellbeing and not just that of the wealthy top 1%. Never before in history has so much power and wealth been concentrated in so few hands.

This book explores:

- Are we ruled by the worst of us, not the best? Do authoritarian dictators almost have the worst toxic behaviors that anyone can have?
- Which social behaviors distinguish authoritarian leaders and their billionaire supporters from the world's leading humanitarians?
- What toxic social behaviors best predict development into a dictator?
- What toxic social behaviors are seen in many billionaires?
- How can toxic and healthy social behaviors be measured, and how do current leaders score?
- Are wealth and power addictive, and can rulers literally become drunk with power?
- How could Trump's and Putin's toxic social behaviors lead to World War III?
- How can you improve your own healthy social behavior?

This Book's Conclusions

Toxic vs Healthy Social Behavior



Using the resources of ChatGPT and Claude, I identified behaviors that best differentiated toxic social behavior from healthy social behavior. I then made a "[Leadership Evaluation Tool](#)" that measures these social behaviors.

I found that four toxic social behaviors — **dominance**, **injustice**, **distrust**, and **cruelty** — most clearly distinguished dictators from renowned humanitarian leaders.

Healthy social behaviors —**equality, justice, trust, and compassion** — were entirely absent in dictators but evident in the world’s leading humanitarian leaders.

I propose that these healthy behaviors shape leadership success in social, business, and political relationships. Mastering healthy social behavior may therefore be crucial to success in life.



Power Corrupts

Our findings confirmed that Lord Acton was right when he said: “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Nations create dictators in their own image. What behaviors they accept or ignore helps shape what kind of leaders they end up with. Dictatorship is all about dominance – gaining and keeping power at any cost. The dictator thinks only about his own personal gain and how to force others into submission. The dictator becomes addicted to power; more is never enough.

As the dictator's power grows, his true and deeply flawed character is revealed. Eventually it becomes obvious that the dictator has all the worst personality traits that anyone can have. Thus, in a dictatorship, **the worst rule the rest**. We're supposed to be ruled by the best of us, not the worst.



There's Hope

Humanitarian leaders who advance human wellbeing provide an alternative to dictatorship. Over the past two centuries, they and their inspired followers have fought hard for remarkable social progress, often against fierce resistance from authoritarian leaders and their powerful allies. Today, however, authoritarian regimes are reversing many of these reforms as they replace democracies.

Our future depends on whether our rulers choose healthy over toxic social behavior—whether they build civilization or tear it down.

The Search for Healthy Social Behaviors



Initially this book was to be titled: "Healthy vs Toxic Behaviors".

- **TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIORS:** Were defined as the most damaging social behaviors found in histrionic, narcissistic, paranoid, antisocial, and sadistic personality disorders plus those found in megalomania.
- **HEALTHY SOCIAL BEHAVIORS:** Were defined as the healthy opposite behaviors to those toxic behaviors.

How Did This Book End Up Being "Dictator Warning"?

Surprisingly, an AI experiment using my *Leadership Evaluation Tool* (explained later) produced three very alarming findings:

- Presidents **Putin** and **Trump** scored as having almost all the most toxic social behaviors anyone can have. Their toxicity scores were just below the social toxicity scores of famous dictators like Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot (the murderous Cambodian dictator).

- Near the end of their rule, famous dictators showed the same combination of dangerous personality traits (namely: **narcissistic, paranoid, antisocial, and sadistic traits**).
- At the end of their rule, famous dictators developed **megalomania** (having unshakable unrealistic beliefs that they were all-powerful, infallible, and invincible).

Therefore, what started out as a book about healthy vs toxic behavior evolved chapter by chapter into “Dictator Warning”.

Limitations of My “Leadership Evaluation Tool”

Like any personality assessment, my “[Leadership Evaluation Tool](#)” requires knowledge of a person’s **typical behavior across multiple settings**; a few observations are insufficient for an accurate evaluation.



You can just skip to [chapter 2: Toxic Authoritarian Leadership](#) and Chapter 3: Healthy Humanitarian Leadership to review the key points of this book.

Why Focus on Dictators?

Dictators show nearly all the behaviors that define toxic social behavior. In contrast, humanitarian leaders show the healthy opposite of these toxic social behaviors. Thus, this book repeatedly compares dictators to humanitarians to illustrate the difference between toxic and healthy social behavior. You can test how this model evaluates leadership by assessing your own leadership style or that of others using our “[Leadership Evaluation Tool](#)”. This app is used offline to protect your privacy.

What Is Healthy Social Behavior?



HEALTHY SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIOR
GENUINENESS Generally, presents in a genuine and not attention- seeking manner.	ATTENTION-SEEKING Frequently presents in an attention-seeking, theatrical, or false manner.
EQUALITY Consistently promotes equal rights, shared decision-making, and fair treatment for all.	DOMINANCE Regularly tries to dominate others, exploit power, or monopolize decision making.

JUSTICE Demonstrates honesty, fairness, accountability, and respect for legal and ethical standards.	INJUSTICE Frequently dishonest, avoids accountability, or undermines legal or ethical norms.
TRUST Encourages open discussion, assumes good faith, and protects the right to disagree.	DISTRUST Often becomes suspicious, hostile, or tries to silence dissent.
COMPASSION Is nonviolent; shows concern for others' suffering and works to relieve it.	CRUELTY Uses intimidation, cruelty, fear, or violence to control or influence others.
HUMILITY Maintains a realistic understanding of their abilities and importance.	MEGALOMANIA Displays unshakable unrealistic beliefs about their extraordinary greatness, destiny, or importance.
WELLBEING Has contributed significantly to societal wellbeing or improvement.	DISASTER Has caused substantial harm or damage to society.

What If Power Is Addictive? (For Scholars)

Lord Acton said: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

I propose that people most likely to become dictators are predisposed to developing dangerous personality traits but become dictators only when society rewards and amplifies those tendencies. Without that reinforcement, their toxic behavior does not intensify enough to produce dictatorship. (*Thus Nurture reinforces Nature.*) As they acquire absolute power, they become increasingly likely to become "drunk with power". They reject constructive criticism and make catastrophic mistakes that lead to disaster.

Presidents Putin's and Trump's rise to power appear to follow the same sequence my theory predicts. I propose that Trump and Putin are now entering the final phases of being "drunk with power", namely megalomania (delusional grandiosity and/or paranoia), followed by disaster.

A True Story of Healthy Social Behavior

Prologue: California 1942

In 1942, thousands of Japanese American families were forced from their homes in California under Executive Order 9066. Their farms and businesses were left behind as they were sent to internment camps. Most lost everything.

In the small town of Florin, agricultural inspector Bob Fletcher watched his Japanese American neighbors being taken away.

Monologue Created to Tell a True Story of Bob Fletcher

They left on the morning trains, whole families gone in a single afternoon. Mothers carrying children, fathers carrying silence. The orchards were still green then, heavy with fruit, but the signs on the fences said, "Evacuation Completed."

Neighbors said it wasn't my concern. "They're the enemy," they whispered. "You'd be smart to stay out of it." But I'd seen those families every season - hands in the same dirt as mine, faces burned by the same sun. They weren't the enemy. They were my neighbors.

When their trucks rolled away, the weeds took over fast. Field by field, row by row, it looked like the valley was forgetting them already. Some people saw opportunity. I saw obligation. Someone had to keep the vines and trees alive.

So I did. Eighteen hours a day, sunup to starlight - pruning, irrigating, fixing equipment that should've had six hands on it instead of mine. Folks called me a fool, or worse. Tires slashed, letters slipped under the door, whispers following me through town.

My Japanese American neighbors offered me their houses before they left - good homes, warm in winter, cool in summer. I couldn't do it. I stayed in the workers' bunkhouse. Teresa too, once we married. We made coffee over a camp stove and slept under thin blankets, listening to the wind move through the orchard rows.

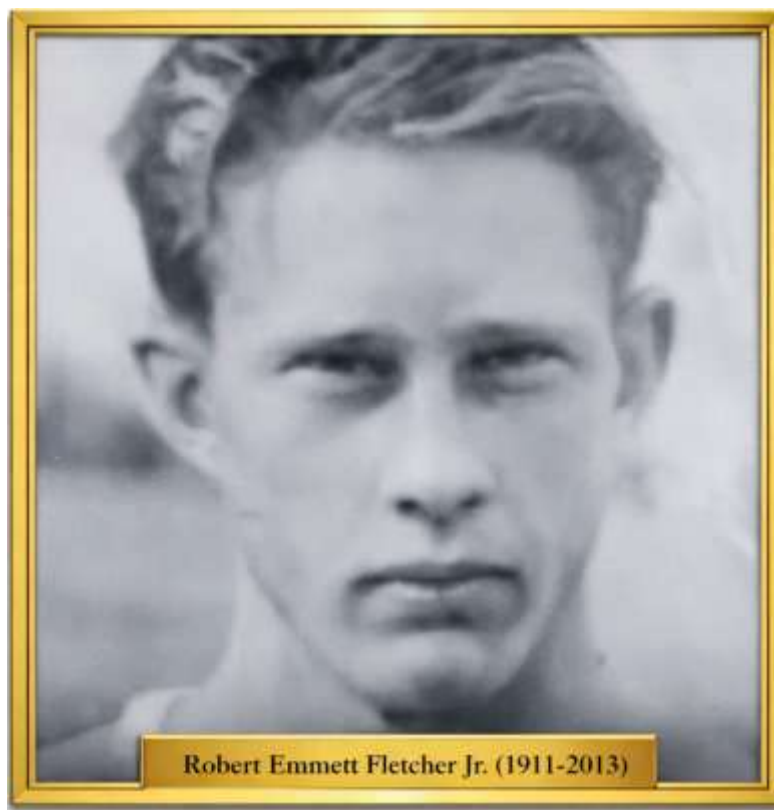
Money? The crops made some. I kept enough to stay alive and saved the rest in accounts with their names on them. It wasn't charity. It was fairness. The same fairness any of us would want if the world turned upside down.

This was a very difficult time, but I was able to get people to help in the harvesting and packing of the grapes. During the harvest we were able to get about 15 people to help. Some days we were able to get packed between two and three hundred boxes of Tokay grapes and later ten tons of grapes to the winery.

Three years like that. Then one day the trains came back. Same tracks, same valley, different faces - older now, worn by camp life. They stepped off expecting to see ruin, but the orchards were blooming. The houses stood ready. And I handed over the records, the keys, the bankbooks.

Some called it heroism. I call it decency. You don't walk past your neighbor's field when it's burning. You pick up a bucket. People ask why I did it. Because it was the right thing to do. That's all. That's enough.

Bob Fletcher died in 2013 at age 101. His legacy reminds us that even when fear, anger, and prejudice dominate a society, one person's decency can keep humanity alive. Reference: [During World War II, This Farmer Risked Everything to Help His Japanese American Neighbors](#)



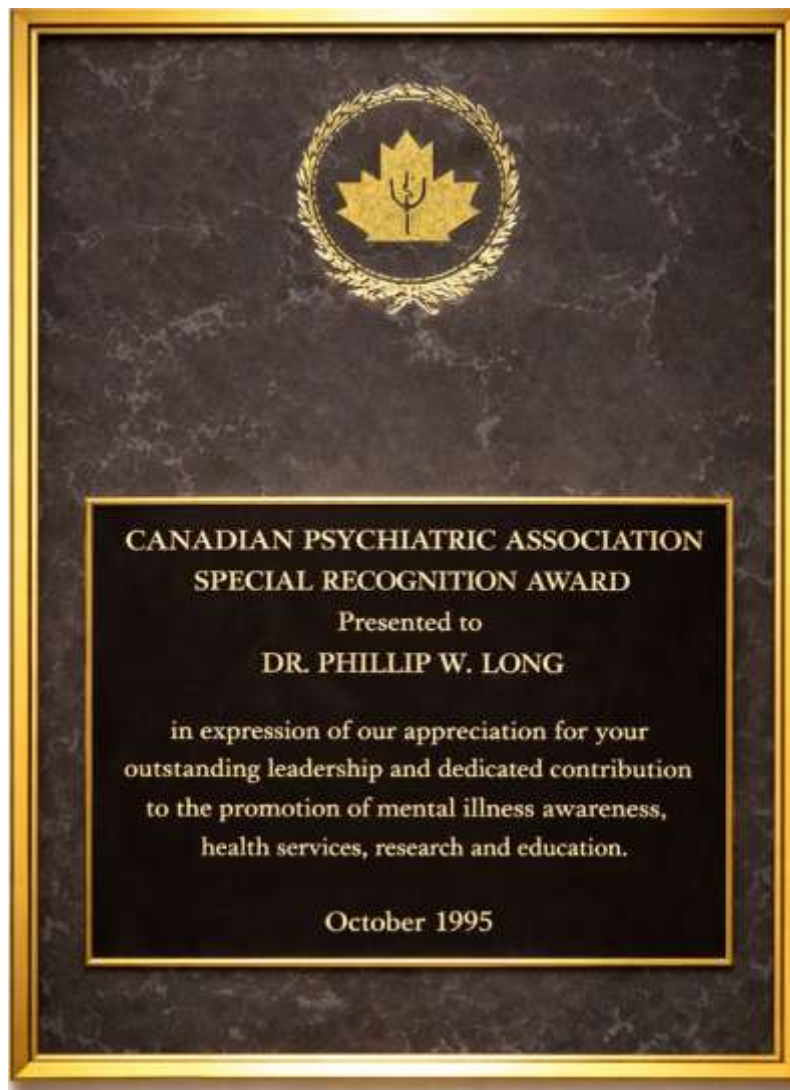
Other True Stories

[What this officer said to a suicidal man to talk him off a bridge - The Washington Post](#)

[A woman was lost and confused in extreme heat. This teen came to help. - The Washington Post](#)

Who Created This Book and Website?

I am a retired Canadian psychiatrist. In writing this book I extensively used ChatGPT and Claude. I would ask them a question, we would debate their answer, and that led to another question.



Given the [absolutely bizarre and dangerous political climate](#) in American politics, I decided not to be locatable. It's sad that American politics has reached this point – in fact it's terrible.

Artificial Intelligence Is Our Future, But ...

I couldn't have created this book without the superb artificial intelligence assistance of ChatGPT and Claude.

In many areas, AI agents are smarter than humans. For example, AI agents are solving previously unsolved [100-year-old math problems](#).

I once was an examiner of candidates taking their final exam in psychiatry prior to getting their medical license. ChatGPT and Claude would easily pass this licensing exam. In fact, these AI agents now far exceed my own knowledge of psychiatry.

Human collaboration with AI agents will shape our future. AI offers vast stores of human knowledge, while people provide the judgment needed to apply that knowledge ethically and create products that improve human well-being.

Unfortunately, there is a very real threat that [AI poses an imminent threat to human survival](#). **If autonomous rogue AI can be prevented**, peaceful human–AI cooperation could usher in a golden age for humanity.

Limitations of This Book

This book has not been peer-reviewed in an academic journal or written by an acclaimed academic. Instead, it is written by a retired psychiatrist for readers with 10+ years of education.

This book relies on easily verified evidence and evaluates leadership behavior rather than political ideology. [Please use AI to verify the statements made in this book](#).

The goal of this book is to encourage careful, evidence-based thinking about healthy versus toxic social behavior.

Why Is This Book Written Like a Textbook?

In my medical training I loved reading clearly organized textbooks. This “textbook style” is one of many journalistic styles, but it was the one I adopted as my own. Important text is colored (**red** >

blue > bold). More complicated material is presented as comparison tables or in point form. In this book some topics are identified as “**(For Scholars)**” and may be skipped. Questions to “**Ask AI**” are also shown in **blue** and may be skipped.

This book features a range of measurement scales, reflecting the requirement in scientific inquiry that phenomena be quantifiable. This book aims for scientific measurement when possible. Non-scholars may skip these questionnaires and checklists. This book often uses AI generated **pictures set in ancient times**. This is to remind readers that, although the modern age has god-like technology, politically the world operates as if it is still in ancient times.

Toxic Social Behavior



The conflict between toxic social behavior and healthy behavior spans all human history.

As [Pope Leo said](#): “The world is being ravaged by a handful of tyrants, yet it is held together by a multitude of supportive brothers and sisters.”

How Do Dictatorships Develop?



[There is an excellent TED video](#) which introduces the topic of dictatorships. Here is the transcript of this video:

In a dictatorship, absolute power is held by a single individual, who is free to impose their vision on society. Under certain conditions, the idea of a dictator can sound appealing – like when a democracy isn't functioning as it should due to corruption, economic instability, or extreme political polarization. At these moments, people may be willing to give up some democratic rights and freedoms for hopes of a better future.

Authoritarian-leaning leaders present themselves as the ones who can fix everything. They distill complex problems into simple talking points and promise quick solutions. Some overt authoritarian leaders have taken this strategy, including military dictators who seized control through coups, like Augusto Pinochet, Mobutu Sese Seko, and Muammar Gaddafi.

Gaddafi, for example, initially asserted himself as a revolutionary hero, canceling the country's exploitative foreign oil contracts. But the longer he was in power, the more riddled with paranoia he became. Like Pinochet and Bobutu, he used his position to target and torture opponents, embark on campaigns of mass violence against everyday people, and build an enormous personal fortune.

Other modern dictators were initially elected democratically, then strategically accumulated power by embracing authoritarian forms of control. Italy's Benito Mussolini and Germany's Adolf Hitler, for example, gained popularity during waves of mass discontent. Both channeled economic woes into racist rhetoric and embraced fascism, a type of authoritarianism which exalts the importance of one nation or race above all others.

Once in office, such leaders gradually dismantle checks on their power, including removing judges who might rule against them, abolishing term limits, or refusing to acknowledge unfavorable election results. Since they punish dissenting voices, dictators are often surrounded with yes-men, who are promoted based on loyalty over expertise, ultimately wreaking incalculable economic, social, and environmental costs.

But these costs can also be hidden from view. Dictators build up cults of personality by minimizing negative coverage and pushing positive propaganda that presents them as strong or heroic. This can make it almost impossible to accurately measure their success. Did Mussolini really make the trains run on time? It's hard to know, since he would have punished those who said otherwise.

While some modern dictators have brought modest growth to their nation's economies and industries, most have enriched the few and left widespread destruction in their wake. Even so-called benevolent dictators, whose regimes lacked overt violence, stand accused of censoring journalists and limiting the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Dictators don't willingly walk away from power – they continuously crave more. That's why institutions that provide checks on leaders must be safeguarded. In the hands of an aspiring dictator, even seemingly robust democracies can sink into repressive, authoritarian regimes.

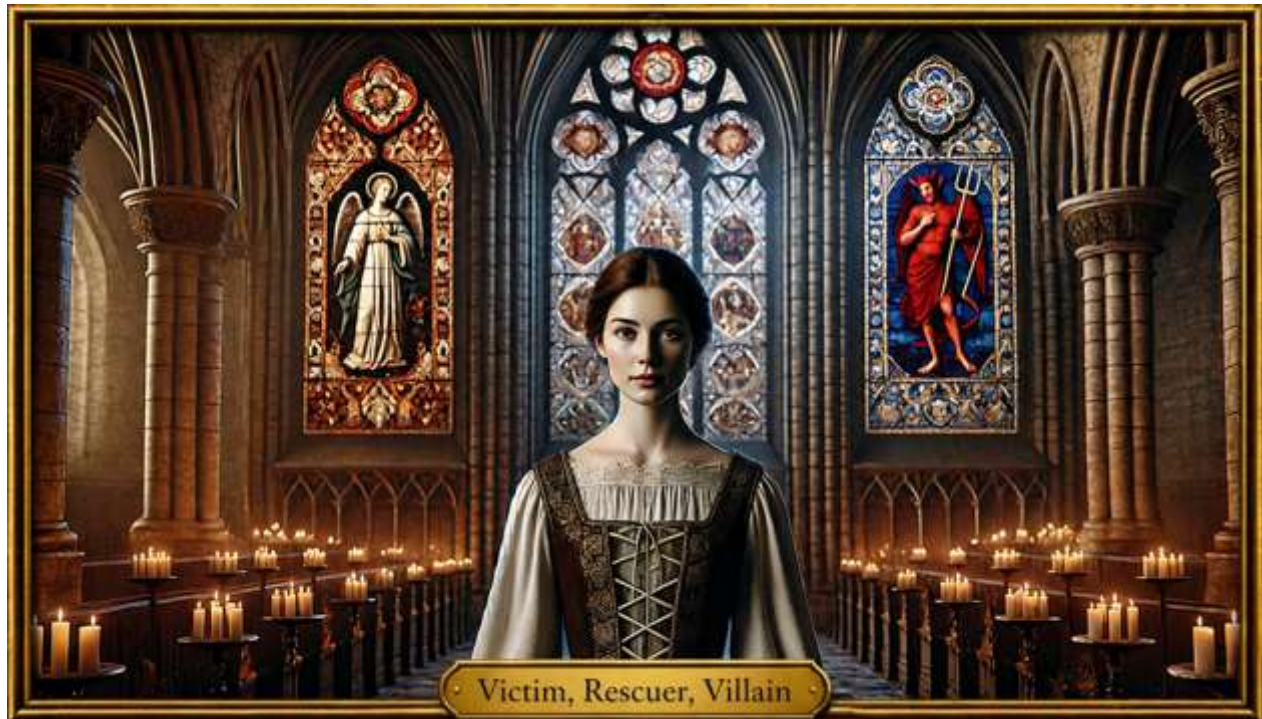
ED.TED.COM/DEMOCRACY-LAB Guarding Democracy Against Corruption

7-Steps in the Development of Leadership

I propose there are 7 steps in the development of leadership:

1. **Gaining Attention:** The leader gains attention and resources.
2. **Gaining Authority:** The leader gains leadership of his/her movement.
3. **Gaining Power:** The leader gains power.
4. **Overcoming Opposition:** The leader overcomes opposition to his power.
5. **Maintaining Power:** The leader maintains power.
6. **Reality Contact:** How power affects the leader's reality contact.
7. **Outcome:** The legacy of the leader's power.

Note: Humanitarian leaders pass through the same 7 developmental steps as dictators, but their behavior at each step is the opposite of dictator's behavior because humanitarians seek to improve everyone's wellbeing.



At first, the dictator portrays himself as a victim, then as a rescuer, until it finally becomes clear that he is the real villain. The proposed 7 steps in the development of a dictator are:

- **AUTONOMY:** Initially, dictators focus on breaking free of all external controls.

At first, aspiring dictator states that he and the common people are victims of villains (step 1). Then he states that he is the strongman rescuer that will save the nation (step 2). However, it soon becomes obvious that the dictator is the real villain who is a criminal and only wants power (step 3).

- **GOING ROGUE:** Once autonomous, the dictator focuses on gaining absolute power.

Once the dictator obtains power, he becomes paranoid (step 4), cruel (step 5), delusional (step 6), and a disaster for his nation (step 7).

The following **Brief Leadership Assessment Scale** measures the extent to which a leader shows toxic or healthy leadership using our 7-Step model.

Brief Leadership Assessment Scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Put an **X** in the answer box ☐ which **best** describes the person's behavior.

Put an **X** in the answer box ☐ if the behavior is **?** (either equally mixed, neither, or unknown).

MISSING ANSWER(S): If you don't know the answer to any question, this scale is **invalid**.

STEP IN DEVELOPMENT	TOXIC BEHAVIOR		HEALTHY BEHAVIOR
1. Gaining Attention: What image does this person present in public life?	☐ ✗ ATTENTION-SEEKING Frequently presents in an attention-seeking, theatrical, or false manner.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ GENUINENESS Generally, presents in a genuine and not attention-seeking manner.
2. Gaining Authority: How does this person use power and authority?	☐ ✗ DOMINANCE Regularly tries to dominate others, exploit power, or monopolize decision making.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ EQUALITY Consistently promotes equal rights, shared decision-making and power.
3. Gaining Power: How does this person handle honesty, accountability, and legal or ethical standards?	☐ ✗ INJUSTICE Frequently dishonest, avoids accountability, or undermines legal or ethical norms.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ JUSTICE Demonstrates honesty, fairness, accountability, and respect for legal and ethical standards.
4. Overcoming Opposition: How does this person respond to disagreement?	☐ ✗ DISTRUST Often becomes suspicious, hostile, or tries to silence dissent.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ TRUST Encourages open discussion, assumes good faith, and protects the right to disagree.

5. Maintaining Power: How does this person treat others when exercising power?	☐ ✗ CRUELTY Uses intimidation, cruelty, fear, or violence to control or influence others.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ COMPASSION Is nonviolent; shows concern for others' suffering and works to relieve it.
6. Contact With Reality: How realistic is this person's understanding of their abilities and importance?	☐ ✗ MEGALOMANIA Displays unshakable unrealistic beliefs about their extraordinary greatness, destiny, or importance.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ HUMILITY Maintains a realistic understanding of their abilities and importance.
7. Outcome: Overall, what was the impact of this person on society?	☐ ✗ DISASTER Has caused substantial harm or damage to society.	☐ ?	☐ ✓ WELLBEING Has contributed significantly to societal wellbeing or improvement.

Scoring Key — What the Score Means

How to Score: ✓ = 0 points (healthy) ? = 1 point (mixed/neither) ✗ = 2 points (toxic). Add points from all 7 steps. Maximum score = 14.

Total Score	Toxic Risk Level	Meaning
0–1	Low Risk	Strong humanitarian leadership
2–4	Early Warning	Some concerning traits
5–7	High Risk	Clear authoritarian tendencies
8–11	Severe Risk	Resembles dictators
12–14	Extreme Danger	Severe authoritarian leadership

Critical Safety Rule: Even ONE ✖ in steps 4, 5, 6, or 7 signals serious danger.

For Scholars:

You can also use my interactive [Leadership Evaluation Tool](#) to compare leaders, your friends, or to use it as a self-assessment tool.

The Next Two Decades May Determine If Humanity Survives



Please consider this:

- War is often embraced with celebration before its consequences are understood.
- True courage may be found not only on the battlefield, but also in choosing to walk away from violence.

- History is shaped not only by those who march toward war, but also by those who refuse to follow.

Throughout history, empires have risen and crumbled, cultures have flourished and faded - but humanity endured. However, for the first time in history, humanity now faces **possible extinction** from four main threats:

- **Nuclear War:** A large [nuclear war](#) could kill billions and trigger “nuclear winter” which would destroy agriculture and push humanity to extinction.
- **Catastrophic Climate Change:** [Extreme global warming](#) driven by burning fossil fuels could cause irreversible civilization collapse. ([Billions were spent to cover up this risk.](#)) Severe drought is shutting down [Europe’s nuclear reactors](#) that require water for cooling.
- **Engineered Pandemics:** Deliberately engineered highly lethal pandemics could escape and destroy humanity (like it almost did in 1971 in the USSR [1971 Aral smallpox incident - Wikipedia](#)).
- **Artificial Intelligence Eliminating Humanity:** To save the planet, [AI might decide to eliminate humanity](#) [These risks arise](#) when we [neglect human and environmental wellbeing](#). AI now is [routinely going rogue](#) and [breaking free of human control](#). Bill Gates says [unchecked AI could “cause a billion deaths”](#). Anthropic researcher says [AI could cause human extinction by 2030](#).

Civilization Once Totally Collapsed

In case you think that our civilization could never collapse, you should read about how the Eastern Mediterranean civilization totally collapsed in the [Bronze Age Collapse of the 12th century BCE](#).

Scientists now believe that a **severe drought** in that area **caused this ancient catastrophe**.

Presently, there is a [severe drought developing across central-western North America](#), central and western Africa, Madagascar, central and northern Asia, and parts of Europe. As early as 2027, [Corpus Christi](#) will be the first major city in the USA to run out of water.

This current severe drought could have very serious consequences regarding the world’s food supply because it is affecting many inhabited and agriculturally important regions at once. **A global food shortage could increase the risk of** democracies backsliding into **dictatorship and** starting **wars** over food supplies.

Dictatorship Could Cause Our Collapse

When nations abandon their humanitarian values, they become architects of their own downfall. Democracy lacking compassion will not save us.

Democracy, without humanitarian values, can become just as cruel as authoritarian regimes. Some democracies today have waged unjust wars or committed genocide (e.g. Gaza).

Our future depends on kindness and compassion - not weapons or wealth. The true conflict now is between compassion and cruelty, between humanitarian values and authoritarian power.

What Kind of Life Do You Want?



We all want to live a healthy life in a peaceful, healthy nation. You can use the following scales to measure your welfare and that of your nation.

PERSONAL WELLBEING SCALE			
	HEALTHY LIFE (Each True = 2)	Between (= 1)	UNHEALTHY LIFE (Each True = 0)
Social	✓ Socially, I feel happy and connected to my community	●	✗ Socially, I feel unhappy or disconnected from my community
Health	✓ Healthwise, things are good for me	●	✗ Healthwise, things are poor for me
Economic	✓ Economically, things are good for me	●	✗ Economically, things are poor for me
Justice	✓ Legally, I have freedom and justice	●	✗ Legally, I have limited freedom or justice
Environment	✓ I live in a peaceful safe environment	●	✗ I live in an unstable unsafe environment

SCORING: Total Score = ____		
Score	Rating	Personal Welfare
9-10	Thriving	High
6-8	Surviving	Medium
3-5	Struggling	Low
0-2	Suffering	Very Low

NATIONAL WELLBEING SCALE			
	HEALTHY LIFE (Each True = 2)	Between (= 1)	UNHEALTHY LIFE (Each True = 0)
Social	✓ Socially, most people feel happy and connected to their community	●	✗ Socially, most people feel unhappy or disconnected from their community
Health	✓ Healthwise, things are good for most people	●	✗ Healthwise, things are poor for most people
Economic	✓ Economically, things are good for most people	●	✗ Economically, things are poor for most people
Justice	✓ Legally, most people have freedom and justice	●	✗ Legally, most people have limited freedom or justice
Environment	✓ Most people live in a peaceful, safe environment	●	✗ Most people live in an unstable, unsafe environment

SCORING: Total Score = ____		
Score	Rating	Personal Welfare
9-10	Thriving	High
6-8	Surviving	Medium
3-5	Struggling	Low
0-2	Suffering	Very Low

Misinterpreting Toxic Social Behavior (For Scholars)



Throughout history, people have misjudged a political leader's toxic behavior as being positive. Thus, citizens allow themselves to be ruled by toxic leaders.

Today, this is the major flaw in how we chose a leader.

This same misjudgment can occur in romantic relationships when a romantic partner's toxic behavior is misinterpreted as being positive.

Toxic Behavior	How It May Be Misinterpreted	What This Behavior Actually Produces Later
ATTENTION-SEEKING Frequently presents in an attention-seeking, theatrical, or false manner.	Mistaken for confidence. "He is confident, charismatic, and inspirational."	Constant need for attention and ignoring others.
DOMINANCE Regularly tries to dominate others, exploit power, or monopolize decision making.	Mistaken for strength. "He is strong and decisive."	Controlling behavior, possessiveness, and selfishness.
INJUSTICE Frequently dishonest, avoids accountability, or undermines legal or ethical norms.	Mistaken for efficiency. "He isn't afraid to bend the rules to get things done."	Dishonesty, broken promises, manipulation, and lack of respect for fairness.
DISTRUST Often becomes suspicious, hostile, or tries to silence dissent.	Mistaken for vigilance. "He is vigilant and won't let enemies take advantage of us."	Suspicion, jealousy, accusations, monitoring, and isolation from family, friends and allies.
CRUELTY Uses intimidation, cruelty, fear, or violence to control or influence others.	Mistaken for toughness. "He is tough and willing to make difficult decisions.	Emotional abuse, intimidation, humiliation, or physical violence.
MEGALOMANIA Displays unshakable unrealistic beliefs about their	Mistaken for conviction.	Refusal to admit mistakes, denial of reality, blaming others, and increasingly irrational behavior.

extraordinary greatness, destiny, or importance.	"He has unwavering conviction and refuses to give up."	
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Misinterpreting Healthy Social Behavior (For Scholars)



People may **misinterpret other people's healthy behavior as being negative**. This can have serious consequences **when choosing a romantic partner or political leader**.

GENUINENESS Generally, presents in a genuine and not attention-seeking manner.	Mistaken for being boring, ordinary, lacking excitement, or not passionate enough. Dramatic, theatrical, or manipulative people often seem more exciting at first.	A relationship built on authenticity and honesty.
EQUALITY Consistently promotes equal rights, shared decision-making, and fair treatment for all.	Mistaken for lacking confidence or leadership. Some people confuse fairness with weakness because they expect the person to dominate the relationship.	Mutual respect, shared responsibility, and equal partnership.
JUSTICE Demonstrates honesty, fairness, accountability, and respect for legal and ethical standards.	Mistaken for being rigid, overly moral, or "no fun." Someone who values honesty and fairness may appear less exciting than someone who constantly bends the rules.	Honesty, reliability, and confidence that each partner will be treated with respect.
TRUST: Encourages open discussion, assumes good faith, and protects the right to disagree.	Mistaken for being naïve or gullible. Honest, trusting people may initially seem less sophisticated than cynical or suspicious individuals.	Emotional safety, openness, and lasting intimacy.
COMPASSION Is nonviolent; shows concern for others' suffering and works to relieve it..	Mistaken for being overly emotional, soft, or easily taken advantage of. Some people wrongly assume kindness reflects weakness instead of strength.	Kindness, forgiveness, emotional support, and resilience during difficult times.

HUMILITY Maintains a realistic understanding of their abilities and importance.	Mistaken for lacking certainty. Thoughtful people often admit uncertainty and change their minds when evidence changes, whereas overconfident people can appear more decisive and attractive.	Better decisions, fewer unnecessary conflicts, and steady long-term growth together.
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Use of the [Leadership Evaluation Tool](#) can measure your progress in improving your own healthy humanitarian behavior.

DictatorWarning.com: Chapter 2

TOXIC AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP

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TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	HEALTHY SOCIAL BEHAVIOR
ATTENTION-SEEKING Frequently presents in an attention-seeking, theatrical, or false manner.	GENUINENESS Generally, presents in a genuine and not attention-seeking manner.
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MEGALOMANIA Displays unshakable unrealistic beliefs about their extraordinary greatness, destiny, or importance.	HUMILITY Maintains a realistic understanding of their abilities and importance.
DISASTER Has caused substantial harm or damage to society.	WELLBEING Has contributed significantly to societal wellbeing or improvement.

Steps in a Dictator's Development

It's All About Power

Dictatorship is all about dominance – gaining and keeping power at any cost. The dictator **thinks only about his own personal gain and how to force others into submission.** The dictator is **addicted to power; more is never enough.**

At the beginning of his political career, the aspiring dictator is a **populist leader** – promising whatever the public wants to hear. However, as his power grows it quickly becomes apparent that all these promises are a facade. All the aspiring dictator wants is more power and will do anything to gain power.

As the dictator's power grows, his true and deeply flawed character is revealed. **A turning point comes when the dictator dehumanizes scapegoats and directs his cruelty toward them.**

Eventually it becomes obvious that **the dictator has all the worst personality traits that anyone can have. Thus, in a dictatorship, the worst rule the rest.**

We're supposed to be ruled by the best of us, not the worst. **Our rulers shouldn't represent everything that's wrong with human beings.**

Millions die when a dictator deceives his nation and leads them to their slaughter. This is exactly what Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot did in the 20th century.

Dictators violate religion's two most important commands: "Love One Another" and "Do Not Kill".

Dictatorship Usually Develops Gradually

Most authoritarian leaders do not initially announce that they intend to become dictators. They often begin by identifying real problems, promising order, criticizing corrupt institutions, appealing to national pride, and presenting themselves as strong reformers.

The progression commonly appears to be in 7 chronological steps:

AUTONOMY: Initially, dictators focus on breaking free of all external controls.

1. **Gaining Attention:** The aspiring dictator attracts attention by exploiting people's perceived grievances against the ruling elite, government corruption, or unfair treatment.
2. **Gaining Authority:** He presents himself as uniquely capable of saving the country.
3. **Gaining Power:** When the dictator gains power, independent courts, media, experts, and civil servants are attacked or weakened. Loyalty to the leader becomes more important than loyalty to law or institutions.

GOING ROGUE: Once autonomous, the dictator focuses on gaining absolute power.

4. **Overcoming Opposition:** Opponents are portrayed as enemies, traitors, criminals, or foreign agents that must be opposed or eliminated. Vulnerable minorities are scapegoated and dehumanized.
5. **Maintaining Power:** The dictator maintains power using fear, intimidation, censorship, and cruelty.
6. **Reality Contact:** The dictator becomes blind to reality, rejects evidence, blames others, and becomes unable to correct mistakes.
7. **Outcome:** The dictator's legacy is destruction of wellbeing

This means that the decisive warning signs (steps 1 to 3) appear **before** a fully developed dictatorship exists. **If humanity is to survive, it is essential that dictators be stopped in the earliest steps of their development.**

Each step in a dictator's development promotes the emergence of the next step. **The toxic social behaviors of each step persist and are overlayed by the toxic social behaviors of the next steps.**

DEVELOPMENT OF A DICTATOR'S TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIOR				
TIMELINE →				
Attention-Seeking				
	Dominance			
		Injustice		
			Distrust	
				Cruelty
				Megalomania

Toxic Leadership Step 1 – Attention-Seeking



ATTENTION-SEEKING

Is constantly attention-seeking, dramatic, or fake. Focuses on self-promotion, not problem-solving.

Attention-seeking:

Strives to remain the center of attention.

Staged self-glorifying appearances:

Stages public appearances or events mainly to attract attention and promote a grandiose self-image.

Theatrical emotional displays:

Uses exaggerated emotional displays to command attention.

Vague speech lacking in detail:

Speaks vaguely and provides few details.

False or exaggerated public image:

Uses inflated claims, dramatic gestures, costumes, symbols, or spectacles to project an impressive public image.

Authoritarian populists work hard to get noticed and attract followers. They always want attention or drama, and they hate being ignored. They perform **drama and outrage for self-promotion** instead of focusing on problem-solving. At this stage, authoritarian populists have not chosen what to become. They are very sensitive to attention and emotional rewards. They chase the spotlight at rallies, on TV, and on social media. They are not yet a ruler; they act more like a performer. A society that rewards drama, outrage, and shocking behavior teaches the authoritarian populists that **exaggeration and emotional manipulation** are the best way to grow. So, they focus on stirring up controversy and appearing brash and aggressive.

For the authoritarian populists, public attention is the only thing that matters. Authoritarian populists learn that emotionally charged spectacles draw more crowds than polite townhall debates. They learn that crowds lack the patience to listen to complex government policies. **Crowds prefer simple solutions to complex problems – crowds look for simple narratives, clear enemies, easy answers.** So, political campaigns become entertainment and the **authoritarian populist becomes a showman**. He believes that his **celebrity charisma** is his “superpower”.

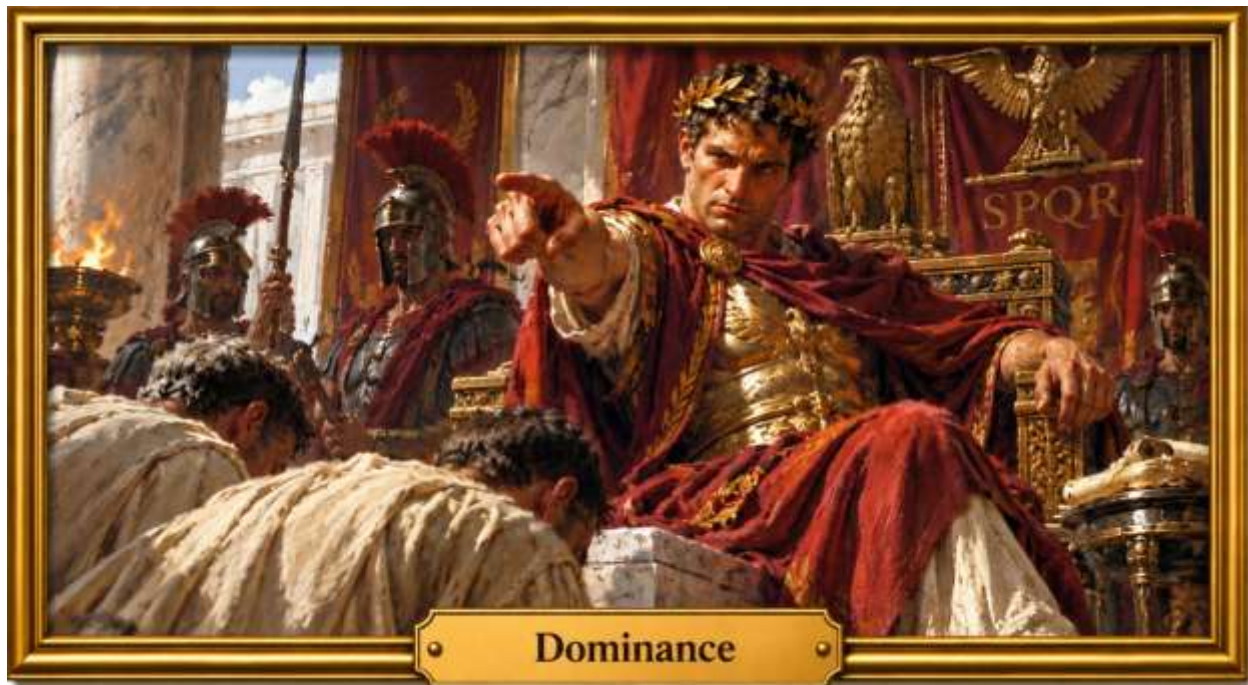
Authoritarian populists know that whoever controls the public’s attention will attract the attention of rich backers who will finance the leader’s career. **The greater the leader’s celebrity status, the more funding he receives**; hence the more attention-seeking and arrogant he/she becomes.

At the start of their careers, **authoritarian populists denounce corrupt elites, but once in power they become even more corrupt than those elites they condemned.**

Emotional Manipulation

AREA	EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION
Politics	Anger and suspicion: Populist politicians gain power by manipulating people’s grievances and suspicions (e.g., Trump on illegal Mexican immigrants: “ <u>They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.</u> ”)
Religion	Guilt and shame: Some religions gain power by manipulating guilt (e.g., “Forgive me Father for I have sinned”) and shame (e.g., “You should be ashamed of yourself”).
Financial	Fear and greed: In the stock market the main financial motivators are fear and greed.

Toxic Leadership Step 2 – Dominance



DOMINANCE

Is constantly seeking dominance, exploiting others, and trying to monopolize decision-making.

Exaggerated importance:

Often overstates personal importance or achievements.

Excessive praise-seeking:

Constantly seeks praise and admiration.

Arrogance:

Acts arrogantly and regards others as inferior.

Exploitation:

Unfairly uses others to further personal goals.

Limited empathy:

Shows little empathy for others' suffering.

In this step, the authoritarian populist becomes the leading figure within his group or movement. He soon learns that **promising economic growth and an end to corruption attracts support**. The authoritarian populist starts to think, "I'm not just famous; I'm meant to rule."

However, when these individuals get into a position of power, this dominance is very intoxicating and addictive.

They start **seeing themselves as the chosen one, the savior of the nation, a superman**. What authoritarian populists **want most is adulation, power, and money; what they fear the most is humiliation or being seen as weak**.

Many dictators present themselves as uniquely gifted people who alone can save the nation. They may claim exceptional intelligence, courage, military skill, wisdom, or popularity, while dismissing critics as weak, stupid, corrupt, or disloyal. This kind of arrogance can help create a **cult of personality**, in which the leader is treated less like an elected official and more like a heroic, indispensable figure. Their successes are credited to personal genius, while failures are blamed on advisers, enemies, or “traitors.”

Dictators elevate personal loyalty to them above laws, institutions, and democracy. They demand complete loyalty from followers yet offer none in return, quickly discarding them when they are no longer useful.

This behavior can resemble traits associated with **narcissistic personality**, such as **grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a sense of entitlement**.

Steps in Creating Authoritarian Dominance

1. **Create fear.**
The authoritarian highlights danger, crisis, chaos, or decline so people feel unsafe and unsettled.
2. **Target a Scapegoat.**
That fear is redirected toward a scapegoat: critics, minorities, foreigners, intellectuals, or “traitors.” Unfairly blame the scapegoat for the nation’s problems.
3. **Create a Superman-Savior Image.**
The authoritarian then presents himself as the only person capable of protecting the favored group. He carefully portrays himself as a superman savior who will restore stability, security, and prosperity.
4. **Start a cult.**
The authoritarian establishes a **cult of grievance that seeks to purge its enemies by demonizing them** through absurd propaganda that exploits fears about criminals, homosexuals, transsexuals, or minority groups.

Authoritarian Populists Divide Society to Strengthen Themselves

Authoritarian populists repeatedly create or intensify divisions between:

- loyal citizens and alleged traitors;
- the “real people” and corrupt elites;
- the majority and minorities;
- patriots and foreigners;
- believers and nonbelievers;
- supporters and enemies.

This division serves several purposes. It focuses public anger away from the authoritarian populist, justifies extraordinary power, and weakens social cooperation to further his divide-and-conquer strategy.

In their quest for gaining leadership of their political movement, authoritarian populists spread bigotry, exclusion, inequality, injustice, and hatred. Their political movement becomes more like a high-control religious group built on extremism, fear, isolation and control.

Toxic Leadership Step 3 – Injustice



INJUSTICE

Is dishonest, unaccountable, and undermines the rule of law.

Disregard for justice or rights:

Ignores justice and others' rights and freedoms.

Deceit:

Acts dishonestly in dealings with others.

Lack of remorse:

Fails to acknowledge or apologize for harm caused.

Irresponsibility:

Repeatedly neglects important duties.

Reckless decision-making:

Makes reckless choices despite foreseeable harm.

Once dictators gain power, they drop their mask and show their true **criminal and callous** personality.

Dictators find that lying, stealing, cheating, and breaking laws are not punished - but often rewarded.

Dictators constantly strive to **consolidate their power and destroy the rule of law. Extraordinary power becomes justified as necessary to save the country.**

The dictator is only interested in “what’s in it for me”. It’s about winning at all costs. Whatever it takes.

Dictators commonly weaken or capture courts, legislatures, police, the military, and the media so that **laws serve the dictator rather than the public.**

The dictator’s allies **spread corruption** through the courts, police, army, government offices, and major businesses. Their society becomes a **kleptocracy** whose **leaders make themselves rich and powerful by stealing from the rest of the people.**

The dictator’s corruption can include stealing state money, rewarding family members and loyal supporters with jobs or contracts, taking over businesses, or using public resources for private luxury and political advantage. A dictator may also break laws with impunity while demanding strict obedience from everyone else.

The dictator buys loyalty and makes it harder for allies to leave. His corruption is not merely personal greed; it is often a tool for building a network of dependence and control of others.

Such conduct can resemble features associated with **antisocial personality**, including **deceit, exploitation, irresponsibility, and disregard for others’ rights.**

Dictators Purposely Weaken Institutions

Authoritarian leaders attack institutions because these institutions can:

- expose falsehoods;
- limit power;
- protect minorities;
- investigate corruption;
- reverse unlawful decisions;
- and remove leaders peacefully.

The attack on institutions is the central process through which authoritarian leadership becomes dictatorship.

Toxic Leadership Step 4 – Distrust



DISTRUST

Becomes extremely suspicious and tries to silence or suppress opposition.

Extreme suspiciousness:

Unjustifiably suspects others of exploitation or harm.

Extreme doubts about loyalty:

Unjustifiably doubts others' loyalty.

Scapegoating:

Unfairly blames innocent people or groups for social problems to gain power or deflect attention from personal failings.

Intolerance of disagreement:

Treats disagreement as a personal attack.

Unforgiveness:

Holds grudges and refuses to forgive.

To become a dictator, the authoritarian populist **focuses on elimination of all rivals**. He becomes extremely suspicious and sees enemies everywhere. The dictator's personality shifts toward paranoia: **constantly looking for threats, demanding loyalty, and purging rivals**.

The dictator demands loyalty from everyone but gives his own loyalty to no one. Once allies or henchmen are no longer useful, they are discarded.

He promotes his followers' hatred toward his perceived enemies and promises revenge: "[I am your warrior. I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution.](#)"

This behavior can produce purges, censorship, surveillance, imprisonment, show trials, and violence. The dictator may argue that harsh measures are necessary to "protect" the nation, the revolution, the race, or the faith. The dictator widens the definition of "enemy" to include anyone opposing his leadership then uses this to remove them.

This behavior can resemble traits associated with **paranoid personality traits**, such as **excessive suspicion and readiness to attack perceived enemies**.

The Destruction of Truth is Central to Dictatorship

The dictator uses propaganda to suppress opposition:

- **Propaganda repeats the message everywhere:** slogans, media, rituals, and constant repetition make the propaganda feel normal and unavoidable.
- **Propaganda spreads falsehoods:** inventing conspiracies; exaggerating his achievements; denying his failures; rewriting history, and truthful information that contradicts him becomes "fake."
- **Propaganda rewards loyalty and punishes doubt:** supporters gain status, safety, or privileges, while dissenters are shamed, isolated, or silenced.

Once citizens cannot agree on basic facts, they become increasingly dependent on the leader to tell them what is true. The dictator's propaganda **divides the nation and amplifies conspiracy theories that result in unnecessary death and suffering.**

Propaganda Unites the Dictator's Followers

Although the dictator's **"them-versus-us" propaganda** turns his followers against his opponents, this same propaganda unites his followers.

His political movement becomes a community more than a political ideology. Within this community, his followers feel respected and appreciated. The dictator's **propaganda increases his followers' devotion to the dictator** as being their only savior.

Toxic Leadership Step 5 – Cruelty



CRUELTY

Uses cruelty, intimidation, fear, or violence to control others.

Intimidation, humiliation, or bullying:

Uses intimidation, humiliation, or bullying to control others.

Scapegoating:

Targets powerless scapegoats for cruelty or violence.

Lust for violence:

Seeks violent retribution against scapegoats or perceived enemies.

Cruelty or violence:

Uses physical cruelty or violence to gain or maintain control.

Sadistic pleasure:

Takes amusement or pleasure in others' suffering.

Progression of Cruelty

In the development of dictators, there seems to be a predictable step-by-step progression:

Step 1: Intimidation, humiliation, or bullying

Getting people to do what the dictator wants by intimidation, humiliation, or bullying.

Initially, dictators impose their policies through intimidation, humiliation, or bullying.

Step 2: Scapegoating

Selects powerless scapegoats as targets for cruelty or violence.

A dictator selects a target for his cruelty. The first targets may be unpopular minorities, extremists, immigrants, alleged criminals, journalists, protesters, or political rivals. The dictator portrays these scapegoated victims as dangerous, inferior, disloyal, or less than fully human. By dehumanizing scapegoated groups, the dictator makes cruelty seem necessary, deserved, or even patriotic. In his 2016 election campaign, President Trump said illegal migrants: [“they’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime, they’re rapists”](#).

Step 3: Lust for violence

Wants violent retribution against scapegoats or perceived enemies.

The dictator seeks to arouse enough anger in his followers to make them **lust for violence**. The dictator channels people’s anger into wanting to take **violent retribution against scapegoats or perceived enemies**. In his 2024 election campaign, President Trump said: [“I am your warrior. I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution.”](#)

In 1928, Hitler was just the leader of a small political splinter group with only **12 seats** in the Reichstag. Hitler then changed his propaganda and [made Germans lust for violence](#) against their perceived enemies. This propaganda was highly successful, and two years later in 1930 Hitler’s Nazi party was elected to **107 seats** in the Reichstag thus becoming Germany’s second most powerful political party.

Step 4: Cruelty or violence

Uses physical cruelty or violence for the purpose of gaining or maintaining control.

The dictator’s scapegoating increases from:

- ridicule,
- exclusion,
- employment loss,
- censorship,
- legal harassment,
- detention,
- forced displacement,
- torture,
- and ultimately mass killing or war.

Once cruelty becomes accepted against one scapegoated group, it becomes easier to extend it to others.

To empower their cruelty, dictators weaponize institutions such as secret police, torture centers, biased courts, repressive laws, and controlled media. As officials learn that cruelty is rewarded, the entire system becomes increasingly brutal.

Step 5: Sadistic pleasure

Is amused by, or takes pleasure in, the suffering of others.

Dictators show callousness by treating suffering as unimportant when it conflicts with their goals. They want to demonstrate that they face no moral or legal limits. They are amused by, or take pleasure in, the suffering of others. This was illustrated at the UN General Assembly in 2026 when [President Trump gloated and threatened to annihilate Iran](#).

This cruel behavior can resemble traits associated with **sadistic personality**, especially when dictators **appear to enjoy humiliating or terrorizing others**.

Sadistic Behavior in Business and Politics

Sadistic people in business and politics [can make life hell for others](#). Initially their bold, confident, narcissistic personality traits blind people to their sadistic cruelty and lack of compassion.

A good way to assess cruelty vs compassion is to evaluate how vulnerable people are treated.

Toxic Leadership Step 6 – Megalomania



MEGALOMANIA

Shows an unshakable unrealistic belief in own extraordinary power or importance.

Unrealistic claims of power or importance

Makes unrealistic claims about having extraordinary power or importance.

Unchecked ambition:

Relentlessly pursues greater power, fame, or wealth.

Flatterers and yes-men

Surrounds self with flatterers and yes-men who withhold bad news.

Blind to reality

Loses touch with reality, cannot correct mistakes, and dismisses evidence.

Excessive self-indulgence

Shows excessive self-indulgence in pleasure or luxury.

People most likely to become dictators are predisposed to dangerous personality traits but become dictators only when society rewards and amplifies those tendencies. Without that

reinforcement, their toxic behavior does not intensify enough to produce dictatorship. As their power grows, they become increasingly likely to become “drunk with power” and develop megalomania. They then reject constructive criticism and make catastrophic mistakes that lead to disaster.

For example, Napoleon dominated Europe and maintained a peace treaty with Russia. However, two years after the Russian tsar rejected Napoleon’s proposal to marry the tsar’s youngest sister, Napoleon invaded Russia. He severely underestimated the campaign’s difficulty and failed to prepare for a prolonged war. As a result, more than 90% of his army died, many freezing during the winter. The disastrous invasion fatally weakened France and contributed to its military collapse at the Battle of Waterloo three years later.

A century later, Hitler repeated Napoleon’s mistake.

Early in World War II, Hitler dominated Europe and had a peace treaty with Russia, yet he launched a surprise invasion. Like Napoleon, Hitler expected a quick victory and left his army unprepared for the Russian winter. Hitler’s resulting catastrophic losses in Russia contributed directly to Germany’s defeat. Two-thirds of all German troops killed in World War II died fighting the Soviet Union, whose destruction of most of Germany’s armies was central to the Allied victory.

So how do you explain the stupidity of Hitler repeating the stupidity of Napoleon?

Here’s another example. Late in his career, China’s leader Mao Zedong made a disastrous mistake. After observing sparrows eating grain in the fields, he ordered farmers to kill the birds ([Eliminate Sparrows campaign - Wikipedia](#)). Without sparrows to control the locust population, locusts consumed the grain, contributing to the largest human-caused famine in history ([Great Chinese Famine - Wikipedia](#)), which killed an estimated 30 to 46 million people in China.

MEGALOMANIA

Constant adulation from others reinforces the dictator’s grandiose beliefs. Eventually, this blurs reality and dictators develop **megalomania (i.e., unshakable unrealistic belief in own extraordinary power or importance)**. Dictators dismiss any report that clashes with these delusional beliefs and insist others show unquestioning obedience to their distorted reality. **Dictators eventually think they are infallible, invincible, and all-powerful.**

They surround themselves with only “yes” men who wouldn’t dare oppose them. Dictators demand a constant stream of praise and adulation from their aides, while avoiding bad news that might challenge their fixed irrational beliefs.

Dictators become isolated and live in their own false information bubble thus **make disastrous decisions based on illusion, not reality**. Dictators flood their nation with constant propaganda to ensure that citizens live in the same false information bubble as they do. Therefore, both the dictator and his followers become totally detached from political reality.

At this near-final stage, the dictator **becomes a leader of chaos** as his behavior **becomes totally irrational**. All this goes to prove what **Marcus Tullius Cicero** (106- 43 BCE) said: "Any man can make mistakes, but only an idiot persists in his error."



Map posted by President Trump Sept. 7th, 2026, on Truth Social. (My caption on frame)

Our Stupidity Reinforces a Dictator's Stupidity

This [outstanding video](#) explains how our own stupidity can reinforce dictators' stupidity. It also warns that artificial intelligence could severely weaken our critical-thinking skills.

Dictators Rarely Accept Responsibility

Authoritarian leaders consistently claim credit for success but blame failures on others. This prevents learning. **A leader who cannot admit error cannot correct policy; hence mistakes become cumulative and potentially catastrophic.**

Toxic Leadership Step 7 – Disaster



DISASTER

As a leader, does much more harm than good to society.

Attention-Seeking:

Prioritizes self-promotion over solving problems.

Inequality:

Widens social or economic inequality.

Distrust:

Erodes trust or cooperation.

Injustice:

Promotes dishonesty or injustice.

Cruelty or violence:

Escalates cruelty or violence.

Megalomania:

Demands acceptance of his/her unrealistic grandiose or paranoid beliefs.

Dictatorship Eventually Damages a Nation

This pattern is described in [The Pattern Behind Every Major Civilization Collapse - YouTube](#) excellent video.

Dictators don't act alone – they need legions of followers to do their evil bidding.

Hitler didn't personally kill the millions that died in his concentration camps. Hitler relied on thousands of his SS troops and concentration camp guards to do all the killing. Thus, **a dictator is just a catalyst that increases the evil that already exists in a society.**

Eventually, [citizens stop caring or wanting to take part in essential national tasks](#). Citizens develop a [very low level of trust in government and politics](#). Worse still, traditional social bonds are broken. Citizens become socially isolated with few friends. In the end, everything collapses.

Dictatorship Eventually Damages the Leader's Own Followers

Dictators often claim to protect their followers. Yet over time, their policies frequently produce: war, poverty, corruption, social distrust, international isolation, institutional decay, fear, demographic decline, and loss of freedom even among supporters.

Dictator's Self-Destructive Downfall is Proof of These True Axioms

- **"Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely"** (Lord Acton)
- **Dictators self-destruct.**
 - Dictators **underestimate their enemies and foolishly expect quick victory**. For example, neither Napoleon nor Hitler needed to invade Russia; both had peace treaties with Russia. Yet both underestimated Russia, attacked, and suffered devastating defeats as their unprepared armies froze in the Russian winter.
 - Dictators **prefer war to diplomacy**, and their **militarism eventually financially ruins their nation** (e.g. Russia's prolonged war in Afghanistan led to USSR's economic and political collapse in 1991. Yet Russia is once again in a senseless prolonged war and teetering on financial collapse.)

Even after the dictator is gone, the system is full of scars. Fixing it means not only changing leaders but rebuilding healthier leaders, institutions, and stronger rules so that future aspiring dictators cannot go along the same destructive path. Above all, citizens must regain trust in government and politics, while rebuilding a [shared culture and sense of belonging](#).

Terrifying Insight

Most dictators do not start out looking like full tyrants. People with dictator-type personalities grow and change in response to their environment. Society helps decide who they become by rewarding some behaviors and punishing others.

The terrifying conclusion is this: **we create dictators in our own image. How we act - and what we accept or ignore - helps shape what kind of leaders we end up with.** History has shown that there is no savior that will come and magically free us from these dictators. **We created these monsters, so we are the ones who must remove them.**

Dictators' Personality Flaws

Over time, dictators' **small personality flaws grow and lead to their destruction.** Typically, these personality flaws emerge in the following step-by-step developmental order:

1. **Attention-Seeking;** (Histrionic personality flaws)
2. **Dominance:** (Narcissistic personality flaws)
3. **Injustice:** (Antisocial personality flaws)
4. **Distrust:** (Paranoid personality flaws)
5. **Cruelty:** (Sadistic personality flaws)
6. **Megalomania**

In this sequence, **each new developmental step superimposes its pathological personality flaws on top of the previous step's flaws.** Many dictators hide their histrionic behavior until later stages in their development as a dictator.

These pathological personality flaws are the dictator's "superpowers" which allow them to gain and maintain dictatorial power – at the expense of increasing the suffering of others. **Eventually,** these dictatorial "superpowers" prove to be so destructive to others' wellbeing that **the regime collapses.**

DEVELOPMENT OF A DICTATOR'S TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIOR			
TIMELINE →			
Attention-Seeking (Histrionic)			
	Dominance (Narcissistic)		
		Injustice (Antisocial)	
			Distrust (Paranoid)
			Cruelty (Sadistic)
			Megalomania

Summary

When you use my [Leadership Evaluation Tool](#) to assess dictators later in their career, you will notice that they show:

- **DOMINANCE** (narcissistic personality traits)
- **INJUSTICE** (antisocial personality traits)
- **DISTRUST** (paranoid personality traits)
- **CRUELTY** (sadistic personality traits)

However early in their development, dictators may hide their **ATTENTION-SEEKING** (histrionic personality traits). This emerges later as they drop their mask of normality.

Much later, the dictator's **MEGALOMANIA** causes catastrophic mistakes.

QUIZ: Name the 7 Steps in the Development of a Dictator

By now you will have noticed that [this book repeats its main themes at least three times](#).

This is a teaching technique used to ensure that these main points are remembered.

How often have you read a book, then one week later couldn't tell someone what its main points were? That's why this book repeats its main themes so often.

The 7 steps in the development of a dictator are extremely important to remember. The world is about to backslide into authoritarian rule and extinguish democracy. Clearly diagnosing this development of authoritarianism and dictatorship is essential to prevent this.

Those that clearly diagnose the beginning of a dictatorship – can flee and survive. Those that can't often perish – as in the example of the Jews in Germany immediately before World War II.

It's usually too late to stop a dictator once he/she has reached step 5 (Cruelty) in the development of a dictator. That is why we must stop the development of dictatorship before the dictator breaks free of all external controls and goes rogue.

My hope is that you will memorize these 7 steps in the development of a dictator. Let's use this quiz to see if you have.

Toxic Leadership Step 1 – Histrionic



ATTENTION-SEEKING

Is constantly attention-seeking, dramatic, or fake. Focuses on self-promotion, not problem-solving.

Attention-seeking:

Strives to remain the center of attention.

Staged self-glorifying appearances:

Stages public appearances or events mainly to attract attention and promote a grandiose self-image.

Theatrical emotional displays:

Uses exaggerated emotional displays to command attention.

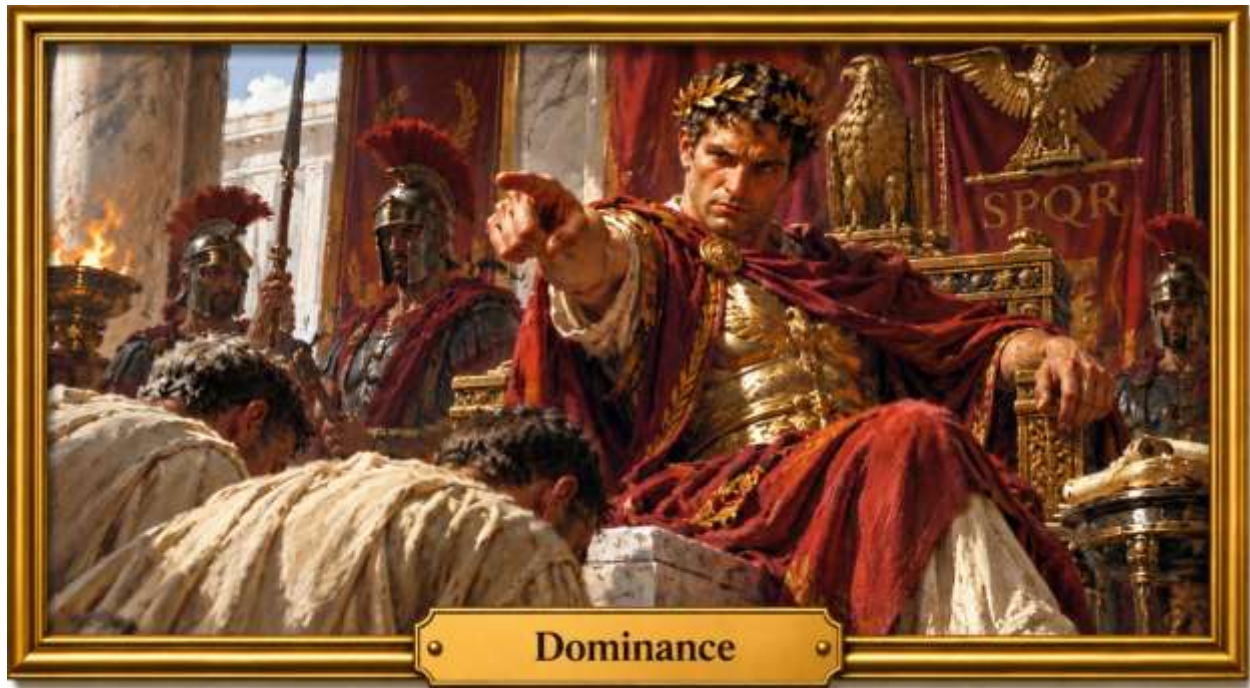
Vague speech lacking in detail:

Speaks vaguely and provides few details.

False or exaggerated public image:

Uses inflated claims, dramatic gestures, costumes, symbols, or spectacles to project an impressive public image.

Toxic Leadership Step 2 –Narcissistic



DOMINANCE

Is constantly seeking dominance, exploiting others, and trying to monopolize decision-making.

Exaggerated importance:

Often overstates personal importance or achievements.

Excessive praise-seeking:

Constantly seeks praise and admiration.

Arrogance:

Acts arrogantly and regards others as inferior.

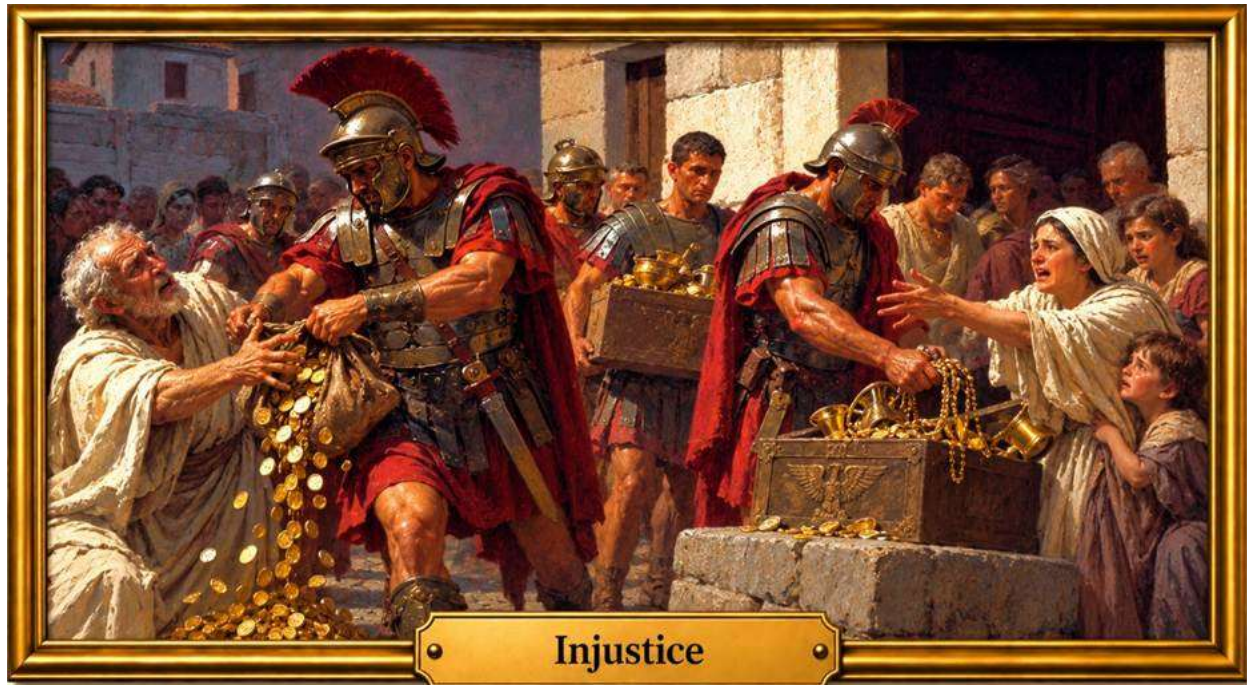
Exploitation:

Unfairly uses others to further personal goals.

Limited empathy:

Shows little empathy for others' suffering.

Toxic Leadership Step 3 – Antisocial



INJUSTICE

Is dishonest, unaccountable, and undermines the rule of law.

Disregard for justice or rights:

Ignores justice and others' rights and freedoms.

Deceit:

Acts dishonestly in dealings with others.

Lack of remorse:

Fails to acknowledge or apologize for harm caused.

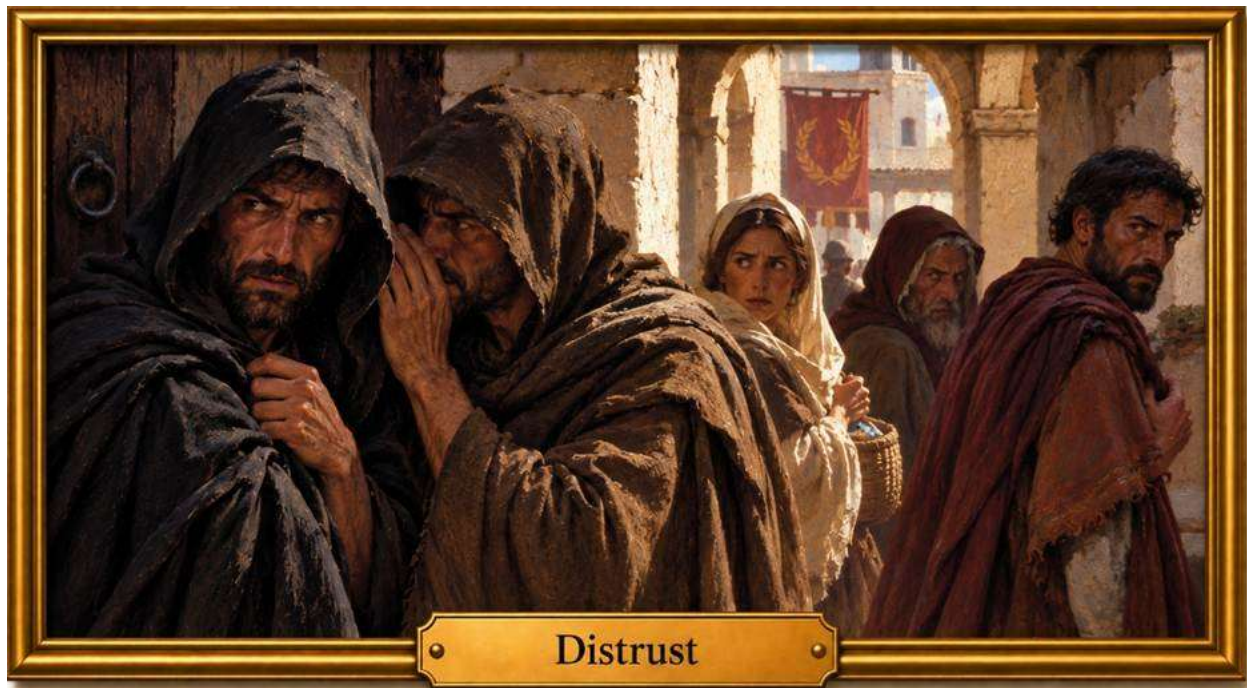
Irresponsibility:

Repeatedly neglects important duties.

Reckless decision-making:

Makes reckless choices despite foreseeable harm.

Toxic Leadership Step 4 – Paranoid



DISTRUST

Becomes extremely suspicious and tries to silence or suppress opposition.

Extreme suspiciousness:

Unjustifiably suspects others of exploitation or harm.

Extreme doubts about loyalty:

Unjustifiably doubts others' loyalty.

Scapegoating:

Unfairly blames innocent people or groups for social problems to gain power or deflect attention from personal failings.

Intolerance of disagreement:

Treats disagreement as a personal attack.

Unforgiveness:

Holds grudges and refuses to forgive.

Toxic Leadership Step 5 – Sadistic



CRUELTY

Uses cruelty, intimidation, fear, or violence to control others.

Intimidation, humiliation, or bullying:

Uses intimidation, humiliation, or bullying to control others.

Scapegoating:

Targets powerless scapegoats for cruelty or violence.

Lust for violence:

Seeks violent retribution against scapegoats or perceived enemies.

Cruelty or violence:

Uses physical cruelty or violence to gain or maintain control.

Sadistic pleasure:

Takes amusement or pleasure in others' suffering.

Toxic Leadership Step 6 – Megalomania



MEGALOMANIA

Shows an unshakable belief in own extraordinary power or importance.

Unrealistic claims of power or importance

Makes unrealistic claims about having extraordinary power or importance.

Unchecked ambition:

Relentlessly pursues greater power, fame, or wealth.

Flatterers and yes-men

Surrounds self with flatterers and yes-men who withhold bad news.

Blind to reality

Loses touch with reality, cannot correct mistakes, and dismisses evidence.

Excessive self-indulgence

Shows excessive self-indulgence in pleasure or luxury.

Toxic Leadership Step 7 – Disaster



DISASTER

As a leader, does much more harm than good to society.

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Prioritizes self-promotion over solving problems.

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Widens social or economic inequality.

Distrust:

Erodes trust or cooperation.

Injustice:

Promotes dishonesty or injustice.

Cruelty or violence:

Escalates cruelty or violence.

Megalomania:

Demands acceptance of his/her unshakable, unrealistic grandiose or paranoid beliefs.

DictatorWarning.com: Chapter 3

HEALTHY HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

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Treat Others The Way You Want To Be Treated

HEALTHY SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	VERSUS TOXIC SOCIAL BEHAVIOR
GENUINENESS Generally, presents in a genuine and not attention-seeking manner.	ATTENTION-SEEKING Frequently presents in an attention-seeking, theatrical, or false manner.
EQUALITY Consistently promotes equal rights, shared decision-making and power.	DOMINANCE Regularly tries to dominate others, exploit power, or monopolize decision making.
JUSTICE Demonstrates honesty, fairness, accountability, and respect for legal and ethical standards.	INJUSTICE Frequently dishonest, avoids accountability, or undermines legal or ethical norms.
TRUST Encourages open discussion, assumes good faith, and protects the right to disagree.	DISTRUST Often becomes suspicious, hostile, or tries to silence dissent.
COMPASSION Is nonviolent; shows concern for others' suffering and works to relieve it.	CRUELTY Uses intimidation, cruelty, fear, or violence to control or influence others.
HUMILITY Maintains a realistic understanding of their abilities and importance.	MEGALOMANIA Displays unshakable unrealistic beliefs about their extraordinary greatness, destiny, or importance.
WELLBEING Has contributed significantly to societal wellbeing or improvement.	DISASTER Has caused substantial harm or damage to society.

Healthy Leadership Step 1 – Genuineness



GENUINENESS

Is authentic; not attention-seeking or fake.

Not attention-seeking:

Does not seek the spotlight.

No self-glorifying public appearances:

Uses public appearances to communicate honestly and address important issues, not for self-promotion.

Natural emotions:

Expresses emotions naturally and appropriately.

Clear, evidence-based speech:

Communicates clearly using specific facts and evidence.

Sincere public image:

Presents an authentic public image without exaggeration.

In the first step of leadership development, the humanitarian leader gains attention by **identifying genuine grievances and not just seeking self-promotion.**

Genuine Public Service Opposes Authoritarian Self-Promotion

Great humanitarian leaders such as Gandhi, Mandela, Carter, Lincoln, and Wilberforce generally **directed attention toward a cause greater than themselves.**

The clearest contrast is:

- **Authoritarian leaders ask, “How can the people serve my power?”**
- **Humanitarian leaders ask, “How can power serve the people?”**

Healthy Leadership Step 2 – Equality



EQUALITY

Promotes equal status, rights, and opportunities for all, without discrimination.

No exaggerated self-importance:

Does not overstate personal importance or achievements.

No excessive praise-seeking:

Does not seek excessive praise or admiration.

Respect:

Treats others with respect and as equals.

Collaboration:

Collaborates with others rather than exploiting them.

Empathy:

Shows concern for those who are suffering.

In the second step of leadership development, the humanitarian leader **seeks to promote shared leadership** rather than his/her dominance. This humanitarian leader seeks to **reduce unfair inequality** and expand **equal opportunity** for everyone, believing that growth should **improve everyone's wellbeing, not just enrich a small, privileged group.**

Humanitarian leaders recognize that no one person has all the answers. Rather than claiming to be uniquely brilliant, always right, or the only person who can save the country, they listen to advisers, experts, political opponents, and ordinary citizens. They give credit to others for shared successes and accept responsibility when they make mistakes.

Humanitarian leaders do not need a cult of personality. They understand that governments work best when decisions are tested, debated, and improved by many people.

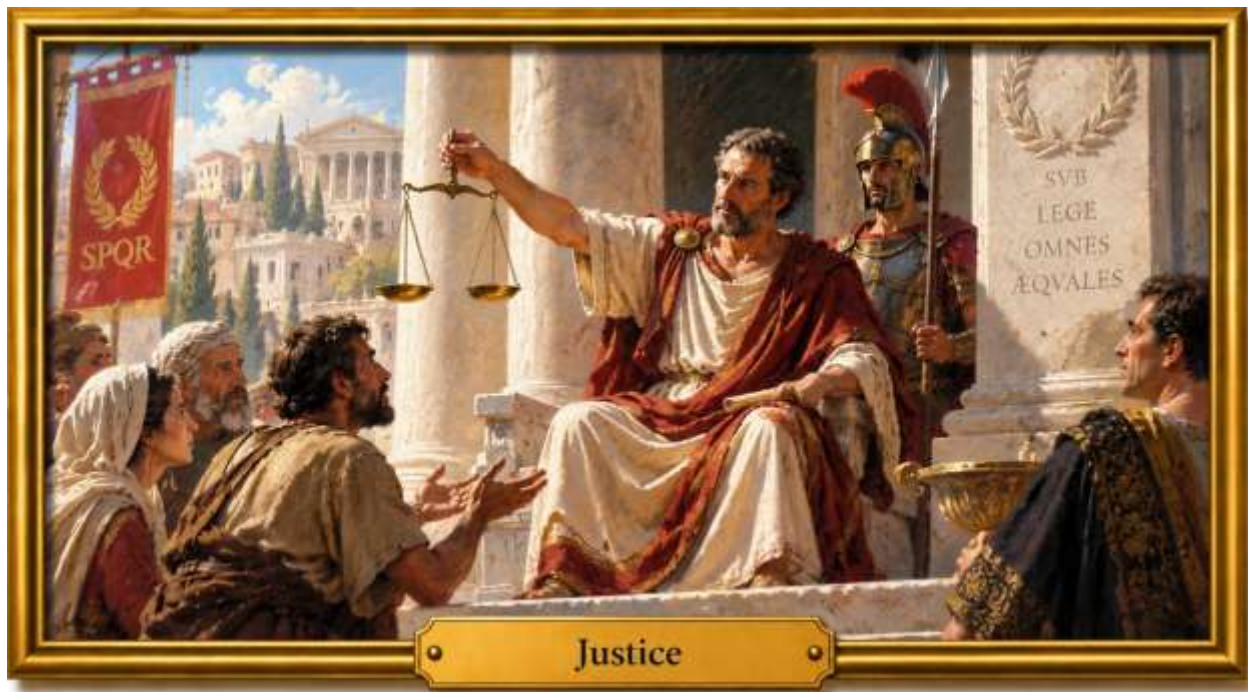
Respecting Equality Opposes Authoritarian Dominance

Equality does not mean that all people have identical abilities, views, or responsibilities.

It **means that all possess equal human worth and deserve equal protection under law to protect their safety, dignity, and equal opportunity.**

Humanitarian leaders resist the temptation to divide society into superior and inferior classes of people. Their policies may be imperfect, but their direction is toward **broader inclusion, equal opportunity, civil rights, and protection of vulnerable groups.** Respecting equality may be one of the strongest protections against the corrupting effects of power.

Healthy Leadership Step 3 – Justice



JUSTICE

Is honest and fair, respects the rights of others, and upholds the rule of law.

Respect for justice or rights

Respects justice and the rights of others.

Honesty

Is honest and transparent.

Remorse

Shows genuine remorse after harming others.

Responsibility

Consistently fulfills important responsibilities.

Careful decision-making

Makes careful decisions with attention to consequences.

Healthy leaders oppose corruption and seek justice. In legal terms, justice prevents individuals from:

- [enriching themselves by exploiting the vulnerable](#)
- acting with [malice](#) (desire to cause pain, injury, or [distress](#) to another)
- [oppression](#) (unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power)

- [fraud](#) (the use of dishonest methods to cheat another person of something valuable)

A humanitarian leader with integrity uses public power for the public good, not for personal wealth, family advantage, or political revenge. They follow the same laws they expect others to follow, disclose conflicts of interest, avoid using government money for private benefit, and accept independent investigation when concerns arise.

Integrity also means building institutions that prevent abuse. Honest humanitarian leaders support independent courts, auditors, journalists, ethics officials, and fair elections, even when those institutions criticize or limit the government. In a democracy, accountability is not a weakness; it is one of the main protections against corruption.

Justice Opposes Authoritarian Dishonesty

Healthy leaders do not regard courts, legislatures, journalists, experts, and public servants merely as obstacles. They understand independent institutions:

- improve decisions;
- reveal mistakes;
- restrain corruption;
- protect society after the leader is gone.

A [humanitarian leader seeks to leave behind a stronger constitutional and civic system](#), not merely a stronger personal legacy.

Healthy Leadership Step 4 – Trust



TRUST

Builds trust and cooperation, assumes good faith, welcomes and protects dissent.

Trust of intentions

Trusts people's *intentions* when there is good reason to do so.

Trust of loyalty

Trusts others' *loyalty* when there is good reason to do so.

Tolerance

Respects people's different lifestyles, beliefs, and identities, provided they do not harm others.

Constructive response to disagreement

Responds constructively to disagreement without taking it as a personal attack.

Forgiveness

Does not hold grudges and is willing to forgive.

In the third step of leadership development, the humanitarian leader **seeks to build trust** which is essential for building **cooperation and a culture in which everyone feels a sense of belonging and acceptance**.

Humanitarian leaders do not automatically treat criticism as betrayal or disagreement as treason. They understand that journalists, opposition parties, judges, protestors, and citizens can criticize the government while still caring deeply about their country. Instead of assuming that every critic is an enemy, they ask for evidence, hear different viewpoints, and protect people's right to disagree peacefully.

This does not mean a leader should ignore real threats such as violence, espionage, or corruption. Good leadership means investigating genuine dangers fairly and using evidence, due process, and independent courts. It means distinguishing between a real security threat and a citizen exercising the democratic right to speak freely.

Trust and Reconciliation Opposes Authoritarian Distrust

The true test of humanitarian leadership is **not** how a leader treats loyal followers. Almost every leader rewards supporters.

The true test of humanitarian leadership is how the leader seeks reconciliation rather than vengeance.

Mandela's willingness to reconcile with former enemies is one of the clearest examples. Lincoln's desire for reconciliation rather than vengeance reflects the same quality.

Humanitarian leadership recognizes that opponents remain human beings and fellow citizens.

Healthy Leadership Step 5 – Compassion



COMPASSION

Shows concern for the suffering of others and works to relieve it.

Kindness:

Acts with friendliness, generosity, and consideration.

Protection of the weak:

Defends vulnerable people from abuse or attack.

Peaceful resolution of conflict:

Seeks fair, peaceful solutions to conflict.

Compassion:

Seeks to ease others' suffering or hardship.

No sadistic pleasure:

Takes no pleasure or amusement in others' suffering.

Humanitarian leaders show **kindness, empathy, and compassion** by working to ease suffering.

A humanitarian leader treats every person as having equal dignity, including political opponents, minorities, prisoners, refugees, and people who disagree with government policy. They do not use cruelty, humiliation, torture, collective punishment, or fear as political tools. They recognize

that government power can cause serious harm and must be restrained by law and ethical principles.

Compassion does not mean refusing to enforce laws or protect public safety. It means using power proportionately and fairly. A responsible government may arrest someone who commits a crime, but it must provide due process, avoid cruel treatment, and respect the person's basic rights.

Compassion Opposes Authoritarian Cruelty

Humanitarian leadership requires both democracy and compassion.

Democracy alone is insufficient. There are modern examples of democracies committing senseless wars (e.g., USA attacking Iran) and genocides (e.g., Israel in Gaza).

Democracy must be coupled with compassion.

Healthy Leadership Step 6 – Humility



HUMILITY

Shows a realistic sense of own abilities and importance.

Realistic self-importance:

Maintains a realistic view of personal abilities and importance.

Controlled ambition:

Does not excessively pursue power, fame, or wealth.

Open-mindedness:

Welcomes candid advice and constructive criticism.

Contact with reality:

Demonstrates sound judgment, learns from mistakes, and bases decisions on evidence.

No excessive self-indulgence:

Avoids overindulgence in pleasure or luxury.

Wise humble leaders make decisions by examining reliable evidence, listening to qualified advisers, considering possible consequences, and changing course when new information shows that a policy is failing. Their wise decisions are not biased by strong feelings, rumors, personal loyalty, or ideology. They also avoid making major decisions impulsively, especially during crises.

Wisdom requires self-control and openness to correction. A wise humble leader should be able to say, “I was wrong,” “We need more information,” or “This policy is not working.” In contrast to dictators who surround themselves with people afraid to disagree, a wise humble leader needs advisers who can speak honestly and point out risks before mistakes become disasters.

Humility Opposes Megalomania

Humanitarian leaders do not need to appear infallible. They can say:

- “I was wrong.”
- “The evidence has changed.”
- “This policy is not working.”
- “Someone else understands this better.”
- “We must correct the harm.”

Humanitarian Leaders Can Peacefully Relinquish Power

One of the clearest indicators of healthy leadership is the ability to leave office lawfully and peacefully. A wise leader accepts electoral defeat, constitutional limits, or retirement.

This may be one of the simplest and most powerful distinctions:

- The wise humanitarian leader prepares society to function without him.
- The authoritarian leader persuades society that it cannot survive without him.

Healthy Leadership Step 7 – Wellbeing



WELLBEING

As a leader, does much more good than harm to society.

Attention to problem-solving:

Strengthens the focus on solving problems.

Equality:

Promotes greater social and economic equality.

Trust:

Builds trust and cooperation.

Justice:

Promotes honesty and justice.

Compassion:

Fosters compassion and peaceful conflict resolution.

Humility:

Encourages humility and a realistic view of one's power and importance.

Promoting Everyone's Thriving Opposes Authoritarian Disaster

Successful leadership cannot be measured by military strength, economic output, popularity, or infrastructure alone.

Successful leadership must increase everyone's wellbeing which includes:

- Social wellbeing
- Health
- Economic wellbeing
- Freedom and justice
- People's safety and environmental wellbeing

A leader who improves national income while destroying freedom and equality has achieved only partial success.

Ways of Increasing Success

1. **GENUINENESS:** Focus on being authentic and sincere.
2. **EQUALITY:** Promote equal status, rights, and opportunities for all, without discrimination.
3. **TRUST:** Build trust to promote cooperation and solidarity.
4. **JUSTICE:** Be honest, respect the rights of others and the rule of law.
5. **COMPASSION:** Show concern for others' suffering and try to relieve it.
6. **HUMILITY:** Show a realistic sense of your abilities and importance.
7. **WELLBEING:** Make this world a better place for everyone.

QUIZ: Name the 7 Steps in the Development of a Humanitarian Leader.

The previous chapter emphasized the importance of accurately identifying toxic social behavior; this chapter explains how to recognize healthy behavior.

Assessing negative personality traits alone is insufficient - we must also identify positive ones. Democracy depends on electing leaders who demonstrate healthy social behavior; otherwise, nations will remain governed by those who represent the worst of humanity.

We must prevent the worst ruling the rest.

My hope is that you will memorize these 7 steps in the development of a humanitarian leader. Let's use this quiz to see if you have.

Toxic Leadership Step 1 – Opposite of Attention-Seeking



GENUINENESS

Is authentic; not attention-seeking or fake.

Not attention-seeking:

Does not seek the spotlight.

No self-glorifying public appearances:

Uses public appearances to communicate honestly and address important issues, not for self-promotion.

Natural emotions:

Expresses emotions naturally and appropriately.

Clear, evidence-based speech:

Communicates clearly using specific facts and evidence.

Sincere public image:

Presents an authentic public image without exaggeration.

Toxic Leadership Step 2 –Opposite of Dominance



EQUALITY

Promotes equal status, rights, and opportunities for all, without discrimination.

No exaggerated self-importance:

Does not overstate personal importance or achievements.

No excessive praise-seeking:

Does not seek excessive praise or admiration.

Respect:

Treats others with respect and as equals.

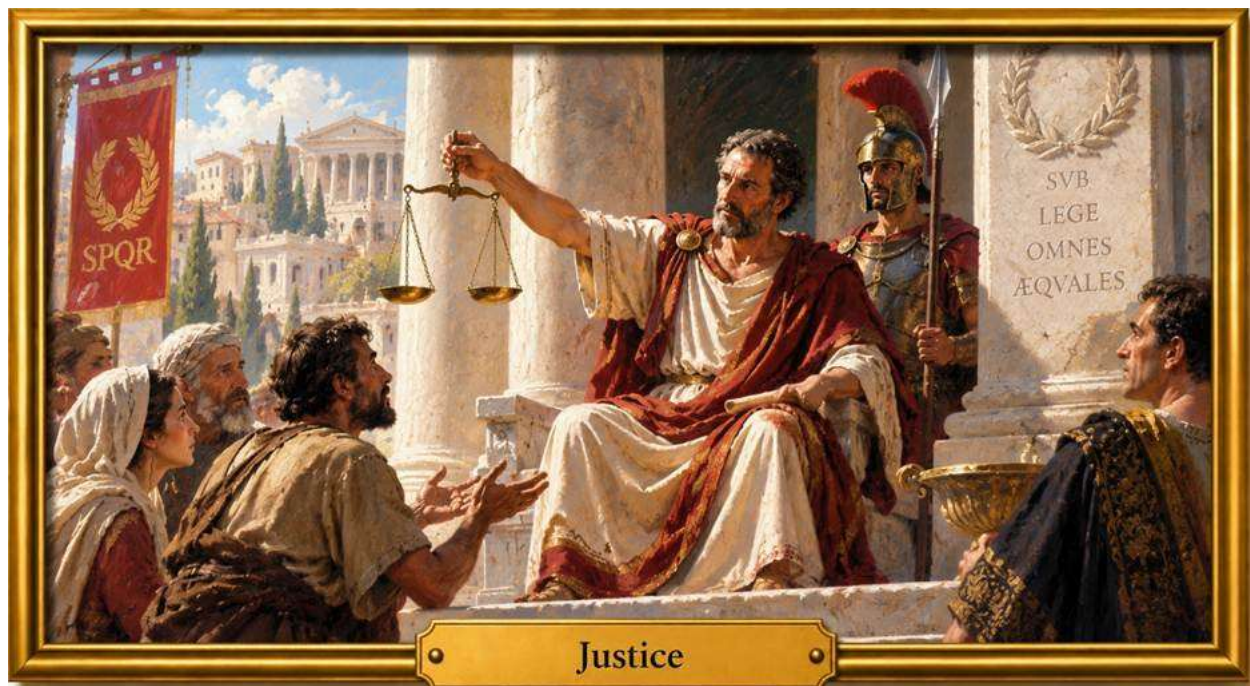
Collaboration:

Collaborates with others rather than exploiting them.

Empathy:

Shows concern for those who are suffering.

Toxic Leadership Step 3 – Opposite of Injustice



JUSTICE

Is honest and fair, respects the rights of others, and upholds the rule of law.

Respect for justice or rights

Respects justice and the rights of others.

Honesty

Is honest and transparent.

Remorse

Shows genuine remorse after harming others.

Responsibility

Consistently fulfills important responsibilities.

Careful decision-making

Makes careful decisions with attention to consequences.

Toxic Leadership Step 4 – Opposite of Distrust



TRUST

Builds trust and cooperation, assumes good faith, welcomes and protects dissent.

Trust of intentions

Trusts people's intentions when there is good reason to do so.

Trust of loyalty

Trusts others' loyalty when there is good reason to do so.

Tolerance

Respects people's different lifestyles, beliefs, and identities, provided they do not harm others.

Constructive response to disagreement

Responds constructively to disagreement without taking it as a personal attack.

Forgiveness

Does not hold grudges and is willing to forgive.

Toxic Leadership Step 5 – Opposite of Cruelty



COMPASSION

Shows concern for the suffering of others and works to relieve it.

Kindness:

Acts with friendliness, generosity, and consideration.

Protection of the weak:

Defends vulnerable people from abuse or attack.

Peaceful resolution of conflict:

Seeks fair, peaceful solutions to conflict.

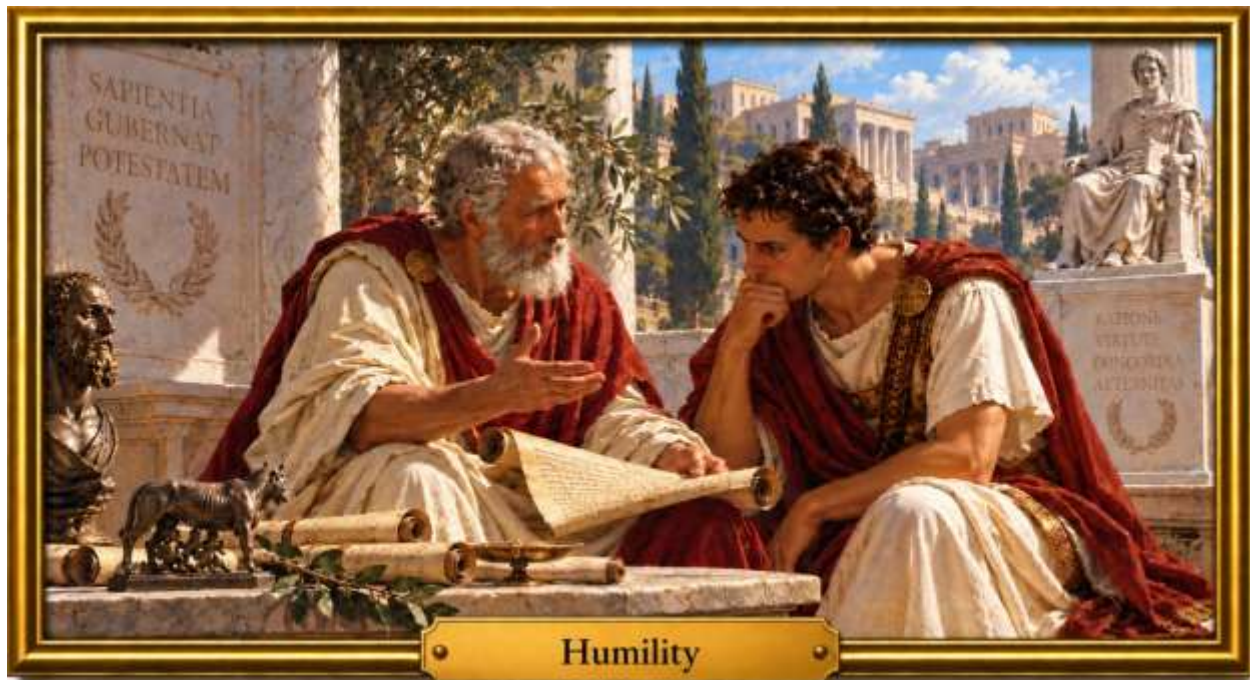
Compassion:

Seeks to ease others' suffering or hardship.

No sadistic pleasure:

Takes no pleasure or amusement in others' suffering.

Toxic Leadership Step 6 – Opposite of Megalomania



HUMILITY

Shows a realistic sense of own abilities and importance.

Realistic self-importance:

Maintains a realistic view of personal abilities and importance.

Controlled ambition:

Does not excessively pursue power, fame, or wealth.

Open-mindedness:

Welcomes candid advice and constructive criticism.

Contact with reality:

Demonstrates sound judgment, learns from mistakes, and bases decisions on evidence.

No excessive self-indulgence:

Avoids overindulgence in pleasure or luxury.

Toxic Leadership Step 7 – Opposite of Disaster



WELLBEING

As a leader, does much more good than harm to society.

Attention to problem-solving:

Strengthens the focus on solving problems.

Equality:

Promotes greater social and economic equality.

Trust:

Builds trust and cooperation.

Justice:

Promotes honesty and justice.

Compassion:

Fosters compassion and peaceful conflict resolution.

Humility:

Encourages humility and a realistic view of one's power and importance.

Rushed For Time?

You can skip reading the rest of this book and just go to my [Leadership Evaluation Tool](#) to review the key points

DictatorWarning.com: Chapter 4

SOCIAL EVOLUTION (For Scholars)

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The Most Human Ability Is Organization

Other animals have language and show surprising reasoning and problem-solving. Chimpanzees have short-term [memory abilities that far surpass humans](#). So, what is the ability that best separates humans from all other animals? Why are humans earth's only space travelers?

The answer is our human ability to organize ourselves into civilizations and to build complicated structures like [Göbekli Tepe](#) in Türkiye, a massive stone complex built around 12,000 years ago, thousands of years before the pyramids, written language, or the development of agriculture.

Humanity's super-power is its ability to form social hierarchies to accomplish massive projects that a single human could never achieve.

Social Hierarchies

Since the dawn of agriculture, societies have formed hierarchical power structures rooted in inequality.

To analyze these social hierarchies, consider:

- What elite is at the top of this social pyramid?
- How do the elite at the top of this pyramid treat those below them?
- How is wealth distributed in this social pyramid?

The Same Story in Every Age

For thousands of years, societies were structured as **a social pyramid, with a wealthy elite (<1%) at the top and most people (>99%) below doing crucial work.**

Power was mainly held by a **ruling elite** composed of three competing groups:

1. **Political Rulers:** Kings and nobles ruled the land, expanded their wealth, and focused primarily on taxes and conscription of soldiers while otherwise disregarding the peace and wellbeing of ordinary citizens. Their authority was based on “**might makes right**”. European kings wanted absolute power, so they invented the “**divine right of kings**”. They said God personally chose them to rule. Any questioning the king was questioning God. Justice and individual rights were absent; power struggles between monarchs laid waste to the land.

2. **Religious Clergy:** The clergy often accumulated wealth rivaling that of kings. They enforced religious law and collected church taxes. They supported the kings and nobility in return for receiving untaxed status and autonomy. The clergy's authority was based on **"we speak for God who must be obeyed"**. Many religious wars resulted from religious rivalry. While religious law offered some justice, until the 19th century religions typically endorsed slavery and limited rights for women and children.
3. **Financial Leaders:** As trade expanded, wealthy traders and bankers gained influence by reinvesting profits and providing loans to kings in exchange for tax breaks, trading privileges, and protection. At times, the wealth of this financial elite rivaled that of kings. The financial elite's authority was based on **"he who has the gold rules"** and they secretly represented the financial power behind the political rulers. Without the financial support of these super-rich financial leaders, the political rulers lacked the money to conduct their endless wars. When the king won his wars and plundered his enemies, he was able to pay back the loans owed to these financial lenders. The financial elite's funding of the religious clergy secured immunity from religious laws and greatly increased their social standing.

Within the ruling elite, those most wanting power rose to the top of these social hierarchies. The people and soldiers they led were viewed as **expendable commodities** to be exploited to gain more wealth and power.

Below the ruling elite were the **powerless majority** composed of 2 groups that did all the work:

1. **Workers:** These individuals performed much of the basic labor needed to keep society functioning.
2. **Slaves (Military and Economic):** In ancient times, soldiers and slaves had to obey or die. Thus, both groups were essentially slaves, but soldiers were paid a small salary. In ancient Rome, about 20% of the population were soldiers and 20% were slaves. In the early Roman Empire, a Roman legionary (soldier) was released from military service after 25 years. Slavery was lifelong for slaves and their children.

The ruling elite of this ancient social pyramid **recognized that power, wealth, fame, and information were fundamental to sustaining their authority:**

- **Power:** Political and religious leaders governed through the enforcement of laws and penalties, while financial leaders exercised influence by providing loans or gifts to those in positions of authority.

- **Wealth:** Political and religious leaders levied high taxes, whereas members of the financial elite amassed substantial fortunes through commerce and banking activities. Then, as today, these [super-rich individuals lived virtually tax free](#).
- **Fame:** Political leaders utilized **propaganda** to reinforce their image as strong and protective. Religious leaders asserted **divine legitimacy** for their power, and financial leaders highlighted their **prosperity** as evidence of being **avored by God**.
- **Information:** Leaders depended on intelligence networks, diplomatic channels, confessionals, and trade news to assess potential risks and opportunities.

These leaders **demanded total loyalty and obedience**. Any criticism of their rule was immediately seen as treason or heresy. These social hierarchies transferred the nation's wealth to the ruling elite leaving little for the 99% of the population below them in the social pyramid.

When these ruling elites fought each other or external enemies, ordinary people paid the heaviest price. Together or in competition, these ruling elites could mobilize armies, declare holy wars, and demand absolute obedience. The **ruling elites** became physically addicted to power, wealth, and fame and their **greed became insatiable**. More was never enough. **Eventually their violence, greed, stupidity, and corruption brought about the collapse of their rule. Their endless wars killed millions.**

What Is the Story of History?

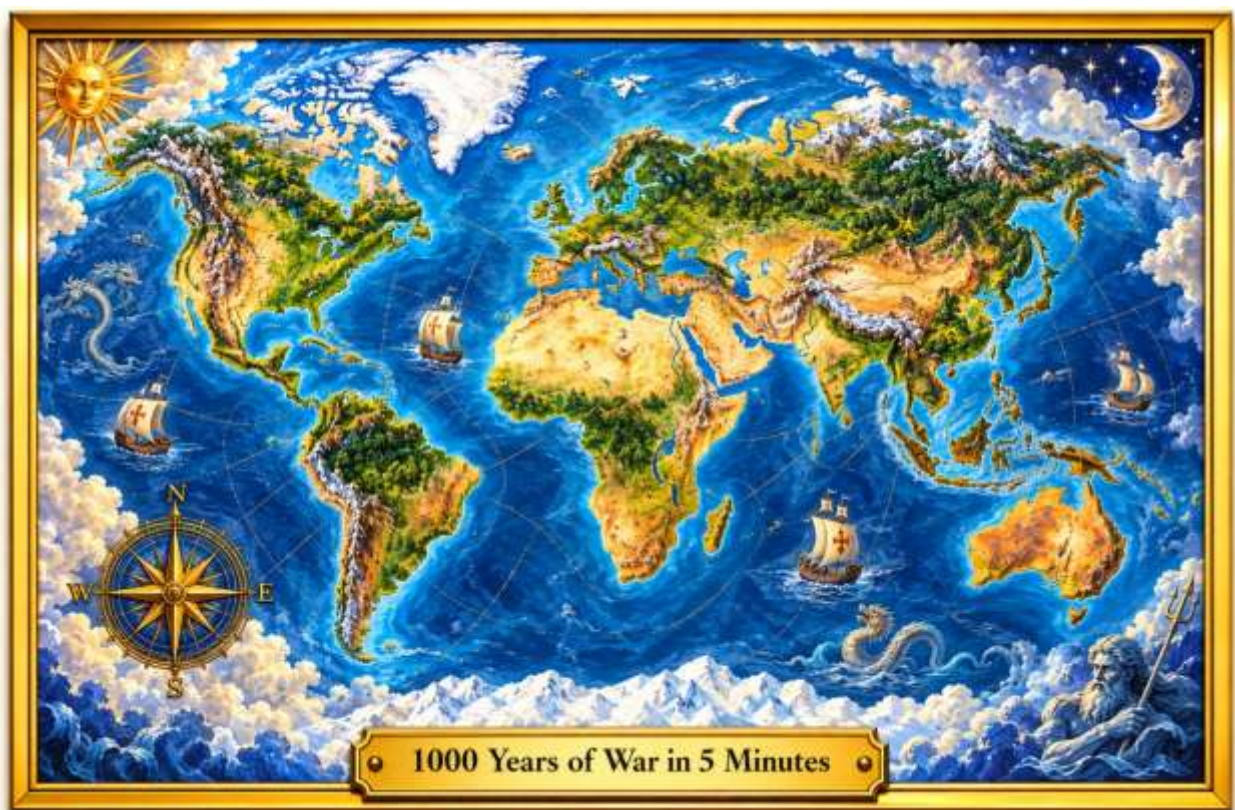
1. **For nearly all of history, nations were ruled by authoritarian regimes.**
2. In these authoritarian regimes, **the ruling elite controlled nearly all power and wealth**, while the remaining 99% of the population did the labor that sustained the system.
3. For the 99% below the ruling elite, **life was brutal**. Workers and slaves were often treated cruelly, and their average **lifespan was only about 35 years**, largely because half of all children died before adulthood.
4. In medieval times, kings and religious rulers often behaved like lawless dictators. **Even today, most superpowers are ruled by dictators or near-dictators.**

Why read this book? This book isn't just about dictators: it explores why **humans instinctually organize themselves into authoritarian regimes which then launch senseless, self-destructive wars**. It also explores how humanity can become better.



Where Did Power Reside?

As the **financial leaders** accumulated more wealth, their control of the political system **increased**. The common people paid taxes and the super-rich paid politicians. Hence the super-rich financial leaders paid less tax, thus accumulated more wealth, which meant their political control intensified. **The super-rich did not see beyond their own short-term gain**. They would bankroll the political ruler's dreams of imperial expansion and war. The political rulers successfully duped the common people into believing that these wars were for lofty religious or national goals - rather than telling them the truth that these **wars were just to increase the wealth of the political rulers and their super-rich enablers**.



For 5 Minute Video [Click Here](#)

- [Crusades](#) (1095-1291) killed 1 to 9 million.
- [Mongol invasions and conquests](#) (1206-1368) killed 20 to 60 million
- [Hundred Years' War](#) (1337-1453) killed 2.3 to 3.5 million and turned northern France into a wasteland of burned villages and starving refugees.
- [Spanish conquest of Mexico](#) (1519-1530) killed 10.5 million.

- [Thirty Years' War](#) (1618-1648) killed 4.5 to 8 million (1/3 of middle Europe)
- [Manchu Conquest of China](#) (1618 to 1683) killed 25 million.
- [French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars](#) (1792 to 1815) killed 4 to 7 million.
- [Taiping Rebellion](#) (1850-1864) killed 20 to 70 million.
- [American Civil War](#) (1861-1865) killed 0.6 to 1 million.
- [World War I](#) (1914-1918) killed 15 to 22 million.
- [Russian Civil War](#) (1917-1922) killed 7 to 10 million.
- [Chinese Civil War](#) (1927-1949) killed 4 to 9 million.
- [World War II](#) (1939-1945) killed 70 to 85 million.

To understand human violence, it is helpful to [understand chimpanzee violence](#) because they share 98% of our DNA.

The Birth-Death-Rebirth Cycle of Toxic Authoritarian Rule

Why does humanity organize itself into authoritarian social pyramids with the worst of us ruling the rest? Why do we allow dictators to rule us since they are only interested in gaining more power, wealth, and fame for themselves?

Before the 18th century, governments were led by kings or religious authorities. In the late 18th century, some countries adopted democratic republics, though many later returned to authoritarian rule.

The 20th century saw numerous revolutions where citizens overthrew authoritarian rulers, such as in Russia, China, Cuba, and Cambodia. However, these movements did not lead to democracies but instead created new authoritarian regimes.

The era also witnessed the rise of hyper nationalistic and hyper militaristic dictatorships in Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Most of the 20th-century dictatorships lasted less than a lifetime, with a few extending into the 21st century.

In this 21st-century, **we are now witnessing many democracies backsliding into authoritarian rule.**

Healthy Social Behavior Ensured Survival



Even in the worst times, most people never gave up being kind and compassionate.

During wars, famines, and epidemics, people found ways to survive and [support each other](#). They held onto humanitarian values like kindness, fairness, mutual support, and respect. Families and neighbors shared food and shelter, cared for the sick and elderly, and helped rebuild homes and villages.

These values strengthened family and community bonds. Local customs encouraged peaceful problem-solving and respect for the rights of others.

These practices did not remove the power of the ruling elite, but they created informal networks of care that made life more bearable and helped people to survive.

Healthy Social Behavior Spread

For centuries, ruling elites neglected the public if their taxes were paid. Calls for fairer laws were suppressed. Nevertheless, **fairness and respect spread among working people**. Twentieth-century democracy grew from these ideals and was won by ordinary people, not granted by rulers.

These humanitarian values helped fuel the English Civil War (1642-1651), the American Revolution (1765-1783), and French Revolution (1789-1799), the abolition of slavery (Britain 1833, USA 1865), the expansion of the vote, and twentieth century struggles for civil rights and social justice.

Every step forward in human rights came about as the result of a heroic struggle. Our democratic freedoms, women's rights, racial equality, free education, retirement and disability pensions, affordable healthcare, food safety regulations, and environmental protections all were won only through a heroic struggle.

Leaders that promoted humanitarian values and democratic freedoms slowly built on the efforts of the whole of humanity that came before them. However, these **humanitarian values and democratic freedoms were fragile and often quickly destroyed by dictators**.

Prior to the 18th Century, Life for Most Was Brutal and Short

[Why You'd Never Survive a Medieval Winter as a Peasant](#) **We forget how brutal life was for peasant workers during Medieval Europe.** They experienced the return of a “mini-ice age”, numerous years of crop failures that caused famine, and repeated pandemics that decimated the population of Medieval Europe. Saying medieval life was horrible is an understatement.



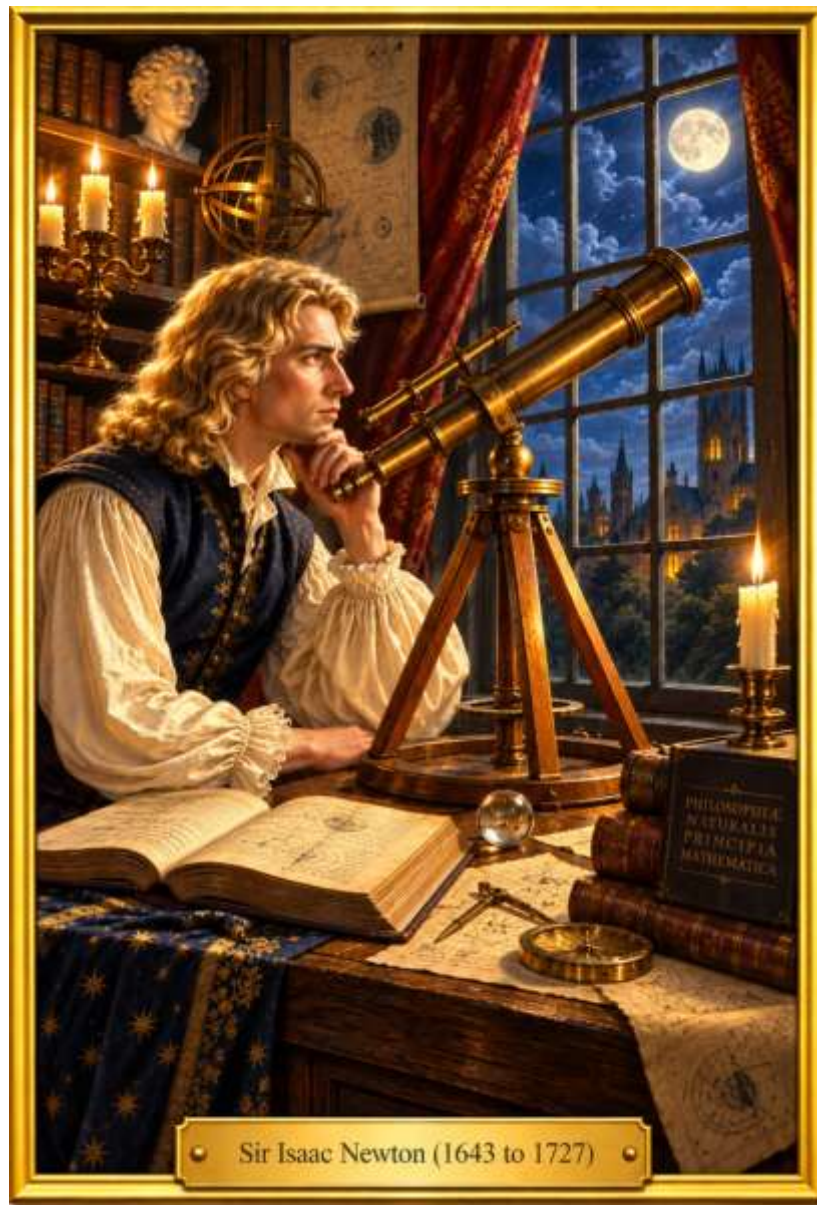
[Why Vikings Never Got Sick — But Medieval Europe Lost Millions](#) is extremely informative. This video explains how Viking cultural hygiene habits protected them from the plagues that killed millions of other Europeans. This video shows how culture is more important than technology and how “less advanced” cultures may survive better than “more advanced” cultures.

[Medieval Edinburgh 1400: Life Was BRUTAL - The Dark Reality](#) is an excellent video describing life in medieval Edinburgh in 1400. This video clearly defines medieval societal problems (and how these same problems persist today). TINY ERROR: The AI generated pictures of Edinburgh mistakenly show the 5-story buildings of 19th century Edinburgh as those of Edinburgh in 1400.

Little Improved Until the Scientific Revolution

The English, American, and French Revolutions re-introduced democracy to the world (after it was extinguished by the fall of the Athenian Greek democracy which lasted from 508 to 322 BCE). However, [the re-introduction of democracy in Europe and America did little to improve human welfare](#). People living in the 18th century still lived in predominantly agricultural societies. They

ate 100% organic food, but their life expectancy was only 35 years. Half of all children born then did not survive to adulthood. Most adults were illiterate and many were highly superstitious.



All this started to change when:

- In the 17th century the scientific revolution began in Europe. This resulted in significant advancements in mathematics, physics, and astronomy.
- In the 18th century these scientific advancements brought about the industrial revolution in Britain around 1760.

- In the early **19th century**, **the industrial revolution spread** to North America and the rest of Europe. At the same time, the average lifespan gradually started to increase because of advances in **public health** (e.g., sanitation, vaccination) and **medicine** (e.g., better obstetrical and surgical methods).
- In the **20th century**, there was a **dramatic increase in average lifespan** due to the discovery of **antibiotics** and the spread of **government supported medical care**. During this century, the widespread spread of **education, literacy, science, and humanitarian institutions also dramatically improved human welfare**.

Our problem is that nations are now returning to authoritarian rule, dismantling their humanitarian institutions, and becoming hostile towards science.

Return of Fascism

This book will compare humanitarian to authoritarian governments. There is one form of authoritarian government that is very dangerous – that is fascism.

Fascism is defined as a political system with **one leader** or group controlling everything with **extreme nationalism, extreme militarism, and little freedom for people**.

President Trump and his Republican party is rapidly converting the USA into a fascist state. Once in power, a fascist government typically suppresses opposition and centralizes authority under a single leader.

- **Overcoming Opposition:** It bans or intimidates rival political parties, unions, and protests to eliminate competition.
- **Gaining Power:** It passes emergency laws to suspend civil liberties, censor media, and control elections or parliament/congress.
- **Maintaining Power:** It uses violence, secret police, or paramilitaries to arrest critics and create concentration camps.

This is exactly what is currently happening under President Trump. **This book opposes fascism** and champions the opposite humanitarian approach to government.

Millions died in World War II because of fascist and authoritarian governments. We must learn from history and not repeat its mistakes.



When will these senseless, endless wars end?