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Cognitive Characteristic and Crisis Behaviour: An Analysis of Donald Trump's Leadership Style and Operational Code in the Time of Crisis*

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Abstract

Crisis conditions create ambiguous situations where individuals rely more on their understanding and previous experiences. In the context of politics, depending on a leader's characteristics, his perceptions may influence and override other agents in policy-making during the crisis time. Many studies claim that leaders' perceptions may change as they confront crisis, as they learn from critical situations. Based on empirical data regarding President Donald Trump's operational beliefs and leadership characteristics, this paper examines the theoretical basis for the ways in which core beliefs resist change and learning. To answer the main question, the operational code of President Trump had been analyzed in three separate phases: the immediate pre-presidential phase, his three years in office prior to COVID-19 breakout, his last nine months in office during the crises. The results of this research may address several questions regarding the Trump political leadership and belief system by focusing on changes in the cognitive construct of the president.

Keywords: Cognitive Characteristic, Crisis management, Leadership, Operational Code, Political Psychology

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1. Introduction

In psychology, the process of comprehending situations happens in the framework of defining them by relating them to previous experiences and cognitively structuring situations to clarify the nature of a problem (Hermann, 1980). This is mostly the case when individuals are confronted with an ambiguous or critical situation such as crises (Holsti, 2006). The Covid-19 pandemic can be considered a crisis condition at both global and domestic levels, as it brought about an incomprehensible situation for political leaders and presidents. In the US, this global pandemic concurred with racial injustice protests of George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020 and put the country in a great turmoil challenging both the virus and the social crisis in the presidential election year. As the president of the United States, Donald Trump had to navigate the country through the crisis situation. With previous experiences in crisis times as a business leader from 1985 to 1995, Donald Trump was now confronted with a larger challenge in the status of presidency. Based on theoretical discussions regarding Operational Code, and the influence of the individual's traits in leadership (Walker & Schafer, 2006) this study assesses and analyzes Donald Trump's cognitive leadership through two crisis timings, that is, during his business leadership, and during his political leadership, to understand the way in which President Trump's "cognitive characteristics" and "leadership style" before and during crises, before and during his presidency, can be explained by employing the Operational Code Analysis at a-distance and what characteristics are consistent in his perception or has changed during the time.

Analyzing our problem in a quantitative manner, we have two possible hypotheses¹: first, Donald Trump's leadership is the continuity of his business leadership with no specific changes in his cognitive understanding of the socio-political world; and two, Donald Trump's Political leadership of crisis during his presidency may differ from similar situations during his business leadership as his cognitive understanding had changed with his new status.

The method of our analysis consists of Leadership Trait and Operational Code at-a-distance techniques, which are specifically designed for analyzing leadership style and cognitive characteristics. The LTA technique measures seven psychological traits of a leader: 1- the need for power, 2- the belief that one can control what happens, 3-conceptual complexity, 4- self-confidence, 5 -the degree of trust in others, 6- the intensity of ingroup bias or nationalism, and 7 -the need for affiliation (Hermann, 2003). OCA focuses on leader's beliefs about the cooperative, mixed or conflictual nature of the political universe, his perceptions of the future of such a world and prescriptions of cooperation or confliction as the most effective means for realizing fundamental political values (Walker, 2000-2004).

The study initially reviews similar cognitive at a distance academic works and then analyzes Donald Trump's beliefs and personality traits in three stages for evaluating possible cognitive changes in leadership. Stages under investigation are: a) 1992 to 1995 – Donald Trump's economic and social crisis time – labeled as the 1st Crisis; b) 2017 to 2020 during the presidential term – labeled as the non-crisis time, which is considered as our null

1. The normal methodological guides promote one main statement as the hypothesis to be examined, however, it is quite normal in Operational Code Analysis studies that two or more conditions are taken as hypotheses and are developed through the research.

hypotheses; c) 2020 election year, the COVID 19 pandemic and socio-economic crisis – labeled as the 2nd Crisis.

In the last phase of analysis, the study evaluates the effect of the crisis times on president Trump's leadership style by comparing his cognitive profile during the 1st and 2nd crises. In conclusion, we discuss the implication of the findings in understanding the effect of Individual cognitive learning or stability on managing crises conditions.

2. Analyzing Trump's Beliefs "at a- Distance"¹

Traditionally, beliefs were considered to be a medium and a mirror, which display realities that leaders have to recognize as constraints to which they shall adapt in order to attain or maintain their political goals (Baldwin, 1993; Keohane, 1983; Kowert & Legro, 1996).

Alexander George defined two classes of beliefs, which indicated that the cognitive concept may be more dynamic and flexible (1969): (i) philosophical beliefs, which are concerned with the leader's beliefs about the nature of the political universe, and (ii) instrumental ones, which focuses on the leader's choices and strategies (George, 1969). A research community of "at a- distance" scholars, including Margaret Hermann, David Winter, Walter Weintraub, Peter Suedfeld, Phillip Tetlock, Jerrold Post, and Stanley Renshon, in addition to other academic communities, had contributed to the work by developing a Verbs in Content System

1. "at-a-distance" implies delving into political psychology and perception of leaders without any direct or close contact and interview with them, but, judging them systematically from the public sources, news agencies, government websites, or various archival media outlets.

of content analysis methodology, which studied operational code analysis quantitatively in addition to the previous qualitative approaches. Axelrod (1976), represented the structure of individual political leaders' causal beliefs through the technique of cognitive mapping.

In 1980, Hermann measured cognitive complexity at a distance by calculating the ratio of certain words and phrases identified as high complexity to words being realized as low complexity. Several studies have employed Hermann's measure on the cognitive complexity, in addition to theories of differentiation and integration, to explain policy decisions and outcomes (Suedfeld et al., 1977; Levi & Tetlock, 1980; Suedfeld & Bluck, 1988). In an operational code analysis, Renshon (2009) used both private and public documents to assess John F. Kennedy's code in the summer of 1962. According to the findings, there was a surprising degree of similarity between the private and public remarks and speeches (Renshon, 2009). The study made a proof for the reliability and capacity of public speeches in revealing various aspects of a leader's belief system.

In recent years, many scholars have analyzed Donald Trump's cognitive processes from various perspectives, such as **psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology, and political psychology**. Each of these disciplines offers unique insights into how Trump's mental frameworks shape his political actions and leadership style, addressing the matter from a specific point of view.

One of the primary approaches in this literature comes from **psychoanalysis**, where works like *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President* (Lee, 2017) and *Trump on the Couch: Inside the Mind of*

the President (Frank, 2018) provide an in-depth evaluation of Trump's psychological traits. Lee's (2017) collection of essays, written by psychiatrists and mental health experts, examine Donald Trump's behavior through the lens of psychiatric conditions such as narcissistic personality disorder and paranoia. These contributors argue that Trump's mental health is not only a personal matter, but also a significant factor in his political decision-making and public rhetoric. Analysis in this manner is more observation-oriented and subjective, failing to take into account that the researcher himself is also observing the matter from a specific socio-cultural cognitive barrier.

In contrast, **cognitive psychology** provides another layer of understanding, focusing on how mental shortcuts and biases shape decision-making processes. Taylor (2019) extends this analysis by examining how Trump's cognitive biases, including confirmation bias and anchoring, influence both his policy stances and his responses to political challenges. This body of work underscores the significant role of cognitive limitations in shaping Trump's political behavior, which is frequently marked by a disregard for expert advice and a preference for intuition over evidence-based reasoning. However, the approach fails to demonstrate the cognitive reason behind these behaviours.

Political psychology, on the other hand as a field is inherently interdisciplinary, and many scholars have drawn on multiple approaches to explain the complexities of Trump's political behavior. Works in this field are mainly focused on the projection of beliefs and cognition in individual behaviour.

Following political psychology's at a distance discipline, this study had focused on quantitatively analyzing Trump's beliefs and leadership from operational code (OCA) and linguistic cognitive

frameworks to understand the psychological stimuli of his behaviours, since individual's linguistic choices not only reveal their beliefs, but also demonstrate how their cognitive biases manifest in their actions (Pennebaker & Niederhoffer, 2003).

On the other hand, while scholarly works on Donald Trump operational code and leadership trait are mostly oriented toward foreign policy decisions (Özdamar et al., 2023; Fitzsimmons, 2020), this study had innovatively used OCA basis and LTA to discuss Donald Trump's cognitive learning through the stages of domestic crisis.

3. Sampling

In designing the three stages, we took great care to ensure that data gathered for all stages were similar in the diversity of documents, different settings, and the number of wordings. Following Hermann (2003) and Walker & Schafer (2006), a minimum of 50 documents or 5,000 words is required for a valid cognitive profile. Therefore, for each stage, more than 5,000 words had been collected from Donald Trump's speeches and interviews in the three mentioned timings. The documents were collected through public sources, news agencies, the White House website, or archival media outlets such as Fact Base (RollCall, 2021) (See Table 1).

Since documents gathered for the interval of the 1st crisis stage (80s and 90s) were limited when categorized based on domestic issues, the study gathered all Trump's opinion interviews of this era to reach the 5,000 words required for a valid cognitive profile. However, documents regarding the two intervals of Donald Trump's presidency were gathered based on their content focusing

on domestic issues during the non-crisis stage and COVID-19 and protests during the 2nd crisis stage.

All samples were coded for eleven indicators from the LTA and OCA approaches to leadership cognitive assessment. The indicators for these variables were generated using Profiler Plus (Social Science Automation, 2020), an automated software (Levine & Young, 2014) that had been specifically designed for LTA and OCA at-a-distance analysis.

Table 1. Data Brief of Three Stages

1st Crisis Stage Data	
1	Interview: Rona Barret interviews Donald Trump / Washington Post 1980
2	Interview: Larry King Interviews Donald Trump/ CNN 1987
3	Interview: Dian Sawyer Interviews Donald Trump 1989
4	Interview: Larry King Interviews Donald Trump / CNN 1990
5	Interview: Barbara Walters Interviews Donald Trump 1990
6	Interview: Playboy interviews Donald Trump 1990
7	Interview: Neil Cavuto Interviews Donald Trump/ Fox news 1998
8	Interview: Tony Snow Interviews Donald Trump / Fox News 1999
9	Speech: Donald Trump speaks at Cuban-American National Foundation 1999
10	Interview: Wall Street Journal Interviews Donald Trump 1999
Non-Crisis Stage Data	
1	Interview: Tucker Carlson of Fox News Interviews Donald Trump - March 15, 2017
2	Interview: Sean Hannity Interviews Donald Trump on FOX News - October 11, 2017
3	Interview: The Wall Street Journal Interviews Donald Trump - January 11, 2018
4	Interview: Maria Bartiromo Interviews Donald Trump on Fox News - July 1, 2018

5	Interview: Donald Trump Interview with Bloomberg Reporters and Editors - August 30, 2018
6	Interview: The Daily Caller's Enjeti and Coglianesse Interview Donald Trump - January 30, 2019
7	Interview: Time Magazine Conducts an Hourlong Interview with Donald Trump - June 20, 2019
8	Interview: Eric Bolling of Sinclair Broadcast Group Interviews Donald Trump - October 25, 2019
9	Interview: Sean Hannity Interviews Donald Trump at The White House - October 21, 2019
10	Interview: Dan Bongino of The Dan Bongino Show Interviews Donald Trump - November 15, 2019
2nd Crisis Stage Data	
1	Speech: Donald Trump Delivers Address at the Kennedy Space Center After SpaceX Launch - May 30, 2020
2	Interview: Donald Trump With Brian Kilmeade on Fox Radio Network - June 3, 2020
3	Interview: Sean Hannity Interviews Donald Trump Live Via Telephone - June 17, 2020
4	Press Conference: Donald Trump Holds the Daily Coronavirus Pandemic Briefing - April 2, 2020
5	Interview: Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum Host a Town Hall with Donald Trump - May 3, 2020
6	Interview: Anna Wiernicki of Nexstar Broadcasting Interviews Donald Trump - June 17, 2020
7	Speech: Donald Trump Delivers an Address at the Dream City Church in Phoenix - June 23, 2020
8	Press Conference: Donald Trump Holds a Coronavirus Pandemic Briefing - August 10, 2020
9	Interview: Kelly Wright of Black News Channel Interviews Donald Trump - August 22, 2020
10	Press Conference: Donald Trump Holds a Coronavirus Pandemic Briefing - September 4, 2020

Source: Authors

4. Crisis Effect on Beliefs

It had been understood that individual's reliance on their beliefs is specifically demonstrated in one or more of the following situations (Holsti, 2006):

a) Situations that are not routine or common, which require more than the application of standard operating procedures; declaring war, interventions, alliances, and such circumstances can be accounted as nonroutine situations.

b) Decisions made by leaders who are relatively free from organizational and other constraints.

c) Tasks that involve considerable uncertainty such as long-range policy planning and tasks in which nature, the results, and relations are the core questions of the political process.

d) Ambiguous situations, which bring about a variety of interpretations. Uncertain conditions are often the result of scarcity of information or contradictory ones that are consistent with two or more significantly different interpretations.

e) Circumstances of information overload, in which decision-makers consequently filter, omit, reduce categories to cope with the problem.

f) Situations in which complex cognitive tasks associated with decision making may be compromised or such decisions may be affected by the various types of stresses impinging on top-ranking executives.

g) Crisis conditions – circumstances that enhance individuals' potential impact on policy-making.

Hence, cognitive characteristics are specifically active when the

individual is facing a new situation, where there's insignificant or no information about it. It is also likely when new information does not match with a leader's pre-existing beliefs based on old information, stereotypes, or other cognitive biases associated with strong emotions such as fear and hate (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Jervis, 1976; Stein, 1988). As a result, the actor is only focused on a narrow range of information with only a few options available. Crisis conditions, therefore are specifically noteworthy for our purpose since they encourage ad-hoc decision-making groups that are in full authority (Hermann & Hermann, 1989).

Operational Code theoretical framework explains this issue by emphasizing on how leaders' psychological characteristics can shape their preferences, attitudes, and political behavior (George, 1969; Walker et al., 2003). While the theory was initially developed for foreign policy analysis by Alexander George in 1960s, recent studies have argued that it can be applied to different fields of decision making (Grunske & Jasinski, 2021; Schafer, 2012; Walker et al., 2003). According to the theory, individuals have two classes of major beliefs: (i) philosophical beliefs, which are concerned with the leader's beliefs about the nature of the political universe, and (ii) instrumental beliefs, which focus on the leader's choices and strategies (Walker & Schafer, 2006). The following are the master beliefs and the essential questions related to them in this framework (George, 1969; Walker & Schafer, 2006, pp. 7-12):

Philosophical Beliefs:

P-1: What is the “essential nature” of the political life, whether it is in harmony or conflict? The question concerns how the leader views the political context.

P-2: What are the prospects for the realization of one's fundamental values? Can one be optimistic or pessimistic? The question focuses on the perception of individuals on the possibilities of reaching their political values.

Instrumental Beliefs:

I-1: What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action? The question concerns the possible strategies of cooperation or conflict, used by the individual according to his/her beliefs.

I-2: How are the goals of action pursued most effectively? What is the intensity of the possible tactics that the individual may utilize based on his perceptions.

These questions are answered through an automated coding of the president's speech based on the Verbs in Context System (VICS) of the profiler plus software specifically designed for OCA analysis (Young, 2001). Hence, for further elaboration, the method of coding is provided in next sections.

5. Method of Coding

5. 1. Operational Code Analysis

OCA focuses on a broader range of verbs, specifically transitive verbs, therefore, completing LTA analysis of textual behavior and giving a more comprehensive picture of the individual's beliefs. Verbs in the individual's remarks are categorized into four kinds of indices, which are constructed from the balance, central tendency, proportion, and dispersion of verb attributions in these sources. These four indices generally aggregate the leader's diagnostic propensities regarding the nature of the political universe and the

prospects for success, in addition to the leader's propensities for effective strategies and tactics in dealing with the political world (Walker & Schafer, 2006). The coding of these four indicators is also done with Profiler Plus software and the Verb in Context System (VICS) dictionary, which identifies the actor's transitive verb-based attributions.

The score for P-1 or *View of the Political Universe* is attained through subtracting the percentage of positive attributions made to others (Walker & Schafer, 2006, pp. 32-38). A score of -1.0 is evidence of a highly hostile view of the political universe, and a score of +1.0 is an indication of a highly friendly view of the political universe. Likewise, the score for I-1 or the *Strategy for Achieving Goals* is derived by subtracting the percentage of negative attributions made to self from the percentage of positive attributions made to self (Walker & Schafer, 2006, pp. 32-38). A score of -1.0 here means that the leader is likely to choose conflictual strategies for achieving goals, and a score of +1.0 indicates that the leader is likely to choose cooperative strategies for achieving goals. Respectively, the score for P-2 or *Prospects for Realizing Fundamental Values* is the mean intensity of remarks about others divided by three (Walker & Schafer, 2006). A score of -1.0 is evidence of pessimism and a score of +1.0 is an indication of optimism toward the future of the political world. The score for I-2 or the Intensity of Tactics is the mean intensity of remarks made when talking about self, divided by three (Walker & Schafer, 2006).

The intensity of tactics ranges from -1.0 to +1.0, with lower score and indication of self-belief toward hostile tactics, and high scores as an indication of a belief in the utility of cooperative tactics.

5. 2. Leadership Trait Analysis

The LTA coding scheme searches and counts the presence and absence of verbal evidence for these seven indicators (Hermann, 2003):

- Conceptual Complexity, which determines the degree to which individuals can see ambiguity in the environment.
- Self-Confidence assesses an individual's sense of self-importance and self-worth.
- Control over Events measures an individual's perception of to the extent he has control over situations or can influence events.
- Need for Power assesses the desire to control or influence people or groups.
- In-Group Bias assesses the importance that an individual places on his/her group.
- Distrust of Others measures individual doubts or wariness of others' motives, in particular those of outsiders who do not belong to his/her group.
- Task Orientation assesses an individual's motivation in seeking office, whether it is accomplishing goals or maintaining relationships.

The calculation is based on the percentage of the positive counts (indicating the presence of a trait) out of the total positive and the negative counts (Hermann, 2003, pp. 178-212). Every part of speech is the source of evidence for a different trait. First-person pronouns are evidence for self-confidence. Adverbs and certain phrases indicate high and low levels of conceptual complexity. Verbs are evidence for control over events and the need for power. Adjectives referencing the leader's group, regarding whether it is

favorable or not, indicate in-group bias. Nouns and noun phrases assigned to others indicate distrust of others. A noun is also evidence of task orientation (Hermann, 2003, pp. 178-212).

Special dictionaries for each of these parts of speech distinctly indicate which nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives indicate which trait. These traits are extracted through an analysis of the leader's remarks, speeches and interviews via Profiler Plus Software, then coded to receive a rating from zero to one, and analyzed concerning one another. Hermann's LTA determines the leader's personality and leadership style by assessing the extent to which he/she respects or challenges environmental constraints; his/her openness to contextual information; and his/her motivations toward taking office.

The assessment is done through comparing the results with a norming group of leaders (87 head of state - available from previous studies) and Hermann's eight identified leadership types: "evangelistic, expansionistic, directive, actively independent, influential, incremental, collegial and opportunistic" (Hermann, 2003, pp. 178-212).

Since the crucial aspect of our study is the assessment of Donald Trump's cognitive analysis and crisis leadership style before and during his presidency, we created three timings: the **1st Crisis stage**, the **Non-Crisis stage**, and the **2nd Crisis stage**.

The 1st Crisis Stage is concerned with Donald Trump's economic crisis time from 1992 to 1995; We included this stage to explore what were Donald Trump's cognitive characteristics in crisis conditions before his presidency and the way in which his cognitive conceptuality had changed during his administration.

The Non-Crisis Stage assesses Donald Trump's beliefs and personality traits from the beginning of his administration until the end of March 2020 – before the official breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic. This timing represents Donald Trump's cognitive characteristics in the specific role of the presidency.

The 2nd Crisis Stage is concerned with three months of the 2020 crisis time – from April to the end of July 2020, including racial injustice statewide protests.

In designing the three stages, we took great care to ensure that data gathered for all stages were similar in the diversity of documents, different settings, and the number of wordings. Following Hermann (2003) and Walker & Schafer (2006), a minimum of 50 documents or 5,000 words is required for a valid cognitive profile.

Before proceeding to the analysis, we briefly describe the two-part test that we utilized to assess our argument. First, we performed ANOVA single-factor analysis on the eleven indices. This test allowed us to see the differences between the three stages and president Trump's cognitive characteristics during the non-crisis stage. Second, we employed an independent t-test analysis on the significant traits between the two crisis times stages to understand how Donald Trump's cognitive behavior has changed from pre-presidency to his presidential term.

6. Results

Test 1. ANOVA Single Factor across the Three Stages

We first address the basic question of how Donald Trump's beliefs and personality traits changed before and during the presidential

term? To examine this, we performed ANOVA single factor analysis between eleven indices in the two mentioned crisis stages and the non-crisis (null) stage.

Table 2 reports the results of the eleven indices (seven LTA traits and four OCA indices) on the three stages under assessment. Only one of the indicators shows statistically significant differences ($P < 0.05$): Need for Power. The Control over Events trait has a high F value, meaning that the trait may be significant in one of the stages. Higher rates in Need for Power (from 0.19 to 0.33, $F = 6.22$, $P = 0.00$) can be a sign of an increased tendency toward holding power during the election year and the time of crisis. This result can be an indication of challenging environmental constraints and should be analyzed in relation to other LTA traits and OCA indices.

Table 2. Mean Scores and One Way ANOVA

<i>Operational Code / LTA Indices</i>	<i>Group Assessed</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Political Universe (P-1)	1 st Crisis	0.21	0.77	0.4
	Non-Crisis	0.17		
	2 nd Crisis	0.09		
Strategy for achieving goals (I-1)	1 st Crisis	0.33	0.06	0.9
	Non-Crisis	0.30		
	2 nd Crisis	0.28		
Future of the Political World (P-2)	1 st Crisis	0.1	1.83	0.17
	Non-Crisis	-0.0		
	2 nd Crisis	-0.02		
The intensity of Tactics (I-2)	1 st Crisis	0.15	0.58	0.56
	Non-Crisis	0.08		
	2 nd Crisis	0.16		

<i>Operational Code / LTA Indices</i>	<i>Group Assessed</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Distrust of Others	1 st Crisis	0.35	1.1	0.32
	Non-Crisis	0.28		
	2 nd Crisis	0.36		
Self-Confidence	1 st Crisis	0.44	0.60	0.55
	Non-Crisis	0.44		
	2 nd Crisis	0.41		
In-group bias	1 st Crisis	0.07	1.37	0.26
	Non-Crisis	0.10		
	2 nd Crisis	0.12		
Control over events	1 st Crisis	0.27	19.46*	5.82
	Non-Crisis	0.40		
	2 nd Crisis	0.45		
Conceptual complexity	1 st Crisis	0.63	1.19	0.31
	Non-Crisis	0.64		
	2 nd Crisis	0.58		
Need for power	1 st Crisis	0.19	5.60**	0.00
	Non-Crisis	0.27		
	2 nd Crisis	0.30		
Task orientation	1 st Crisis	0.59	2.37	0.11
	Non-Crisis	0.48		
	2 nd Crisis	0.55		

Source: Authors' Calculations

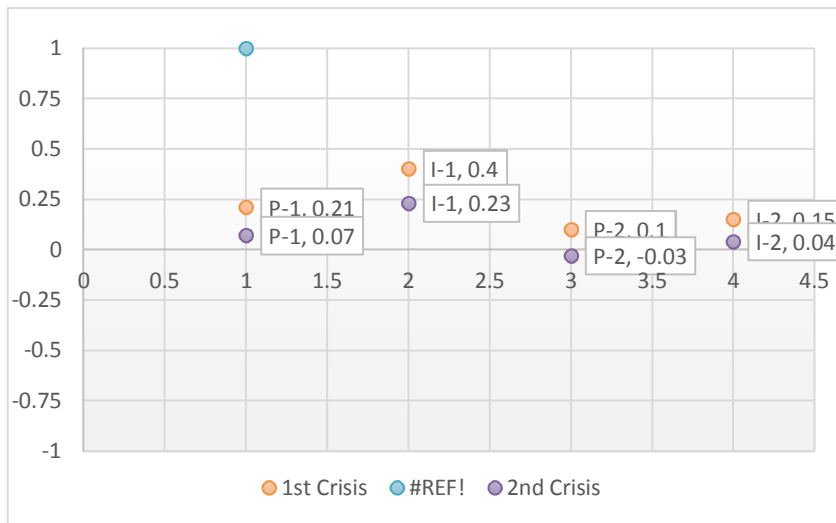
Notes: The only two significant traits in three stages are “Need for Power” and “Control over Events”; the latter surpassed the $F_{critical}$ (3.35), meaning that one of the scores in the three stages is more significant.

P-value < 0.05

Donald Trump's OCA indices reported in Table 2, his perception of the *Nature of the Political World* (P-1), *The Future of Political Relations* (P-2), in addition to the *Appropriate Strategy* (I-1) and *Intensity of Tactics* (I-2) had no significant changes during the three stages under assessment.

Findings on OCA indices suggest that the changes in the traits of Control over Events, and Need for Power are a temporary personality shift related to dealing with the crisis, and not related to Donald Trump's major world views and beliefs. According to the results, Donald Trump had followed the same beliefs and perceptions from the first crisis stage to the second crisis stage. Figure 1. is the scatter plot of Donald Trump's OCA indices in both crisis stages.

Figure 1. Scatter Plot of the Crisis Stages on OCA Indices¹



Source: Authors' Calculations

1. Note: 1st Crisis is the 80s and 90s
2nd Crisis is the election year in 2020

As the depicted in Figure 1, approximately all indices in the crisis times are above the category (x) axis and between the range of 0.0 to 0.25 on the value axis, which according to Walker's range of values (2000, 2004) is within the continuum of mixed to somewhat co-operational beliefs toward the four major indices. Donald Trump's stability in his major beliefs during both of the crisis times indicates that he is still viewing the world and the critical situation in the same specific way since the 80s and 90s, and had less been affected by the bureaucratic system during his presidency.

Test 2. Independent T-test between Significant Personality Traits

We performed an independent two-tailed T-test on the statistically significant indicators to determine how they are being significant when compared between the two crises stages that are the main focus of this study. In other words, in this part the study we tried to determine any significant difference between Donald Trump's core beliefs and leadership traits in the two crises stages. Table 3 reports the results of the independent t-test analysis and other studies scores of 87 heads of states on the same traits. The analysis confirmed that the difference between the 1st crisis time and the 2nd crisis time is also statistically significant on the Need for Power trait.

Table 3. Independent T-test Analysis of the Significant LTA Traits¹

LTA Indices	Group Assessed	Mean	T-stat	P-value (two-tailed)	87 Head of States
Control over events	1 st Crisis	0.27	5.73	1.95	Mean=0.44
	2 nd Crisis	0.45			Low< 0.32
Need for power	1 st Crisis	0.19	-2.97	0.00*	High>0.56
	2 nd Crisis	0.30			Mean= 0.5
					Low< 0.37
					High> 0.62

Source: Authors' Calculations

The score of the Control over Events trait is no longer significant between the two crisis stages, which constitute the main focus of the study. Furthermore, the score of Need for Power (0.19/0.33) is still low in comparison with the scores of the other 87 head of states on the same trait. Control Over Events is highly related to the score of Need for Power. Leaders who are high in the Control over Events but low in the Need for Power would take charge of what happens and challenge constraints, but are less successful in manipulating the people and the bureaucratic system to have the desired influence (Hermann, 2003). Donald Trump's score on this trait is moving toward a high score – tending to resist environmental constraints; however, he may not succeed in persuading the United States bureaucratic system to act and decide as he desires.

7. Discussion

Findings indicated why Donald Trump constantly disregards systematic sources of policy-making and resists adaptability, as he

1. Note: Between the two crisis stages the only significant traits is *Need for Power*, which is still low compared to the norming group.

is maintaining his pre-presidential cognitive characteristics even in crisis conditions. According to the analysis, only one of the eleven cognitive indicators was statistically significant from the 1st (business leadership in 80-90s) to the 2nd crisis time (presidential leadership in 2016-2020).

7.1. Donald Trump’s Leadership Trait

According to Hermann (2003) LTA, when assessing the individuals’ leadership style, we should assess these main concepts: a) the extent to which the leader respects or challenges environmental constraints; b) his/her openness to contextual information; and c) his/her motivations toward taking office. Each of these dimensions is determined through the relationship of specific traits toward one another. Table 4 illustrates Hermann (2003) Leadership Style based on the seven LTA indices. A low to mean score on the Control over Events trait, alongside a low score on the individual’s Need for Power means that the leader has a tendency to challenge environmental constraints.

Table 4. Hermann’s Leadership Style (2003)

<i>Responsiveness to Constraints</i>	<i>Openness To Information</i>	<i>Motivation Problem Focus</i>	<i>Relationship Focus</i>
Challenges Constraints	Closed to Information	Expansionistic (Focus is on increasing power and influence)	Evangelistic (Focus is on persuading others to accept and join one’s cause)
Challenges Constraints	Open to Information	Incremental (Focus is on maintaining one’s maneuverability and resilience while avoiding the obstacles that constantly try to limit both)	Charismatic (Focus is on achieving one’s agenda by engaging others in the process and persuading them to act accordingly)

Respects Constraints	Closed to Information	Directive (Focus is on personally guiding policy along with one's views while still working within the norms and rules of one's position)	Consultative (Focus is on monitoring that important others will support, or not actively oppose, what one is willing to do in a particular situation)
Respects Constraints	Open to Information	Reactive (Focus is on determining what is possible in the current situation given the nature of the obstacle and considering what important constituencies will allow)	Accommodative (Focus is on conciliating differences and building consensus, empowering others and sharing accountability in the process)

Source: Hermann, 2003

Therefore, even by moving toward a mean score on Control over the Events trait, Donald Trump is still challenging the structural constraints, which, according to Hermann's (2003) leadership style challenging constraints is one of the features of a charismatic leader. The analysis of other LTA indices are correlated in all three stages and demonstrate Trump's openness to contextual information (Low Self Confidence and High Conceptual Complexity) and a flexible task orientation focus (Mean Task score and Low In-Group Bias and Distrust of Others).

Based on the results of the analysis of the three stages, Donald Trump has a rather *charismatic* leadership style since he acts and decides based on the contextual situation. Such leadership style highly depends on the situational cues and contextual information in decision-making (Hermann, 2003).

On the other hand, while changes in the *Need for Power* indicator were statistically significant between the first and the

second crisis stage, the score of this trait was still *Low* compared to Hermann's norming group of 87 head of states. The significance of the Need for Power trait should be analyzed through its relation with the individual's perception of having control on what is happening around him. A low to mean score on the Control over the Events trait, in addition to a low score on the individual's Need for Power means that the leader tends to challenge environmental constraints and exhibits a charismatic leadership style. The analysis of other LTA indices is correlated in all three stages.

Therefore, according to the theoretical frameworks of the study, it can be argued that Donald Trump is open to contextual information (due to Low Self Confidence and High Conceptual Complexity scores), and has a flexible task orientation focus (due to Mean Task score and Low In-Group Bias and Distrust of Others scores), constantly shifting from task toward maintaining his relationships and the other way around. Trump's cognitive characteristics have led him to highly depend on situational cues and contextual information in decision-making.

7.2. Donald Trump's Beliefs

OCA scores of the three stages also support the argument that Trump is following the same beliefs and philosophical perceptions since the 80s and 90s, and that little learnings have occurred during the time of the presidency. There was no statistically significant difference between the philosophical and the instrumental indices of *the Crisis* and *non-Crisis* timings on the second test. The stability of these beliefs indicates that Donald Trump is viewing the political world with the same cognitive characteristics, while resisting adaptability toward the bureaucratic norms of the

presidential office that are in conflict with his understanding. In both crisis stages, Trump has a mixed toward somewhat cooperative view toward the political environment and the appropriate strategies and techniques that should be utilized. The president's perception is that he should challenge the environmental constraints, and represent and pursue American's true demands. Hence, he sees no need for learning as his beliefs are fixed and unchangeable.

8. Conclusion

This research tended to understand how Donald Trump's beliefs and leadership traits have changed when facing a crisis from his business leadership toward his political career as the US president. The study hence started with two main hypotheses to assess change and possible cognitive learning: First, Donald Trump's leadership may be the continuity of his business leadership with no specific changes in his cognitive understanding of the socio-political world; and second, Donald Trump's Political leadership of crisis during his presidency may differ from similar situations during his business leadership, as his cognitive understanding has changed with his new status.

The findings of the research highlight that Donald Trump's leadership style, both during his pre-presidential business years and his presidency, shows a strong consistency in cognitive and leadership traits. Despite the significant shift in his role, his approach to leadership remained largely unchanged, marked by a tendency to challenge environmental constraints rather than adapt to them.

The results may also be the reason for his resistance to systematic sources of policy-making rather than the adaptive leadership typically required in times of crisis. Trump's low scores on key indicators such as "Control over the Events" and "Need for Power" suggest that his leadership is driven more by an individualistic approach, emphasizing personal control and a disregard for external influences, rather than a desire for traditional political power or responsiveness to external conditions. This cognitive rigidity, coupled with a lack of openness to new information, ultimately shaped his leadership during crises, where adaptability and collaboration with established frameworks were often essential.

Thus, the analysis accepts the hypothesis of cognitive continuity of traits and rejects any possible change of learning in Donald Trump's beliefs and leadership traits in time of crisis. In other words, Trump remained committed to his old ways of thinking and decision-making, rather than embracing new approaches required for managing crises effectively. The results are significant in that they provide a solid cognitive basis for analyzing Trump's future behaviour, as his profile had demonstrated that he tends to rely on his previous cognitive experiences in solving matters.

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