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## Back to the F Scale: Milosevic as Authoritarian

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**Abstract.** This article describes the "fit" of Slobodan Milosevic's personality with the classic construct of the authoritarian as conceptualized by the initial form of the F Scale.

Some political psychologists often cite personality content, structure, and dynamics as explanatory and even causal variables associated with political behavior and events. Such efforts seem to have the potential for considerable utility in the case of the political leader controlling an authoritarian or totalitarian regime--wherein there may be less robust modifiers, modulators, intermediary variables, and various socio-political filters affecting personality. This may be so even if the very construct of personality is vulnerable to the theoretical critiques of hypostatization, reification, social constructionism, lay epistemology, and the like.

In this context, one might consider the personality of Slobodan Milosevic. Should his many politically authoritarian behaviors--exhibited since he began to control Serbian politics--be construed as indices of a psychological authoritarianism? And would this ascription be useful?

The original construct of the authoritarian personality based on the F Scale and developed by Adorno and colleagues comprised nine components. (1) A sexual component suggested a significant and hypervigilant concern that sexual behaviors other than so-called "normal" ones were very threatening to decency and should be stamped out before the threat became overwhelming. Milosevic might fit this component given at least his publicly declaimed hyper-loyalty to his wife, "height of propriety" of the relationship, and little information to suggest otherwise. In fact, the relationship may serve to bind, deflect, or otherwise re-channel very primitive and undecorous sexual tendencies. (2) Another component suggested being less prone to engage in the imagination, to be tender-minded as opposed to tough-minded, to frequently employ introspection. Milosevic might fit this component as one who focuses on action and on contingencies in the political world as opposed to the vagaries of the self. Some of his early familial catastrophes--e.g., parental suicide--might have contributed to an outer versus inner perspective. (3) An additional component suggested a significant focus on political power as the essence of interpersonal relationships, on poles of strength versus weakness, and superiority versus inferiority. Milosevic might fit this component given his power-oriented weltanschauung and choice of vocation. (4) A further component suggested a conformity/conventionalism predilection especially as to middle class values. Milosevic might fit this component if his extraordinary and extreme political behavior is construed as in the service of a desired conformity and conventionalism and based on his own sense of moral and ethical propriety even if this propriety seems to be belied by his behavior. (5) A component suggested the acceptance through faith of idealized, controlling authorities--that certain tenets are just so. Milosevic fits this component, but so don't we all. (6) A component suggested a very strong sense that the world harbors very dangerous and threatening phenomena against which one must be on guard. Milosevic--above and beyond his political rhetoric--seems to fit this component through his political behaviors predicated on such phenomena and the small degree of trust that he seems to experience for almost all others. (7) A component suggested a cynical stance towards other people as well as significant hostility towards them. Milosevic might fit this component based on his interpersonal behaviors towards friend and foe alike--especially sudden and fatal accidents and attacks.

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(8) A component obliquely related to at least (3), (4), (6), and (7) suggested an aggressive stance towards people who violate convention. Milosevic might fit this component when his own sense of convention is self-perceived as social convention. This is an example of l'état c'est moi psychology. (9) Finally, a component suggested a nexus of superstition and statistically deviant beliefs about fate. Milosevic might fit this component beyond his political rhetoric in ascriptions about the Serbian nation and mythology as well as his presumed magical thinking related to his own power and the actions and reactions of the world.

Although Milosevic may fit components of the classic authoritarian construct, he may fit other constructs as well, dependent on hermeneutic strategies and preferred epistemological pathways. As well, explanation, understanding, influence, and predictions of his behavior in specific situations still might be difficult regardless of his psychological fit with various constructs. Parsing Milosevic's personality--should the term personality be ontologically valid or adaptively useful--requires a much more intense focus on the environment, situations, and historical era in which he lives. (See Adorno, T.W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D.J., & Sanford, R.N. (1950). *The authoritarian personality*. NY: Harper; Diakonova, N., & Gilgen, A. R. (1998). Right-wing authoritarianism relative to traditional Western thinking and locus of control. *Psychological Reports*, 82, 83-86; Duncan, L. E., Peterson, B. E., & Winter, D. G. (1997). Authoritarianism and gender roles: Toward a psychological analysis of hegemonic relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 41-49; Feldman, S., & Stenner, K. (1997). Perceived threat and authoritarianism. *Political Psychology*, 18, 741-770; McCourt, K., Bouchard, T. J., Jr., Lykken, David T., Tellegen, A., & Keyes, M. (1999). Authoritarianism revisited: Genetic and environmental influences examined in twins reared apart and together. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 27, 985-1014.) (Keywords: Authoritarian, Milosevic, Personality.)