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## The Personality Profile of al-Qaida Leader Osama bin Laden

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**THE PERSONALITY PROFILE  
OF AL-QAIDA LEADER  
OSAMA BIN LADEN**

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## **Abstract**

### **THE PERSONALITY PROFILE OF AL-QAIDA LEADER OSAMA BIN LADEN**

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This paper presents the results of an indirect assessment of the personality of Osama bin Laden, founder and leader of the al-Qaida terrorist network allegedly responsible for the September 11, 2001 terror attack on the United States, from the conceptual perspective of Theodore Millon. Information concerning bin Laden was collected from biographies and media reports, and synthesized into a personality profile using the second edition of the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC), which yields 34 normal and maladaptive personality classifications congruent with Axis II of *DSM-IV*.

The personality profile yielded by the MIDC was analyzed on the basis of interpretive guidelines provided in the MIDC and Millon Index of Personality Styles manuals. Bin Laden's primary personality patterns were found to be Ambitious/exploitative and Dauntless/dissenting, with a secondary Distrusting/suspicious orientation, and subsidiary Dominant/controlling and Conscientious/dutiful features.

Ambitious individuals are bold, competitive, and self-assured; they easily assume leadership roles, expect others to recognize their special qualities, and often act as though entitled. Dauntless individuals are bold, courageous, and tough; minimally constrained by the norms of society; routinely engage in high-risk activities; not overly concerned about the welfare of others; skilled in the art of social influence; and adept at surviving on the strength of their talents, ingenuity, and wits.

Bin Laden's blend of Ambitious and Dauntless personality patterns suggests the presence of Millon's "unprincipled narcissist" syndrome. This composite character complex combines the narcissist's arrogant sense of self-worth, exploitative indifference to the welfare of others, and grandiose expectation of special recognition with the antisocial personality's self-aggrandizement, deficient social conscience, and disregard for the rights of others.

A major implication of the study is that bin Laden neither fits the profile of the highly conscientious, closed-minded religious fundamentalist, nor that of the religious martyr who combines these qualities with devout, self-sacrificing features; rather, it suggests that bin Laden is adept at exploiting Islamic fundamentalism in the service of his own ambition and personal dreams of glory.

## **Introduction**

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001 operatives of the al-Qaida terrorist network, evidently acting upon instructions of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden (“Evidence,” 2001), employed commercial aircraft to destroy the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and inflict serious damage to the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The purpose of the present study is to explore the personal psychology behind bin Laden’s motives for the infamous attack and his so-called “evil genius” in mobilizing the resources to achieve his mission.

Conceptually, the present study is informed by Theodore Millon’s model of personality (1969, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996; Millon & Davis, 1998, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985) as adapted (Immelman, 1993, 1998, 2002) for the study of personality in politics. The methodology entails the construction of a theoretically grounded personality profile derived from empirical analysis of biographical source materials.

The psychodiagnostic approach to studying political personality is equivalent to that of Simonton (1986, 1988) in that it quantifies, reduces, and organizes qualitative data derived from published biographical materials. As observed by Simonton, who has credited Etheredge (1978) with establishing the diagnostic utility “of abstracting individual traits immediately from biographic data” to uncover the link between personality and political leadership (1990, p. 677), “biographical materials [not only] . . . supply a rich set of facts about childhood experiences and career development . . . [but] such secondary sources can offer the basis for personality assessments as well” (1986, p. 150).

### ***Millon’s Model of Personality and Its Utility for Indirect Personality Assessment***

A comprehensive review of Millon’s personological model and its applicability to political personality has been provided elsewhere (see Immelman, 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003). Briefly, Millon’s model encompasses eight attribute domains: expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization (see Table 1).

Political personality assessment grounded in Millon’s conceptual system is systematic and multidimensional, which affords the distinct advantage of accounting for the patterning of personality variables “across the entire matrix of the person” (Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 2, 65). Furthermore, a distinctive aspect of Millon’s model is that it offers an integrative view of normality and psychopathology; normal and pathological behaviors are considered relative concepts representing arbitrary points on a gradient (Millon, 1996, pp. 12–13). Finally, the Millonian approach to political personality assessment is conceptually and methodologically congruent with standard procedures for personality assessment in professional psychodiagnostic practice (Immelman, 1993).

**Table 1**  
***Millon's Eight Attribute Domains***

Attribute	Description
Expressive behavior	The individual's characteristic behavior; how the individual typically appears to others; what the individual knowingly or unknowingly reveals about him- or herself; what the individual wishes others to think or to know about him or her.
Interpersonal conduct	How the individual typically interacts with others; the attitudes that underlie, prompt, and give shape to these actions; the methods by which the individual engages others to meet his or her needs; how the individual copes with social tensions and conflicts.
Cognitive style	How the individual focuses and allocates attention, encodes and processes information, organizes thoughts, makes attributions, and communicates reactions and ideas to others.
Mood/temperament	How the individual typically displays emotion; the predominant character of an individual's affect and the intensity and frequency with which he or she expresses it.
Self-image	The individual's perception of self-as-object or the manner in which the individual overtly describes him- or herself.
Regulatory mechanisms	The individual's characteristic mechanisms of self-protection, need gratification, and conflict resolution.
Object representations	The inner imprint left by the individual's significant early experiences with others; the structural residue of significant past experiences, composed of memories, attitudes, and affects that underlie the individual's perceptions of and reactions to ongoing events and serves as a substrate of dispositions for perceiving and reacting to life's ongoing events.
Morphologic organization	The overall architecture that serves as a framework for the individual's psychic interior; the structural strength, interior congruity, and functional efficacy of the personality system (i.e., ego strength).

*Note.* From *Disorders of Personality: DSM-IV and Beyond* (pp. 141–146) by T. Millon, 1996, New York: Wiley; *Toward a New Personology: An Evolutionary Model* (chapter 5) by T. Millon, 1990, New York: Wiley; and *Personality and Its Disorders: A Biosocial Learning Approach* (p. 32) by T. Millon and G. S. Everly, Jr., 1985, New York: Wiley. Copyright © 1996, © 1990, © 1985 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Adapted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and Theodore Millon.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The present study is a psychodiagnostic analysis of the personality of Osama bin Laden, apparent instigator and sponsor of the September 11, 2001 terror attack on the United States.

## Method

### *Materials*

The materials consisted of biographical sources and the personality inventory employed to systematize and synthesize diagnostically relevant information collected from the literature on Osama bin Laden.

**Sources of data.** Diagnostic information pertaining to Osama bin Laden was collected from a broad range of books, media reports, and public statements that shed light on his personal characteristics. The following sources provided useful, diagnostically relevant personological data:

1. *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (2001) by Peter L. Bergen.
2. *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (2001) by Yossef Bodansky.
3. *Bin Laden: Behind the Mask of the Terrorist* (2001) by Adam Robinson.
4. A variety of media reports, including Peter Arnett (1997, 1998), *CNN*; Abdul Bari Atwan (2001), *The Guardian*; Scott Baldauf and Faye Bowers (2001), *The Christian Science Monitor*; Jeffrey Bartholet (2001), *Newsweek*; Lisa Beyer (2001a, 2001b), *Time*; excerpts from bin Laden's writings and interviews he has given to ABC News, *Nida'Ul Islam* magazine, and *The Independent* ("Bin Laden speaks out," 2001); the "bin Laden tape" (2001) released by the U.S. Department of Defense; Ronald Brownstein and Robin Wright (2001), *Los Angeles Times*; Jason Burke (2001), *The Observer*; Michael Cabbage (2001), *The Denver Post*; Michael Dobbs (2001), *The Washington Post*; Michael Dobbs and John Ward Anderson (2001), *The Washington Post*; Robert Fish (2001), *The Independent*; biography and interviews in the *Frontline* "Hunting bin Laden" (2001) production; Reed Johnson (2001), *Los Angeles Times*; Tony Karon (2001), *Time*; Bernard Lewis (2001), *The New Yorker*; Neil MacFarquhar (2001), *The New York Times*; Ben Macintyre (2001a, 2001b), *The Times* of London; Scott MacLeod (1996), *Time*; Robert D. McFadden (2001), *The New York Times*; John Miller's (1998) interview with Osama bin Laden; Christian T. Miller (2001), *Los Angeles Times*; Judith Miller (2001), *The New York Times*; Norimitsu Onishi (2001), *The New York Times*; Michael Satchell (2001), *U.S. News & World Report*; various statements by Osama bin Laden ("Statements," 2001; "Text of fatwah," 1998; "Text of statement," 2001); Evan Thomas (2001), *Newsweek*; Peg Tyre, Tara Pepper and Mark Hosenball (2001), *Newsweek*; Paul Watson, Tyler Marshall, and Bob Drogin (2001), *Los Angeles Times*; Rahimullah Yusufzai (1999), *Time*.

**Personality inventory.** The assessment instrument, the second edition of the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC; Immelman & Steinberg, 1999), was compiled and adapted from Millon's (1969, 1986b; 1990, 1996; Millon & Everly, 1985) prototypal features and diagnostic criteria for normal personality styles and their pathological variants. Information concerning the construction, administration, scoring, and interpretation of the MIDC is provided in the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria manual (Immelman, 1999).<sup>1</sup> The instrument taps the first five "noninferential" (Millon, 1990, p. 157) attribute domains listed in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Inventory and manual available to qualified professionals upon request.

The 12 MIDC scales correspond to major personality patterns posited by Millon (1994, 1996), which are congruent with the syndromes described on Axis II of the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* of the American Psychiatric Association (APA; 1994) and coordinated with the normal personality styles in which these disorders are rooted, as described by Millon and Everly (1985), Millon (1994), Oldham and Morris (1995), and Strack (1997). Scales 1 through 8 (comprising 10 scales and subscales) have three gradations (a, b, c) yielding 30 personality variants, whereas Scales 9 and 0 have two gradations (d, e), yielding four variants, for a total of 34 personality designations, or types. Table 2 displays the full taxonomy.

### ***Diagnostic Procedure***

The current diagnostic procedure, termed *psychodiagnostic meta-analysis*,<sup>2</sup> can be construed as a three-part process: first, an *analysis*<sup>3</sup> phase (data collection) during which source materials are reviewed and analyzed to extract and code diagnostically relevant content; second, a *synthesis* phase (scoring and interpretation) during which the unifying framework provided by the MIDC prototypal features, keyed for attribute domain and personality pattern, is employed to classify the diagnostically relevant information extracted in phase 1; and finally, an *evaluation* phase (inference) during which theoretically grounded descriptions, explanations, inferences, and predictions are extrapolated from Millon's theory of personality based on the personality profile constructed in phase 2.

### ***Cross-Cultural Considerations***

Owing to its compatibility with conventional psychodiagnostic procedures and standard clinical practice in personality assessment, psychodiagnostic meta-analysis lends itself particularly well to cross-cultural application, given the relative uniformity of training in professional psychology around the globe. Moreover, the taxonomy of personality patterns assessed by the MIDC is congruent with the syndromes described on Axis II of the *DSM-IV*, with which psychologists worldwide are familiar.

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term *meta-analysis* because the resultant personality profile represents a synthesis of the observations of others, including biographers, psychobiographers, historians, psychohistorians, journalists, political analysts, and political psychologists. I use the term *psychodiagnostic* because the conceptual framework is more closely related to the realm of contemporary clinical assessment than to classic psychobiography or to conventional social-psychological and cognitive approaches to the assessment of political personality. The "psychodiagnostic" label is not intended to imply a presupposition of psychopathology: *diagnostic* is used in a generic sense to denote a process "serving to distinguish or identify," as defined in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1997); accordingly, the object is to identify a leader's enduring personality configuration and to specify its political implications.

<sup>3</sup> This step constitutes a process analysis in which each source is coded for MIDC prototypal features. I use the term *process* to accentuate the contrast between the present approach and more conventional content-analytic procedures, which arguably tend to capture surface features of source materials. Process analysis, in contrast to content analysis, seeks to identify the underlying structural and functional personality processes revealed by theory-driven empirical analysis of biographical data with respect to the political leader in question.

**Table 2**  
***Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Scales and Gradations***

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Scale 1A:	Dominant pattern
	a. Asserting
	b. Controlling
	c. Aggressive (Sadistic; <i>DSM-III-R</i> , Appendix A)
Scale 1B:	Dauntless pattern
	a. Adventurous
	b. Dissenting
	c. Aggrandizing (Antisocial; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.7)
Scale 2:	Ambitious pattern
	a. Confident
	b. Self-serving
	c. Exploitative (Narcissistic; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.81)
Scale 3:	Outgoing pattern
	a. Congenial
	b. Gregarious
	c. Impulsive (Histrionic; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.50)
Scale 4:	Accommodating pattern
	a. Cooperative
	b. Agreeable
	c. Submissive (Dependent; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.6)
Scale 5A:	Aggrieved pattern
	a. Unpresuming
	b. Self-denying
	c. Self-defeating ( <i>DSM-III-R</i> , Appendix A)
Scale 5B:	Contentious pattern
	a. Resolute
	b. Oppositional
	c. Negativistic (Passive-aggressive; <i>DSM-III-R</i> , 301.84)
Scale 6:	Conscientious pattern
	a. Respectful
	b. Dutiful
	c. Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.4)
Scale 7:	Reticent pattern
	a. Circumspect
	b. Inhibited
	c. Withdrawn (Avoidant; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.82)
Scale 8:	Retiring pattern
	a. Reserved
	b. Aloof
	c. Solitary (Schizoid; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.20)
Scale 9:	Distrusting pattern
	d. Suspicious
	e. Paranoid ( <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.0)
Scale 0:	Erratic pattern
	d. Unstable
	e. Borderline ( <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.83)

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*Note.* Equivalent *DSM* terminology and codes are specified in parentheses.

## Results

The analysis of the data includes a summary of descriptive statistics yielded by the MIDC scoring procedure, the MIDC profile for Osama bin Laden, diagnostic classification of the subject, and the clinical interpretation of significant MIDC scale elevations derived from the diagnostic procedure.

Bin Laden received 64 endorsements on the 170-item MIDC. Descriptive statistics for bin Laden's MIDC ratings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*MIDC Item Endorsement Rate by Attribute Domain*

Expressive behavior	16
Interpersonal conduct	14
Cognitive style	10
Mood/temperament	13
Self-image	11
Sum	64
Mean	12.8
Standard deviation	2.1

Bin Laden's MIDC scale scores are reported in Table 4. The same data are presented graphically in the profile displayed in Figure 1.<sup>4</sup>

Bin Laden's most elevated scale, with a score of 30, is Scale 2 (Ambitious), followed by scores of 20 on Scale 1B (Dauntless) and Scale 9 (Distrusting). Based on cut-off score guidelines provided in the MIDC manual, the Scale 2 elevation is in the *mildly dysfunctional* (24–30) range, the Scale 1B elevation is well within the *prominent* (10–23) range, and the Scale 9 elevation is just within the *moderately disturbed* (20–35) level.

Elevations of less diagnostic significance include Scale 1A (Dominant) and Scale 6 (Conscientious), just within the *prominent* range; and relatively minor elevations, in the normal, functionally adaptive *present* (5–9) range, on Scale 5B (Contentious) and Scale 3 (Outgoing).

<sup>4</sup> See Table 2 for scale names. Solid horizontal lines on the profile form (Figure 1) signify cut-off scores between adjacent scale gradations. For Scales 1–8, scores of 5 through 9 signify the *presence* (gradation a) of the personality pattern in question; scores of 10 through 23 indicate a *prominent* (gradation b) variant; and scores of 24 to 30 indicate an exaggerated, *mildly dysfunctional* (gradation c) variation of the pattern. For Scales 9 and 0, scores of 20 through 35 indicate a *moderately disturbed* syndrome and scores of 36 through 45 a *markedly disturbed* syndrome.

**Table 4**  
***MIDC Scale Scores for Osama bin Laden***

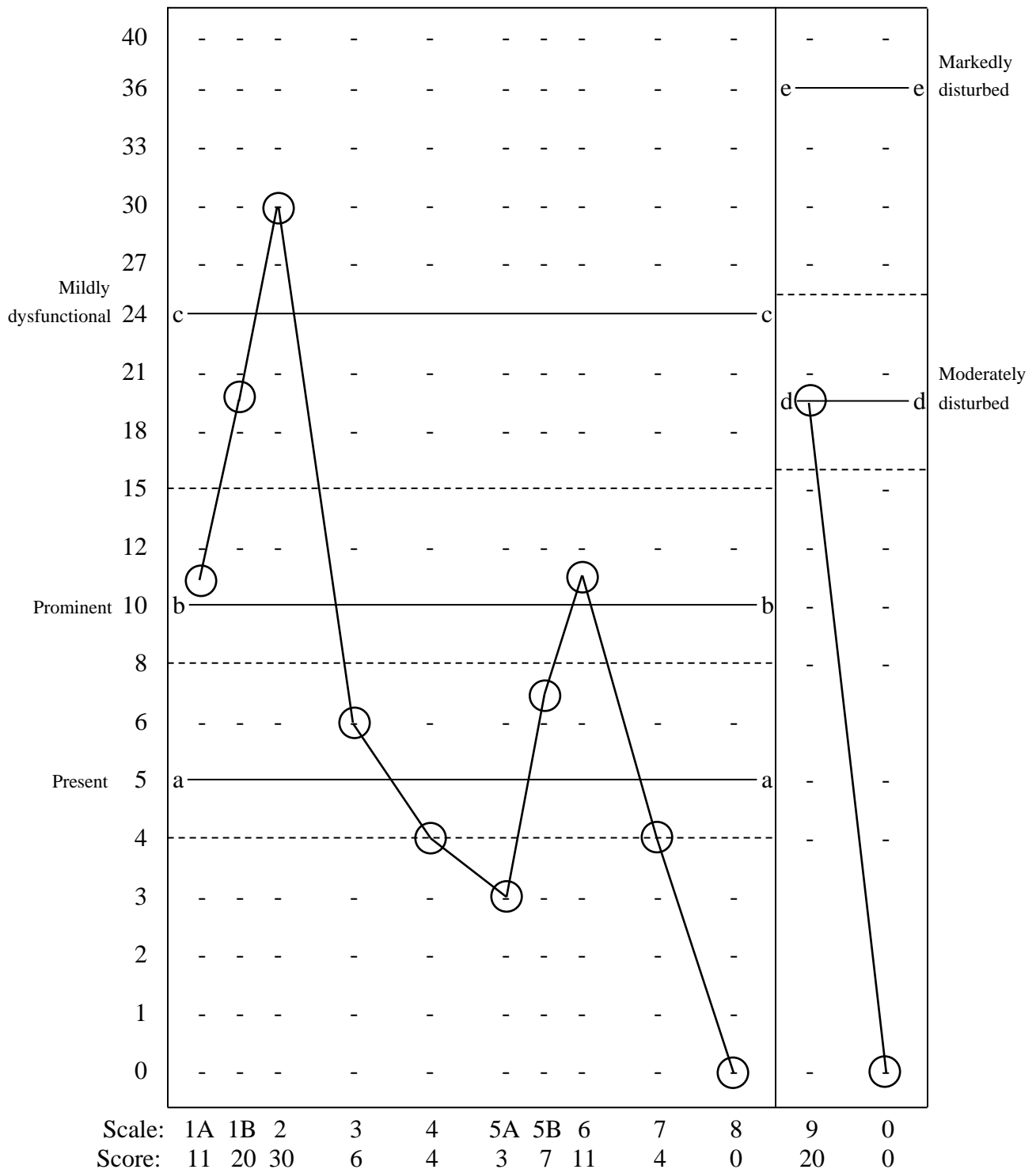
Scale	Personality pattern	Raw	RT%
1A	Dominant: Asserting – Controlling – Aggressive (Sadistic)	11	11.5
1B	Dauntless: Adventurous – Dissenting – Aggrandizing (Antisocial)	20	20.8
2	Ambitious: Confident – Arrogant – Exploitative (Narcissistic)	30	31.3
3	Outgoing: Congenial – Gregarious – Impulsive (Histrionic)	6	6.3
4	Accommodating: Cooperative – Agreeable – Submissive (Dependent)	4	4.2
5A	Aggrieved: Unpresuming – Self-effacing – Self-defeating (Masochistic)	3	3.1
5B	Contentious: Resolute – Oppositional – Negativistic (Passive-aggressive)	7	7.3
6	Conscientious: Respectful – Dutiful – Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive)	11	11.5
7	Reticent: Circumspect – Inhibited – Withdrawn (Avoidant)	4	4.2
8	Retiring: Reserved – Aloof – Solitary (Schizoid)	0	0.0
	Subtotal for basic personality scales	96	100.0
9	Distrusting: Suspicious – Paranoid (Paranoid)	20	17.2
0	Erratic: Unstable – Borderline (Borderline)	0	0.0
	Full-scale total	116	117.2

*Note.* For Scales 1–8, ratio-transformed (RT%) scores are the scores for each scale expressed as a percentage of the sum of raw scores for the ten basic scales only. For Scales 9 and 0, ratio-transformed scores are scores expressed as a percentage of the sum of raw scores for all twelve MIDC scales (therefore, full-scale RT% totals can exceed 100). Personality patterns are enumerated with scale gradations and equivalent *DSM* terminology (in parentheses).

In terms of MIDC scale gradation (see Table 2 and Figure 1) criteria, Osama bin Laden was classified as primarily a blend of the Ambitious/exploitative (Scale 2) and Dauntless/dissenting (Scale 1B) personality patterns, with secondary features of the Distrusting/suspicious (Scale 9) pattern, and subsidiary Dominant/controlling (Scale 1A) and Conscientious/dutiful (Scale 6) features.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In each case the label preceding the slash signifies the basic personality pattern, whereas the label following the slash indicates the specific scale gradation, or personality type, on the dimensional continuum; see Table 2.

**Figure 1. Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Profile for Osama bin Laden**



## Discussion

The discussion of the results examines Osama bin Laden's MIDC scale elevations from the perspective of Millon's (1994, 1996; Millon & Davis, 1998, Millon & Davis, 2000) model of personality, supplemented by the theoretically congruent portraits of Oldham and Morris (1995) and Strack (1997). The discussion concludes with a theoretically integrative synthesis of the political and ideological implications of Osama bin Laden's personality profile.

With his elevated Scale 2, Osama bin Laden emerged from the assessment as a predominantly exploitative type, an exaggerated, maladaptive (i.e., pathologically narcissistic) variant of the Ambitious pattern. The interpretation of bin Laden's profile must also account for his concurrent elevation on Scale 1B (Dauntless), which modulates his Ambitious pattern. In addition, more modest elevations on Scale 9 (Distrusting), Scale 1A (Dominant), and Scale 6 (Conscientious) should be considered.

### *Scale 2: The Ambitious Pattern*

The Ambitious pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. At the well-adjusted pole are confident, socially poised, assertive personalities. Slightly exaggerated Ambitious features occur in personalities that are sometimes perceived as self-promoting, overconfident, or arrogant. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the Ambitious pattern manifests itself in extreme self-absorption or exploitative behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Ambitious pattern (i.e., confident and self-serving types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Self-Confident* style, Strack's (1997) *confident* style, and Millon's (1994) *Asserting* pattern. Millon's *Asserting* pattern is positively correlated with the five-factor model's *Extraversion* and *Conscientiousness* factors and negatively correlated with its *Neuroticism* factor (Millon, 1994, p. 82). It is associated with "social composure, or poise, self-possession, equanimity, and stability" — a constellation of adaptive traits that in stronger doses shades into its dysfunctional variant, the narcissistic personality (Millon, 1994, p. 32). In combination with the Outgoing pattern (Scale 3), it bears some resemblance to Simonton's (1988) *charismatic* executive leadership style. Although there is some evidence for the presence of Outgoing features in bin Laden's profile, his MIDC Scale 3 elevation of 6 is rather low relative to contemporary charismatic leaders in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Millon (1994)<sup>7</sup> summarizes the *Asserting* (i.e., Ambitious) pattern as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Former president Bill Clinton: Scale 2 = 17, Scale 3 = 15 (Immelman, 1998); Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura: Scale 2 = 9, Scale 3 = 19 (Immelman, 2000); Arizona senator John McCain: Scale 2 = 5, Scale 3 = 11 (Immelman, Illies, Kuzma, & Carlson, 2000); President George W. Bush: Scale 2 = 4, Scale 3 = 16 (Immelman, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> All Millon 1994 citations in this report refer to the manual of the *Millon Index of Personality Styles* (MIPS). Copyright © 1994 by Dicandrien, Inc. "MIPS" is a trademark of The Psychological Corporation registered in the United States of America and/or other jurisdictions. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, The Psychological Corporation, a Harcourt Assessment Company. All rights reserved.

An interpersonal boldness, stemming from a belief in themselves and their talents, characterize[s] those high on the . . . Asserting [Ambitious] scale. Competitive, ambitious, and self-assured, they naturally assume positions of leadership, act in a decisive and unwavering manner, and expect others to recognize their special qualities and cater to them. Beyond being self-confident, those with an Asserting [Ambitious] profile often are audacious, clever, and persuasive, having sufficient charm to win others over to their own causes and purposes. Problematic in this regard may be their lack of social reciprocity and their sense of entitlement — their assumption that what they wish for is their due. On the other hand, their ambitions often succeed, and they typically prove to be effective leaders. (p. 32)

Oldham and Morris (1995) offer the following portrait of the corresponding *Self-Confident* style:

Self-Confident [Ambitious] individuals stand out. They're the leaders, the shining lights, the attention-getters in their public or private spheres. There is a star quality born of self-regard, self-respect, self-certainty — all those *self* words that denote a faith in oneself and a commitment to one's self-styled purpose. Combined with the ambition that marks this style, that . . . self-regard can transform idle dreams into real accomplishment. . . . Self-Confident [Ambitious] men and women know what they want, and they get it. Many of them have the charisma to attract plenty of others to their goals. They are extroverted and intensely political. They know how to work the crowd, how to motivate it, and how to lead it. (p. 85)

Finally, Stephen Strack (1997) provides the following description of the equivalent *confident* style (i.e., the normal prototype of the Ambitious pattern) based on Millon's theory, empirical findings from studies correlating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the instrument:

Aloof, calm, and confident, these personalities tend to be egocentric and self-reliant. They may have a keen sense of their own importance, uniqueness, or entitlement. Confident [Ambitious] individuals enjoy others' attention and may be quite bold socially, although they are seldom garish. They can be self-centered to a fault and may become so preoccupied with themselves that they lack concern and empathy for others. These persons have a tendency to believe that others share, or should share, their sense of worth. As a result, they may expect others to submit to their wishes and desires, and to cater to them. Ironically, the confident [Ambitious] individual's secure appearance may cover feelings of personal inadequacy and a sensitivity to criticism and rejection. Unfortunately, they usually do not permit others to see their vulnerable side. When feeling exposed or undermined these individuals are frequently disdainful, obstructive, or vindictive. In the workplace, confident [Ambitious] persons like to take charge in an emphatic manner, often doing so in a way that instills confidence in others. Their self-assurance, wit, and charm often win them supervisory and leadership positions. (From Strack, 1997, pp. 489–490, with slight modifications)

Millon's (1994), Oldham and Morris's (1995), and Strack's (1997) descriptions of the asserting, self-assured, confident personality style are not theoretically congruent with the conventional wisdom that Osama bin Laden is a devoted, ascetic, militant Islamist; rather, they suggest that bin Laden is adept at exploiting Islamic fundamentalism in the service of his own ambition.

Millon's personality patterns have predictable, reliable, and — for the most part — observable psychological indicators (expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization). The diagnostic features of the Ambitious pattern are summarized below.

***Expressive behavior.*** The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Ambitious individuals is their *confidence*; they are socially poised, self-assured, and self-confident, conveying an air of calm, untroubled self-assurance. More exaggerated variants of the Ambitious pattern tend to act in a *conceited* manner, their natural self-assurance shading into supreme self-confidence, hubris, immodesty, or presumptuousness. They are self-promoting and may display an inflated sense of self-importance. They typically have a superior, supercilious, imperious, haughty, disdainful manner. Characteristically, though usually unwittingly, they exploit others, take them for granted, and frequently act as though entitled. The most extreme variants of this pattern are *arrogant*; they are self-serving, reveal a self-important indifference to the rights of others, and are manipulative and lacking in integrity. They commonly flout conventional rules of shared social living, which they view as naive or inapplicable to themselves. All variants of this pattern are to some degree self-centered, ungenerous, and lacking in social reciprocity. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 405; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 32, 39)

***Interpersonal conduct.*** The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Ambitious individuals is their *assertiveness*; they stand their ground and are tough, competitive, persuasive, hardnosed, and shrewd. More exaggerated variants of the Ambitious pattern are *entitled*; they lack genuine empathy and expect favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities. The most extreme variants of this pattern are *exploitative*; they shamelessly take others for granted and use and manipulate them for their own ends, to enhance themselves, indulge their desires, or advance their personal agenda, yet contributing little or nothing in return. Ironically, the sheer audacity of all variants of this pattern, rather than being clearly seen for what it is — impertinence, impudence, or sheer gall — often conveys confidence and authority and elicits admiration and obedience from others. Indeed, they are skilled at sizing up those around them and conditioning those so disposed to adulate, glorify, and serve them. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 405–406; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 32, 39)

***Cognitive style.*** The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Ambitious individuals is their *imaginativeness*; they are inventive, innovative, and resourceful, ardently believing in their own efficacy. More exaggerated variants of the Ambitious pattern are cognitively *expansive*; they display extraordinary confidence in their own ideas and potential for success and redeem themselves by taking liberty with facts or distorting the truth. The most extreme variants of this pattern are cognitively *unrestrained*; they are preoccupied with self-glorifying fantasies of accomplishment or fame, are little constrained by objective reality or cautionary feedback, and deprecate competitors or detractors in their quest for glory. All variants of this pattern to some degree harbor fantasies of success or rationalize their failures; they tend to exaggerate their achievements, transform failures into successes, construct lengthy and intricate justifications that inflate their self-worth, and quickly deprecate those who refuse to accept or enhance their admirable sense of self. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 406; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 32, 39)

***Mood/temperament.*** The core diagnostic feature of the characteristic mood and temperament of Ambitious individuals is their social *poise*; they are self-composed, serene, and optimistic, and are typically imperturbable, unruffled, and cool and levelheaded under pressure. More exaggerated variants of the Ambitious pattern are *insouciant*; they manifest a general air of nonchalance, imperturbability, or feigned tranquility. They characteristically appear coolly

unimpressible or buoyantly optimistic, except when their narcissistic confidence is shaken, at which time either rage, shame, or emptiness is briefly displayed. The most extreme variants of this pattern are *exuberant*; they experience pervasive emotional well-being in their everyday life — a buoyancy of mood and an optimism of outlook — except when their sense of superiority is punctured. When emotionally deflated, their air of nonchalance and imperturbability quickly turns to edgy irritability and annoyance. Under more trying circumstances, sham serenity may turn to feelings of emptiness and humiliation, sometimes with vacillating episodes of rage, shame, and dejection. All variants of this pattern to some degree convey a self-satisfied smugness, yet are easily angered when criticized, obstructed, or crossed. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 408; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 32, 39)

***Self-image.*** The core diagnostic feature of the self-perception of Ambitious individuals is their *certitude*; they have strong self-efficacy beliefs and considerable courage of conviction. More exaggerated variants of the Ambitious pattern have an *admirable* sense of self; they view themselves as extraordinarily meritorious and esteemed by others, and have a high degree of self-worth, though others may see them as egotistic, inconsiderate, cocksure, and arrogant. The most extreme variants of this pattern have a *superior* sense of self. They view themselves as having unique and special qualities, deserving of great admiration and entitled to unusual rights and privileges. Accordingly, they often act in a pompous or grandiose manner, often in the absence of commensurate achievements. In high-level leadership positions, some of these individuals may exhibit a messianic self-perception; those failing to pay proper respect or bend to their will typically are treated with contempt and scorn. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 406)

***Regulatory mechanisms.*** The core diagnostic features of the unconscious regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of Ambitious individuals are *rationalization* and *fantasy*; when their admirable self-image is challenged or their confidence shaken, they maintain equilibrium with facile self-deceptions, devising plausible reasons to justify their self-centered and socially inconsiderate behaviors. They rationalize their difficulties, offering alibis to put themselves in a positive light despite evident shortcomings and failures. When rationalization fails, they turn to fantasy to assuage their feelings of dejection, shame, or emptiness, redeem themselves, and reassert their pride and status. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 407)

***Object representations.*** The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of Ambitious individuals is their *contrived* nature; internalized experiences that serve as inner templates for evaluating new life experiences are of illusory and changing memories. Consequently, problematic experiences are refashioned to appear consonant with their high sense of self-worth, and unacceptable impulses and deprecatory evaluations are transmuted into more admirable images and percepts. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 406–407)

***Morphologic organization.*** The core diagnostic feature of the morphological organization of Ambitious individuals is its *spuriousness*; the interior design of the personality system, so to speak, is essentially counterfeit, or bogus. Owing to the misleading nature of their early experiences — characterized by the ease with which good things came to them — these individuals may lack the inner skills necessary for regulating their impulses, channeling their needs, and resolving conflicts. Accordingly, commonplace demands may be viewed as annoying incursions and routine responsibilities as pedestrian or demeaning. Excuses and justifications are

easily mustered and serve to perpetuate selfish behaviors and exploitative, duplicitous social conduct. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 407–408)

### ***Scale 1B: The Dauntless Pattern***

Few people exhibit personality patterns in pure or prototypal form; more often, individual personalities represent a blend of two or more prevailing orientations. As noted earlier, Osama bin Laden's elevation on Scale 1B (Dauntless) modulates his Ambitious (Scale 2) pattern. Bin Laden's loading on Scale 1B classifies him as a dissenting type, a generally adaptive, though somewhat exaggerated or distorted variant (i.e., suggesting antisocial tendencies) of the Dauntless pattern.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Dauntless pattern (i.e., adventurous and dissenting types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Adventurous* style, Millon's (1994) *Dissenting* pattern, and the low pole of Simonton's (1988) *interpersonal* executive leadership style. Theoretically, the normal, adaptive variant of the Dauntless pattern incorporates facets of the five-factor model's *Extraversion* factor and the low pole of its *Agreeableness* factor; however, the Dissenting scale of the Millon Index of Personality Styles (Millon, 1994) is uncorrelated with the NEO Personality Inventory's (Costa & McCrae, 1985) *Extraversion* factor, though, as expected, it is negatively correlated with its *Agreeableness* factor. In addition, the Dissenting scale is moderately correlated with the NEO Personality Inventory's *Neuroticism* factor, has a small negative correlation with its *Conscientiousness* factor, and is uncorrelated with *Openness to Experience* (see Millon, 1994, p. 82). The Dauntless pattern, as conceptualized in the MIDC, is congruent with the low poles of Simonton's (1988) *deliberative* and *interpersonal* leadership styles and incorporates elements of his *neurotic* and *charismatic* styles.

According to Oldham and Morris (1995, pp. 227–228), the following eight traits and behaviors are reliable clues to the presence of an *Adventurous* style:

1. *Nonconformity*. Live by their own internal code of values; not strongly influenced by the norms of society.
2. *Challenge*. Routinely engage in high-risk activities.
3. *Mutual independence*. Not overly concerned about others; expect each individual to be responsible for him- or herself.
4. *Persuasiveness*. “Silver-tongued” charmers talented in the art of social influence.
5. *Wanderlust*. Like to keep moving; live by their talents, skills, ingenuity, and wits.
6. *Wild oats*. History of childhood and adolescent mischief and hell-raising.
7. *True grit*. Courageous, physically bold, and tough.
8. *No regrets*. Live in the present; do not feel guilty about the past or anxious about the future.

It should be noted that *Adventurous* (Oldham & Morris, 1995) and *Dissenting* (Millon, 1994) personalities are adaptive variants of antisocial personality disorder. Perhaps by dint of more favorable socialization experiences these more adaptive styles express themselves “in behaviors that are minimally obtrusive, especially when manifested in sublimated forms, such as independence strivings, ambition, competition, risk-taking, and adventuresomeness” (Millon,

1996, p. 449). Apparent political prototypes of the Dauntless pattern in contemporary American politics are Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura (see Immelman, 2001) and — to a lesser degree — Arizona senator John McCain (see Immelman, Illies, Kuzma, & Carlson, 2000).

Ultimately, adventurous types “are fundamentally out for themselves” (Oldham & Morris, 1995, p. 228). They “do not need others to fuel their self-esteem or to provide purpose to their lives, and they don’t make sacrifices for other people, at least not easily” (p. 229). Furthermore, they believe in themselves and do not require anyone’s approval; they have “a definite sense of what is right or wrong for them, and if something is important to them, they’ll do it no matter what anyone thinks” (p. 229). In spite of their self-centeredness, however, adventurous people are capable of advancing a cause incidentally in the service of their personal desires or ambitions; but, fundamentally, what matters is the momentary excitement, emotional vitality, or sense of aliveness that they experience, not love of person, country, or cause (p. 229).

Millon (1994), who uses the term *Dissenting* as a label for the normal, adaptive variant of the aggrandizing, antisocial pattern, asserts that these individuals tend to “flout tradition,” “act in a notably autonomous fashion,” “are not social-minded,” and “are not inclined to adhere to conventional standards, cultural mores, and organizational regulations” (p. 32). They are

unconventional persons who seek to do things their own way and are willing to take the consequences for doing so. They act as they see fit regardless of how others judge them. Inclined at times to elaborate on or shade the truth, as well as ride close to the edge of the law, they are not conscientious — that is, they do not assume customary responsibilities. Rather, they frequently assert that too many rules stand in the way of people who wish to be free and inventive, and that they prefer to think and act in an independent and often creative way. Many believe that persons in authority are too hard on people who don’t conform. Dissenters dislike following the same routine day after day and, at times, act impulsively and irresponsibly. They will do what they want or believe to be best without much concern for the effects of their actions on others. Being skeptical about the motives of most people, and refusing to be fettered or coerced, they exhibit a strong need for autonomy and self-determination. (p. 33)

Millon and Davis (2000) specifically address the relevance of the Dauntless pattern to leadership — notably the intermediate range of the continuum, where normality shades into the more aggrandizing, antisocial variant of this pattern. They suggest that within this range “we find persons [e.g., some very successful industrialists, entrepreneurs, and corporate executives] who have never come into conflict with the law, but only because they are very effective in covering their tracks” (p. 107).

Millon (1996), in examining the developmental background of these so-called “socially sublimated antisocials” (p. 462), asserts that their experiential history is often characterized by secondary status in the family. He writes:

It is not only in socially underprivileged families or underclass communities that we see the emergence of antisocial individuals. The key problem for all has been their failure to experience the feeling of being treated fairly and having been viewed as a person/child of value in the family context. Such situations occur in many middle- and upper-middle class families. Here, parents may have given special attention to another sibling who was admired and highly esteemed, at least in the eyes of the “deprived” youngster. (p. 462)

As noted before, Millon's personality patterns have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators. The diagnostic features of the Dauntless pattern with respect to each of Millon's eight attribute domains are summarized below. It must be noted, however, that owing to the clinical emphasis of his model, the following summary of Millon's attribute domains with reference to the Dauntless pattern emphasizes the maladaptive, aggrandizing pole of the adventurous–dissenting–aggrandizing continuum. Thus, in some cases the diagnostic features outlined below will be less pronounced and more adaptive in the case of bin Laden. Nonetheless, the Dauntless elements in bin Laden's profile play a key modulating role with respect to bin Laden's predominantly Ambitious personality pattern.

***Expressive behavior.*** Dauntless personalities are typically adventurous, fearless, and daring, attracted by challenge and undeterred by personal risk. They do things their own way and are willing to take the consequences. They often act hastily and spontaneously, failing to plan ahead or heed consequences, making spur-of-the-moment decisions without carefully considering alternatives. This penchant for shooting from the hip can signify boldness and the courage of one's convictions as easily as it may constitute shortsighted imprudence and poor judgment. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 444–445, 449–450; Millon & Davis, 1998, p. 164)

***Interpersonal conduct.*** Dauntless personalities are rugged individualists, not compromisers or conciliators. They take clear stands on the issues that matter, backed up by the self-confidence and personal skills and talents to prevail. Though generally jovial and convivial, they become confrontational and defiant when obstructed or crossed. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 445–446, 449–450; Millon & Davis, 1998, p. 164)

***Cognitive style.*** Dauntless personalities are original, independent-minded, and unconventional. At their best, these personalities are enterprising, innovative, and creative. They are nonconformists first and foremost, disdainful — even contemptuous — of traditional ideals and values. Moreover, Dauntless personalities shirk orthodoxy and typically believe that too many rules stand in the way of freedom. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 446–447, 449–450; Millon & Davis, 1998, p. 164)

***Mood/Temperament.*** Dauntless personalities are untroubled and easygoing, but quickly become irritable and aggressive when crossed. They are cool, calm, and collected under pressure, restless and disgruntled when restricted or confined, tough-minded and unsentimental, and display feelings openly and directly. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 448–449, 449–450; Millon & Davis, 1998, p. 164)

***Self-image.*** Dauntless personalities are self-confident, with a corresponding view of themselves as self-sufficient and autonomous. They pride themselves on their independence, competence, strength, and their ability to prevail without social support, and they expect the same of others. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, pp. 447, 449–450; Millon & Davis, 1998, p. 164)

***Regulatory mechanisms.*** Dauntless personalities are unconstrained. They express their impulses directly, often rashly, precipitously, and without regret or remorse. They rarely refashion their thoughts and actions to fit a socially desirable mold. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 448)

**Object representations.** Dauntless personalities are driven by restive impulses to discredit established cultural ideals and mores, yet are skilled in arrogating for themselves what material spoils they can garner from society. Though fundamentally driven by self-serving motives, they are capable of incidentally advancing social causes in the service of their own ambition. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 447)

**Morphologic organization.** The inner drives and impulses of Dauntless personalities are unruly, recalcitrant, and rebellious, which gives rise to unfettered self-expression, a marked intolerance of delay or frustration, and low thresholds for emotional discharge, particularly those of a hostile nature. (Adapted from Millon, 1996, p. 448)

### ***Scale 9: The Distrusting Pattern***

It can often be productive to examine less elevated scales that, although not of primary significance, nonetheless appear to play a secondary role in the individual's overall personality configuration. Such is the case with Osama bin Laden's elevation on Scale 9 (Distrusting), which presumably modulates his more prevailing Ambitious–Dauntless mixed personality pattern. Bin Laden's Scale 9 elevation reaches a level that provides minimal evidence for a suspicious personality orientation. Of course, considering his circumstances, this scale elevation should be interpreted with circumspection. The “realistic paranoia” of a covert operator, engendered by the situational press of the incentive to avoid detection, should not be confused with a deeply embedded paranoid character structure; nonetheless, some emerging paranoid trends appear to be present in bin Laden's character composite.

There is no normal variant of the Distrusting pattern; according to Millon (1996),

it is hard to conceive [of] normal paranoids. Although a number of these individuals restrain their markedly distorted beliefs and assumptions from public view, at no point does their fundamental paranoid inclination manifest itself in an acceptable, no less successful personality style. (p. 705)

Oldham and Morris (1995), with their *Vigilant* style, nonetheless attempt to describe an adaptive version of the Distrusting pattern:

Nothing escapes the notice of . . . [people who have a] Vigilant [Distrusting] personality style. These individuals possess an exceptional awareness of their environment. . . . Their sensory antennae, continuously scanning the people and situations around them, alert them immediately to what is awry, out of place, dissonant, or dangerous, especially in their dealings with other people. Vigilant [Distrusting] types have a special kind of hearing. They are immediately aware of mixed messages, the hidden motivations, the evasions, and the subtlest distortions of the truth that elude or delude less gifted observers. With such a focus, Vigilant [Distrusting] individuals naturally assume the roles of social critic, watchdog, ombudsman, and crusader in their private or our public domain, ready to spring upon the improprieties — especially the abuses of power — that poison human affairs. (p. 157)

The Vigilant style is equivalent to the more adaptive (i.e., suspicious) variant of the MIDC's Distrusting pattern. In addition, the aspect of Oldham and Morris's (1995) description pertaining to hypervigilance (“scanning the people and situations around them”) overlaps with the “insecure” variant of the MIDC's Reticent pattern, whereas their reference to the “crusader” role in society incorporates aspects of both the Conscientious and Dominant patterns.

### *Scale 1A: The Dominant Pattern*

Occasionally, it proves useful to examine less elevated scales that, although not of primary or secondary significance, nonetheless appear to play a subsidiary role in the individual's overall personality configuration. Such is the case with bin Laden's modest elevation on Scale 1A (Dominant), which arguably modulates his more prevailing personality patterns. Bin Laden's loading on Scale 1A is in the adaptive (i.e., asserting) range of the Dominant pattern.

The Dominant pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. At the well-adjusted pole are strong-willed, commanding, assertive personalities. Slightly exaggerated Dominant features occur in forceful, intimidating, controlling personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form (evidently not the case with bin Laden), the Dominant pattern displays itself in domineering, belligerent, aggressive behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of sadistic personality disorder.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Dominant pattern (i.e., asserting and controlling types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Aggressive* style, Strack's (1997) *forceful* style, and Millon's (1994) *Controlling* pattern. According to Millon (1994), *Controlling* individuals

enjoy the power to direct and intimidate others, and to evoke obedience and respect from them. They tend to be tough and unsentimental. . . . [Dominant] types typically make effective leaders, being talented in supervising and persuading others to work for the achievement of common goals. (p. 34)

Caution should be exercised in applying Millon's description of the Controlling pattern to bin Laden, given that the Dominant pattern plays, at best, a subsidiary role in his overall personality configuration. This caveat also holds for Oldham and Morris's (1995) portrait of the *Aggressive* personality, which supplements Millon's description:

[Dominant individuals] can undertake huge responsibilities without fear of failure. They wield power with ease. They never back away from a fight. . . . When put to the service of the greater good, the Aggressive [Dominant] personality style can inspire a man or woman to great leadership, especially in times of crisis. (p. 345)

Finally, Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the normal (*forceful*) prototype of the Dominant pattern, which could modify bin Laden's primary Ambitious and Dauntless patterns:

[Dominant] people seem driven to prove their worthiness. They are characterized by an assertive, dominant, and tough-minded personal style. They tend to be strong-willed, ambitious, competitive, and self-determined. . . . In work settings, these personalities are often driven to excel. They work hard to achieve their goals, are competitive, and do well where they can take control or work independently. In supervisory or leadership positions, these persons usually take charge and see to it that a job gets done. (From Strack, 1997, p. 490, with minor modifications)

In retrospect, bin Laden was tough and strong-willed in instigating the September 11 terror attack and bold and daring in consummating the plot. Nonetheless, fundamentally, he is not a highly dominant, controlling personality type. Those subsidiary Dominant traits detected in the

assessment can perhaps be more accurately conceptualized as an expression of the self-confident audacity of his central Ambitious–Dauntless personality orientation.

### ***Scale 6: The Conscientious Pattern***

In interpreting bin Laden’s profile, it may be instructive to consider his subsidiary elevation on Scale 6 (Conscientious), which could potentially modulate his primary Ambitious–Dauntless personality composite. Bin Laden’s Scale 6 elevation is just within the *prominent* but generally adaptive (i.e., dutiful) range of the Conscientious pattern.

The Conscientious pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. At the well-adjusted pole are earnest, polite, respectful personalities. Slightly exaggerated Conscientious features occur in dutiful, dependable, and principled but rigid personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form (not true for bin Laden), the Conscientious pattern displays itself in moralistic, self-righteous, uncompromising, cognitively constricted, compulsive behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Conscientious pattern (i.e., respectful and dutiful types) correspond to Oldham and Morris’s (1995) *Conscientious* style, Millon’s (1994) *Conforming* pattern, Strack’s (1997) *respectful* style, and Leary’s (1957) *responsible–hypernormal* continuum. Millon’s Conforming pattern is correlated with the “Big Five” *Conscientiousness* factor, has a modest positive correlation with its *Extraversion* factor, a modest negative correlation with its *Neuroticism* factor, and is uncorrelated with *Agreeableness* and *Openness to Experience* (see Millon, 1994, p. 82). Adaptive variants of the Conscientious pattern are disciplined, detail-oriented, and organized. Though these traits evidently apply to bin Laden, the interpretation of his personality profile is complicated by the fact that normal-range Conscientious individuals demonstrate “an unusual degree of integrity, adhering as firmly as they can to society’s ethics and morals” (Millon, 1996, pp. 518–519). In the words of Oldham and Morris (1995),

Conscientious-style people . . . [have] strong moral principle[s] and absolute certainty, and they won’t rest until the job is done and done right. They are loyal to their families, their causes, and their superiors. Hard work is a hallmark of this personality style; Conscientious types *achieve*. . . . The Conscientious personality style flourishes within cultures . . . in which the work ethic thrives. Conscientious traits . . . [include] hard work, prudence, [and] conventionality. (p. 62)

Being principled and meticulous, Conscientious individuals “tend to follow standards from which they hesitate to deviate, attempt to act in an objective and rational manner, and decide matters in terms of what they believe is right.” They are often religious, and maintaining their integrity “ranks high among their goals” while “voicing moral values gives them a deep sense of satisfaction.” The major limitations of this personality style are its “superrationality,” leading to a “devaluation of emotion [that] tends to preclude relativistic judgments and subjective preferences”; and a predilection for “seeing complex matters in black and white, good and bad, or right or wrong terms” (Millon, 1996, p. 519). Millon (1994) summarizes the Conscientious pattern (which he labels *Conforming*) as follows:

[Conscientious individuals possess] traits not unlike Leary's [1957] responsible-hypernormal personality, with its ideal of proper, conventional, orderly, and perfectionistic behavior, as well as bearing a similarity to Factor III of the Big-Five, termed Conscientiousness. Conformers [Conscientious people] are notably respectful of tradition and authority, and act in a reasonable, proper, and conscientious way. They do their best to uphold conventional rules and standards, following given regulations closely, and tend to be judgmental of those who do not. Well-organized and reliable, prudent and restrained, they may appear to be overly self-controlled, formal and inflexible in their relationships, intolerant of deviance, and unbending in their adherence to social proprieties. Diligent about their responsibilities, they dislike having their work pile up, worry about finishing things, and come across to others as highly dependable and industrious. (p. 33)

Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the normal (*respectful*) prototype of the Conscientious pattern, based on Millon's theory, empirical findings from studies correlating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the instrument:

Responsible, industrious, and respectful of authority, these individuals tend to be conforming and work hard to uphold rules and regulations. They have a need for order and are typically conventional in their interests. These individuals can be rule abiding to a fault, however, and may be perfectionistic, inflexible, and judgmental. A formal interpersonal style and notable constriction of affect can make some respectful persons seem cold, aloof, and withholding. Underneath their social propriety, there is often a fear of disapproval and rejection, or a sense of guilt over perceived shortcomings. Indecisiveness and an inability to take charge may be evident in some of these persons due to a fear of being wrong. However, among co-workers and friends, respectful [Conscientious] personalities are best known for being well organized, reliable, and diligent. They have a strong sense of duty and loyalty, are cooperative in group efforts, show persistence even in difficult circumstances, and work well under supervision. (From Strack, 1997, p. 490, with minor modifications)

### ***Summary and Formulation: The Unprincipled Narcissist***

With his exploitative narcissism (Scale 2) and dissenting, perhaps aggrandizing, dauntlessness (Scale 1B), Osama bin Laden is a close match for the "unprincipled narcissist" syndrome. Millon and Davis (1998, 2000) describe these individuals as follows:

Unprincipled narcissists (narcissistic psychopaths) exhibit an arrogant sense of self-worth, an indifference to the welfare of others, and a fraudulent social manner. There is a desire to exploit others or at least an expectation of special recognition and consideration without assuming reciprocal responsibilities. A deficient social conscience is evident in a tendency to flout conventions, to engage in actions that raise questions of personal integrity, and to disregard the rights of others. Failures are justified by expansive fantasies and frank prevarications.

Descriptively, this psychopathic subtype may be characterized as being devoid of a superego — that is, as evidencing an unscrupulous, amoral, and deceptive approach to relationships with others. Disloyal and exploitative in the extreme, unprincipled narcissists are prevalent among society's con artists and charlatans, many of whom are vindictive toward and contemptuous of their victims.

The unprincipled narcissist often evidences a rash willingness to risk harm and is usually fearless in the face of threats and punitive action. Malicious tendencies are projected outward, precipitating frequent personal and family difficulties, as well as occasional legal entanglements. Vengeful gratification is often obtained by humiliating others. These narcissistic psychopaths operate as if they have no principles other than exploiting others for their personal gain. Lacking a genuine sense of guilt and possessing little social conscience, they are opportunists who enjoy the process of swindling others, outwitting them in a game they enjoy playing, in which others are held in contempt because of the ease with which they can be seduced. Relationships survive only as long as the narcissistic psychopath has something to gain. People are abandoned with no thought to the anguish they may experience because of the psychopathic narcissist's irresponsible behaviors.

Unprincipled narcissists display an indifference to truth that, if brought to their attention, is likely to elicit an attitude of nonchalant indifference. They are skillful in the ways of social influence, are capable of feigning an air of justified innocence, and are adept in guilefully deceiving others with charm and glibness. Lacking any deep feelings of loyalty, they may successfully scheme beneath a veneer of politeness and civility. Their principal orientation is that of outwitting others — “Do unto others before they do unto you.” Many of these narcissists attempt to present an image of cool strength, acting arrogant and fearless. To prove their courage, they may invite danger and punishment; however, rather than having a deterrent effect, it only reinforces their exploitive behaviors. Moreover, unprincipled narcissists have a devious and guileful style, plotting and scheming in their calculations to manipulate others. They exhibit a basic self-centeredness and an indifference to the attitudes and reactions of others, preying on the weak and vulnerable, and enjoying their dismay and anger.

### **Conclusion: Political Implications**

In the larger context of developing a more comprehensive understanding of the basis of political leadership orientations in underlying personality dynamics — in international terrorism as in conventional polities such as nation-states — there may be some merit in exploring the nexus of Osama bin Laden's style and classic models of personality in politics. The profile of the highly narcissistic (Scale 2), substantially dauntless (Scale 1B), dominant (Scale 1A) Osama bin Laden — though an imperfect match — most closely approximates Margaret Hermann's (1987) “expansionist” orientation to foreign affairs. These leaders have a view of the world as being “divided into ‘us’ and ‘them’,” based on a belief system in which conflict is viewed as inherent in the international system. Expansionist leaders “are not averse to using the ‘enemy’ as a scapegoat” and their rhetoric often may be “hostile in tone” (pp. 168–169).

A possible implication of the present study is that it places in stark relief the political implications of a particular personality structure. The potential ramifications in international politics, were a leader with Osama bin Laden's personality profile to ascend to a high-level leadership position in a world or regional power — either formally or informally — are transparent. Fortunately, as I have attempted to show in the present endeavor, there exist assessment technologies sufficiently advanced to enable a psychological early warning system with respect to identifying persons in positions of power who pose a threat to regional stability and world peace.

The major implication of the study is the suggestion that bin Laden does not fit the profile of the highly conscientious, closed-minded religious fundamentalist, nor that of the religious martyr who combines these qualities with devout, self-sacrificing features; rather, it suggests that bin Laden is adept at exploiting Islamic fundamentalism in the service of his own ambition and personal dreams of glory.

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