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## The Political Personality of Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden

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**THE POLITICAL PERSONALITY  
OF 2020 DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE JOE BIDEN**

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## *Abstract*

### **The Political Personality of 2020 Democratic Presidential Nominee Joe Biden**

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This paper presents the results of an indirect assessment of the personality of former U.S. vice president Joe Biden, Democratic nominee in the 2020 U.S. presidential election, from the conceptual perspective of personologist Theodore Millon.

Psychodiagnostically relevant data about Biden were collected from biographical sources and media reports and synthesized into a personality profile using the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC), which yields 34 normal and maladaptive personality classifications congruent with *DSM-III-R*, *DSM-IV*, and *DSM-5*.

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. Biden's primary personality pattern was found to be Outgoing/gregarious, complemented by a secondary Accommodating/cooperative pattern and subsidiary Ambitious/confident features.

The prominence of the Outgoing pattern, in conjunction with a distinctive Accommodating pattern in his overall personality configuration, is indicative of the *conciliatory extravert* subtype. This personality composite provides the personological substrate for a strong affiliation motive. These individuals are driven to seek approval; they want others to like them and view them as a friend or ally. To achieve that motivational goal, they often compliment, praise, or flatter others, presenting an image of goodwill. When disagreements occur, they attempt to smooth things over, sometimes at the cost of conceding.

Leaders with Biden's personality profile are likely to exhibit an *interpersonal* leadership style, characterized by flexibility, compromise, and an emphasis on teamwork. The general tenor of a Biden presidency likely will be conciliatory, which could render a prospective President Biden vulnerable to manipulation by pressure groups and handicap him in negotiations or conflicts with foreign adversaries.

## Introduction

This paper reports the results of a psychodiagnostic case study of former U.S. vice president (2009–2017) Joseph Robinette Biden Jr., Democratic nominee in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The study offers a more detailed personality profile than a previous working paper titled [“The Political Personality of Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden”](#) (Immelman, 2019) and predicts Biden’s likely leadership style, if elected president.

Conceptually, the study is informed by Theodore Millon’s (1969, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2003; Millon & Davis, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985) model of personality as adapted (Immelman, 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005) for the study of personality in politics.

I employ the terms *personality* and *politics* in Fred Greenstein’s (1992) narrowly construed sense. Politics, by this definition, “refers to the politics most often studied by political scientists — that of civil government and of the extra-governmental processes that more or less directly impinge upon government, such as political parties” and campaigns. Personality, as narrowly construed in [political psychology](#), “excludes political attitudes and opinions ... and applies only to nonpolitical personal differences” (p. 107).

Personality may be concisely defined as:

a complex pattern of deeply embedded psychological characteristics that are largely nonconscious and not easily altered, expressing themselves automatically in almost every facet of functioning. Intrinsic and pervasive, these traits emerge from a complicated matrix of biological dispositions and experiential learnings, and ultimately comprise the individual’s distinctive pattern of perceiving, feeling, thinking, coping, and behaving. (Millon, 1996, p. 4)

Greenstein (1992) makes a compelling case for studying personality in government and politics: “Political institutions and processes operate through human agency. It would be remarkable if they were *not* influenced by the properties that distinguish one individual from another” (p. 124).

That perspective provides the context for the current paper, which presents an analysis of the personality of Joe Biden and examines the political implications of his personality profile with respect to leadership style and executive performance.

The methodology employed in this study involves the construction of a theoretically grounded personality profile derived from empirical analysis of biographical source materials (see Immelman, 2003, 2005, 2014).

A comprehensive review of Millon’s personological model and its applicability to political personality has been provided elsewhere (e.g., Immelman, 1993, 2003, 2005; Immelman & Millon, 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).

**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 serve 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.

## 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 Joe Biden.

### ***Sources of Data***

Diagnostic information pertaining to Biden was collected from a broad array of nearly 400 media reports that offered useful, diagnostically relevant psychobiographical information.

### ***Personality Inventory***

The assessment instrument, the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC; Immelman, 2015), 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, 2014).<sup>1</sup> The 12-scale (see Table 2) instrument taps the first five "noninferential" (Millon, 1990, p. 157) attribute domains previously listed in Table 1.

The 12 MIDC scales correspond to major personality patterns posited by Millon (1994, 1996), which are congruent with the syndromes described in the revised third edition, fourth edition, and fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R, DSM-IV, and DSM-5)* of the American Psychiatric Association (APA; 1987, 1994, 2013) 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 diagnostic procedure, termed *psychodiagnostic meta-analysis*, can be conceptualized as a three-part process: first, an *analysis* 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 (see Immelman, 2003, 2005, 2014 for a more detailed account of the procedure).

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

**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-5</i> , 301.7)
Scale 2:	Ambitious pattern a. Confident b. Self-serving c. Exploitative (Narcissistic; <i>DSM-5</i> , 301.81)
Scale 3:	Outgoing pattern a. Congenial b. Gregarious c. Impulsive (Histrionic; <i>DSM-5</i> , 301.50)
Scale 4:	Accommodating pattern a. Cooperative b. Agreeable c. Submissive (Dependent; <i>DSM-5</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-5</i> , 301.4)
Scale 7:	Reticent pattern a. Circumspect b. Inhibited c. Withdrawn (Avoidant; <i>DSM-5</i> , 301.82)
Scale 8:	Retiring pattern a. Reserved b. Aloof c. Solitary (Schizoid; <i>DSM-5</i> , 301.20)
Scale 9:	Distrusting pattern d. Suspicious e. Paranoid ( <i>DSM-5</i> , 301.0)
Scale 0:	Erratic pattern d. Unstable e. Borderline ( <i>DSM-5</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 Joe Biden, diagnostic classification of the subject, and the clinical interpretation of significant MIDC scale elevations derived from the diagnostic procedure.

Biden received 26 affirmative (and 13 equivocal/affirmative) endorsements on the 170-item MIDC (see Appendix). Judging from endorsement-rate deviations from the mean (see Table 3), data on Biden's self-image (7 endorsements) were most easily obtained and may be overrepresented in the data set, whereas data on his mood/temperament (4 endorsements) were most difficult to obtain and may be underrepresented in the data set.

Descriptive statistics for Biden's MIDC ratings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*MIDC Item Endorsement Rate by Attribute Domain for Joe Biden*

Attribute domain	Diagnostic criteria (Items)	
	Present	Possible
Expressive behavior	5	10
Interpersonal conduct	5	9
Cognitive style	5	7
Mood/temperament	4	5
Self-image	7	8
Sum	26	39
Mean	5.2	7.8
Standard deviation	1.0	1.7

Biden's MIDC scale scores are reported in Table 4. The MIDC profile yielded by Biden's raw scores is displayed in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Table 2 for scale names. Solid horizontal lines on the profile form 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 Joe Biden*

Scale	Personality pattern	Lower	Upper
1A	Dominant: Asserting–Controlling–Aggressive (Sadistic)	3	6
1B	Dauntless: Adventurous–Dissenting–Aggrandizing (Antisocial)	1	4
2	Ambitious: Confident–Self-serving–Exploitative (Narcissistic)	5	8
3	Outgoing: Congenial–Gregarious–Impulsive (Histrionic)	13	19
4	Accommodating: Cooperative–Agreeable–Submissive (Dependent)	9	11
5A	Aggrieved: Unpresuming–Self-denying–Self-defeating (Masochistic)	0	1
5B	Contentious: Resolute–Oppositional–Negativistic (Passive-aggressive)	0	0
6	Conscientious: Respectful–Dutiful–Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive)	2	4
7	Reticent: Circumspect–Inhibited–Withdrawn (Avoidant)	0	0
8	Retiring: Reserved–Aloof–Solitary (Schizoid)	0	0
	Subtotal for basic personality scales	33	53
9	Distrusting: Suspicious–Paranoid (Paranoid)	0	0
0	Erratic: Unstable–Borderline (Borderline)	0	0
	Full-scale total	33	53

*Note.* Table 4 depicts the 12 personality patterns along with their normal, exaggerated, and pathological scale gradations and equivalent *DSM* terminology (in parentheses). Interpretation of the data is based on scale scores derived from affirmative MIDC item endorsements only, specified in the column labeled *Lower*. (The column labeled *Upper* displays scale scores based on the sum of affirmative and equivocal/affirmative endorsements.)

Biden’s most elevated scale is Scale 3 (Outgoing), with a score of 13. In addition, Biden obtained a secondary elevation on Scale 4 (Accommodating), with a score of 9, and a subsidiary elevation on Scale 2 (Ambitious), with a score of 5. The primary Scale 3 elevation is within the *prominent* (10–26) range, while the secondary elevation on Scales 4 and the subsidiary elevation on Scale 2 are in the *present* (5–9) range. The Scale 1A elevation failed to reach the lower threshold of the *present* (5–9) range. No other scale elevation is psychodiagnostically significant; however, low scores on some of the scales are of note — particularly Scale 1A (Dominant), with a score of 3 (which is unusually low for a high-level leader) and Scale 6 (Conscientious), with a score of 2 (which has important implications for campaigning and governing).

Based on the cut-off score guidelines in the MIDC manual, all of Biden’s scale elevations (see Figure 1) are within normal limits, though the spike on Scale 3 (Outgoing) is noteworthy by virtue of its moderate elevation and singular prominence in Biden’s overall personality configuration. In terms of MIDC scale gradation (see Table 2 and Figure 1) criteria, supplemented by clinical judgment, Biden was classified as primarily an Outgoing/gregarious personality, complemented by a secondary Accommodating/cooperative pattern and a subsidiary Ambitious/confident pattern.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In each case, the label preceding the slash signifies the *categorical* personality pattern, whereas the label following the slash indicates the specific scale gradation, or personality type, on the *dimensional* continuum; see Table 2.



## Discussion

The discussion of the results examines Joe Biden's MIDC scale elevations from the perspective of Millon's (1994, 1996; 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 brief synthesis of the practical political implications of Biden's personality profile.

Few people exhibit personality patterns in "pure" or prototypical form; more often, individual personalities represent a blend of two or more primary and secondary orientations. With his moderately elevated Scale 3, Biden emerged from the assessment as primarily a *gregarious* type, an adaptive, slightly exaggerated variant of the Outgoing pattern. Biden's secondary elevation on Scale 4 (Accommodating) and subsidiary elevation on Scale 2 (Ambitious) reflect adaptive levels of, respectively, agreeableness and self-confidence. Biden's score of 3 on Scale 1A (Dominant) is the lowest score obtained by any major-party presidential candidate in the seven election cycles since 1996.<sup>4</sup>

The Millon Index of Personality Styles manual (Millon, 1994) describes Outgoing personalities as dramatic attention-getters who thrive on being the center of social events, go out of their way to be popular with others, have confidence in their social abilities, and become easily bored, especially when faced with repetitive and mundane tasks (pp. 31–32).

The interpretation of Biden's profile must also account for secondary elevations on Scale 4 (Accommodating) and Scale 2 (Ambitious). The Millon Index of Personality Styles manual (Millon, 1994), employing the label *Agreeing*, describes Accommodating personalities as notably cooperative, amicable, participatory, and compromising, conveying a self-respecting, congenial obligingness — a willingness to adapt their preferences to be compatible with those of others, to reconcile differences to achieve peaceable solutions, and to concede when necessary (p. 34). Ambitious personalities — labeled *Asserting* — are bold, competitive, and self-assured individuals who easily assume leadership roles, expect others to recognize their special qualities, and often act as though entitled (p. 32).

Chief executives with an elevated Outgoing scale, accompanied by prominent Dauntless (Scale 1B) and Ambitious (Scale 2) patterns and a low score on Scale 6 (Conscientious), may be prone to errors of judgment related to "neglect of the role demands of political office, low resistance to corrupting influences, and impulsiveness .... [as well as] favoring loyalty and friendship over competence-for-the-position in making appointments to high-level public office" (Immelman, 1993, p. 736). Biden, though scoring low on Conscientiousness, fits this profile only marginally, given his clinically nonsignificant elevation of Scale 1B (Dauntless) and a Scale 2 (Ambitious) elevation in the nonpathological, adaptive range.

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<sup>4</sup> In descending order of magnitude, the Scale 1A elevations for major-party presidential nominees studied at the [Unit for the Study of Personality in Politics](#) are: Donald Trump, 22 (2020); Hillary Clinton, 21 (2016); Bob Dole, 21 (1996); George W. Bush, 11 (2000); John McCain, 10 (2008); Al Gore, 8 (2000); Mitt Romney, 8 (2012); Bill Clinton, 7 (1996); Barack Obama, 7 (2008); John Kerry, 6 (2004); Joe Biden, 3 (2020).

### Scale 3: The Outgoing Pattern

The Outgoing pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive.<sup>5</sup> At the well-adjusted pole are warm, congenial personalities.<sup>6</sup> Slightly exaggerated Outgoing features occur in sociable, gregarious personalities.<sup>7</sup> In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, extraversion manifests itself in impulsive, self-centered, overdramatizing behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of histrionic personality disorder.<sup>8</sup>

Normal, adaptive variants of the MIDC's Outgoing pattern (i.e., congenial and gregarious types) correspond to Strack's (1997) *sociable* style and Millon's (1994) *Outgoing* pattern. It overlaps with the *cooperative* segment of Leary's (1957) *cooperative–overconventional* continuum (which is, however, more congruent with the Accommodating pattern). Millon's Outgoing pattern is highly correlated with the five-factor model's *Extraversion* factor, moderately correlated with its *Conscientiousness* and *Openness to Experience* factors, has a moderate negative correlation with its *Neuroticism* factor, and is uncorrelated with its *Agreeableness* factor (see Millon, 1994, p. 82).

Millon (1994) summarizes the Outgoing pattern as follows:

At the most extreme levels of the Outgoing pole are persons characterized by features similar to the DSM's histrionic personality. At less extreme levels, gregarious persons go out of their way to be popular with others, have confidence in their social abilities, feel they can readily influence and charm others, and possess a personal style that makes people like them. Most enjoy engaging in social activities. ... Talkative, lively, socially clever, they are often dramatic attention-getters who thrive on being the center of social events. Many become easily bored, especially when faced with repetitive and mundane tasks. ... [Prone to] intense and shifting moods, gregarious types are sometimes viewed as fickle and excitable. On the other hand, their enthusiasms often prove effective in energizing and motivating others. Inclined to be facile and enterprising, outgoing people may be highly skilled at manipulating others to meet their needs. (pp. 31–32)

Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the normal (*sociable*) prototype of the Outgoing 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:

They are characterized by an outgoing, talkative, and extraverted style of behavior and tend to be lively, dramatic, and colorful. These people are typically viewed by others as spontaneous, clever, enthusiastic, and vigorous. ... Sociable individuals may also be seen as fickle in their attachments. They may have quickly shifting moods and emotions, and may come across as shallow and ungenune. These persons tend to prefer novelty and excitement, and are bored by ordinary or mundane activities. ... They often do well interacting with the public, may be skilled and adept at

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<sup>5</sup> Joe Biden's score of 13 on MIDC scale 3 (Outgoing) — a measure of extraversion — compares as follows with U.S. presidents studied by the author: Donald Trump, 20 (Immelman & Griebie, 2020); George W. Bush, 16 (Immelman, 2002); Bill Clinton, 15 (Immelman, 1998); Barack Obama, 3 (Immelman, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Relevant to Biden.

<sup>7</sup> Relevant to Biden.

<sup>8</sup> Not applicable to Biden.

rallying or motivating others, and will usually put their best side forward even in difficult circumstances. (From Strack, 1997, p. 489, with minor modifications)

In politics, leadership ability may well be compromised in individuals who “become easily bored, especially when faced with repetitive and mundane tasks,” and who are prone to “intense and shifting moods.” Those limitations must, however, be weighed against the high degree of skill with which Outgoing leaders are able to engage their capacity for “energizing and motivating” the public.

Millon’s personality patterns have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators (expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization). Owing to the clinical emphasis of his model, Millon’s (1996) attribute domains accentuate the maladaptive range of the personality patterns in his taxonomy — in the case of the Outgoing pattern, the impulsive pole of the congenial–gregarious–impulsive continuum. The “normalized” (i.e., de-pathologized; cf. Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 238–240) diagnostic features of the Outgoing pattern are summarized below, along with the diagnostic features of the exaggerated variant of the pattern. The maladaptive, pathological variant of the Outgoing pattern is omitted because it does not apply to Biden.

### ***Expressive Behavior***

The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Outgoing individuals is *sociability*; they are typically friendly, engaging, lively, extraverted, and gregarious. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern are predisposed to *impulsiveness*, intolerant of inactivity and inclined to seek sensation or excitement to prevent boredom; such individuals may display a penchant for momentary excitements, fleeting adventures, and short-sighted hedonism. As leaders, Outgoing personalities may be somewhat lacking in “gravitas,” inclined to make spur-of-the-moment decisions without carefully considering alternatives, predisposed to reckless or imprudent behaviors, and prone to scandal. (Millon, 1996, pp. 366–367, 371; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Sample observation:** A former Obama administration official described Joe Biden as “more like Bill Clinton” than the “cool and cerebral” Barack Obama. She described Biden as “very emotional, very animated and voluble” — “a back-slapping politician” who is “really in your face.” (Fifield, 2010)

### ***Interpersonal Conduct***

The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Outgoing individuals is *demonstrativeness*; they are amiable and display their feelings openly. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern tend to be *attention seeking*, being attentive to popular appeal and actively soliciting praise and approval. In a political leadership role, Outgoing personalities display a substantial need for validation, one manifestation of which may be an overreliance on public opinion as an instrument of policy direction and formulation. (Millon, 1996, pp. 367–368, 371; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Sample observation:** “The former vice president ... has a long history of putting his hands all over pretty much anyone who comes within reach. Women. Men. Children. Longtime friends. Perfect strangers.” (Tumulty, 2019)

### *Cognitive Style*

The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Outgoing individuals is *unreflectiveness*; they avoid introspective thought and focus on practical, concrete matters. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern tend to be *superficial*, which is sometimes associated with flightiness in reasoning or thinking. They are not paragons of deep thinking or self-reflection and tend to speak and write in impressionistic generalities; though talkative, they tend to avoid earnest or complex matters and their words may lack detail and substance. In politics, more extreme variants of the Outgoing pattern may be associated with lapses of judgment and flawed decision making. (Millon, 1996, pp. 368–369, 371; Millon & Davis, 2000, p. 236)

**Sample observation:** “Sometimes he talks before thinking. He is not always a systematic thinker. He loves to hear himself talk. He can get carried away with his enthusiasms.” (Fineman, 2008)

### *Mood/Temperament*

The core diagnostic feature of the temperamental disposition and prevailing mood of Outgoing individuals is emotional *expressiveness*; they are animated, uninhibited, and affectively responsive. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern are quite *changeable*, with occasional displays of short-lived and superficial moods. Leaders with an Outgoing personality pattern are skilled at staying in touch with public sentiments, but may be mercurial, volatile, or heedless, prone to periodic emotional outbursts, and easily angered or bored. (Millon, 1996, pp. 370–371)

**Sample observation:** “Since he joined the Democratic race ... in the November 2020 election, Biden has won over voters with tender moments that brought them to tears, while also showing flashes of anger.” (Hunnicuttt & Oliphant, 2020)

### *Self-Image*

The core diagnostic feature of the self-image of Outgoing individuals is their view of themselves as being socially desirable, well liked, and *charming*. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern tend to perceive themselves as stimulating, popular, and *gregarious*. Given their appealing self-image, these personalities are confident in their social abilities. In politics, Outgoing personalities, more than any other character types, are strongly attracted to the self-validation offered by adulating crowds. (Millon, 1996, pp. 369, 371; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Sample observation:** In his 2008 speech at the National Democratic Convention in Denver, Biden said, “I think it’s fair to say that I have almost as many friends on the Republican side of the aisle as I do the Democratic side of the aisle.” (Joseph R. Biden’s convention speech, 2008)

### ***Regulatory Mechanisms***

The core diagnostic feature of the regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of more extreme variants<sup>9</sup> of the Outgoing pattern is *self-distraction*; their preferred stress-management strategy is to engage in relatively mindless activities — for example, games, physical diversions, or other forms of amusement or recreation. Although healthy self-distraction is generally adaptive in coping with the stress of high-level public office, some of its political implications may be troubling — including a leader’s failure to face up to unpleasant or dissonant thoughts, feelings, and actions, which may be compounded by cosmetic image-making as revealed in a succession of socially attractive but changing facades. (Millon, 1996, p. 370)

### ***Object Representations***

The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of more extreme variants<sup>10</sup> of the Outgoing pattern is their *shallow* nature. Outgoing personalities characteristically seek stimulation, attention, and excitement, presumably to fill an inner void. In politics, Outgoing leaders thrive on the thrill of political life and the international spotlight, and in office may not be averse to instigating a crisis for instrumental purposes. Thus, although generally conflict averse, they may engage in brinkmanship to force a desired outcome and secure a legacy — especially if narcissistic tendencies feature prominently in their personality profile. (Millon, 1996, p. 369)

### ***Morphologic Organization***

The core diagnostic feature of the morphologic organization of more extreme variants<sup>11</sup> of the Outgoing pattern is *exteroceptiveness*; they tend to focus on external matters and the here-and-now, being neither introspective nor dwelling excessively on the past, presumably to blot out awareness of a relatively insubstantial inner self. The personal political style of Outgoing leaders, hypothetically, may have a similar quality, with ad hoc strategies sometimes displacing the disciplined pursuit of carefully formulated policy objectives. (Millon, 1996, p. 370)

## **Scale 4: The Accommodating Pattern**

The Accommodating pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive.<sup>12</sup> In the case of Joe Biden, only the normal variant — associated with cooperative, conciliatory personalities — has any bearing on his overall personality functioning and executive performance.

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<sup>9</sup> Marginally relevant to Biden.

<sup>10</sup> Marginally relevant to Biden.

<sup>11</sup> Marginally relevant to Biden.

<sup>12</sup> Biden’s score of 9 on MIDC scale 4 (Accommodating) — a measure of agreeableness — compares as follows with recent U.S. presidents: Barack Obama, 5 (Immelman, 2010); Bill Clinton, 5 (Immelman, 1998); George W. Bush, 4 (Immelman, 2002); Donald Trump, 0 (Immelman, 2016; Immelman & Griebie, 2020).

The normal, adaptive variant of the Accommodating pattern corresponds to Strack's (1997) *cooperative* style and Millon's (1994) *Agreeing* pattern. The Accommodating pattern also overlaps with the *docile* and *cooperative* segments of Leary's (1957) *docile-dependent* and *cooperative-overconventional* interpersonal styles. Millon's Agreeing pattern is highly correlated with the five-factor model's *Agreeableness* factor. The Accommodating style is equivalent to Simonton's (1988) *interpersonal* executive leadership style.

According to Millon (1994) the Accommodating pattern (which he labels *Agreeing*)

is akin to the normal "cooperative" segment of Leary's [1957] cooperative-overconventional interpersonal style, representing an accommodating, participatory, compromising, and agreeing pattern of behavior. ... [The Accommodating pattern] corresponds ... to the Big-Five's Factor II, Agreeableness ... in conveying a self-respecting concordance with others; a congenial obligingness is voluntary rather than being coerced or being a product of self-derogation. Those who fit the congenial/Agreeing [Accommodating] pattern are notably cooperative and amicable. Disinclined to upset others, they are willing to adapt their preferences to be compatible with those of others. Trusting others to be kind and thoughtful, they are also willing to reconcile differences and to achieve peaceable solutions, as well as to be considerate and to concede when necessary. Cordiality and compromise characterize their interpersonal relationships. (p. 34)

Millon (1996) further notes that Accommodating personalities in the adaptive range of the pattern tend to demand little from others, are relatively uncritical, and are invariably gracious, even to those they may dislike (p. 335).

Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the interpersonal style of the normal (*cooperative*) prototype of the Accommodating 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:

Cooperative [Accommodating] persons are often cooperative, reliable, considerate of others, and deferential. They may appear even-tempered, docile, obliging, or self-effacing. When faced with difficult or stressful situations, cooperative persons may seek others to provide authority, leadership, and direction. (Adapted from Strack, 1997, p. 489)

Millon's personality patterns have predictable, reliable, 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 normal variant of the Accommodating pattern with respect to each of these attribute domains are summarized below.

### ***Expressive Behavior***

The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Accommodating individuals is *avoidance of self-assertion*; they tend to be overly cooperative and acquiescent, preferring to yield and placate rather than assert themselves. They are characteristically generous and thoughtful, impressing others with the gentility of their behavior and their humility, cordiality, and graciousness. (Millon, 1996, pp. 331–332)



**Sample observation:** “Mr. Biden already is bending to that pressure. He announced two new policy proposals designed to appeal to Sanders liberals, one to lower the eligibility age for Medicare to 60 from 65, the other to forgive student debts for lower-income and middle-class students who attended public and historically black colleges.” (Seib, 2020)

### ***Interpersonal Conduct***

The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Accommodating individuals is *submissiveness*; to achieve their goals, they tend to ask for little other than acceptance and support, avoiding expressions of power. (Millon, 1996, p. 332)

**Sample observation:** “Mr. Trump’s unfiltered, combative style is a natural fit for the hyperpolarized audiences on Facebook and Twitter, whereas Biden’s more conciliatory, healer-in-chief approach can render him invisible on platforms where conflict equals clicks.” (Roose, 2020)

### ***Cognitive Style***

The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Accommodating individuals is a certain *naiveté*, or *artlessness*; they tend to be unperceptive and uncritical, inclined to look on the bright side of things and smoothing over difficulties or downplaying troubling events. (Millon, 1996, p. 332)

**Sample observation:** “At a town hall in Hanover, New Hampshire ... Biden asked the younger members of his audience to try to imagine how they would have felt if President Barack Obama had been assassinated. It was an attempt to explain to them what it felt like to lose Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy in an eight-week span in 1968. The *New York Times* in particular seemed to treat the comment as something close to bizarre.” (Greenfield, 2020)

### ***Mood/Temperament***

The core diagnostic feature of the characteristic mood and temperament of Accommodating individuals is a prevailing *mild-mannered* mood and generally *pacifist* temperament; they avoid tension and interpersonal conflict. (Millon, 1996, p. 334)

**Sample observation:** “Biden, whose decency defines him, will want someone [as his vice-presidential running mate] whose empathy, warmth, devotion to the dignity of every human being, kindness to staff and closeness to family are akin to his own. He will want someone who believes in winning over political adversaries, not running them over.” (Rubin, 2020)

### ***Self-Image***

The core diagnostic feature of the self-perception of Accommodating individuals is *cooperativeness*; they view themselves as considerate, thoughtful, and modest in their aspirations. (Millon, 1996, p. 333)

**Sample observation:** “‘Folks, I believe one of the things I’m pretty good at is bringing people together,’ Mr. Biden, the former vice president, said.” (Glueck, 2019)

### ***Regulatory Mechanisms***

The core diagnostic feature of the unconscious regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of more extreme variants<sup>13</sup> of the Accommodating pattern is *introjection*; as a defense against anxieties stemming from deep-seated fears of powerlessness, these individuals tend to internalize the beliefs and values of a more powerful and supporting figure. Another common regulatory mechanism is *denial*; these individuals tend to cover up and smooth over troublesome events. (Millon, 1996, p. 333)

### ***Object Representations***

The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of more extreme variants<sup>14</sup> of the Accommodating pattern is a *lack of sophistication*; these individuals are artless, guileless, and sincere in the trust they place in others. They possess an ingrained capacity for expressing tenderness and consideration and have a preference for forming attachments to strong, competent, sympathetic figures. (Millon, 1996, p. 333)

### ***Morphologic Organization***

The core diagnostic feature of the morphological organization of more extreme variants<sup>15</sup> of the Accommodating pattern is its rudimentary, relatively *undeveloped* nature; because of the degree to which these individuals have entrusted their fate to others, excessively Accommodating personalities have had little need to develop a diversity of coping strategies. Because of a strong need to escape social condemnation, highly Accommodating personalities are careful to restrain assertive impulses and to deny feelings that might provoke criticism and rejection. This, in part, accounts both for their social affability and good-naturedness and for their tendency to be self-deprecating without being overly harsh about their own shortcomings. (Millon, 1996, pp. 333–334)

## **Scale 2: The Ambitious Pattern**

The Ambitious pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. In the case of Biden, only the normal variant — well-adjusted, confident, and socially poised — has any significance.

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

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<sup>13</sup> Marginally relevant to Biden.

<sup>14</sup> Marginally relevant to Biden.

<sup>15</sup> Marginally relevant to Biden.

*Neuroticism* factor (Millon, 1994, p. 82). It is associated with “social composure, or poise, self-possession, equanimity, and stability” (Millon, 1994, p. 32).

Millon (1994) summarizes the Asserting (i.e., Ambitious) pattern as follows:

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 ... [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)

Strack (1997) provides the following description of the normal (*confident*) 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. ... 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. (Adapted from Strack, 1997, pp. 489–490, with minor modifications)

It should be emphasized, however, that the Ambitious pattern plays a rather limited, subsidiary role in Biden’s overall personality functioning. Accordingly, we will not elaborate on the diagnostic indicators associated with each of the eight attribute domains with respect to the Ambitious pattern.

## Summary and Formulation

Predominantly extraverted (Scale 3) personality types with a distinctive agreeable (Scale 4) tendency, as in the case of Joe Biden, may be characterized as *conciliatory extraverts*. Following personologist Theodore Millon (1996, p. 374), this particular personality composite may also be labeled *appeasing extravert* and described as follows:

The conciliatory extravert subtype combines outgoing and accommodating (agreeable) features. They have strong affiliation motives and are driven to seek approval. They want others to like them and view them as a friend or ally. To achieve this goal, they often compliment, praise, flatter, and commend others, presenting an image of goodwill. When disagreements occur, they attempt to smooth things over, even when they must sacrifice ground, compromise their own desires, or concede important points. They are disinclined to retaliate against those who cannot be placated (Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 242–243).

## Leadership Implications

The present study offers an empirically based framework for anticipating Joe Biden's executive performance as president if he defeats Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. There is utility in coordinating the present findings with alternative models of political personality and complementary theories of political leadership.

### *Presidential Style*

Dean Keith Simonton's (1988) empirically derived framework of five presidential styles (charismatic, interpersonal, deliberative, neurotic, and creative) offers a promising frame of reference. Given the fidelity with which Simonton's leadership styles mirror the currently popular five-factor model (FFM), whose correlates with Millon's personality patterns have been empirically established (Millon, 1994, p. 82), Simonton's stylistic dimensions may have considerable heuristic value for establishing links between personality and political leadership.

The prominence of the Outgoing pattern in Biden's profile, in conjunction with his Accommodating predisposition (congruent with the "Big Five" Agreeableness factor), provides the personological substrate (i.e., psychological driver) for Simonton's (1988) *interpersonal* presidential leadership style:

The interpersonal president characteristically "allows Cabinet members considerable independence. ..." ..., "encourages the exercise of independent judgment by aides" ..., "gives credit to others for work done" ..., "endears himself to staff through his courtesy and consideration" ..., "is flexible" ..., "emphasizes teamwork" ..., "is frequently in contact with his advisers and Cabinet" ..., "maintains close relationships with wide circle of associates" ..., is "willing to make compromises" ..., "relies on working in a staff system, deciding among options formulated by advisers" ..., "keeps members of his staff informed on matters concerning other departments" ..., "knows his limitations" ..., and "supports constitutional government. ..." (Simonton, 1988, pp. 929, 931)

As a leader high on interpersonal, the following traits likely will *not* be characteristic of a Biden presidency:

"[A]ccepts recommendations of others only under protest" ..., "believes he knows what is best for the people" ..., "is emphatic in asserting his judgments [i.e., is deferential]. ..." ..., is "suspicious of reformers" ..., is "impatient, abrupt in conference" ..., "bases decisions on willfulness, nervousness, and egotism" ..., "tends to force decisions to be made prematurely" ..., and "rarely permits himself to be outflanked."<sup>16</sup> (Simonton, 1988, p. 931)

### *Presidential Temperament*

James David Barber (1972/1992), focusing more narrowly on presidential temperament, developed a simple model of presidential character that has shown some utility in predicting successful (active–positive) and failed (active–negative) presidencies.

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<sup>16</sup> These traits are *uncharacteristic* of the interpersonal style and thus *unlikely* in a Biden presidency.

In terms of presidential temperament, Joe Biden seems most similar to Barber's (1972/1992) *passive-positive* presidential character — leaders such as William Howard Taft, Warren G. Harding, and Ronald Reagan, characterized by an ingratiating personality, optimism, and a desire to please. These affiliation-motivated presidents are low on the need for power and do not invest much energy in the office of the presidency but nonetheless like the job.

### ***Character-Based Leadership Skills***

Stanley Renshon (1996) has proposed “three distinct aspects” (p. 226) of political leadership shaped by character: mobilization — the ability to arouse, engage, and direct the public; orchestration — the organizational skill and ability to craft specific policies; and consolidation — the skills and tasks required to preserve the supportive relationships necessary for an executive leader to implement and institutionalize his or her policy judgments (pp. 227, 411).

In terms of Renshon's (1996) three critical components of political leadership, Joe Biden, due to his modest elevations on dominance and ambition, does not appear particularly skilled in *mobilization*, and hence may falter in rallying, energizing, and motivating his supporters. In the sphere of *orchestration*, Biden's relative dearth of personality traits related to conscientiousness (i.e., having insufficient attention to detail and diminished capacity for sustained focus), exacerbated by the relatively superficial cognitive style characteristic of outgoing personalities, may hamper his presidential performance. Finally, Biden's conciliatory extraversion may be an instrumental with respect to *consolidation*, potentially enabling him to foster the supportive relationships necessary for consummating his policy objectives.

### ***Foreign Policy Leadership Orientation***

Lloyd Etheredge (1978) and Margaret Hermann (1987) developed personality-based models of foreign policy leadership orientation that can be employed rationally and intuitively to enhance and complement the predictive utility of Millon's model with respect to leadership performance in the arena of international relations.

Etheredge (1978) proposed a “four-fold speculative typology” of “fundamental personality-based differences in orientation towards America's preferred operating style and role in the international system” (p. 434). In terms of Etheredge's model, which locates policymakers on the dimensions of dominance–submission and introversion–extraversion, Biden's secondary Scale 4 (Accommodating) pattern in concert with his primary Scale 3 (Outgoing) elevation unambiguously points to low dominance (i.e., submission) and high extraversion. This suggests that a prospective President Biden's foreign policy role orientation would most likely be that of a *low-dominance extrovert* (or conciliator). According to Etheredge, conciliatory leaders, such as Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, “are not inclined to reshape the world in accordance with a grand vision,” tending “to respond to circumstances with the sympathetic hope that accommodations can be negotiated.” These leaders are “flexible,” “hopeful,” and “open to change” but may lack the consistency and will to consummate their policy objectives” (p. 450).

Conceptually, Etheredge's (1978) "conciliator" foreign policy leadership orientation converges with Hermann's (1987) *mediator/integrator* — a foreign policy role orientation motivated by "[c]oncern with reconciling differences between ... nations, with resolving problems in the international arena" (p. 168). In these leaders' world view, conflict can be resolved through third-party mediation, prompting a foreign policy "principally diplomatic in nature," in which the leader engages in "collaborative activities with other nations to foster [a] sense of mutual trust and understanding." The rhetoric of these leaders "is generally positive in tone." They use "consensus-building and group maintenance techniques effectively" and have a personal political style characterized by a "willingness to 'take a back seat' in the policymaking process, having an impact without seeming to control or interfere with others" (pp. 168–169).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the present study offers an empirically based personological framework for inferring Joe Biden's major personal strengths and limitations as a presidential candidate and anticipating his likely leadership style as president. The major implication of the results is the inference that the general tenor of a prospective Biden presidency will be conciliatory; in the words of former president George W. Bush, he will strive to be "a uniter, not a divider." The corollary of this personological propensity, however, could also be cause for concern: A President Biden is likely to be overly open to influence, which could render him unduly vulnerable to manipulation by pressure groups in his own party and impede his leadership effectiveness in negotiations or conflicts with foreign adversaries.

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## Appendix

### MIDC Score Sheet for Joe Biden

Subject: Joe Biden

Date: August 2020

Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria  
Score Sheet

Attribute	Scale														Attribute tally																							
	1A			1B			2			3			4			5A			5B			6			7			8			9			10			Min	Max
	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	d	e	d	e				
A	①	/	X	(1)	X	X	①	(2)	X	①	(2)	/	①	(2)	/	(1)	/	X	X	X	X	(1)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	5	10			
B	(1)	X	X	(1)	X	X	(1)	X	X	①	(2)	X	①	(2)	X	/	X	X	X	X	X	①	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	5	9			
C	①	X	X	/	X	X	/	(2)	X	①	(2)	(3)	①	/	/	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	5	7			
D	/	X	X	(1)	X	X	①	X	X	①	/	X	①	(2)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	/	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	4	5			
E	①	(2)	X	(1)	X	X	①	/	X	①	(2)	X	①	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	①	/	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	8			
Scale score (lower)	3	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	5	8	0	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Scale score (upper)	4	2	0	4	0	0	4	4	0	5	8	6	5	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
F	3			3			3			3			3			3			3			3			3			4	4									
G	3			3			3			3			3			3			3			3			3			4	4									
H	3			3			3			3			3			3			3			3			3			4	4									

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O = Affirmative

( ) = Equivocal/Affirmative

X = Negative

/ = Equivocal/Negative