Societal Impacts of Autocratic Government:

An Exploratory Analysis for Future Research

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Abstract

Autocratic government is characterized by a lack of tolerance in disagreement from followers as well as strict submission to authority. While there are several studies of autocratic leadership in the literature, much of the research is biased toward democratic, Western societies, particularly the United States, who favor individual autonomy. Though autocratic governments are associated with negative societal outcomes, there are notable autocratic governments which have achieved positive results such as universal healthcare, increased life expectancy, and universal education. Recent studies suggest that autocratic leadership may foster a sense of safety among followers, enabling positive outcomes. Additionally, the fear of social unrest may encourage autocratic leaders to pursue channels in which to meet the collective needs of society. This paper seeks to analyze the existing quantitative and qualitative literature to identify key areas which contradict some of the negative associations with autocratic governments. Furthermore, the authors of this paper will propose areas for future research to explore how some autocratic governments are able to achieve positive societal outcomes, whereas some democratic governments are not.

Keywords: autocratic, democratic, authoritarian, societal outcomes, transformational leadership, social identity theory, uncertainty-identity theory

The Societal Impacts of Autocratic Government:

An Exploratory Analysis for Future Research

Numerous studies of governments regarding leadership style have been conducted. These studies, though, have primarily been conducted from the viewpoint of Western cultures, particularly the United States, who favor individual autonomy over high power distance and collectivism (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). In general, studies of autocratic governments indicate negative outcomes for individuals and societies; however, these studies often minimize or ignore the cultural preferences of followers and societies.

When cultural preferences are taken into consideration, it may be determined that some followers and societies prefer the structure, hierarchy, and high levels of power distance characteristic of autocratic governments and leadership (De Hoogh, Greer, & Hartog, 2015). Notably, there are few examples of these types of studies in the literature.

It has only become apparent recently that there is a need to assess the overall outcomes of autocratic governments—whether they produce positive outcomes for followers. While it can be argued that democratic regimes offer the greatest good for the greatest number, autocratic regimes may produce better outcomes for followers. The assumption that autocracy is in general a negative factor, should not be dismissed. However, the intent of the leader, the overall outcomes for societies, and followers' preferences for types of power should be considered in future studies when assessing the positivity or negativity of a governmental regime. Taking into consideration differences in cultural preferences, the authors of this paper examine leadership characteristics from both autocratic and democratic governments. The authors review the cultural framework from which these types of governments arise; and, the authors analyze the psychosocial interactions which result in an autocratic leader-follower relationship.

Review of the Literature

Over the past three decades transformational leadership, particularly as outlined by the full-range model of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), has generally been accepted by scholars as the preferred leader-follower interaction. Transformational leaders inspire followers to forego their interests to work toward a collective goal (Northouse, 2013). Burns (1978) noted that lasting societal change with a moral uplifting of all involved is the expected outcome of transformational leadership. Bass (1985), however, posited that a moral component is not necessary for transformational leadership to occur.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) hypothesized the existence of authentic and pseudo-transformational leaders. Both authentic and pseudo-transformational leaders advocate for similar goals; however, the intent of these leaders differ—pseudo-transformational leaders tend to seek personal gain from their leadership, whereas authentic transformational leaders seek to lead for the greater good of the group. Opponents of transformational leadership have noted that facets of transformational leadership may be used to manipulate followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). For instance, inspirational motivation may be used to mislead followers to achieve the leader's vision.

Researchers have also recognized that cultural differences impact leaders' actions and followers' perceptions of those actions (House, Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, & Sully de Luque, 2014; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). A leader's actions may be perceived as autocratic in one culture, but the same actions may be welcomed and seen as considerate in others. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) attribute some cultural differences in the perception of leadership to power distance—the extent to which a group accepts an unequal balance of authority.

While there are few studies in the literature which link positive societal outcomes to autocratic forms of government and leadership, there is substantive evidence demonstrating democratic governments do not unequivocally produce positive societal results (Loum, 2002). Loum (2002) argued, in his article detailing the 1994 coup in Gambia, that a democratic government that is respectful of human rights and enjoying a favorable international reputation, can still lose the confidence of its citizens (Loum, 2002). Research also shows that leadership styles may be used to manipulate followers (Landa & Tyson, 2017; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Various leadership styles, especially transformational leadership, motivate followers toward a collective goal, which may or may not align with followers' personal beliefs or interests. When those goals do align, a coercive leader may be appropriate as they can manipulate those followers into accepting the outcome as the ultimate goal, while paying less attention to the specifics that go into achieving it. Additionally, followers, when faced with psychosocial needs, willingly enter autocratic leadership relationships to achieve a satisfactory emotional state where the relationship is based primarily on the follower's social identification with the group or organization (Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012; Howell & Shamir, 2005). Entrance into these types of leader-follower relationships provides both leaders and followers a cohesive, collective self-identity (Hogg, et al., 2012; Hogg, Kruglanski, & van den Bos, 2013).

Democratic Governments

The idea of a democratic government is one that resonates with most people living in the United States. To live in a truly free country, one must follow the principles of democracy. Understanding where this concept originates is not only imperative to the study but also interesting to explore as it may not be a clear-cut as we all would like it to be. The word democracy derived from the Greek word *demokratia*, derived from the words *demos*, meaning people, and *kratos*, meaning rule (Dahl, n.d.). The foundation of a democratic society was

expected to be followed by small cities or towns where the decisions could be made amongst the people. It was not until the beginning of the 18th century that representative democracy or political institutions where elected officials would represent the people as a whole, began to take form and by the 19th century all Western nation-states, except Russia, had representative political institutions involving significant practice of electoral politics (Higley & Burton, 1989). Democracy in this sense is what is widely known today. The history, however, paints a very different picture of what democracy should be (Dahl, n.d.).

To explore the reasoning behind the move towards democracy, it is necessary to appreciate the motivating factors behind this type of rule. It can be argued that the reason the Greeks moved towards democracy was to give their people a voice; however, if this were truly the case then all people would have been allowed to participate in the practice of voting and making their voices heard. That was not the case then and it is not the case today. According to the United States Election Project (McDonald, n.d.), only 59.7% of eligible voters cast their ballots in the 2016 Presidential Election. With a democratic government that does not mandate civil participation, it is not clear whether the election results would have been different if voting was a mandate and not an option.

One must also take into consideration how those who do participate in the voting process vote based on economic need and trends. The sophistication of the voter should be considered, as should their knowledge of how their vote and their candidate will change the backdrop in the coming years. In a study of voting and the economic cycle, Maloney and Pickering (2015) found that, although a meaningful fraction of the electorate has some degree of sophistication in terms of the economy, a sizeable amount does not recognize the economic cycle, thus rewarding candidates during an upswing in the economy and punishing those during a downswing. Taking the concept of economic growth and building on that, it should be considered that the difference

in leadership styles and governance is almost always based on economic stability. New conventional wisdom in comparative politics claims that the origins of democracy and dictatorship are fundamentally economic; that the emergence and stability of democratic and authoritarian regimes are shaped by the calculations of social actors about the implications of regimes for the redistribution of assets (Soifer, 2016). Looking at democracy and democratic governments from a truly economic perspective makes the idea appear less about all the people and more about the chosen few.

If economic advancement is a motivating factor for democratic governments, what else can be said that would help steer the people into defining this regime popular? The benefits of a democratic government are obvious: free and independent elections, the protection and promotion of the interest of the people, and a system of checks and balances (Macey, 1993).

Democratic governments are more open to change and the promotion of that change. Those ideals are most often expounded by a charismatic leader who is empowering and delegates his/her power and responsibility to others. A leader of a democratic government is elected to help make decisions that are in the best interest of everyone, not only those who fall within their political party or political model. That begs the question, what then happens when that leader takes charge and realizes the amount of power he/she has? Is it fair to say that a leader that is democratic in principle can become autocratic in how he/she rules? And if the leader does become autocratic, is this necessarily a negative outcome?

The disadvantages of a democratic government are closely linked to the amount of power that comes with being in charge. The potential for corruption, as seen in our most recent election, is high, especially since the people have the option of civil participation (Macey, 1993). Another disadvantage comes from those who do end up with all the power. In a democratic election, the winner is not always the best to represent all the people. This argument was explained by Soifer

(2016). Soifer (2016) evaluated state capacity and the relationship between democracy and economic inequality. Soifer concluded that inequality is more likely to lead to pressures from the poor for political change when the poor expect that political change will lead to economic change (2016). In other words, access to more economic gain is the motivating factor for the underrepresented to stand up and take charge of their societies. Minus that motivating factor, most people will choose to remain silent and allow others to make decisions for them instead of with them.

Historically, democratic governments and democratic principles have been flaunted by leaders as the way of the people, by the people and for the people; however, more and more scholars are looking at the ulterior motives of the founding fathers and the standards of democracy. A review of Woodrow Wilson's 1887 essay, *The Study of Administration*, completed by Heidelberg (2017) showed that Wilson suggested that public administration is a form of rulership that produces its principles of legitimacy and therefore encourages the concept of monarchy. This interpretation can help to explain the underlying benefit to having less public involvement in the making of social reform. The problem lies in the establishment of that leader and determining how that leader's decisions will benefit the majority of those involved.

Autocratic Governments

Autocracy is defined as a "government in which one person possesses unlimited power" ("Autocracy," n.d.). Geddes (1999) broke down autocratic governments into three types, military, single party, and personalist. According to Geddes (1999), single party regimes' access to political office and control over policy are dominated by one party, whereas personalist regimes' access to office and the fruits of office depend on the discretion of the individual leader. Military regimes are run by a group of officers who decide who will rule and exercise influence on policy (Geddes, 1999). With those three categories of autocratic leadership on the forefront, it

makes sense to explore how each of them results in outcomes for those they lead. Mattes and Rodriguez (2014) focused on accountability, flexibility, and transparency. Single party regimes were found to score highest in the areas of accountability and transparency, with personalist scoring highest in flexibility and coming in a close second regarding transparency. Military regimes scored low in all three areas (Mattes & Rodriguez, 2014). Although the idea of an autocratic government is contrary to what most industrial societies see as respectable, it is important to look at some of the benefits these types of regimes bring to their people.

Countries that are run by Autocratic governments such as China and Vietnam continue to have policy change implemented by the people and for the people. In Vietnam, for example, researchers analyzed how formal networks of people living with HIV extended beyond one or two sites to gain more considerable attention through the national media and other public events thus resulting in changes in government policy (Gomez & Ruger, 2015). China's introduction of a universal health insurance system is also a socialist endeavor under an authoritarian rule. China developed the New Healthcare Reform which has been characterized by a very inclusive public discussion involving the general population, domestic and international think tanks and various other interest groups which have been dubbed a healthcare democracy both for the people and by the people (Korolev, 2014).

Li (2014) acknowledges that China's authoritarian government does hold central power; however, lower-level leaders are downwardly accountable to the people. A fear of social unrest motivates leaders to provide public services such as education and healthcare (Li, 2014). These provisions, in essence, offset government decisions in which there is no consideration of public want or need. Li's study found that the collective actions of the people do in fact influence leader's decisions even when the form of government is autocratic (2014).

De Hoogh, Greer, and Hartog (2015) note that autocratic leadership, especially within the context of cultural preference, may be preferred by followers. When the context is appropriate, autocratic leadership satisfies followers' needs for order, hierarchy, and structure. De Hoogh et al. 2015 found that autocratic leadership increased follower psychological safety when the perception of intra-group power struggle was low. Increased team performance was an indirect effect of an increased perception of psychological safety and low power struggle.

Leadership Styles

The study of leadership has become an interest in academic circles over the past 100 years. Leadership theory has evolved a great deal in that time. For the past three decades, transformational leadership has been viewed as the optimal form of leadership, and it has been the subject of multiple studies to test its applicability and adaptability (Northouse, 2013; Green, 2015). Transforming, or transformational leadership was originally envisioned by Burns (1978) as a form of leadership in which followers move beyond their interests toward a collective goal, resulting in morally uplifting societal change (Burns, 1978).

Researchers have operationalized transformational leadership, and the currently accepted construct places this form of leadership on a continuum (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Bass and Avolio's full-range model reflects various styles of leadership ranging from ineffective to effective (1994). Laissez-faire, or passive leadership (even non-existent leadership), represents the least effective leadership style. In this style, leaders fail to act at all, or they abdicate authority to others. Slightly more effective is management-by-exception which may take on passive or active forms. These leaders either fail to provide guidance until they are forced to act, or they oversee followers so closely that they are unable to provide motivation and vision. More effective than management-by-exception, but less effective than transformational leadership is

transactional leadership. These leaders practice contingent reward in which they offer followers some form of incentive in exchange for their followership.

The most effective form of leadership in Bass and Avolio's (1994) full-range model is transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are idealized for both their behaviors and for their attributes, which followers perceive to be representative of the group. These leaders inspire followers to move toward a goal which may not have been previously attainable. Furthermore, followers are motivated to achieve the overall goal through individual consideration as well as through intellectual stimulation. An important result of transformational leadership is that followers are inspired to prioritize the needs of the group above their own in the interest of achieving the collective goal (Northouse, 2013).

In the context of the full-range model (Bass & Avolio, 1994), a moral component is not necessary for transformational leadership to occur. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) noted that the charismatic qualities of transformational leaders could be used to motivate followers toward immoral or unethical goals. Additionally, transformational leaders are capable of manipulating followers to act contrary to their morals, values, and interests (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

To explain these actions of transformational leaders, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) noted the existence of authentic transformational leaders and pseudo-transformational leaders. Both authentic and pseudo-transformational leaders work toward similar goals; however, the underlying intent and the means of achieving those goals are different. As idealized pseudo-transformational leaders seek power, they disregard the needs of their followers, and they tend to overstate their capabilities (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Unlike authentic transformational leaders who motivate followers by providing a unifying vision, pseudo-transformational leaders inspire and motivate by exploiting the fears of followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Authentic transformational leaders stimulate followers by analyzing factual information to encourage

innovation. Pseudo-transformational leaders stimulate followers by presenting anecdotal, emotionally charged data as fact and use that information to sway followers toward the leader's self-serving vision (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Whereas authentic transformational leaders provide individual consideration through development and empowerment, pseudo-transformational leaders keep followers dependent by manipulating emotions.

Social Identity and Followers. Hogg, van Knippenberg, and Rast (2012) researched social identity leadership theory as it relates to uncertainty identity theory and other leadership concepts and outcomes. The social identity theory of leadership focuses on group norms as they relate to the emergence and development of leaders (Hogg et al., 2012). Because belonging to a group facilitates individuals' self-identity as well as others' perception of individuals, those that behave more characteristically or prototypically of the group are more likely to have influence over the group and to emerge as leaders (Hogg et al., 2012). Members of the group enter a leader-follower relationship out of the need for group homogeneity and conformity. Leaders and followers from diverse identity groups generally face some degree of pressure to behave like leaders from the majority group while the leaders, mainly, continue to express their own cultures (Eagly & Chin, 2010). As ideal behaviors become more distinct, the group places a higher value on these actions (Hogg et al., 2012).

Hogg et al. (2012) note that while prototypical leaders are expected to maintain group norms and homogeneity, they often exhibit charisma such that they are able to change group norms through their influence and demonstrate transformational qualities. Uncertainty also plays a key role in the leader-follower relationship. When there are high amounts of self-perceived uncertainty, especially about self-identity, group identification minimizes uncertainty which individuals tend to find unsatisfactory (Hogg et al., 2012). Group uncertainty may also lead to the acceptance of autocratic leadership. During periods of high uncertainty, followers are more

likely to identify with the structured and directive qualities of autocratic groups, especially when there is a distinct prototypical typical leader who offers a clear vision (Hogg et al., 2012).

Hogg, Kruglanski, and van den Bos (2013) found evidence that individual and group uncertainty led to extremist behaviors. Periods of great societal change and social uncertainty tend to coincide with occurrences of social and political extremism (Hogg et al., 2013). Feelings of social uncertainty and the need to minimize perceived uncertainty, motivates individuals to locate and identify with groups whose beliefs and values are similar (Hogg et al., 2013). According to Hogg et al. (2013) the inclination to self-identify with a group may also open individuals to assimilate group norms which may be considered autocratic. Additionally, when individuals and groups need to feel that their values and beliefs are more correct than the values of others, they are more inclined to follow a leader who exhibits autocratic and extremist characteristics when perceptions of uncertainty are high (Hogg et al., 2013).

Cultural Implications of Leadership Styles. Central to understanding autocratic governments and the role of the authoritarian leader is the distinction between an oligarchy and an autocracy. The media and other outlets typically do not make this distinction, and they often imply that the terms are interchangeable. Autocracies can be defined as near-absolute state control of social, economic and political life (Gurr, Jaggers, & Moore, 1990). This form of government describes the government of Cuba. However, the term oligarchy is typically associated with the Cuban government and it is often referenced in the media. An oligarchy is "government by the few, especially despotic power exercised by a small and privileged group for corrupt or selfish purposes" ("Oligarchy," n.d.).

Autocratic governments are usually the result of revolutionary action (Svolik, 2009). This is one of the hallmarks that makes Cuba fitting for analysis. The Cuban Revolution, and to that point, the rise of Fidel Castro, brought about a communist regime with the central focus on the

leader. Further, it is because of this revolution that one finds one of the central themes of the revolution—equality for all (Saney, 2009). It is a common understanding that autocratic governments and leaders seek to position and consolidate power to an individual; however, these leaders seek to establish power by collusion with a select group (Svolik, 2009). Conventional wisdom, especially that offered by Western democratic societies, maintains that these autocratic regimes are ineffective and otherwise harmful to followers. However, autocratic governments such as Cuba have often sought to not only equalize power within the government, but also within the medical, military, and education communities (Saney, 2009).

Autocratic leaders utilize their abilities to gain allies to keep and maintain power (Boix & Svolik, 2013). This type of power sharing is key and central to the success of Cuba. Revolutionary councils gave way to the formalized structures that became integrated into the government. This explains why the Cuban government structure mimics that of the United States with Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches (Boix & Svolik, 2013). Not only is this an effective use of power, but it speaks to the fact that by sharing power with those that helped to create the government, the threat of challenges and challengers is reduced because power is shared among those who are not only qualified but who are also strategic to maintaining the positions of power within the government.

The Western notion of autocratic government becomes problematic if the Cuban government and its pursuits are not completely selfish, malicious, and out of the norm. Yet Cuba continues to be a model of humanitarian efforts, relief, and education around the globe. This was the primary function of the Rectification Campaign of the 1980s and the election of General Frias and General Miera to the Council of State (Saney, 2009). These elections dispel the notion that there are only appointments within the autocratic government and illustrate a progressive understanding of the needs of the people and the broad spectrum of ideas that have helped to

serve the Cuban people. It is evident that power-sharing through elections, progressive ideologies of social welfare, and equality are in stark contrast to most of the literature on authoritarian regimes, and specifically, are antithetical to the research conducted in most academic settings to disprove the viability of the dictator or authoritarian. However, Cuban regime has enjoyed longevity because of its ability to intuitively use and accept the model of power without taking on the negative connotations (Boix & Svolik, 2013).

The Cuban government views itself and its people as a single, unified entity. Cuban leaders saw their revolution as a global struggle against colonial powers. Hence, Cuba worked with Angola after it had won independence, but then fell into conflict with South African forces that were controlled by the apartheid state (Saney, 2009). While addressing this conflict, it is important to note, that Cuba, in its aim for equality, addressed the inherent conflict of sexism in the military. It was during this same period that revolutionary ideals had to meet up with the functional state. Women in the Cuban Revolution were essential in what would be considered the front lines and support roles. In the functional state with an established military, Cuban women's service had been relegated back to a support status, forgetting their service in combat during the days of the revolution. It was at the time when Cuba was assisting Angola that the Cuban military also lifted the restriction on the woman in combat, to the point where there were Cuban battalions on the front line made up of exclusively of women (Saney, 2009). This pivotal moment in Cuban history supersedes that of the United States by nearly 60 years.

Castro's Cuba is sustainable because the contested dictatorship moved to an established dictatorship (Svolik, 2009). The Cuban Revolution began as a contested dictatorship with Castro and his supporters overthrowing the government and establishing a new government of the people. The dictatorship became established via constitutional means to solidify the power of the regime. Constitutional provisions also gave formality to the other structures that make the

government effective. These attempts to legitimize the government have kept Castro in power to what some would argue is the benefit of the Cuban people and those who have benefited from Cuban foreign policy around the world.

Comparative Analysis

Autocratic governments, those which are under the power of one person or group, with majority control, are perceived as negative to most, particularly to those in Western, democratic societies. As with most areas associated with autocratic governments, there is often an alignment with negative attributes unlike that of their democratic counterparts. These negative attributes are often publicized through media and community relations making it fodder for the masses.

The authors will complete a comparative analysis of two countries with varying government regimes as well as leadership styles by examining the two nations' health care, education systems, social structure as societal impacts through qualitative data collected from scholarly articles. The researchers also compare and analyze Cuba, an autocratic government, with Vietnam, a communist, democratic society which also models a tri-level form of government. Analysis also considers the most recent changes within the Vietnamese establishment. The analysis looks to determine whether autocratic governments do produce positive societal outcomes.

In the literature, the research group expected that followers from autocratic societies would experience negative feelings toward government; however, the literature shows that Cuban followers felt "infectious warmth, vitality, joy and musical energy" (Herndon & Michaelis, 2001). From an economic standpoint, Cuba and Vietnam are both on par with each other as well as the middle-income less-developed countries of the world (Brux, 1992). With regard to economic debt, both Cuba and Vietnam, owe a sizeable amount to foreign governments with both "Cuba and Vietnam owing $31.2 billion and $22.4 billion respectively" (Brux, 2002).

Although each country is experiencing economic improvement, the amount of debt both countries have accrued has made it difficult for them to maintain economic momentum. This lack of forward financial movement is a contributing factor to both country's standing as lesser developed nations.

Despite experiencing economic reform, and undergoing changes in government regime, both countries have committed to the development of social policies to meet the needs of citizens (Brux, 2002). Included in this commitment are healthcare systems servicing all citizens, provisions for an adequate education system, social services that meet the needs of the oppressed, and livable incomes for all their people. The research led the authors to the subject of healthcare and the central argument for universal coverage. More specifically, in Cuba, we see that 100% of its population has access to health services (UNDP, 2000). Public health spending amounts to 7.7% of the gross domestic product (GDP), and there are many doctors and nurses available to serve. In contrast, Vietnam is spending only 0.4% of their GDP on public health care. This is down from 0.9% in 1990, indicating recently constrained resources (Brux, 2002). Despite the universal healthcare system in Vietnam, patients are not able to afford high-cost share plans, nor can they afford prescriptions, so they seek drugs on city streets (Marr, 1995). The gap in accessibility to quality care is increasing between rural and urban residents and between the poor and the rich (Marr, 1995) resulting in a negative healthcare result for the democratic government versus the autocratic one.

Another critical component to the impact on society is the education system of both nations. Cuba spends a large amount of money on education, amounting to 5.6% of GDP. This amount is far more than the average for the less-developed countries. Primary education is universal in Cuba, and approximately 70% of appropriate age students are in secondary education which is well above the lesser developed country average (Brux, 2002). Vietnam

spends only 3.0% of GDP on public education, and while primary enrollment rate is universal, secondary enrollment is not as high as in Cuba (Brux, 2002). Accessibility for Vietnamese children in rural areas may be diminishing because of funding coming from outside sources or from shifting of resources which is a cause for concern in this area as well.

The central focus, however, of the Vietnam and Cuba comparison has been how their societies have been impacted due to their leadership and government regimes as well as their ability to lead their countries to prosperity. Social inclusion has always been the Cuban government's claim to fame (Corrales, 2012); however, some continue to argue that Cuba's claim has always been deliverables in equity through progressive social policies. Despite having one of the world's most-schooled workforces, Cuba has one of the world's least impressive growth records (Corrales, 2012). Cuba's healthcare and education system, both contributing to service the needs of the country's people, bring more than commitment and satisfaction to its citizens. As stated earlier, the social outcomes of policy are more important than the economic outcomes, since these indicate the impact on the quality of life of people (Brux, 2002).

Cuba's commitment to basic social services remains at the forefront of the budget, with the government spending 52.4% of GDP on social assistance, housing and community services, public health, and education (Brux, 2002). The government's commitment to providing social services to all, including citizens living in remote parts of the country, is expensive and reduces opportunities for government spending in other areas. In contrast, Vietnamese people believe in the redistribution of benefits leads to growth.

Discussion of Findings

The prevailing perception, especially in Western cultures, that favor individual autonomy and low power distance, is that autocratic governments and leadership result in negative societal outcomes. The literature demonstrates that autocratic governments may, in fact, produce positive

societal outcomes for followers. Autocratic governments have succeeded in providing social services such as universal healthcare and universal primary and, in some cases, secondary education. Western scholars view these services as beneficial to society. Kraft and Furlong (2015) view healthcare as a public safety measure, and they view education as a means of productivity and independence. A healthy population can thrive and continue the values and practices of a society generation after generation. Education provides individuals with the means to support themselves (or their government). Furthermore, education provides society with a uniform understanding of the government and allows that information to be passed on to future generations (Kraft & Furlong, 2015). While it can be argued that the provision of these public services serves the needs of the autocratic government, the same can be said of democratic governments.

In very basic terms, leadership is a means of guiding a group toward a common goal. One of the most accepted forms of leadership in Western society is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership behaviors motivate followers to attain a goal which may not have been previously achieved (Avolio & Bass, 1995). A key component of this style of leadership is the intent of the leader (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational leaders who seek to attain moral and ethical change, or at least seek change for the collective good, are assumed to be the norm. However, leaders who seek power or idealization for their gain do exist. Authentic and pseudo-transformational leaders may aim for similar goals, but what distinguishes the two is their intent and their means of achieving those goals (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Authentic transformational leaders unify the entire group. Pseudo-transformational leaders unify followers with similar beliefs through divisive techniques which create in-groups and out-groups (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The members of the in-group are allowed to prevail because they have been collectively convinced that the leader's self-serving vision is their own (Bass & Steidlmeier,

1999; Hogg et al., 2013). The values and beliefs of the out-group inflate the emotions of the in-group.

An individual's social identity and level of uncertainty attract them to a group as a result of a need for belonging and because of shared values, beliefs, and behaviors (Hogg et al., 2012). Whether intentional or not, in these scenarios, transformational leaders motivate their followers either positively or negatively—they will either attempt to unify both the in-group and the out-group, or they will attempt to unify the in-group against the out-group (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Hogg et al., 2012). What is notable about this interaction is that followers willingly enter this relationship with the leader, even when the leader is exhibiting autocratic behaviors (Hogg et al., 2013). The followers' need for social belonging and the perception of the leaders' prototypical behaviors override the followers' autonomy. In periods of uncertainty—when economic, social, and individual or familial survival are in question—followers are even more likely to forego their interests to become part of the autocratic leader's in-group (Hogg et al., 2013). It is debatable whether the entrance into this relationship is positive. However, in cultures where less individual autonomy and high power distance are favorable, one could argue that this autocratic leader relationship is positive. Furthermore, in instances where these conditions are considered favorable, the societal results—the social well-being of the followers—should be considered when determining the positive or negative nature of the government and leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

From the literature, the authors have found that democratic governments do not always produce the best results for followers. A primary concern for those in democratic societies, especially true democracies, is the “tyranny of the majority” as it was referred to by James Madison (Hamilton, Jay, & Madison, 2003; Macey, 1993). The will of the majority outweighs the needs of the minority. Even in the United States, democratic decisions have resulted in the

loss of civil rights. This was evident in societal policies such as *separate but equal* and *don't ask don't tell*. The will of majority is every bit as responsible for the oppression of followers as is the will of a single autocratic leader or party. When researching societal outcomes, it should be considered whether the results were based on a democratic or autocratic decision. In either case the overall well-being of the people, including those on the fringes of society should be considered.

Transformational leadership, while widely accepted, may be used to manipulate and exploit followers, as is noted by Bass and Steidlmeier (1999). Transformational leaders are known to influence decisions and change values such that the needs of the group supersede the needs of the individual. In many cases this may be seen as a positive result, but it should be known that transformational leaders do not always have the best interest of followers in mind. Future research should consider the intent of the leader when assessing overall outcomes. It may be argued that authentic leadership theory (Walumbwa et al., 2008) resolves the issue of intent; however, this widely accepted construct minimizes or negates the use of contingent reward and management-by-exception, which within certain contexts are not only viable, but productive forms of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995). A new construct incorporating both intent and authenticity may resolve the gaps of the full-range model and its sub-construct transformational leadership.

Social identity leadership theory and uncertainty-identity theory are both products of social psychology, which has been largely absent from the academic study of leadership (Hogg et al, 2012). These two theories, however, unify organizational and cultural leadership theories, and may explain how otherwise rational individuals enter autocratic leader-follower relationships. Future research should include the social identity theory as related to uncertainty and cultural preferences when assessing the overall outcomes of government for societies.

Western, democratic societies, which favor individual autonomy, will almost never perceive autocratic governments as favorable or as producing positive societal outcomes. It should be noted, though, that autocratic governments have produced positive outcomes even while democratic societies, the pillars of the west, have failed or severely lacked in these areas. Research of governmental outcomes should also assess cultural preferences, social identities and uncertainties, and overall needs of the population.

This study was limited in the amount of information available. It has only become apparent recently that there is a need to assess the overall outcomes of autocratic governments rather than what is considered to be oppression of followers. There are few, if any, existing studies that look to validate this theory. While it can be argued that democratic regimes offer the greatest good for the greatest number, autocratic regimes may produce better outcomes for followers; however, there is a minimal amount of literature that looks to support this. These limitations are most likely tied to the fact that western societies and researchers are culturally taught from early ages that autocracy is negative. The assumption that autocracy is in general a negative factor, should not be dismissed. However, the intent of the leader, the overall outcomes for societies, and followers' preferences for types of power should be considered in future studies when assessing the positivity or negativity of a governmental regime.

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