DEALING WITH A MEGALOMANIAC DICTATOR: 101

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Category: Opinions

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"*There's a strong message of divine Righteousness in dictatorships. Every megalomaniac has to believe his actions are sanctioned by God.*"
Eric Gamalinda

If one were to follow President Ilham Aliyev's interviews or speeches, one would witness a barrage of crass and disparaging remarks about Armenia and Armenians. He publicly lashes out at Armenians whenever he is angry. He warns Armenians: "Do as I tell you; otherwise, you will be sorry!" He has become a cocky dictator perched on a pedestal. He has even begun to treat Iran in a venomous manner.

He insults, intimidates, and threats Armenians with abandon and treats them with coercive diplomacy. Such a conduct is not only unbecoming for a head of state dealing with an adversary, it's uncouth, inappropriate, and unacceptable for the civilized world.

What makes President Aliyev act this way? Let us speculate that he is suffering from a psychological disorder.

Let's first explore the definition of megalomaniac, how to diagnose the disorder, and how to deal with it, since it may apply to politicians, people in positions of power, or even ordinary people you may deal with in your everyday life.

Megalomaniac narcissists can be found in every walk of life --your boss, the president of your country, your teacher, your colleague, etc. Megalomaniac comes from the Greek words "megalo," meaning grand or large, and "mania," meaning frenzy or madness. The two words combined become "megalomaniac," which is someone who displays manic behavior, often paired with delusions of grandeur and an enhanced sense of self-importance with an oversized ego. This personality type worships himself or herself to the detriment of others.

Some scholars suggest the megalomaniac differs from the narcissist for he wishes to be powerful rather than charming, and seeks to be feared rather than just admired or loved. To this type of megalomaniacs belong many lunatics and most of the "great" men of history.

Although some may find them different in shades of meaning, the terms megalomaniac and narcissist will be used interchangeably here because thus far megalomania is diagnosed with a narcissistic scale of traits.

The person who fits these classic definitions of megalomania tends to believe he or she has greater powers than others, and has the ability to use that power over large populations. Research shows power corrupts. As a hereditary dictator, President Aliyev has the illusion of being unstoppable.

In certain extreme cases, megalomaniacs believe they can control the world. They will act as though they have or deserve control over the people around them. In other words, they have the pedigree

and destiny to rule others.

How to detect megalomania? What are the signs? In psychology, the area of this phenomenon is called Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), in which a person believes the world revolves around him or her.

Research findings indicate that a person with NPD may not try to conquer the world but would try to exert power and control over people in their lives. Megalomaniacs act without empathy or consideration for the needs of others. to better manipulate others, they feign compassion and understanding of the plight of those around them.

Those who have megalomaniacal tendencies may be diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder methods. According to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, a person with NPD possesses at least five of the following nine traits:

1. Grandiosity with expectations of superior treatment from other people
2. Continually demeaning, bullying and belittling others
3. Exploiting others to achieve personal gain
4. Lack of empathy for the negative impact they have on the feelings, wishes, and needs of other people
5. Fixation on fantasies of power, success, intelligence, attractiveness, etc.
6. Self-perception of being unique, superior, and associated with high-status people and institutions
7. Need for continual admiration from others
8. Sense of entitlement to special treatment and to obedience from others
9. Intense envy of others, and the belief that others are equally envious of them

Based on my observations of President Aliyev's behavior for several decades, especially after the 44-Day War, I strongly believe that he has the following traits: Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8, which makes six traits of the nine-point scale listed above.

As a result, we can conclude that President Aliyev suffers from NPD in my assessment. Yours may be different based on your own knowledge and experience of his conduct in public.

A caveat: the above conclusion is not based on an inferential study. Remember this is an exploratory study to generate hypotheses for further studies.

Studies have shown that a person with NPD may act selfishly, only to fulfill his or her big goals and obtain power. Maybe he uses manipulation to get there, or maybe he uses charm and charisma.

President Aliyev is the lord and master of Azerbaijan. The 44-Day War debacle has left Armenians in a state of woe; Aliyev knows it and is trying to benefit from Armenia's weak condition by rough housing PM Pashinyan into submission to his will.

Narcissists tend not to care who they hurt. For a person with NPD, complete loyalty is a must from his surroundings. Deviation would incur the wrath or even the death sentence on those who act "disloyally" against him.

According to some reports, less than 1 percent (1%) of the U.S. population is said to be a narcissist. Furthermore, men are more likely to have NPD than women.

To understand megalomaniacs, we should know what causes Narcissistic Personality Disorder. This area is sketchy, not too many serious studies have been reported since it is very difficult to determine what causes narcissism.

Two psychologists have written a book (2009) titled The Narcissism Epidemic in which they claim the American culture, the social media, and other factors have made millennials narcissistic.

Some experts argue that genetic factors could contribute to narcissism and related personality disorders. Others say that "nurture," rather than "nature," is the culprit.

There are cultures that instill in children the idea that they can do anything, and that they are unique and special. Maybe a lot of Armenian parents nurture their male children to become know-it-alls and chauvinistic.

A lot of research is needed before causes of NPD can be determined. It is difficult to carry an NPD study: for one thing there are not many narcissists seeking help from mental health professionals since they feel they are above that problem and therefore do not need counseling.

In the case of President Aliyev, I can venture one observation. His Turkish ancestry makes him one of the sons of the conquerors of the so-called Azerbaijan. He considers himself one of the elites, the chosen, to rule his subjects (i.e., the indigenous ethnic groups who live in the artificial state of Azerbaijan).

President Aliyev must have inherited his sense of superiority to rule others from his father and forefathers whom most historians have romanticized as brave conquerors instead of ruthless marauders and looters.

How to deal with a megalomaniac dictator such as Aliyev and Turkey's Recep Tayyib Erdogan, two persons who most likely suffer from NPD?

Not too many studies have looked into how to deal with narcissists or megalomaniacs for the simple reason that if the cause is not known, how could anyone come up with a cure.

There are anecdotal suggestions for dealing with a megalomaniac dictator, though, based on educated guesses and even on intuitions.

The following common sense approaches are suggested to deal with a megalomaniacal narcissist:

Educate Yourself on NPD. The more one knows about the nature and behavior of megalomaniacs

suffering from NPD, the better he or she would be to deal with their way of manipulating their social environment.

Once you know the habits of a megalomaniac narcissist, you would be in better position to anticipate and understand his or her behavior.

Set Boundary Lines. It is always hard to accept that people with NPD do not care about your feelings and go out of their way to hurt you for their gain. Once you see the reality of your situation, it would be easier to set boundaries to put your foot down when the narcissist's behavior is hurtful or damaging.

Drawing boundary lines means you should make known to a megalomaniac that because of his offensive behavior the lines of communication would be severed between you if the abuse continues.

When a megalomaniac does something wrong to get his way and when he is not sanctioned, he would be emboldened to do more harm. Bullying, bluffing, and betraying the letter and the spirit of all the peace (truce) agreements, he repeats the acts whenever he wants.

Like President Erdogan, Aliyev has become the enfant terrible of South Caucasus. Nobody dares to hold him responsible for violating his signed agreements.

For example, President Aliyev signed a ceasefire agreement on Nov. 9, 2020 and on Sept. 13, 2022 broke his agreement by attacking Armenia unprovoked. His army killed over 200 soldiers and civilians, he occupied 125 sq. kilometers of Armenia's sovereign territory, and threatened to grab the so-called Zangezur Corridor by force.

How can anyone forget the barbaric treatment of the Armenian female soldier, Anush Apetyan, who was gang-raped and mutilated--and her desecrated naked body was displayed on social media?

The “civilized” world stood by and dared not even to criticize Aliyev for violating international laws of the fair treatment of POW. Such indifference, lionizes the megalomaniac Aliyev to continue with his atrocities unchecked. Setting boundaries on a megalomaniac dictator is crucial to curb his wild and selfish acts.

Resist Gaslighting Tactics. Most experts maintain megalomaniacs are focused on getting their way. If they believe they are in the right, they will take more extreme measures until you admit they are in the right. This is why narcissists take to "gaslighting" to convince others they are in control.

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation or bluffing an opponent that hinges on creating self-doubt. If someone is intentionally distorting reality to make you feel like what you’re seeing or feeling isn’t real, you could be a victim of gaslighting.

When a person begins to doubt his own reality, he is more likely to agree with the narcissist, who is confidently guiding him to agree with the narcissist's point of view. For example, President Aliyev

insists on the existence of an agreement in the Nov. 9, 2020 ceasefire that Armenia had agreed to provide Azerbaijan with the so-called Zangezur Corridor. Naturally, PM Nikol Pashinyan should firmly reject Aliyev's bluff.

Counter Strategizing Plans. A small Turkish tribe led by a narcissistic leader named Osman set to conquer the world. For 612 years, the followers of Osman planned and strategized to deal with the Eastern Roman Empire, later known as Byzantine Empire.

Who would have guessed that one small Turkish tribe could create a massive empire that lasted 612 years? Probably not Osman, the man who started it all back in the 13th century. He was an astute leader who kept strategizing. When canons became available, the Turks bought one of the largest and used it against Constantinople. The Ottomans then hired a Hungarian canon-maker to construct massive guns to use in sieges. One cannon weighed over 17.5 tons.

Then as now, the Turks believe in arming themselves with super weapons. Turkey has continued that tradition into modern times by becoming the second- most powerful nation in NATO with one of the world's largest standing armies, which ranks 13th on global scale. Next to Israel, Azerbaijan has become the number-one military power in the region.

Azerbaijan planned for almost 30 years to teach Armenians a lesson while the Armenian leaders kept their heads in the sand. Instead of counter strategizing to resist Azerbaijan's massive preparation for war, the Armenian leaders focused on maximizing their personal gains. Hopefully, the present administration will work to achieve a balance of power in the South Caucasus.

Appeal to Grandiosity. How to tell a megalomaniac to cut it out is a very sensitive issue. The direct approach of telling them that they are wrong for acting megalomaniacal seldom works. A safer way to speak to a narcissist about their behavior is to appeal to their megalomania. Let them know that you are acting in their best interests and for your interests.

Later on, offer the narcissist feedback in the form of a technique called "Feedback Sandwich." That is to say, the critiques or suggestions you make should be sandwiched between compliments or praise. This approach will prevent the narcissist from feeling threatened or feeling that they have to resort to extreme measures to get their way. This situation requires you to be gentle and brief, but you have to be firm when the narcissist does cross the line.

It would be very difficult to critique Aliyev when the 44-Day War victory has gone to his head making him act like a Gengiz Khan. Nevertheless, Armenians should try to see whether appealing to his magnanimity or sense of fair play would work. Remember, this approach may backfire, though, in creating a bigger monster.

Find Support in Friends. True friends of Armenia are few and far between. The Sept. 13-14, 2022 Azerbaijani attack on Armenia dashed the hopes of the Armenian world for the CSTO to come to the rescue. Armenians are right in believing Russia is favoring Azerbaijan over Armenia. Although the

French Senate is proposing sanctions against Azerbaijan, the French government has rejected punitive measures against Aliyev. Armenia needs genuine friends.

Moreover, dealing with a narcissist can be isolating. Megalomaniacs also thrive on isolated people who do not have support or strong ties. Try to build a support system to strengthen you when a narcissist tries to overwhelm you. For example, recently Greece, Armenia, and Cyprus formed an alliance which is a critical step in the right direction. Armenia should also capitalize on the move from India to establish friendly and military ties.

The megalomaniac in your life most likely does not want you to succeed or even may take drastic steps to prevent you from reaching your goals. President Aliyev is conniving to deprive the people of Artsakh of their right to self-determination. The recognition of the independence of Artsakh is essential to counter a narcissist's claim to insurgence of the people of Artsakh. A coalition with the Armenian Diaspora would help Artsakh leaders navigate their relationships with narcissists, create boundaries, and decide when it is time to cut ties, etc.

Rely on Self. In addition to finding support through friends, it is imperative that through unity become so strong that the megalomaniacal dictator will fear you and look elsewhere for his exploits.

Just because dealing with a megalomaniac narcissist is difficult, Armenians should not give up to dethrone the megalomaniacal dictator who is jeopardizing their sovereignty and independence.

Aliyev is a relatively young dictator. He could be around for a long time. It behooves Armenian leaders not only to familiarize themselves with the behavior of the megalomaniac, but to study his conduct to treat him accordingly, to negotiate with him from strength, and even be able to outsmart him.

Photo in teaser *Megalomaniac dictators believe that people around them are puppets to be manipulated in order to satisfy their goals and objectives. Once we know the characteristics of these "puppeteers," we would be in better position to deal with them. Education is, therefore, crucial for circumventing the actions of or reasoning with a megalomaniac dictator suffering from distorted sense of mission and vision to sacrifice others as a means to realize his or her selfish dreams. And let us not forget, the more people kowtow to a megalomaniac dictator, the more he would put them under his control.*

Comments



Patlamish – 2022-12-13 23:48:15
Well done, Dr. Demirdjian. Thank you. You offer important advice. All readers should acquaint themselves with this phenomenon. For the last 50 years, social scientists have been saying that narcissists make up 1% of the population -- newsflash, they make up far more than that! There is also such a thing as "group narcissism," which applies to countries whose citizens buy into the notion that "we can do no wrong and we rule the universe." I will leave it to you to decide which nations I am referring to. Unfortunately, the "charismatic leaders" we so love are often megalomaniacal characters who fool the people into thinking they care about the public's welfare when nothing could be further from the truth. People won't easily be deterred from looking up to charismatic individuals and this is a human flaw we must overcome. The most capable to lead are often the ones who are NOT charismatic. Sociopathic narcissists do the most damage of any disordered individual no matter where they find themselves - and that's usually anywhere there is a little piece of ground to control. Every ethnic group has its share of narcissistic personalities and Armenians are no exception. Getting narcissistic personalities to swallow their egos to unite for the greater good is like trying to herd cats. Two of the best books on the topic are: The Wizard of Oz and Other Narcissists; and Why is it Always About You: The Seven Deadly Sins of Narcissism. The very good book, Political Ponerology, is about Sociopathic Narcissism in Global Politics.



Tavo – 2022-12-13 16:19:39
Great article. President Aliyev is learning a lot from his fellow psychotic Turk, President Erdogan. It may be partly an inherited trait too, passed down through Jengiz Khan, Othman, and other barbarians. Many Western leaders who look on Azerbaijan and Turkey's crimes and do nothing suffer from another disease: Cowardice. It can sometimes be diagnosed by a yellowing and eventual breakage of the spine. Joe Biden and Donald Trump both have this disease.