

## My Past, My Future Decisions: How Psychological and Anthropological Factors Influence High Level Politicians Decisions

*Marcos Iglesias Carrera, Jose Antonio Martín Herrero*  
(Univerisdad de Salamanca, Spain)

**Abstract:** Transcultural leadership analysis. The Study will decipher the psychological profile of political leaders through the analysis of their behaviour and personality. Through a psychological and anthropological comparative study, we will describe the factors that affect their behaviour and attitudes in different societies, specifically for this paper we have chosen for the comparative study our own Western society and other Caribbean, Dominican Republic. This selection obeys to the idea to explain what leads a high level politician to decide how he does under certain circumstances and if there is a psychological or anthropological explanation that in some way could help foresee what decision would be taken. The cases chosen are due to, in first place, the high level of clientelism that exists in the Dominican Republic (LAPOP2010), so psychological/anthropological factors which could be used to influence future decisions of high level politicians, and Western Society, in which clientelism is not a factor to take into account, but still, decisions are made under the influence of personal experience.

For this study, we will review the cultural bases behaviour of a leader, studying and analysing the practices of early childhood education (childrearing) and its relation with the configuration of personality structure (school and theories of culture and personality), the influence of systems beliefs, and other important variables that affect the behaviour of the leader as well as its impact on their interaction with followers. This will allow as well to analyse the behaviour of the leader during their term in office.

**Key words:** decision making, leadership, cultural base, political behaviour, leader anthropological study

### 1. Introduction: Leadership and Social Change

We live a period in time in which cycles of change happens in the most dizzying form. Changes that range from technological, economic and of course social in an environment that is becoming more and more global, competitive, diverse and different, represent large challenges for those countries, organizations and people that work in them. In this changing environment, the survival of an organization depends on the capacity that it has to maintain its identity in the context of diversity, and to turn their weaknesses and vulnerabilities into strengths, adapting its resources and incorporating the appropriate management and production processes. To do so, it is essential to count with people that know how to manage with talent the equipment and resources available, and contribute to the innovation and the transformation of processes and systems of business management. These

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Jose Antonio Martin Herrero, Degree in Psychology, Ph.D. in Anthropology, Universidad de Salamanca; research areas/interests: anthropology, psychology and addictions. E-mail: [janmartin@usal.es](mailto:janmartin@usal.es).

Marcos Iglesias Carrera, Master in Political Science, Lawyer, Instituto de Iberoamérica, Universidad de Salamanca; research areas/interests: judicial politics, public politics and political anthropology. E-mail: [marcosiglesias@usal.es](mailto:marcosiglesias@usal.es).

people are what we would call, political leaders.

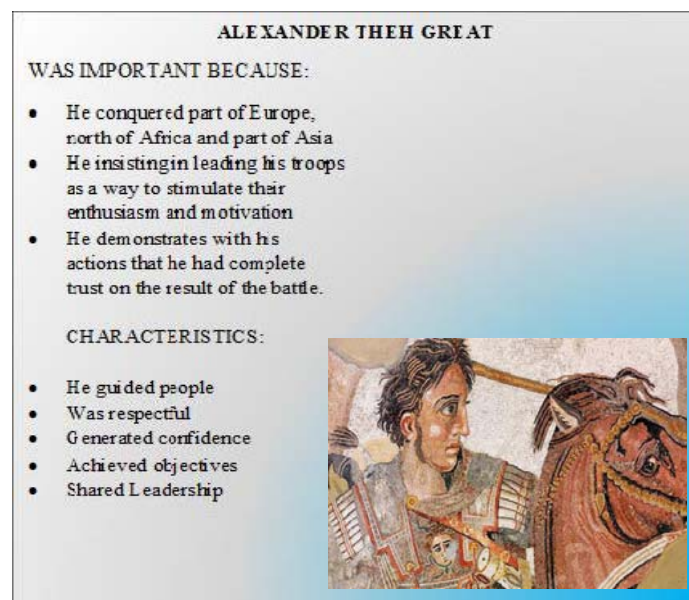
Flexibility, learning and strategic anticipation reveal themselves as three of the core competencies that organizations, and those who belong to them, must developed.

We know that, organizations, are people who are grouped together in order to achieve common objectives and purposes. To achieve these common objectives, usually people organize themselves around a leader.

Theoretically, a leader is supposed to be a type of person whose success is higher than the average, and that share certain psychological characteristics or personality as seen in Figure 1: intelligence (or mental abilities) above the average, emotional maturity, intrinsic need of successes and achievements, ability to resolve conflicts and problems, empathy, ability to contact people, representativeness, perseverance, high self-esteem, ability to work in team and in cooperation with others, positive attitude, responsible, with capacity to assume risks and challenges, vision of future, between others characteristics.

The skills of a leader are able to guide the actions of others. This refers to a set of skills and abilities, supported by ethical values, that have its base in the influence and the authority, understanding the mast heart of a leader to get others to do things as he, the leader, wants them to, and that they will do what they have been told with pleasure. This is based, and supported, by the honesty, respect and credibility of the leader, which has to inspire (not impose).

This attitude is essential because if it focuses only on the task, and not on the human relationship, the leader would lose weight and would soon be replaced by another leader. This, to our understanding, is the engine of social, cultural and political change of the Nations. When a political leader stops and begins to show signs of weakness, a new leader will so one merge, and will be capable of capturing the basic needs of a collective (or town or country...) which will replace him as leader. New leaders, new values, new ideologies...will lead to social change and, in two or more generations, cultural change.



**Figure 1 Decision Making Principle Variables**

Future research will try to decipher the psychological profile of leaders through a cross-cultural analysis of their behaviors and personality. With a psychological, anthropological and comparative study will try to describe

the factors that affect their behaviors and attitudes in different societies (we have chosen for the comparative study our own Western society and other Latin American, Dominican Republic).

Leaders, as agents of the change, are the people and groups that introduce the change, hold it together or are opposed to it. They are the ones who forged the history of mankind, their actions and decisions direct their destination. Leaders, usually, part of a certain type of groups, elites.

Elites are those groups of people who possess exceptional qualities and give evidence of skills in its own domain or any activity. They are part of the elites, those who by their work or their natural gifts are more successful than the average of the other inhabitants. The elites constitute a set of agents singularly active in the society where they live, mostly in what regards to change. The variety of elites indicates a plurality of ideologies and values that leads to a direct consequence, that is the appearance of conflict between them, and in addition, these are groups to imitate.

We will review the cultural bases of the behaviors of a leader, studying and analyzing the practices of early childhood education (child rearing) and its relation with the configuration of the structure of personality (school and theories of culture and personality), the influence of the belief systems, and other important variables that affect the behaviors of the leader as well as their impact on your interaction with those who follow them.

## **2. Psychological-anthropological Analysis of Leadership**

One of the objectives of anthropology is to, empirically and theoretically, clarifies relations between the infrastructural levels, structural and super structural level. This means, we try to find out how man relates to other men, with their environment and biologically determined nature and with the spiritual world. It is in this environment where we investigate political behaviors. And we do know that, most of our behaviors, are culturally learned or are biologically determined.

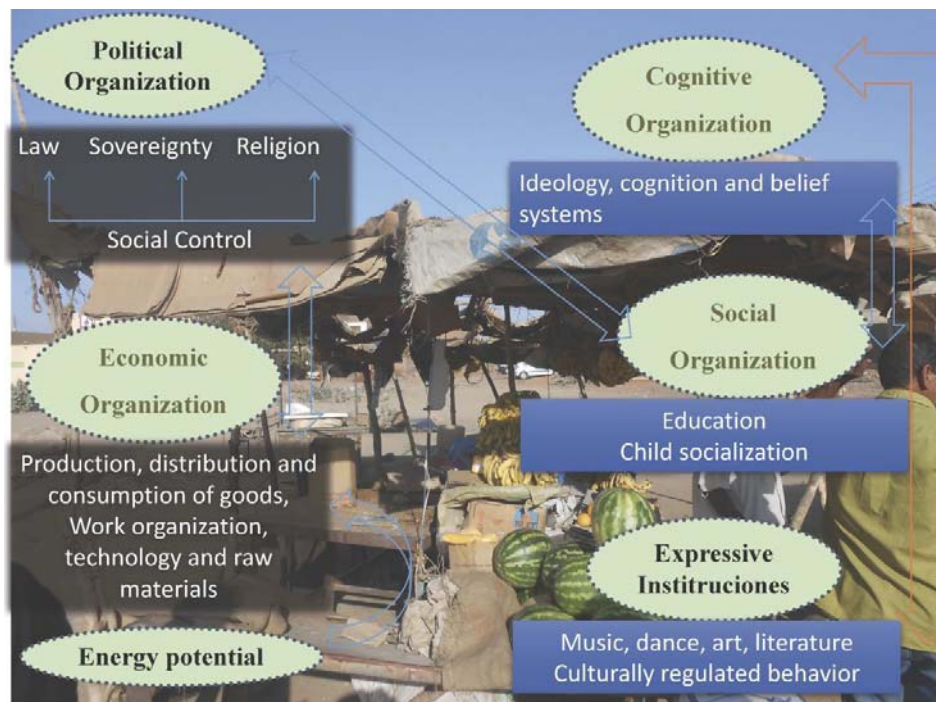
We obviously know that there is a gene that determines the behaviour of a leader or their political actions. It remains them to clarify how such behaviour is culturally regulated. What are the anthropological or psychological bases from this type of behavior?

Anthropology is a holistic science (Figure 2), is based in the study of the human condition as a whole: past, present and future, biology, society, language and culture. It is comparative and cross-cultural (systematically compares data from population and different time periods). It is the way we propose to study this type of behavior. The purpose is to establish generalizations, using the scientific method.

Political and economic science have been developed to investigate particular domains of human behavior, at the same time, this science, just as sociology, has had that work with modern societies. Anthropologists, studding in across-cultural, have increased understanding of the diversity and breadth of the political and legal systems, which vary from a culture to another. In addition, we analyse forms of expression and conflict resolution, in different cultural contexts.

Now, if we talk about political culture, what is culture? Culture can be defined as a system of knowledge that provides us with a model of reality, through which we give sense to our behaviour. In the same way, for Geertz, culture is an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life (Geertz, 1973, p. 89). This system is formed by a set of fundamental interactive elements, generated and shared by the group, with which they feel identified (ethnic group), so they are

transmitted to new members (enculturation), and are effective in there solution of problems.



**Figure 2 Holistic Analysis of the Cultural System**

What is culture for? To solve problems and create needs. It becomes unconscious. Everyone begins immediately learning a culture in a conscious and unconscious way, and through interaction with others, or their own observation, begins to assimilate their culture. We must then see, what is this that we today call political culture. It is from this approach that we will analyze those human behaviors.

From psychology, one of the most enigmatic behaviors of man, and especially the political leader, is their decision making. We know that, decisions that are taken from the reason, are mature decisions (situation-I think solutions-I choose among several options-I decide-I will assume the consequences of my decision).

We also know that, decisions which we take from the feelings are immature decisions: (situation-I don't think solutions-I get carried away by feelings-I do what I want-do not assume the consequences of my decision).

It is known that the process of taking of decisions involves not doing something. When we choose an option, there are others that are put aside but, when making a decision, we not only have to consider what is best for ourselves, but we have to take into account others that may be affected by the decision I have taken (how are they after the decision, see if the decision has worsened them, etc.). Once the decision has been taken, I am who has to assume the consequences of it. If I allow others to decide for me, I do not assume responsibility, and if things don't go well, I will then blame others for what has happened to those affected by the decision. Decisions have to be personal, only if they are, will I assume responsibility for them. I must act in a consisted manner, coherent with what I decide.

We want to analyze this process of decision making, but in the figure of the political leaders, so, in order to do so, political leadership must be the first step to analyse.

### **3. Political Leadership**

Since immemorial time, leadership has been a central concern of social and political theory and therefore subject to disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and political science (Rejai & Phillips, 1997, p. 1). When it comes to define what we must understand by leadership, we already encounter the first problem. It is by no means a term whose definition has turned out pacific, there is no single meaning; the phenomenon to which it refers to, has never been, and maybe never be, explained in a single way (Dominguez, 2004, p. 7).

As explained in the present paper, since our arrival in life, we start off with the task of learning the culture in which we are born into, and this includes as well, political leaders. This allows us to come to an idea of what can be understood for leadership, so as soon as we try to define it we, discover immediately that leadership has different meanings (Northouse, 2001, p. 2) and this is because, the culture that surrounds and molds us, allows to define leadership in one way or another., i.e., there are geographical, historical, political and professional issues to consider, among others.

But nowadays, there are other approaches that must be considered when it comes to understand leadership, and this is the Theory of Organizations (Dominguez 2004, p. 9) that understands leadership as the ability to provide management functions associated with the top level positions (Heifetz, 1997, p. 48). Despite this diversity of possibilities for finding a definition, it is no less true that there are a number of common elements which, over the years, scholars have been bringing to light. These elements are listed by Northouse (2001, p. 3) in the following way:

- (1) It is a process.
- (2) It is about influence.
- (3) It takes place within or relative to a group.
- (4) It aimed to achieve a goal, whatever goal it may be.

As a result of the former features, presented in the definitions which are given of leadership, Molina and Delgado (2001, p. 71) have expressed three ways to understand, and therefore make a differentiated approach, to the term leadership, so we can understand leadership as:

- (1) As a feature or quality attributable to a person.
- (2) As a positional or situational attribute.
- (3) As quality of behavior.

Each one of these elements described previously, in one way or another, allow us to define, study and predict in some way, how to become and what makes a political leader. Whether it is a situational condition, or if it is a purely personal feature that develops in someone or is one of a set of elements that are expressed differently depending on the geographical area. This is why the present study aims to develop in differentiated geographical areas, in order to define what is, and what characterizes a political leader in a western country and other Caribbean areas.

### **4. The Making of Political Decisions**

Decision-making is one of the key aspects in politics. In the liberal capitalist economy decision-making has been inspired by a positivistic epistemology, an individualistic anthropology and a materialistic axiology. A few decades ago, this model began to be questioned from philosophy, psychology, anthropology and economics from

were critics have been given due to its partial vision of economy and political management. The proposals offered go in the direction of integrating social, emotional and ethical dimensions in political theory and management.

The predominant model of decision-making, assumes a series of alleged epistemological, ethical and anthropological cases that should be analyzed critically. One of the most decisive epistemological assumptions is the analytical-mathematic vision of decision-making. It starts with a conception of mathematical logical rationality calculator as the only valid model for the process of decision-making. This assumption is based on a positivist vision of the world.

The rationalist perspective assumes the calculation of individual utility as a basis of the mathematical model. One of its central concepts is “expected utility”, which means that people choose among alternative courses of action after evaluating the desirability or “utility” of each possible outcome of action.

In addition to these positivist models, it is important to also consider the causal-lineal approach. The dominant paradigm follows an analytical model of cause and effect to develop models of decision making, forgetting or only very partially using hermeneutic interpretations. From these assumptions, we offer, or propose, a basis for political decision-making theory.

Against these logical-scientific arguments of decision-making, leaders do not seize human beings, and as such, know the reality, anticipate its possible impacts, and take decisions after evaluating the advantages and disadvantages. Reality is that, we make decisions guided by intuition and emotional “supports” that, in many occasions create, interpret and evaluate reality in a biased way and using shortcuts.

Kahneman (2011) identifies two systems: system I (reflective) that operates quickly and automatically, without or with very little effort, and without sense of voluntary control; and a (reflective) system II, that focuses attention and requires efforts of mental activity. Economic decisions (from investment to consumption, through the selection of workers) are often guided by system I and political leaders are no strangers to this process.

Modern economy is based on the model of teleological and instrumental rationality that seeks the control of objects and has an empiricist perspective of the analysis of problems, forgetting the dimension individual-individual that economy has. The relationship between people cannot govern itself only by logic of instrumental reason, but should take in account practical communicative reasoning.

From an anthropological point of view, the individual is a maximizer of utilities; he permanently seeks his own personal interest (“self-seeking egotistical man”) and always takes rational decisions consistent with his preferences. It is assumed that, people have clear their preferences and that life is spent making constant calculations as to see which the most efficient way to get them is. The present study will see into how political leaders do not escape from this anthropological generalization, also caught by the multifactorial influence given below.

One of the pioneering studies on the influence of factors for decision-making is Knouse and Giacalone (1992), who identifies three categories: individual differences, interpersonal variables and organizational variables. Giapponi and Tromley (2007), provide a classification of factors in four different levels: individual, work context, organizational context and external context.

#### **4.1 Individual Factors**

Individual factors which have a decisive influence on political decision-making include age, gender, religion, I force, independence, locus of control, and level of development of moral consciousness.

Empirical studies do not provide conclusive results about the relationship between age and political

decision-making. There does seem to be a positive relationship between training and professional experience with the making of political decisions, but the factor age in itself does not seem to be determinant. Nor does it seem to have conclusive results regarding the gender factor.

Where there does seem to be statistic interaction is between the force of one's convictions and the capabilities of self-regulation, opposed to context dependence context and is linked to the concept of "locus of control". The locus of control refers to the attribution of those successes or failures to one or to the context. People with external locus of control consider success or failure as dependent on the context, and that the political and ethical dilemmas are out of control. Analyzed research concludes that people with an internal locus of control are more willing to take the initiative to resolve ethical dilemmas and resist social pressure to perform non ethical acts. Political leaders usually have an internal locus of control, successes or failures depend on their efforts, skills and qualities. This means they are more prepared to face the consequences of their acts or political decisions.

Another important individual factor is making contact with the emotions and feelings of the person (Martin Herrero & Viedma Ramos, 2013, p. 46). We believe that this is a major variable, and that their knowledge and study will help us in the work to understand the behavior of a political leader.

#### **4.2 Environmental Factors**

Stenmark and Mumford (2011) analyzed empirically the role of six environmental variables that influence the decision-making of political leaders:

- The performance pressure, when people in organizations are under pressure to "win at all costs", it is very likely that bad policy decisions are made;
- Interpersonal conflicts, a negative relation with decision-making has also been proven. The bigger the interpersonal conflict, worst political decisions are made;
- Evaluation of auto-efficiency made by leaders themselves. We define self-efficiency as the evaluation that performs oneself of the ability to perform a task. The conclusion obtained is that leaders with a low self-assessment of their capacities make worst political decisions;
- Typology of the ethical problem: those related to procedural justice (breaching a rule or procedure), and those that have to do with distributive justice (get a fair outcome). The hypothesis that poses these authors is that leaders follow strictly the rules without considering situational variables, have more possibilities of making worst political decisions.
- Authority influence in the making of decisions. Leaders are more willing to contribute to unethical decisions when they are demanded or supported by a superior.
- Level of autonomy. When employees have a greater level of autonomy, it seems as if they were intrinsically more motivated to carry out their work and improving their satisfaction, performance and creativity.

#### **4.3 Organizational Factors**

The organizational variables that more influence the decisions made by leaders we must highlight the impact of ethical codes, culture and political climate, the type of industry, the size of the Organization, the obedience to the authority and the systems of rewards and sanctions.

Thiel et al. (2012) developed a model based on the creation of a cognitive process by which mental models overcoming deficits of information and inaccurate assessments, and therefore contribute to generate a more effective assessment. The point comes to identifying these cognitive strategies that political leaders use: emotional

regulation, self-reflection, prognosis and integration of information. We believe that these strategies cognitive are teachable.

- Emotional self-regulation. Making political decisions in an unstable and uncertain environment is more likely to be influenced by emotions and requires some special tactics of compensation or self-regulation. This emotional regulation is defined as a strategy that determines how, when, why and what emotions are experienced. Especially relevant is the influence of anger and fear in decision-making.
- Self-reflection. Personal reflection on previous, direct and indirect experiences, have a large influence on decision-making. Self-reflection and self-awareness are important indicators of conduct in political leaders and may increase decision-making of leaders helping them to reflect on their motives and select useful information of the past.
- Preparation of forecasts and future assessments of the results of specific situations. This strategy allows leaders solve complex problems generating multiple solutions to those problems. Identifying multiple consequences improves the quality of forecasts and contributes to responsible decision making.
- Integration of information. People create mental models that are influencing the selection and interpretation of information. The integration of information, using these frames of reference, influences both the representation of a politician as well as the formation of appropriate responses to a problem. This is why it is very important that leaders are aware of their biases when they interact with others, especially when have that face political crisis of an interpersonal event.

## **5. Sociology and Anthropology Contributions to the Study of Leader**

The role of the sociologist, as social scientist, is to develop an objective knowledge of reality. The role of the anthropologist goes further on, as they seek cultural bases of behavior, or the bases of culturally regulated behavior. This gives anthropologists a privileged position to advise political leaders in their processes of decision making with the contribution of a principle of reality and critical technique of values.

The relations between social reality and its knowledge, constitute a very peculiar case that occurs between world and science, first and foremost, because social reality is very complex, much more than the physical-natural, as it is impregnated of the sense that configures its structure and functionality. And, in the same way, the individuals who form part of it, speak, emitting complex messages on which depends their behavior and that of others; and they do it in a language (from a huge variety of them) that it has not been created by any of the speakers, but that all have learned. The science has a powerful influence on society. Not in vain do we handle nowadays the expression of society of knowledge, to refer to certain characteristics of the modern world.

An important modality of this game is that which takes place when someone tries to apply the knowledge achieved by social science to transform the social reality: we can find not only activists, political parties, leaders or officials, but also social scientists themselves, can be found convinced to have the solution to a given problem.

Sociology would have, in this sense, a regulatory function, “say what has to be done” with a rational and undeniable support, of social science, which would have as a goal achieve a more satisfying world (at least for whom proposes the action concerned) (Beltrán, 2012, p. 299).

The acquisition and application of such knowledge by the leaders is so important, that sometimes it is thought that the Foundation of the Platonic Academy had the purpose of teaching it as principal of political practice: the wise man, the man of science, the philosopher, should have a decisive power in Government, he



should be considered as a governing-philosopher. Sabine say, when commenting on the texts of The Republic, “There is no hope for the States, unless the power is in the hands of those who know [...]: The Government should be an art based on an exact knowledge” (Sabine, 1963, pp. 42–43). We believe important to point that, political science, cannot teach anyone what should he do or not do, but only what could he do and, in certain circumstances, what does he want (Weber, 1973, p. 44).

Political leaders have occupied this function which social sciences should not have, and now they are who establish, or propose, what is convenient for citizens, limited to “point out criteria of rationality according to which prosecute the ethos of the existing life forms” (Habermas, 1991, p. 82).

Lindblom (1990, pp. 4–5) states that, a social problem such only when the population defines a situation as in need of improvement. It seems that, never before in our modern history, has there been a situation like this, with a major need of improvement. But, what for some is a problem, is no such problem for others, and what is even a solution or an improvement is something that varies from one person to another. The question, therefore, transforms into a process of resolution of conflicts between social groups, each one of which defines the problem in a certain way and prefers a certain solution, what finally ends involving some type of debate that gives arguments that allow modifying the opposing positions. This makes possible a solution that would not be imposed by force. Such arguments can be rational and logical, or at least try to seem so, even based on a conscious knowledge of the reality that allows a leap to the *should be*.

The question on the role of values in social research needs be completed with which role they play in the scientific advice to leaders. Can social science provide answers to questions for the adoption of political decisions? How can a sociologist or an anthropologist advise political leaders? An answer to these questions could be, by providing with accurate information on how is reality and, if it is known, why is it as so. In other words, it is given to who has to make the decision, the descriptive knowledge, and eventually explanatory of social reality. It is by no means a small contribution: it is nothing less than offering the result of scientific research. It is clear that, such contribution does not resolve by itself, the problem of the decision making, and even frequently enough it complicates, but, nevertheless, having are liable initial point of information on how is the social, economic or political situation, between others, is, undoubtedly, an important factor of rationality in the decision that is finally adopted.

A second level is to giving advice, may refer to the adaptation n of means to ends. The advice should pinpoint, if needed, possible alternatives, because, frequently, important options fall precisely on the means that can cause conflicts depending on their alternative use. Without a doubt, and if possible, advice should extend to the eventual negative effects of measures (means and ends) that can be decided. The expert can predict effects, which could not be foreseen, and which must be taken into account or undesirable effects. Finally, once adopted and implemented the decision, the expert advisor may subsequently deal with checking the effectiveness of the decision made and see, to what extent, has it produced the desired effects, as well as verify the efficiency with which the operation is carried out as to prevent the dilapidation or misuse of public resources.

Social scientists, as experts, do not decide, as this corresponds to the citizens and their political representatives, not to the science, but as an advisor, he accompanies the leader throughout the process: he pinpoints the reality that must be taken into account, as from where must he begin, he considers the rationality and the viability of ends pursued as to the means that better suit to reach such ends, warns of possible perverse effects of the decision that is being preparing and evaluates the results of the action done, both its effectiveness and its efficiency, and even how has it been received by the public opinion (Beltrán, 2012, p. 306).

## **6. Conclusions**

We believe that the union of all three social disciplines Psychology, Anthropology and Political Science can help us understand the cultural basis of behavior of political leaders. Anthropology allows us relate in some way the super-structural level (man's relationship with a higher level that we don't understand), structural levels (man's relations with other members of his society) and infrastructural level (relations between man and his environment). It is in this inter-relational scenario, where the leader's conduct takes place.

As we have already said, from Anthropology, we know that culture is defined as a system of knowledge that gives us a model of reality, through which we make sense of our behavior. This system consists of a set of generated interactive elements and shared by the group identifying (ethnicity), which are transmitted to new members (enculturation), and which are effective in solving various problems (Aguirre, 1997, p. 7). All of this is the result of the power to externalize, and the need for human interaction, which manifests analytical level in ideas, actions and concrete products; customs are one of them, cultural traditions, other. This means that, traditions can play an important enculturate and socializing role, (and actually do), and also can act as elements and/or features of identity that unite the popular consciousness or popular identity of a locality specific (Martin, 2001, p. 146). We believe important consideration to understand, and possibly predict the behavior of a political leader.

From Psychology we know that human behavior is a dependent variable, you must then find that independent variables involved or exert on behavior.

And it is Political Science that should tell us how relations between the previously proposed levels (such as cultural background of the leader, as well as the independent variables (in the form of personality structure, for example) influence making political decisions. It should allow us to see how the chosen political leaders can stay away from making a decision that can lead to disaster, or to a corrupt situation. Decision making can even transform an entire regime if the leader that does so is capable of, for example, maintain judicial independence avoiding political interference (Iglesias, 2016, p. 321).

Political leaders who act based on their ideology and the interests of social groups to which they belong or represent try to not act blindly; This is why they seek advice from those who know, both by sociologists and anthropologists, as by experts that are not social scientists. It is for this reason that this paper has exposed the main variables that influence the decision making of political leaders (individual, organizational, and situational factors), taking into account that their decisions will be very influenced by their beliefs, memories, narratives about leadership and ideologies that determine the emotions, preferences and values that are the basis of their decisions.

To continue, future research must delve into the importance of cultural variables, as a determining factor in this game of decision-making from political leaders. In order to do so, the figure of two political contemporary leaders in Spain and the Dominican Republic, Jose Maria Aznar and Leonel Fernandez, have been chosen to compare between two very different cultural habitats, if these cultural variables referenced before, determined in any way how they made decisions when they were Presidents of their countries.

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