

Political Leadership Traits and Tolerant Decision-making Process

*A Content Analysis of Former Dutch Prime Ministers
Jan Peter Balkenende versus Mark Rutte*

BACHERLOR THESIS

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Abstract

This study examines the probable causes of different leaders' responses to political intolerance in Dutch democracy. In comparing two Dutch Prime Ministers in similar settings, who show different responses to increasing intolerance in society, this study attempts to explain their contrasting attitudes by their personal traits. Both the political tolerance and the leadership style scholars' results are used as a basis, since both type of scholars use personality traits in trying to predict leaders' attitudes or political intolerance. This study states as many other studies that most personality traits do not explain contrasting leadership responses to intolerance, while self-esteem does. Thus, when political parties want to create a more tolerant society, and therefore want to select a more tolerant political leader, the leaders' self-esteem is most important.

Keywords: Dutch Politics, Leadership, Political Intolerance, Personal Traits, Self-esteem

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Introduction

Since the right-wing populist Geert Wilders is a member of the Dutch parliament, intolerance has been increasing. In contrast to the expectation that a politician is respectful to all citizens, he discriminates some minority groups and wins votes at the same time. Launching the film 'Fitna' in 2008 which presented a negative image of Muslims, made him a nationally and internationally famous politician. He profits by stating his intolerant message, since he gains more votes. He benefits from the economic crisis as some citizens seem to need a scapegoat in these times of social unrest. As one might expect he continues to repeat his discriminating message, since these benefits beat the disadvantages. So he introduces a so-called 'anti-Pole' website inviting Dutch nationalists to lodge their complaints about Central and Eastern Europeans living in the country in 2012.

The political leaders' response to these two statements of Wilders is contrasting. The Dutch Prime Minister (PM) Jan Peter Balkenende immediately rejected Fitna in contrast to his successor PM Mark Rutte who ignored the 'anti-Pole' website. While they have the same position and relatively similar constraints, their contrasting reactions present a rich theoretical puzzle. Environmental constraints are undoubtedly not the only explanation for the leaders' attitudes as some researchers state. Leaders cannot be treated exogenously from the environment, since in the end they make the actual political decision (Keller 2005, 836). Drawing on both Dutch leaders' press conferences and interviews, some leadership traits will be exposed, which may explain their decision-making process and actual response.

Even though scholars of broad political tolerance and leadership styles have investigated political attitudes in general, leaders' responses to intolerance have never been the main research subject of a study, and will therefore be the focus of this study. Predicting how politicians will react to growing intolerance of discrimination based on their traits is the main goal of this study. Knowing which traits may cause a tolerance attitude may be relevant for political parties that want to select a more tolerant political leader to create a more tolerant society. Nowadays, this may even be more relevant since right-wing parties are increasingly issuing more discriminatory messages.

Literature Review

Political Intolerance

Political tolerance refers to a willingness to extend civil liberty rights to other people. In other words, other people have to be allowed their political freedom Sullivan, Pierson, Marcus state that political tolerance means that people have to 'put up with' things that they reject, such as opposing values (Gibson and Bingham 1982, 604).

Most studies of political tolerance have focused on the levels and sources of political intolerance among average citizens. Stouffer was the first to study to which extent people tended to apply civil liberty rights to communists in 1955. He concluded that people tend not to be very tolerant when civil liberty rights are applied (Sullivan *et al.* 1979, 782). After him many studies followed mostly focusing on the average citizen in the United States. Repeating the study of Stouffer, John Sullivan found that intolerance has not increased since the 1950s, while other studies did conclude the contrary. This difference may be due to the fact that there is some discussion on how to measure intolerance. Stouffer asked in a large survey if people allow some specific groups civil liberty rights. His questions included whether a person should have the right to speak in public, a book should be included in the library or a person should have the right to teach at a public school. While Stouffer presented the groups, other studies did allow the respondents to choose their own 'least like' group to which they could be intolerant. Therefore the results may differ, not only could a respondent be tolerant to different groups, but he could also show different levels of tolerance to groups (Gibson and Bingham 1982, 604). Since all people dream of a better world, there is also much research into the cause of intolerance and whether we could learn to be intolerant. However, although it is a great research subject, there is still a lot unknown about intolerance. Next to the measurement of intolerance previously mentioned, it is uncertain if there is a connection between social and political intolerance, the difference in tolerance and intolerance, and the dimensional threat that may cause or trigger intolerance, and the difference between elite and the average citizen (Gibson 2006, 22). This research focuses on this latter subject, since all previous studies had already focused on the average citizen.

It is particularly important to study political tolerance of political leaders, since in a democracy they not only have to accept the outcome of elections, but they also have to allow their opponents to govern the country when they have the majority of the votes (Gibson 2006,

22). Many studies show that the public may be far less tolerant than the political elite, who may be more exposed to libertarian norms and in effect are less intolerant. According to Stouffer they are the ‘*advocates of democracy*’, although he did not have any data to confirm this difference (Sullivan *et al.* 1993, 52-69). Sullivan wanted to test this and conducted two hypotheses: first, the adult socialization hypothesis that the political leader context may stimulate tolerance and, second, the selective recruitment hypothesis that states that more tolerant people are hired. Most politicians come from a higher status family, who experience a less authoritarian structure in childhood than lower status families. Since many studies prove that an authoritarian structure may increase intolerance, politicians are therefore less intolerant. As a consequence politicians are less intolerant. Overall, the leader in a power position may be surrounded with intolerant people who in turn have an effect on the leader’s tolerance. Similarly, Altemeyer (1988) states that less experience with diversity is explanatory for intolerance. Although they may not have to be mutually exclusive, Sullivan found more evidence for the latter hypothesis (Sullivan *et al.* 1982, 158-162).

Common practice is to explain different leaders’ responses in relation with the situational context (Dyson 2007, 648). These situations put constraints on leaders that influence their attitude. The contrasting responses of Balkenende and Rutte in this research are striking, because they faced relatively similar constraints, such as democracy, some domestic constraints and the threat of violence. Yet, as will be discussed in the research design below, most of the relevant constraints are constant across these two cases. This leads to the focus on the impact of leadership traits on political tolerance.

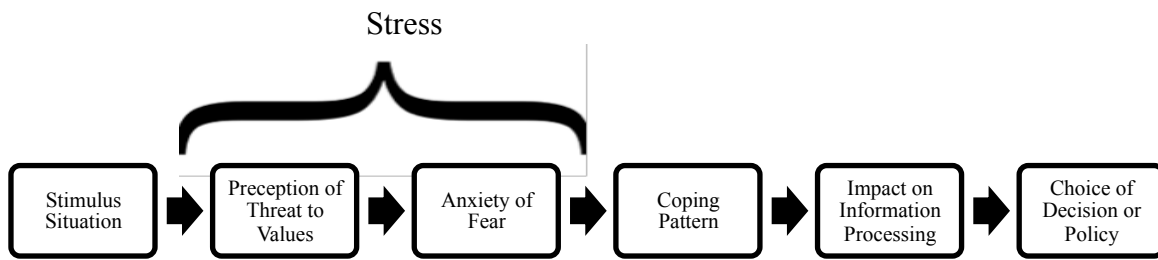
Perceived Threat and Activating Constraints

Both the political tolerance and the leadership style literature have studied various traits that may explain general political attitude or intolerance level, although scientific evidence in predicting political leaders’ reactions to intolerance is still missing. The number of studies that try to predict political attitude in general have increased since Harold Lasswell (1930) constituted the concept of leadership style that he defined as a mix of traits (Post 2004, 17). Several studies constituted their own leadership style by using their own mix of personal traits. Margaret Hermann identifies for example seven traits to assess leadership style. First, the belief that *one can influence what happens*, second, the *need for power*, third, *complexity*, which is the ability to differentiate things and people, fourth, *self-confidence*, fifth, a *problem focus* versus *group focus*, sixth, a general *distrust* or in other words suspiciousness of others,

and finally, the intensity in which a person holds an *in-group bias* (Post 2003, 197-198). In comparison, Sullivan states that a predisposition to tolerance affects how tolerant people are. This predisposition is based on traits that provide a stable basis for real political attitude (Sullivan *et al.* 1995, 162-176). Similar, Jeanne Knutson (1972) used Maslow's need hierarchy to predict the personal tolerance level. From basic to more complicated these needs are *psychological need*, *security and safety*, *affiliation and love*, *self-esteem* and *actualization*. Her hypothesis is that if a need is met satisfactorily, people will become more tolerant. Although her findings are unfortunately not empirically confirmed, it is a valuable conceptual theory (Sullivan *et al.* 1982, 145-147).

Leadership traits may clearly help to predict political attitude or tolerance level, although some researchers demonstrate that the environmental constraints have to be activated to get a leader response. These constraints and the perception of the leaders are therefore important as well. The relation between the environment and personal traits may explain a leader's perceived threat level. Threat to the individual is known as stress. Similarly, collective threat to the group or country is defined as a crisis (Post 2004, 102-103). Post, who also created different leadership styles, constitutes that this mix of traits is exaggerated in a crisis situation. The leader who is already confident in a normal situation, for example, may in a crisis situation not only become extremely self-confident, but could also lose reality. The compulsive personality who wants to pursue certainty, may in effect make an irrational decision to achieve more certainty and could even decide not to act at all. The narcissistic leader could go out of touch with the political reality and make irrational decisions when the inner circle is not critical and only encourages the self-esteem of the leader. However, a narcissistic leader under a crisis situation does not always act completely insane, but can act perfectly normal as well. The American presidents Roosevelt and Kennedy, for example, were narcissistic leaders. Finally, the paranoid personality who was already suspicious in a calm situation becomes extra suspicious in a crisis situation (Post 2004, 106-112). Similarly, Janis (1972, 1989) identified several patterns in leaders dealing with environmental threat. Some leaders seem to avoid decision-making by not expressing the situation as a crisis or excessively delaying the process. A hyper vigilance leader, for example, is in a state of panic when confronted with stress or a crisis (Post 2004, 103-104). This relation between the environment and personal traits defines not only the level of perceived threat, but may also predict how leaders react, is shown in figure one.

Figure 1 The Impact of Stress on Decision-making



Source: Post, Jerrold M. 2004. *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 103.

These studies of perceived threat are similar to the studies of personal desires of the leaders, that may predict political attitude or intolerance, which is also another missing link in both studies. Leaders seem to become both anxious and intolerant when their desires, also known as their belief systems, are threatened. They may react more intolerant when for example their belief in democracy is threatened (Sullivan *et al.* 1993, 69-71). Similarly, Post states that subjective factors may become significant when leaders' environments conflict with their traits or values. Even leaders with a strong need for control may feel pressure at a time of social unrest, even if the unrest is caused by the desired progress (Post 2004, 21). Similarly, Rokeach (1960) discovered that individuals become more close-minded when the belief system like dogmatism is more dominant. Dogmatism is a cognitive need to understand the world and secondly a defense mechanism against threatening aspects of reality. Thus, leaders' belief systems affect what is personally threatening. Parallel to the previous example, Rokeach stated that disbeliefs like communism, fascism or extreme right-winged doctrines may be threatening when leaders believe in democracy (Sullivan *et al.* 1982, 154). Similarly, a desire for safety may cause intolerance according to Knutson. An individual who is feeling unsafe may develop a rigid attitude. These 'law-and-order' types have a fear for complexity, want to prevent chaos and are in effect more intolerant. Some are even undemocratic (Sullivan *et al.* 1982, 145-147). If the public is opposed to leaders' values, they may feel threatened as well. These leaders do not only react quicker, but also find threat more upsetting and are likely to be intolerant (Sullivan *et al.* 1995, 166-172).

A threat to the leaders group may be a potential personal threat. Leaders who are more connected to the group have a higher *authoritarianism*. These authoritarians prefer group uniformity rather than group diversity. When the group is threatened, the uniformity is under threat as well. The individuals with a higher level of *authoritarianism* will then be less intolerant to protect the group uniformity (Feldman and Stenner 1997, 755-761).

In tolerance literature the relation between the environment and leadership traits is

explained in terms of perceived threat. In leadership literature this is explained in terms of leaders who *challenge* or *respect* environmental restraints. Keller and Dyson used this method to explain leaders' attitudes. They based their studies on the earlier mentioned traits of Hermann. Dyson focused on actions proposed or taken by the leader or the leader-identifying group and assumed that leaders take responsibility for planning or initiating an action when they believe that they have some *control over what happens*. He compared the leadership style of United Kingdom PM's Johnson and Tony Blair in a case study. Johnson decided not to go into war with Vietnam, whereas Blair did go to war in Iraq, although they had to deal with similar constraints, such as the pressure of public opinion and strategic considerations regarding the United States relations who asked for help in both wars (Dyson 2007, 647-656). Similarly, Keller conducted an experiment. Finding that not only dispositional traits, but also situational demands will determine if respondents accept political opposition in exchange for policy efficiency (Keller and Yang 2008, 692). Before turning to the analysis of Hermann's seven traits in relation to the environmental constraints other studies are examined.

Self-esteem, Power Position and Tolerance

Self-esteem is probably one of the most investigated traits in both studies, but the influence of leaders' *self-esteem* is still puzzling. The main question remains if the trait *self-esteem* is a stable or a flexible trait that can increase or decrease when someone reaches or loses a power position. This link between *self-esteem* and a power position is recognized both by Payne and Lasswell. The latter argues that leaders seek power to compensate a lower *self-esteem*. Likewise, Payne measured seven incentives such as status, program, responsibility, game, mission in life, affection, and conviviality. He found *self-esteem* too as the most significant trait why individuals want to hold a power position despite the divergent deprivations, such as critical media reactions, long working hours and the financial downfall compared to a commercial job (Payne 1984, 187). Similarly, Barber found that a leader's situation in combination with *self-esteem* would predict their attitude. Leaders' motivation defines how they orient themselves towards live, not only for the moment, but also enduringly (Barber 1977, 8). Their drives for *power*, *achievement* and *love* are important to know why leaders seek power. Do they want to be documented in the pages of history, or just occupy the desirable place in the limelight or wield power (Post 2003, 91)?

The level of self-esteem may not only predict why individuals hold a power position, but may also indicate a leader's response to intolerance. Sniderman (1975) states that an

individual with a lower level of *self-esteem* will reject contrasting views and a pluralistic society, and in effect does not want to learn being tolerant. *Self-esteem* is both a capacity of social learning and a learning motivation to new ideas and values. He assumes that tolerance is a democratic restraint that is too abstract and hard to learn. Similarly, Knutson states that when individuals do not meet affiliation in the need hierarchy there will never be less tolerance, since these individuals will never build *self-esteem*, because they always feel unloved. They also may reject opposing ideas, because being more authoritarian and undemocratic will alleviate their fear. This corresponds with an earlier study of George (1956) who stated that political leaders with a higher *self-esteem* are more tolerant (Sullivan *et al.* 1982, 145-147). This leads to the first hypotheses:

H1: The lower a leader's self-esteem, the more likely he or she will react to increasing intolerance in society with less tolerance.

Seven Traits of Hermann Explaining Political Attitude

In addition to *self-esteem* Hermann identifies six other traits, which will in combination with each other predict a leader's response better than just a single trait.

To measure for example if leaders challenge or respect the earlier mentioned environmental constraints both *a belief that they can influence and control what happens* and *need for power* that is known as the wish to influence, control, or dominate other people and groups, are coded (Keller 2005, 842). When the level of the *belief that they can influence or control what happens* is high, leaders are assumed to challenge constraints, since they may think they can shape the environment. If leaders are high in *the belief they can control events*, but low in the *need for power* they will challenge constraints as well. If they are low in *the belief they can control events* but high in the *need for power* they will also challenge constraints, although it will be more behind the scenes, than out in the open (Post 2003, 200). This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: The leader who is a *constraints respecter* will react to increasing intolerance in society with less tolerance than a *constraint challenger*.

Figure 2. Leaders Reactions to Constraints

Need for Power	Belief One Can Control Events	
	Low	High
Low	<p>Respect constraints Work within such parameters toward goals. Compromise and consensus building important.</p>	<p>Challenge constraints But less successful in doing so because too direct and open in use of power. Less able to read how to manipulate people and setting behind the scenes to have desired influence.</p>
High	<p>Challenge constraints But more comfortable doing so in an indirect fashion—behind the scenes. Good at being "power behind the throne" where they can pull strings but are less accountable for result.</p>	<p>Challenge constraints Are skillful in both direct and indirect influence. Know what they want and take charge to see it happens.</p>

Source: Dyson, S.B. 2007. Alliances, Domestic Politics, and Leader Psychology: Why did Britain stay out of Vietnam and go into Iraq, *Political Psychology*, 28, 647-666.

Hermann’s third trait is *complexity*, which she defines as the ability to differentiate things and people. It is linked with a more adaptive behavior that is especially significant in threatening situations, a crisis for example, since most crisis situations are complex. Some leaders are able to deal with more complex situations than others. Leaders with a lower level of *complexity* may want to avoid or soon end the crisis situation, while on the other hand leaders with a higher level of *complexity* may want to challenge the situation (Post 2004, 40-42). This leads to the third hypothesis:

H3: The less a leader can handle complexity, the more likely he or she will react to increasing intolerance in society with less tolerance.

The fourth trait is the power motive of the leaders. Are they *task-focused* or *group-focused*? Do they focus on problem solving and accomplishment or do they want to maintain the cohesion of the group and are they dealing with opposing ideas and sensitivities? A higher level of *group focus* indicates that leaders want to maintain the group cohesion at all costs. For these leaders group loyalty is important. Not only are they even more likely to use external threat to mobilize support for their own population, but also do they believe in politics as a zero-sum game, where one party’s gain is another party’s loss. Thus, they want to win (Post 2004, 214-215). *Task-oriented* leaders on the other hand may want to solve the problems and challenge constraints to pursue their goal, while *group-oriented* leaders favor a more participatory style. *Task-oriented* leaders are also more autocratic, while the *group-oriented* leader is searching for consensus to avoid disputes (Keller 2005, 841). Important to

notice is that the motives do not have to be mutually exclusive. This study assumes that *task-oriented* leaders will be more tolerant, since *group-oriented* leaders will feel threatened when the group is under attack and therefore could become less tolerant in order to protect the group. This leads to the fourth hypothesis:

H4: The more *group-oriented* rather than *task-oriented* a leader is, the more likely he or she will react to increasing intolerance in society with less tolerance.

The fifth trait is *in-group bias*. Leaders with a high *in-group bias* emphasize the ‘greatness’ of the group. They want to maintain the power and structure of the group (Post 2004, 200-204). Again as with the previous trait, the assumption is that leaders with a higher focus on the group would be less tolerant, since they want to protect the group. This leads to the fifth hypotheses:

H5: The higher a leader’s *in-group bias*, the more likely he or she will react to increasing intolerance in society with less tolerance.

The final trait is *distrust*, which is defined by Hermann as a belief that people outside the group cannot be trusted. Their actions should be treated with suspicion. Nationalism is an example of distrusting people who are not a part of the nation (Keller 2005, 842). It is a belief that others are often two-faced and should be regarded with suspicion. Leaders with higher levels of *distrust* see the world as more threatening. That may lead to an increased willingness to use forceful policy instruments to neutralize these threats (Keller 2005, 693). The higher a leader’s distrust is, the more likely it is that he or she will be less tolerant. This leads to the last hypothesis:

H6: The higher a leader’s distrust, the more likely he or she will react to increasing intolerance in society with less tolerance.

Research Design and Methods

Case Selection

The first advantage of this research is that it provides scientific evidence on political leaders' traits that may predict their reactions to intolerant speech. This real-world case measures real reactions of political leaders towards relevant constraints. This is important, since most experimental trait analyses of both scholars not only focus mostly on average citizens instead of political leaders, but also may contain a potential bias, since what people say and how they act generally differs.

The second advantage of this research is that it allows to check many of the contextual differences in constraints on which previous research has focused. The leaders have the same power position and are confronted with the same context, which makes the contrasting responses even more puzzling. Thus their different mix of traits may affect their response to intolerance.

The first contextual constraint involves democracy and political intolerance, which is somewhat contradictory. This is also known as the intolerance paradox. This is the conflict among individuals who do not tolerate civil liberty rights to all, while democracy as such demands that society has to tolerate them. In the Dutch democracy Wilders can thus spread his intolerant messages even if he is discriminating others by doing that. The specific concern here is with Wilders' right to free speech—his right to freely express intolerant opinions. Karl Popper identifies this paradox as well. He states that in fact tolerance itself is threatened when intolerant people are tolerated. People should therefore not tolerate the intolerant (Rosenfeld 1987, 1485). Following this advice Balkenende rejected intolerance in contrast to Rutte, although the latter claims to be a big fan of Popper. He even refers to him in a speech: "An open society is a product of many individual opinions that in many ways interact with each other. In that debate -a confrontation of opinions and characters- the open society will be created. The outcome is surely not predictable neither perfect. We –the Dutch citizens- have to accept this" (Rutte, 2011). Rutte wants to protect an open society even if the outcome may not be perfect. By not only ignoring Wilders' undemocratic opinion, but also allowing an uncomfortable outcome he is in fact more tolerant than Balkenende who rejected intolerance. In this research Balkenende is assumed to be intolerant in contrast to Rutte who is tolerant towards the statements of Wilders.

The second constraint is the institutional norm that both a majority of the citizens and most other politicians expect a rejection of intolerant speech by the PM as head of a national government, since ignoring the website may signal support for it. If he does not respond, they may instead of criticizing the discrimination, criticize the leader for not rejecting it. The European political elite decides for example not only to respond in a resolution to Wilders' discrimination, but also to Rutte's silence. They are in a position to criticize, because the Netherlands is a member of the European Union¹. Rutte's silence did not meet the expectations of the public opinion and thus they were furious at Rutte's cold-shouldered reaction². Rutte calmly repeated his first and only statement: "Wilders does not state the opinion of the government, and moreover freedom of speech is a democratic right" (Rutte and Rosenthal, 2012). On the contrary Balkenende respected this constraint and in effect immediately rejected the intolerance. According to Balkenende "The Dutch government stands for a society in which freedom and respect belong together. Such a society demands dedication and commitment" (Balkenende, 2008).

The third domestic constraint is both leaders' political party values. Balkenende may as a member of the *Christian Democratic Appeal* (CDA) be in a better position to reject Wilders' message, because it is opposed to the party value of solidarity³. On the other hand, the ideas of Rutte's political party, the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD), are freedom, responsibility, tolerance, social justice and equality of people⁴. These values empathize tolerance and a tolerant reaction towards all. Rutte may have followed these values and therefore reacted tolerantly. Although it should be noticed that the last value seems to contradict Wilders' website too, since Wilders does not treat all Europeans equal. Assuming that both leaders agree with most of their own party values, it may be easier for Balkenende to reject intolerance than for Rutte.

The fourth constraint is the threat of economic downfall. The Netherlands is significantly dependent on foreign trade, which could be threatened if foreign countries stop trading (CBS, 2012). This may be a potential threat for a Dutch PM who wants to create economic growth. To avoid this most leaders reject discrimination. The anti-Pole website case shows this could be a real threat, because a big investment in the Dutch Rotterdam

¹ Government News 'European Union Supports Dutch Government's Standpoint on Fitna' 2008 <<http://www.government.nl/news/2008/03/29/european-union-supports-dutch-government-s-standpoint-on-fitna.html>> (20 May 2012)

² BBC, 18 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17078239>> (20 May 2012)

³ CDA <http://www.cda.nl/Waar_staan_we_voor.aspx> (20 May 2012)

⁴ VVD <<http://www.vvd.nl/over-de-vvd/detail/17/liberale-beginselen>> (20 May 2012)

Harbor may fail due to the silence of the Dutch government⁵. Similarly, earlier on the ambassadors threatened the government with worsening the relations between the Netherlands and Eastern European countries (Rosenthal, 2012). Foreign minister Rosenthal of Rutte's cabinet says on the other hand that the relations with the Eastern European countries had not changed at all (Rosenthal, 2012a). There is a lack of examples in the case of Balkenende, due to his firm rejection of intolerance. Rutte challenged this constraint and may not be afraid of real economic downfall, while Balkenende may have been afraid of the economic downfall and thus rejected discrimination, even though the threat of economic downfall is the same.

The fifth constraint is the threat of probable violent consequences because of discrimination. In 2005 filmmaker Theo van Gogh had been murdered for example, due to his intolerant reviews of Muslims (BBC News, 2004). Balkenende was also the Dutch PM when this murder happened. In the case of Fitna extreme Muslims threatened a Danish Cartoonist, who made a cartoon of the religious Muslim leader Mohammad. His house was even set on fire. All this happened while the Dutch debate on Fitna was still going on in the Netherlands (The Guardian, 2010). These incidents made the threat of violent consequences more realistic. Balkenende was clearly aware of this threat when he stated there was reason for constant awareness on 28 March 2008 (Balkenende, 2011). Similarly, Rutte had to deal with this as well. Six months before the launch of the anti-Pole website there was a political murder in Norway. The murderer Breivik, who says he is a Wilders sympathizer, murdered 77 people in two attacks (BBC News, 2012). Public opinion seems to get used to intolerance while not only the threat and violence, but also the debate on the immigrant policy is continuing. The constraints of both cases are thus comparable, although diverse responses remain puzzling.

In contrast to these relatively similar constraints the leaders' dependency on Wilders differs. Balkenende was not dependent on Wilders, whereas Rutte made an agreement with Wilders to support some of his plans to get the majority in parliament (Gedoogakkoord, 2010). It seems by ignoring the message he did not want to lose Wilders' support, although he could have depended more on other political parties than Wilders' Freedom Party (PVV). On the other hand he did challenge all the other constraints while he also needed support from other parties for some policies. The question remains whether Rutte did tolerate Wilders due to the democratic restraint of the 'freedom of speech' or due to the necessity for his support and, thus, for maintaining his own power. Rutte may ignore Wilders because of this, but he

⁵ Kamerstuk: Kamerbrief DEU-0261/12, 26 March 2012

could actually have rejected intolerance as well. He made the decision not to reject and thus not to challenge his agreement with Wilders.

The fact that all these variables are constant means that this real-world case allows to focus on the personality traits.

Data Coding and Analysis

The weekly Friday afternoon PM press conferences of Rutte and Balkenende and the weekly TV interviews are the analyzed data for the context of this analysis. Choosing these texts the probability of more spontaneous speech samples may increase, since it is less likely responses to unknown question are prepared and controlled. The assumption is that leaders' responses will to some degree reveal their traits. Their written words and phrases of the press conferences will reveal the independent variable. Basis for this deductive research is the coding method of Margaret Hermann, who assumes that traits are measurable from a distance. She developed scores on eight personal characteristics that may predict a political response (Keller 2005, 845-847).

Figure 3. Periods that are Chosen to Examine for Research

Jan Peter Balkenende, who was PM from 2007-2010.

<i>Period 1.</i>	<i>April until May</i>	<i>2007</i>
<i>Period 2.</i>	<i>September until October</i>	<i>2008</i>
<i>Period 3.</i>	<i>February until March</i>	<i>2009</i>
<i>Period 4.</i>	<i>January until February</i>	<i>2010</i>

Mark Rutte, who was PM from 2010-2012.

<i>Period 1.</i>	<i>October until November</i>	<i>2010</i>
<i>Period 2.</i>	<i>April until May</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Period 3.</i>	<i>November until December</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Period 4.</i>	<i>March until April</i>	<i>2012</i>

For coding each PM both four random periods and six press conferences of each period are chosen. The press conferences are not threatening or on special subjects. The aim was to get a neutral and real reaction of the PM's. There could be a potential bias in the spreading of the periods, because these data covered four cabinets of Balkenende while only one cabinet of Rutte is covered. Balkenende was PM from 22 July 2002 until 14 October 2010. Rutte was PM from 14 October 2010 until 23 April 2012. This may not be too big an issue, since the aim is to discover the leadership traits that are not to change over time as

assumed by Hermann. A second potential bias may be that the data do not cover the beginning of Balkenende as PM. The first press conferences available online date from February 2007. Still, there was sufficient data from 2007 to analyze Balkenende.

The most basic quantitative output word counting is used (Neudendorf 2002, 131). This manifest content is easy to count and decreases the chance of a bias compared to latent content counting (Neudendorf 2002, 146). When coding the trait *self-esteem* the pronouns ik (I), wij (we), mij (me) and mijn (mine) are counted. All in Dutch of course, since the press conferences are in this language. By using more I, me or mine than we, leaders may see themselves both as more important and may have higher *self-esteem*. By calculating the percentage of times these personal pronouns are used in a response a score is determined. Similarly, when coding for *complexity* the focus is on words that suggest that the leader can deal with more contextual dimensions, such as trend (trend), mogelijk (possible), ongeveer (approximately). In contrast to those who want to avoid complex situations and favor words or phrases, zonder twijfel (like without a doubt), zeker (certainly) and absoluut (absolutely). In this way all traits are coded which are shown in table one. The overall score for all traits is the average percentage across the total number of interview responses (Post 2003, 202). It may be more relevant to count the number of average percentage across all words, but the method of Hermann is leading. This is done by machine coding with the coding program DEDOOSE. The average scores were analyzed in SPSS. By conducting an independent simple t-test, possible differences between both leaders are tested. Unfortunately, because of time boundaries it was not possible to compare both leaders to a reference group as Hermann did. She used a reference group of twenty world leaders from a variety of geographical regions and historical areas to determine if the leaders' trait scores are typical or deviate from the average group score (Post 2003, 243).

The dependent variable known as a political leaders' response to growing intolerance is already distinguished. This is analyzed by qualitative descriptive analysis of the process of 'Fitna' and the anti-Pole website as well as the leaders' responses to this. The assumption is that different dependent variables may have an effect on the independent variable. The independent variables have to differ as well as to confirm the hypotheses. Unfortunately, there are some special constraints, such as the environment that is affecting the attitudes as well. The traits are thus complementing in explaining diverse attitudes towards growing intolerance. The assumption is not that traits will be the only explanation of the diverse reactions. Another constraint is that the level of perceived threat cannot be measured. It might

be that one constraint may be more significant to a leader than another. The assumption is that all constraints have the same impact on a leader.

Table 1. Coding Scheme Based on Margaret Hermann

Trait	Kinds of Words	Examples
<i>Believe that they have some control over what happens</i>	Verbs	Verbs that indicate that the speaker or a group with whom the speaker identifies has taken responsibility for planning or initiating an action.
<i>Need for Power and Influence</i>	Verbs	1. Proposes or engages in a strong, forceful action, such as an assault or attack, a verbal threat, an accusation, or a reprimand. 2. Gives advice or assistance when it is not solicited. 3. Attempts to regulate the behavior of another person or group. 4. Tries to persuade, bribe, or argue with someone else so long as the concern is not to reach agreement or avoid disagreement. 5. Endeavors to impress or gain fame with an action. 6. Is concerned with his or her reputation or position.
<i>Self-confidence</i>	Pronouns	Ik (I), mij (myself), mijn (mine)
<i>Conceptual complexity</i>	Words that suggest the speaker can see different dimensions in the environment.	Absoluut (absolutely), zonder twijfel of zondermeer (without a doubt), zeker (certainly), en onomkeerbaar (irreversible)
<i>Task-focused</i>	Task-oriented words.	Bereiken (accomplishment), (achievement), plan (plan), positie (position), voorstel (proposal), erkenning (recommendation), en tactiek (tactic).
<i>Group-focused</i>	Group-maintenance types of words.	Waardering (appreciation), samenwerking (collaboration), teleurstellen (disappoint), vergeven (forgive), schaden (harm), bevrijden (liberation), and lijden (suffering).
<i>In-group bias</i>	Modifiers that suggest greatness, strength or that indicate the need to maintain group honor and identity.	1. Groot (great), vreedzaam (peace-loving), progressief (progressive), succesvol (successful); 2. Machtig (powerful), capabel (capable), maakte grote sprongen/ grote vooruitgang (made great advances) 3. Onze grenzen stellen (need to defend firmly our borders), eigen koers behouden/eigen visie vasthouden (must maintain our own interpretation), wij gaan over ons eigen beleid (decide our own policies)
<i>Distrust</i>	Noun and noun phrases referring to persons other than the leader and to groups.	If the leader shows distrust, doubt, have misgivings about, feels uneasy about, or feels wary about what these persons or groups are doing. When the leader shows concern about what these persons or groups are doing and perceive such actions to be harmful, wrong, or detrimental to himself or herself, an ally, a friend, or a cause important to the leader.

Source: Post, Jerrold M. 2003. *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders with Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*. University of Michigan Press.

Results

Table two reports not only the mean scores that provide an appropriate measure of each word, but also an independent t-test that demonstrates if there is a significant difference is between both leaders. According to these results it seems that there is a distinction in the motivation traits *task or group oriented*, *self-esteem*, and *need for power*. There is no significant difference in *in-group bias*, *control over the situation* and low or high *complexity*. The problem is that exposing leaders differences in some traits is not the same as exposing that they can be classified as ‘high’ or ‘low’ and in effect be described as challenging or respecting constraints. However, judging leaders in relation to each other is appropriate if the situations are comparable, according to Dyson (2007, 658). It is important to keep in mind that no significant difference is found between both leaders, does not mean the data is not significant. The results present the traits of the leaders, but when there is no difference, the trait may not explain the diverse responses of the leaders. That is after all the aim of this research.

Table 2. Comparison Trait Scores of Jan Peter Balkenende and Mark Rutte

	J.P. Balkenende (N=24)	M. Rutte (N=24)	Significance (P < .05)	T-score (Balkenende/Rutte)
Motivation: Task-oriented	.0064 (.005)	.0039 (.002)	.00	-2.35
Motivation: Group-oriented	.0027 (.004)	.001 (.001)	.00	-2.10
In-group Bias	.0088 (.006)	.0069 (.007)	.27	-1.02
<i>Self-esteem</i>				
I, Me, Mine	0.045 (.015)	.047 (.023)	.04	0.48
We	.034 (.017)	.031 (.014)	.46	-.58
Need for power	.0066 (.004)	.003 (.003)	.02	-3.16
Control over situation	.03 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.44	-.35
Low Complexity	.01 (.007)	.009 (.006)	.66	-1.71
High Complexity	.005 (.004)	.003 (.003)	.10	-1.28

Balkenende Case: the Film ‘Fitna’, 2008

First, both the power position and self-esteem seem to have an influence on tolerance. In this case both leaders hold the same power position. This is not the cause of the contrasting reactions to intolerance whereas the level of *self-esteem* can be. Thus the expectation is that

Balkenende will have a lower *self-esteem* than Rutte, because of his intolerant response to Wilders. The assumption is that a *self-confident* leader will feel less threatened and consequently will be more tolerant. The results seem to confirm this expectation. Balkenende has a lower *self-esteem* than Rutte according to the results, which are shown in table two. Balkenende's mean score is .045 with a significant difference (.04) from Rutte's .047 mean score as is shown in table one. This may explain that he reacted more intolerant to Wilders' discrimination, since he may have felt more threatened by the constraints than Rutte. In his reactions to Fitna he is mostly referring to the possible damage of the Dutch reputation internationally⁶. He not only repeats this several times in parliament, but also on press conferences in January and February 2008⁷. Similarly, his fear of the economic consequences of this reputation⁸ may be relevant, because of the threatening statement of Iran (Castle, 2008). All this takes place months before 28th of March 2008 when Fitna is actually released. Even without seeing the film there is a long debate about its message (van Ham, 2012). Balkenende tries in this manner to limit the impact of the film (van Ham, 2008), although he recognizes the freedom of speech as a liberal democratic right⁹. By releasing Fitna Wilders shows that Democracy is a belief as well (van Ham, 2012). Unfortunately for Wilders the film fails to shock, although this does not seem to reduce the threat for Balkenende (Schaerlaeckens, 2008). Immediately after the release of Fitna he says once again that the discrimination is the vision of neither the government nor the majority of Dutch citizens¹⁰.

Second, in this case several constraints challenged both leaders. The first democratic constraint is left out of this research, because the interpretation of democracy may change over time. But the other environmental constraint, the public's expectation that political leaders should reject intolerance, has not changed. Therefore this constraint is a real threat or potential constraint for the leaders. Balkenende respected this constraint, while Rutte challenged it. Additionally, both leaders did not only have to deal with the economic threat, but also the violent consequences. Again, Balkenende respected both constraints in contrast to Rutte who rejected them. Rutte could look for parliamentary support by other parties and rejected Wilders. The fact that he decides not to and ignores the growing intolerance, whereas Balkenende rejects Wilders several times while confronted with similar constraints may be

⁶ Handeling II 2007/2008, 31402, No.2 P. 4924-4937.

⁷ Handeling II 2007/2008, April 1 2008, No. 70. P. 4880-4921.

⁸ Handeling II 2007/2008, 31402, No.2 P. 4924-4937.

⁹ Handeling II 2007/2008, 31402, No.2 P. 4924-4937.

¹⁰ Handeling II 2007/2008, April 1 2008, No. 70. P. 4880-4921.

due to their differences in *need for power* and *influence and control what happens*, which affects their attitudes of challenging or respecting constraints. The results of this study show that Balkenende's *need for power* is significantly higher than Rutte's. His mean score is .0066 with a significant difference (.02) from Rutte's .003 mean score. On the contrary there is no significant difference (.02) in his belief that he *can influence and control what happens* in comparison to Rutte. Mean scores are .03 for the first and .01 for the latter. The two traits together are a matrix where a leader can be placed in the respect or challenge constraint categories. When leaders respect restraints, they do exactly what the environmental constraints expect them to do. If leaders challenge them, they respond or act differently from what the environment expects. The results show that Balkenende is higher in *need for power* and similar in the belief *he can control the situation* compared to Rutte. Unfortunately, this study fails to confirm the second hypothesis; because there is no comparison group other than Rutte, it is hard to say if Balkenende is a constraint challenger or respecter. Even in comparison to Rutte this study fails to confirm the second hypothesis, because *the belief in controlling events* is similar. For Balkenende to be a constraint respecter would imply that both leaders have a low *belief in controlling events*. In that case Rutte cannot be a constraint challenger. The link between the two traits is shown in figure two earlier in this study.

While this study fails to prove that Balkenende respects constraints the real world evidence shows that he is respecting almost all constraints he is faced with. He respects the democratic right by not completely denying Wilders to publish his film, although he tried (van Ham, 2012). He responded exactly not only as the public but also as the national and European elite expected him to do¹¹. He respected and even defended his political party values. He tried to avoid economic downfall by continually repeating his message. He put all his ambassadors to work to keep a good trade relation. And finally, he often warned for the violent consequences of the discrimination¹². Thus, overall, he respects them all. In this case the theory does not match the almost obvious expectation.

Third, this study assumes that Rutte would be better in handling complex situations, since he reacted less intolerant than Balkenende. It seems that Rutte did avoid the complex situations, whereas Balkenende defines the situation as a crisis and wants to solve the probable crisis. However, the results show that the level of *complexity* of both leaders do not differ significantly, which means that the level of *complexity* does not explain the diverse

¹¹ Handeling II 2007/2008, 31402, No.2 P. 4924-4937.

¹² Handeling II 2007/2008, No. 70. P. 4880-4921.

reactions in this study. Balkenende may thus act similarly in complex situations to Rutte according to the level of *complexity*.

Fourth, group versus task focus is significant. Balkenende is not only more task focused, but also more group focused. This may be linked with self-esteem, since Rutte focused mostly on his own person. By doing that he does not mention the group or task less often, while Balkenende mentions his group and his task more often than himself. As a consequence Rutte has a higher self-esteem and a lower group and task focus than Balkenende.

Fifth, in the Dutch case it seems likely that Balkenende rejects intolerance if he has a higher *in-group bias*, because Wilders attacks his group's values. Notice that it may differ who belongs to the group; Wilders may for example not define Polish people who live in the Netherlands as part of the nation. Rutte is expected to have a lower *in-group bias*, because he does not protect his own group. He allows different opinions and subgroups in the Netherlands. He seems not to feel any threat to the group. However, the results show that Balkenende has a higher *in-group bias* than Rutte, but there is no significant difference (.27) between them. His mean score is .0088 and thus similar to Rutte's .0069. Therefore *in-group bias* seems not to be the missing link to explain tolerant or intolerant response to discrimination, because there is no significant difference between both leaders. This study fails to confirm hypothesis three, even though there are some real world examples that Balkenende fears consequences to the group. He warned for example all citizens for possible violent actions from citizens of Islamic countries due to Wilders film (Crouch, 2008).

Finally, there was no coding of *distrust* at all. None of the leaders indicate any distrust in their press conferences. Why the leaders show no indicators of *distrust* is not clear. This could be a potential bias, since the leaders are aware of the press and do not want to be framed as a weak leader by them. It could also be that they simply do not *distrust* anyone. Another possibility is that the leaders do not want to show that they may feel threatened or they obey the expectation of the position that is another constraint. Perhaps the public expect a strong and non-distrusting leader.

Rutte Case: the Anti-Pole Website, 2012

Starting with the second hypothesis that, although this could not be confirmed, the real world shows that Rutte in fact challenged almost all constraints. He is not only challenging

public pressure, but also the expectation of the public elite to deny discrimination¹³. He did not try to avoid economic downfall, although there was evidence that some countries did not want to invest anymore¹⁴. He even ignored a letter from Eastern European ambassadors to reject the anti-Pole website¹⁵. And, in contrast to Balkenende, he never warned for the violent consequences of the discrimination. On the contrary, he did respect not only his own party values (VVD), but also his agreement with Wilders (“Gedoogakkoord”, 2010) and the democratic right of the freedom of speech. Overall he challenged most restraints, but he does respect three constraints that may be of more value to him than the other constraints.

Back to the first confirmed hypothesis that Rutte’s higher *self-esteem* trait score may explain his disregard to increasing intolerance in society. He may be less threatened by the constraints. Over and over again Rutte is repeating his message that the anti-Pole website is an initiative of one single political party. He will not be held responsible for it. It would not be his role to reject it. The attention of the media, the public opinion, the opposition and the European Union is not necessary. He compares it with red meat. People should not react to every piece of ‘red meat’ of Wilders¹⁶. To accept all this criticism and not give in takes some courage that Rutte seems to have. This confirms the hypothesis that Rutte has a higher *self-esteem* that may explain his disregard not only of Wilders’ discrimination, but also of many constraints.

Finally, the expectation was that Rutte had a lower *in-group bias* than Balkenende, and the reaction to increasing intolerance in society would have been more tolerant. Unfortunately, the *in-group bias* has also proved not to be the missing link to explain the diverse leadership responses. Evidence, however, shows that Rutte is respecting his own party values (VVD), therefore his own group. But this is not threatened, so there is no direct reason to respond or defend his group.

¹³ Kamerstuk II 29407 No. 148

¹⁴ Handeling II 2011/2012, No. 88, Item 5.

¹⁵ Kamerstuk II 29407. No 137.

¹⁶ Handelingen II, 2011/2012, No. 53, Item 4.

Discussion

Overall, one of the broader implications of this study is that *self-esteem* is an important trait to explain the different responses to discrimination. This relates to other studies that want to predict leadership reactions and intolerance. *Self-esteem* seems to be the link between both leadership traits and intolerance scholars. While, on the other hand, both the challenge or respect constraints hypothesis and the *in-group bias* trait has failed to be confirmed by this study, even though there is a lot of real world evidence for those hypotheses.

In this study it was not ideal that the anti-Pole website was very recent, many things happened during the research. The debate in the media was still going on. Secondly, it was hard to explain Rutte's disregard. There is not much data or research on disregard in a leader.

A weakness in the data is that there was more available data on Balkenende than on Rutte. Balkenende had also been PM of the Netherlands for a longer period of time, which may create a potential bias, but because Hermann conducts content analyses of general traits it should not matter which periods or texts are used. Hermann assumes that leadership traits are quite a stable concept and do not change over time or because of a powerful position, like Sniderman and Lasswell suggest. Besides this, it was hard to reconstruct both events objectively. Many resources, such as some newspapers or interviews, are not neutral.

In future additional cases, a comparison group could be made that provides more evidence to conclude if, compared to that group, Balkenende or Rutte is more or less in-group biased. In the future more comparable cases where leaders respond to intolerance of discrimination could be examined, because this has not been tested before. Future studies may also want to investigate what explains disregard of intolerant speech, and what it means. Do leaders simply not care, and aspire to enhance their personal power, or is there another explanation?

This study was actually important, because once again it shows the importance of *self-esteem* to explain leader responses even to growing intolerance in society. But, if people want their leaders to reject discrimination, leaders should not be too self-confident, and then leaders may not respond.

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