

Toxic leaders in the modern world history essay



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History has told us of various kinds of leaders: from those that brought positive changes to the world, to those that brought about the negative. There are those that played major roles in bringing the world to where it is today, and those that almost brought the world to a standstill. Some of these leaders were seen as heroes, while the others were perceived as ruthless villains. These leaders ranged from those that were in politics, to those that led in enterprises; they brought political, social, economical, and at large global changes.

Toxic leaders are individuals who due to their dysfunctional personalities have played a negative role on the people they led. Instead of piloting their countries or organizations to achieve their common goals, they put their personal interests first, making poor decisions, therefore causing complications and leaving them in situation that is far worse than they were in. They are usually extremely determined, smart, competitive, skilled, sly, charismatic and knowledgeable, knowing exactly what visions and goals to propel to captivate their followers. They are extremely controlling, wanting their followers to carry out their exact orders (Lipman-Blumen). They are so focused on their ideas that they do not want to listen to others and most times, anybody that tries to oppose them is punished while those that support them are rewarded. For example, in an office, those that support the toxic leader are usually promoted, while those that don't might be demoted or fired (Wilson-Starks).

These leaders in most cases have deep rooted psychological problems, e. g. low self esteem, lack of trust in people, paranoia, and low confidence. Some of them have even been exposed to toxic leadership and because of that,

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they have a distorted view of how people should be led, thinking their way is the ideal way. They are not aware that leadership is not an action. It is meant to be an interaction between the followers and the person they chose to help them achieve their goals; the leader (Wilson-Starks). The followers are meant to be aware of the steps being carried out by the leader to achieve the stated goals and are meant to be in support of these steps. They usually are in support of these steps at first, because the toxic leader has appealed to their psychological wants, needs and fears. He knows they need security, order, a sense of belonging, and authority (Lipman-Blumen). He lies to them, making them believe that he is doing what they want, what is best for them when really, he is going after his own selfish goals and in the process trying to gain more power for himself so he is unopposed. Some followers see what is going but they feel scared to do anything because of the fear the he has imposed on them so it goes on until the leader finally leads them to destruction. For example, In the case of Enron's downfall, the employees were aware of what was going on in the organization but they listened to the assurances of the CEO Jeff Skilling that the shares were going to rise. They wanted to believe this because they were scared of leaving Enron in fear that they would not find a job that pays as well. Or in the case of Yugoslavia's Slobodan MiloÅ¡eviÄ‡ whose rule was detrimental to the growth of the country, but the citizens could not do anything to stop him at first because they were afraid, until when they finally revolted against him and he was forced to resign.

Toxic leaders have done more harm than good to the people they lead. They are responsible for so many problems, which in some cases have led to war

or disharmony. The Modern World has seen a lot of these callous, skilled leaders because of their ability to articulate definite visions to the people they are leading. The likes of Slobodan Milošević, the former President Serbia and of Yugoslavia, Jeff Skilling and Kenneth Lay of the Enron scandal, Omar al Bashir the current President of Sudan and Charles Taylor, who was the former President of Liberia. Just to name a few.

Slobodan Milošević of Yugoslavia <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/images/milosevic-photo.jpg>

He was born on the 20th of August, 1941 in Yugoslavia and died on the 11th of March, 2006. He was the president of Serbia from 1989 to 1997, and also become the President of Yugoslavia from 1997-2000.

He was the second son of his parents. His father was an orthodox priest, while his mother was a hardworking Serbian communist school mistress. When he was young, his parents separated and years later, committed suicide; his father in 1962, and his mother in 1973. He met his wife while Mirjana Markovic while attending high school in Pozarevac and they later got married in 1965 and had two children.

He studied law in the University of Belgrade. It was there that he met Ivan Stambolic, who was the nephew to one of the most powerful Serbian communist leaders. After graduating in 1964 he accomplished a lot. He became the Deputy Director of Technogas, a gas company owned by the state. After he left in 1973 and became Prime Minister of Serbia, he became the Director of Technogas and the President of Belgrade bank Beobanker five years later. In 1982, he became a member of the collective presidency of the <https://assignbuster.com/toxic-leaders-in-the-modern-world-history-essay/>

League of Communists of Serbia and in 1984, became a chief of the City of Belgrade Party Organization. In 1986, he was elected as the President of The collective presidency of the League of Communists of Serbia.

A defining moment of his political career was in April 24, 1987 when he was visiting Kosovo Polje and told the crowd “ No-one has the right to beat you!”, and thus changed the political structure of Serbia. He was able to gain a lot of support from the public due to that speech. He succeeded in removing Ivan Stambolic and his associates from the Serbian politics arena and became the President of Serbia in 1989 (Slobodan Milosevic Biography).

During the 13 years that he ruled Serbia and Yugoslavia, the citizens watched their country fall apart, thousands of people die, and saw a lot of people left homeless.

Yugoslavia, which once consisted of six republics, has only two left; Serbia and Montenegro (which is its junior partner). While he was President, there was the Croatian War which was between 1991 and 1995. The war started after Croatia declared independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which up to 20, 000 people were killed and about 400, 000 people were made homeless. During this time, the UN imposed an economic sanction on Serbia. There was also the Bosnian War, which started after Bosnia declared Independence in April 1992- December 1995. It signaled the dissolution of what was left of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The sanction by the UN was partially raised in 1995 when MiloÅeviÄ± signed a Dayton peace agreement to end the war in Bosnia (British Broadcasting Corporation).

In 1997, when his second and final term as a President was about to end he played a legal trick and changed his title as President of Serbia to President of the Yugoslavia Federation in an attempt to hold on to his term. In 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by the United States bombed Serbia for two and a half month because MiloÅ;eviÄ‡ refused to withdraw troops who were sent to stop the independence movement in Kosovo. It left Serbia in ruins; the country's infrastructure was destroyed and new economic sanctions were placed on the country. He finally resigned in October 2000 due to the national strike that was declared by the citizens of Serbia against him. He destroyed Serbia. He left the country with crippling sanctions and with the Serbs living in abject poverty (Slobodan Milosevic Biography).

Due to his actions during the civil war that happened in Yugoslavia in the 1990's, he was sent to stand trial in late June 2001, at the International War Crimes Tribunal (court) in The Hague, Netherlands. He later died from a heart attack in his cell on March 11, 2006, in the UN war crimes tribunal's detention center (British Broadcasting Corporation).

From a commentary by Paddy Ashdown, Bosnia's international administrator, published in the ' Observer', 12 March 2006:

“ I met Milosevic on many occasions and of course I gave evidence against him in The Hague. He was a tough, clever, charismatic leader. He was called a nationalist, but he wasn't. He was an opportunist who rode the nationalist bandwagon. There is no doubt he was personally responsible as the architect, along with Franjo Tudjman, of the Balkans tragedy of the Nineties.

He had seductive qualities which were sufficiently powerful to seduce many Western states who for far too long believed him to be part of the solution rather than the problem. ... I think he will be remembered as an extremely malign influence - a clever man whose undoubted intelligence was put to malevolent effect - and as the architect not only of the humiliation of his nation, the great nation of Serbs, but also their shame and the deaths of tens of thousands" (Ashdown).

Kenneth Lay and Jeffery Skilling of the Enron Corporation

scandalhttp://images.salon.com/opinion/feature/2004/07/08/kenneth_lay/story.jpg

Kenneth Lay

He was born on the 15th of April 1942 in Tyrone, Missouri. He died on July 5, 2006, of a heart attack in Colorado. He was the chief executive officer and chairman of Enron Corporation from 1985 until when he resigned on January 23, 2002 expect during the time Jeffrey Skilling was CEO and he was chairman. He was convicted of fraud and conspiracy on the 25th of May (Biography True Story).

He attended University of Missouri for both his Bachelors and Masters degrees in economics. He was a member of the Zeta Phi chapter of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity at his university where he served as president. He obtained his PhD in economics from the University of Houston in 1970. After that, he worked for Exxon predecessor Humble Oil & Refining. From 1971-1972, he worked for the federal power commission and served as the energy deputy under secretary for the United States Department of interior until

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1974. He joined Florida Gas Company in 1974, finally becoming president of its successor company, Continental Resources Company. He left Continental Resources Company to join Transco Energy Company in Houston in 1981. In 1984 he left and joined Houston Natural Gas Co. as chairman and CEO. In 1985, Enron Corporation was formed after Houston Natural Gas Co. merged with InterNorth. In 1986, he was appointed chairman and CEO of Enron.

He hired Jeffrey Skilling in 1990, and in 2000, he was replaced by him as CEO. Kenneth Lay resumed his old position as CEO of Enron in 2001 when Jeff Skilling abruptly resigned. Large amounts of Enron stock was sold by him. In total, from 1989-2001, he liquidated more than \$300 million of Enron stock. When Enron filed for bankruptcy in December 2001, it cost about 20,000 employees their jobs. He faced eleven counts of securities fraud and related charges but the judge dismissed the eleventh. On May 25, 2006, he was found guilty of all six counts of conspiracy and fraud (Biography True Story).

<http://www.nndb.com/people/044/000031948/jeff-skilling-sized.jpg>

Jeffery Skilling

He is the former president of Enron Corporation and on May 2006, he was on trial in Houston over what was called a 'massive fraud' by the prosecutors (Biography True Story).

He was born on the 25th of November, 1953 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and was the second of four children. He attended the Southern Methodist University where he was a member of Beta Theta Pi (Kenneth Lay, the

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founder of Enron Corporation was also a member) and graduated with a B. S in Applied Science in 1975. He obtained his M. B. A from Harvard Business School in 1979. After he graduated, he worked for McKinsey & Company in their energy and consulting practices.

In 1990, he was hired by Kenneth Lay to work at Enron. He was appointed chairman and chief executive officer of Enron Finance Corporation and became chairman of Enron Gas Services Co. in 1991. He was promoted to president and chief operating officer in 1997. It was then that he came up with the investment strategy that the company did not need any "assets". With this strategy he helped Enron become the biggest wholesaler of gas and electricity with \$27 billion traded in the first quarter. In 2001, he replaced Kenneth Lay as the C. E. O of Enron and was receiving \$132 million in a year (TIME).

He resigned suddenly in August 2001, amidst the California energy crisis. Soon after his resignation, he sold almost \$60 million worth of his Enron Corporation shares. Ken Lay returned as the C. E. O and the corporation declared bankruptcy in December 2001 (Biography True Story). This came as a shock to the corporate world because to the public, Enron was doing fine. They had no idea what was going on inside the corporation because were being lied to by them. False records of anticipated future profits were reported as actual gains in order to inflate stock price. Skilling also persuaded colleagues to report smaller than expected losses. His actions later caused a great deal of Americans millions of dollars (British Broadcasting Company).

He faced 31 counts of fraud, conspiracy, insider trading and lying to auditors about the financial position of Enron. He was convicted of these charges, was fined \$45 million dollars and is currently serving a 24 year, 4 month prison sentence at the federal correctional constitution in Englewood Colorado. So far he has served 4years out of his sentence. The case is currently being appealed (British Broadcasting Company).

In conclusion, Yugoslavia became a totally different country when they were being presided over by Slobodan Milosevic. Thousands of people died and many became homeless because of his obsession to make a ' Greater Serbia'. He wanted to bring all the ethnic Serbs that lived in Bosnia and Croatia under his rule. He led them to destruction. After he was done with Yugoslavia, it had become bankrupt, the people were living in desperate poverty, and it had gone from six republics to two.

Leadership is extremely important to any organization; the leaders can determine the kind of culture the office adapts. At Enron, the leaders made it clear to the employees that it was " profits at all costs". They encouraged rule breaking and led their followers in an intimidating and aggressive environment (Sims and Brinkmann). Jeffrey Skilling was a coward. After him and Kenneth Lay led their employees to destruction, he resigned and sold his shares when the company needed him the most. Due to their toxic leadership, over 4, 000 jobs were lost. Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling went from corporate heroes to criminals in a matter of years.

These leaders are examples of Toxic leaders. They were selfish, manipulative and greedy. They wanted to have things done their way without thinking

about the consequences their actions were going to have on the people they were leading. They use the effective combination of great ideas to captivate their followers, and fear to manipulate them. And they later drive them to destruction.