

The inevitable presence of corruption in leadership

[Government](#), [Corruption](#)



Since the beginning of time, leaders have become corrupt in their positions; from Caligula, to Ivan the Terrible, or even to more modern contemporaries such as Josef Stalin, and Adolf Hitler. Power always seems to have a corruptive element to it, and it has affected thousands whether they were perpetrators of the corruption or the victims. Power may not always corrupt, but nine times out of ten, from even a prison guard to the president, power begins to negatively affect a person. However, the big question still remains to power, “ Why does it corrupt?”. Power is corruptive because of the ways it seduces and addicts even the best human beings and takes them under its darkening wing. One of the greatest leaders of all time, the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln said “ Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power,”(Acton Institute).

The first step in a link of dangerous changes is the way in which power corrupts by seduction. This happens slowly at first, but eventually, a person in power is entirely caught up in the love of their position.. It happens because power gives people a taste of the little things that they may want in life; influence over a bully, a way to change the world; these things continually drag someone into a position of power. As well as this, power constantly plays to all of our needs as humans whether it is to feel safe, or be fed, and as humans, we also thoroughly enjoy feeling powerful. Josef Stalin was always a little man in his life, beaten by kids younger than him, beaten by his father, short and always full of anger. Stalin was seduced by power as a way to top or triumph over those that bullied and abused him. Following more power trips, Stalin was hooked and became the mass

murdering dictator that is widely known today. These seductions wrap the person into power and lead to the next step of corruption; addiction.

When a person is finally seduced into a position of power, they then come to the second step: addiction. Power is wanted by a person basically for the sake of it, and when it is attained in the slightest, it takes hold and can be very addicting. As the heroin addict constantly returns for his next fix, the power addict always wants more power because the paradigm of not having power is an abhorrent nightmare that they do not want. A power addict will do anything in their power to keep their power from others to the point of excessive paranoia. When Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in the 1930s, he kept gobbling higher positions like Pac Man until he was at the very top as Fuhrer and Chancellor of Germany. To maintain his position until he died, he purged the entire Nazi Party and murdered hundreds in the Night of the Long Knives. Furthermore, he used propaganda and proceeded to unleash mass genocide upon the Jewish population of Europe, of whom he feared to keep himself powerful.

After a person is seduced and thoroughly addicted to power, they finally become corrupted by the fear of loss. As in the previous allegory, the worst nightmare of the addict is being on withdrawal; likewise, the worst nightmare of the power addict is to lose power. This nightmarish fear means that the person in power will do anything within their power to keep it. The person in power will create alliances with others to collectively ensure their power, but they all will not hesitate in the least to betray each other if it means they will remain in power. Powerful leaders will use others to keep their power and

climb over others to maintain power, for all that matters to them is that their power is ensured. After enough times, a leader tries to create restrictions and laws to keep his power and also for fear of anonymity. After this period, a leader keeps on passing restrictions which strains his morals badly and eventually is unable to tell between right and wrong. Josef Stalin also imposed lots of laws and eventually lost the man he once was and became a tyrant.

A leader, no matter his skills and moral, can be slowly corrupted by the alluring appeal of power. Eventually, all power will corrupt. This sentiment can be seen throughout history. The British historian, Lord Acton, was once asked his opinion of power; he said, “ All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely” (Acton Institute). This is true for everyone throughout time the leaders who stood strong in the face of power number very little to those who embraced power and most of those who stood strong died rather violently for trying to do what was best. Eventually, a leader, after being seduced, addicted and hooked on power decides that his thoughts and ideas are equivalent to logic and wisdom. When this is decided, power continues to corrupt the individual; going on a downward spiral from there on a highway of ruin.