CAESAR: Power at 0.95, Then the Ides

Caesar's author-coded LTA profile shows 0.95 Need for Power and 0.31 Distrust. He built an empire on magnanimity and was killed by senators he had pardoned.

Julius Caesar scored 0.95 on Need for Power and 0.31 on Distrust in an author coding of Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis rubric. He resettled 80,000 veterans, reformed Roman debt law, and stabilized grain supply in five years. Rome's GDP per capita rose 30% in the two centuries after his death, built on his reforms. He was stabbed 23 times by men he had pardoned and promoted. The house he built lasted five centuries because Augustus redesigned it to survive without him.

Caesar was born in 100 BCE in the Subura — Rome's roughest district — to a patrician family with a noble name and thin wallets. His father died when he was fifteen, leaving him head of household with no resources. At twenty-five, Cilician pirates captured his ship, demanded twenty talents ransom, and watched him laugh, volunteer fifty, spend thirty-eight days writing poetry and calling them illiterates, then return with a fleet and crucify every one — exactly as promised. This is not an anecdote. It is the earliest behavioral evidence of his operating theory: the self is the institution.

By 44 BCE, Caesar had crossed the Rubicon, won a civil war, reformed debt, redistributed land to 80,000 veterans and urban poor, rebuilt the calendar, and declared himself dictator for life. He was then stabbed twenty-three times by sixty senators — led by Brutus and Cassius, two men he had pardoned, appointed to praetorships, and promised consulships. The house he built outlasted him by five centuries. The soul that built it collapsed the structure the moment it failed.

Leadership Trait Analysis

Caesar's LTA profile has a distinctive asymmetric shape that makes the psychonomic argument visible before you read a word

Caesar's profile, hand-coded by the author from the Commentarii, Plutarch, and Suetonius on Hermann's (1999) rubric, is asymmetric. Need for Power (P = 0.95) and Belief in Ability to Control Events (B = 0.92) sit near the top of that 0–1 coding. Distrust of Others is the low point (D = 0.31). The same coding puts Conceptual Complexity at 0.78, In-group Bias at 0.44, and Task focus at 0.85. A need-for-affiliation figure of 0.58 is not plotted: affiliation is not one of Hermann's seven traits. These are hand codes. They are not Profiler Plus scores, and they are not a rank against her published sample.

Published Profiler Plus runs do not support the comparison this chart used to draw. Douglas (2017) coded 167 speeches by Mao (477,453 words, 1922–1971) and 79 by Xi Jinping (117,855 words, 2012–2014) against a norming group of 121 political leaders. The means he prints match Hermann's (1999) table for 122 leaders. Mao's distrust is 0.32, inside the moderate band around a mean of 0.38 (low is below 0.20; high is above 0.56),

and his in-group bias is 0.13, below the low cutoff of 0.34. His need for power is 0.29, also low, against a mean of 0.50. Xi scores 0.08 on distrust, 0.20 on in-group bias, and 0.34 on need for power, all low. Douglas notes that a reading of a sample of the speeches found Mao more ready than Xi to split society into groups and to voice distrust. That reading is not a high score on either trait, and it does not locate the Cultural Revolution in an LTA number. Mao's other scores in that study are task focus 0.69 (mid), belief he can control events 0.37 (mid), self-confidence 0.40 (mid), and conceptual complexity 0.58 (high). Xi's are task focus 0.69 (mid), belief he can control events 0.32 (low), self-confidence 0.31 (low), and conceptual complexity 0.46 (mid).

Thatcher is a different instrument run, and she is not in Douglas's study. Fitzgerald (2022, p. 75) quotes Dyson (2009, p. 37) at 0.49 for conceptual complexity, measured on her answers to foreign-policy questions in the House of Commons. Fitzgerald's own seven-trait coding gives her distrust 0.09, task focus 0.70, belief she can control events 0.36, in-group bias 0.06, self-confidence 0.36, conceptual complexity 0.47, and need for power 0.27. In his group of 12 prime ministers the distrust mean is 0.10 and the complexity mean is 0.56. Those means are not Hermann's 1999 means (distrust 0.38, complexity 0.45), so Thatcher's 0.09 is not a low score on Mao's scale. None of these series is drawn on Caesar's chart.

The Economic Fingerprint

The most important feature of this chart is not Caesar's era — it is what comes after it

The most important feature is what comes after Caesar. Roman GDP per capita during the late Republic sat at approximately $440–$490 (1990 international dollars), barely clearing the subsistence floor of $400 (Maddison, 2007). The Scheidel-Friesen (2009) income distribution model places the top 1.5% capturing roughly 20% of all income. Grain supply chains failed regularly. Debt bondage was common. The Republic's fiscal machinery was captured by the factions fighting civil wars for control of it. Caesar's dictatorship lasted less than five years (49–44 BCE). His reforms held after his death, but GDP data shows no immediate uplift. The economy barely moves during his lifetime. It moves under Augustus, who took Caesar's policies and embedded them in institutions designed to outlive any individual: the principate, the imperial cult, the professional army with fixed terms and state pensions. From Augustus's consolidation (27 BCE) to Trajan (100 CE), Roman GDP per capita rose roughly 30% — from ~$480 to ~$630. The Scheidel-Friesen peak of ~$680 at 150 CE came 194 years after Caesar's assassination. This is the psychonomic paradox the chart makes numerical. Caesar's theory was that the self could substitute for institutional architecture — that personal authority, sufficiently magnanimous and forceful, was durable enough to hold the gains. Augustus understood what Caesar did not. He built the house so no single soul was load-bearing. Caesar authored the prosperity line. Augustus inhabited it. The distance between the assassination marker and the GDP peak measures the difference between their theories of power.

The Patronage Network

The network chart makes the psychonomic argument structural

Every edge connects to Caesar at the center. There is no distributed authority, no secondary loyalty cluster, no institution that holds if the center fails. This is not how republics work — it is how patronage networks work

when one person has absorbed enough of the Republic that the two become indistinguishable. Caesar did not intend to build a fragile system. He built the only system his operating theory allowed: one where the self is the institution, and the institution is therefore exactly as durable as the self. The three dashed red edges are the chart's payload. Decimus Brutus was in Caesar's inner military circle — trusted as much as Antony. Marcus Brutus had fought against Caesar in the civil war, been pardoned, given the praetorship, and promised a consulship. Cassius had done the same. All three were among the highest-trust, highest-centrality nodes outside Caesar's immediate family. Decimus Brutus physically escorted Caesar to the Senate on the morning of March 15, 44 BCE, after Caesar considered staying home. The network assigned maximum proximity to the men who carried the knives. Caesar's D score of 0.31 on Chart 1 was not naivety. It was the logical extension of his core belief: that he could convert anyone through magnanimity. He was, in the vast majority of cases, correct. He converted pirates into cautionary tales, Gallic chiefs into clients, and grain riots into political capital. The failure mode is in the chart. Trust everyone, control everything works at every scale — until three nodes decide simultaneously that the values Caesar embodied apply to removing him. There was no redundancy to absorb it.

What this file cannot tell you

This report applies Leadership Trait Analysis — developed for living leaders with large, verifiable speech corpora — to an ancient figure whose primary text is self-authored political propaganda. The Commentarii de Bello Gallico was written by Caesar during the campaigns it describes, distributed to a Roman political audience, and never intended as impartial record. LTA scores derived from it likely underestimate Distrust (since trust was the policy Caesar advertised) and may overestimate Conceptual Complexity (since nuance served his rhetorical interests). These biases should be read as floor and ceiling, not distortions. The scores reflect the psychological signature Caesar projected and acted upon. They are hand codes, not Profiler Plus output, and they are not comparable to the published scores for Mao, Xi, and Thatcher reported above.

The Roman GDP series carries wide uncertainty before 14 AD, the earliest reliable Maddison Project anchor. All pre-Augustus estimates are reconstructed from grain prices, Egyptian wage records, archaeological trade volume, and demographic models. Scheidel cautions that ancient GDP estimates "can only be regarded as rough approximations." The GDP chart should be read directionally — the shape of the trajectory and its inflection points relative to Caesar — not as precision at individual data points.

The patronage network is qualitatively constructed from primary sources, not computationally derived from social network data. Edge types and trust weights reflect documented events (appointments, pardons, correspondence) and scholarly consensus from Plutarch, Suetonius, and Strauss (2015). The network cannot capture undocumented relationships, and it represents a snapshot of Caesar's final years rather than alliance evolution over time.

What to take away

Julius Caesar is the founding case study for Psychonomics because his life is a closed experiment with a clean result. We have his biography in granular detail, his writings, three independent ancient accounts, and 2,000 years of institutional outcomes to measure against his decisions. The result is unambiguous: the man who

reformed Roman debt law, redistributed land to 80,000 veterans and poor, stabilized grain supply, rebuilt the calendar, and laid the administrative foundation of a 500-year empire never lived in the house he built. He was killed by the men he trusted most, using the values he taught them, nineteen months after declaring himself dictator for life.

The three charts tell the same story from three angles. The LTA radar shows the author's hand-coded profile — high on need for power, lower on distrust than on the other traits in that coding. It does not plot published scores for Mao, Xi, or Thatcher, which sit on other scales. The GDP series shows the economic gap — Caesar in the flat zone of the late Republic, Augustus and his successors riding the 30% growth curve built on Caesar's reforms. The patronage network shows the mechanism — dashed red edges pointing at the center, maximum trust assigned to maximum-risk nodes, no redundancy, no buffer between Caesar's confidence and its consequences.

Economics tracks how houses are managed. Psychonomics asks who is managing the soul of the house — and what it costs. In Caesar's case, the cost was paid by everyone who came after, and they built something extraordinary with it. The soul that managed the house collapsed it in the process of perfecting it. The house that replaced it was built to survive without him — and did, for fifteen centuries in the East, five in the West, and indefinitely in the calendar we still use.

Data, methods & sources

Data and method

This report uses Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA), the trait scheme Margaret Hermann published in 1999 and that Profiler Plus implements. The seven traits are belief in one's ability to control events, need for power, conceptual complexity, self-confidence, task focus, in-group bias, and distrust of others. Each published score is a proportion from 0 to 1. Hermann's comparison sample of 122 political leaders has means of 0.45, 0.50, 0.45, 0.57, 0.62, 0.43, and 0.38 on those traits, in that order. A score more than one standard deviation from the mean is high or low: for distrust, low is below 0.20 and high is above 0.56 (Hermann, 1999). For 87 heads of state the distrust mean is 0.41. Need for affiliation is not an LTA trait. An earlier version of this report listed it as one, and compared Caesar's distrust of 0.31 with a world-leader average of 0.48. That average is not in Hermann's table. It is withdrawn.

Caesar's scores on the chart are the author's hand application of Hermann's rubric to three texts: Commentarii de Bello Gallico (58–50 BCE), Plutarch's Caesar, and Suetonius's Divus Julius. They are not Profiler Plus output, and they are not placed on Hermann's published distribution. Dyson (2006) used the same rubric on Tony Blair, a contemporary prime minister, not on an ancient figure. Published comparison scores are reported in the text and in the data file, and they are not drawn on the chart, because they were not produced by the same procedure. Mao's and Xi Jinping's scores are from Douglas (2017). Thatcher's conceptual-complexity figure of 0.49 is Dyson (2009, p. 37) as quoted by Fitzgerald (2022, p. 75); her other six traits are Fitzgerald's (2022) Table 22. Fitzgerald's prime-ministerial means sit on a later Profiler Plus benchmark and are not compared with Hermann's 1999 means or with Douglas's scores.

Roman GDP per capita data come from Maddison (2007), revised by Scheidel & Friesen (2009) and Lo Cascio & Malanima (2011). Values are in 1990 Geary-Khamis international dollars — the standard unit for pre-industrial economies. The Maddison Project's earliest reliable Roman anchor is 14 AD; earlier estimates carry wider uncertainty and should be read directionally. The uncertainty band on Chart 2 reflects the low-to-high range across published estimates.

Sources

Bolt, J., & van Zanden, J.L. (2020). *Maddison Project Database, version 2020.* University of Groningen.

Caesar, J. (58–50 BCE). *Commentarii de Bello Gallico.* Trans. W.A. McDevitte & W.S. Bohn. Project Gutenberg.

Cicero, M.T. (46 BCE). *Brutus.*

Douglas, D. (2017). *Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping: A trait analysis.* Master's thesis, Wright State University. https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all/1797

Dyson, S.B. (2006). Personality and foreign policy: Tony Blair's Iraq decisions. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *2*(3), 289–306.

Dyson, S.B. (2009). Cognitive style and foreign policy: Margaret Thatcher's black-and-white thinking. *International Political Science Review*, *30*(1), 33–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512108097055

Fitzgerald, I. (2022). *Prime-ministerial power, personality and leadership — comparing Westminsters.* Doctoral thesis, University of Canberra. https://researchsystem.canberra.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/62540061/Fitzgerald_Ian.pdf

Goldsworthy, A. (2006). *Caesar: Life of a Colossus.* Yale University Press.

Hermann, M.G. (1999). *Assessing Leadership Style: A Trait Analysis.* Social Science Automation.

Lo Cascio, E., & Malanima, P. (2011). Ancient and pre-modern economies: GDP in the Roman Empire and early modern Europe. Paper presented at the Conference on Quantifying Long Run Economic Development, Venice, March 22–24.

Maddison, A. (2007). *Contours of the World Economy 1–2030 AD.* Oxford University Press.

Milanovic, B., Lindert, P.H., & Williamson, J.G. (2011). Pre-industrial inequality. *The Economic Journal*, *121*(551), 255–272.

Pliny the Elder. *Naturalis Historia*, 7.54.

Plutarch. (c. AD 100). *Parallel Lives: Caesar.* Trans. Robin Seager. Penelope/University of Chicago.

Post, J.M. (2004). *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World.* Cornell University Press.

Scheidel, W., & Friesen, S.J. (2009). The size of the economy and the distribution of income in the Roman Empire. *Journal of Roman Studies, 99*, 61–91.

Strauss, B. (2015). *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination.* Simon & Schuster.

Suetonius. (c. AD 121). *The Twelve Caesars: Divus Julius.* Trans. Robert Graves. Penguin Classics.

Editor's note

This report was researched and written with the assistance of AI tools for structural analysis, data synthesis, and drafting. Citations below were checked against the sources named in the bibliography. Leadership Trait Analysis scores for Caesar were coded by the author using the Hermann (1999) rubric applied to primary source texts; they are hand codes, not Profiler Plus output. A 2019 Journal of Chinese Political Science citation for Mao, Xi, and Thatcher could not be verified and has been removed. Comparative scores now come from Douglas (2017), Dyson (2009), and Fitzgerald (2022), and they are not plotted on Caesar's chart. Roman GDP estimates are drawn directly from published academic sources and presented with their documented uncertainty ranges. The Psychonomics framework — applying behavioral economics methodology to historical and contemporary leadership profiles — is an original contribution of Artometrics. Readers are encouraged to follow the source citations and form their own conclusions.

— Artometrics Editorial

Source archive (GitHub)