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POLITICAL SCIENCE

Congenial Authoritarian: A Psychological Assessment of America's 43rd President
Deon D. Colvin
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Winston Churchill once said, "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." As George W. Bush's memoir on his presidency, *Decision Points*, hits shelves, at least one reviewer has commented that that's the only reason why presidents write memoirs – to make sure that history portrays them in a flattering light. But whether you feel that Bush did good things or bad things for the nation as president, a set of guiding motivations colors every decision, action and comment he's ever made. It is this set of motivations, the very core of Bush's personality, that Deon D. Colvin looks at in his book, *Congenial Authoritarian*.

To perform his psychological assessment, Colvin examines almost every aspect of Bush's life so far, from his birth into a politics-oriented, high status family to the final days of his presidency. In each chapter, the author explains a personality theory in a clear, simple manner, then compares and contrasts the theory to Bush's actions. For instance, Colvin looks at three personality typologies found in leaders (narcissist, obsessive-compulsive and paranoid) as outlined by Dr. Jerrold M. Post, which are then applied to Bush's life. At the end of the section, in which he looks at Bush's relationship with his cabinet, the Valerie Plame leak, the Terry Schiavo case and others, Colvin concludes that Bush is a narcissist, but:

> *"Bush does not conform fully to the narcissist framework, as evidenced by his ability to maintain long-term relationships. However, he also presented behavior found in malignant narcissism, which is on the far negative end of the narcissist continuum. These two facts … combine to put him firmly inside the boundaries of the narcissist personality type…"*

Usually, the Bush presidency polarizes authors into seeing either red or blue, but Colvin strives for objectivity. He admits to being one of the millions of Americans who found Bush

appealing in the 2000 election, but the president's more questionable actions—the lead up to the Iraq War, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the treatment of enemy combatants in Guantanamo Bay—ultimately led Colvin to take a closer look at Bush's motivations. To be complete, Colvin even offers to interview Bush (Colvin's request and the White House's refusal appear in the book's appendix).

Overall, Colvin's assessment is a quick and surprisingly engrossing read that's ideal for just about anyone. Whether you're a psychologist, historian or plain old political junkie, *Congenial Authoritarian* is the right book to read if you want to know more about one of the most controversial presidents in American history.

Katerie Prior