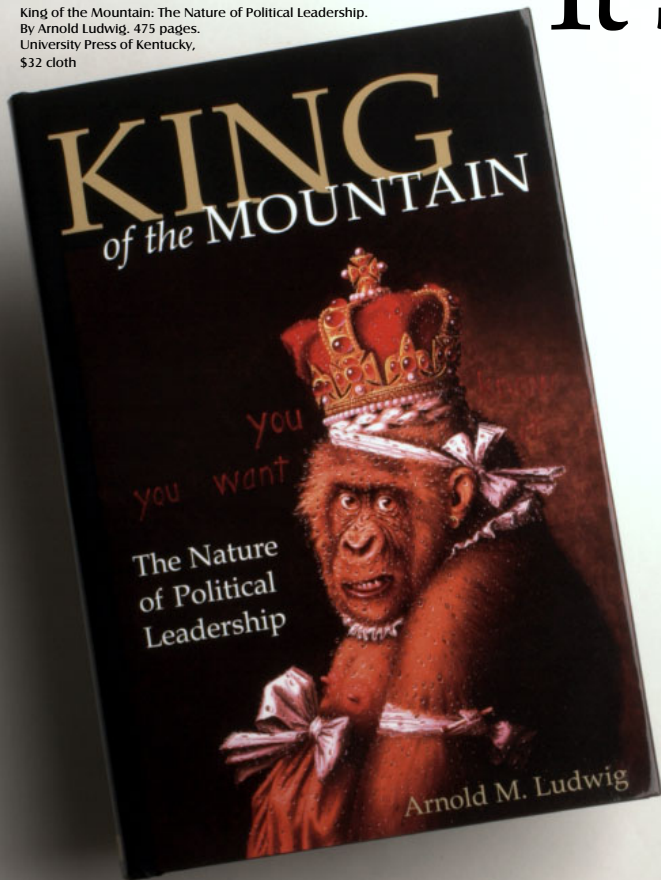


King of the Mountain: The Nature of Political Leadership.
By Arnold Ludwig. 475 pages.
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It's Good to Be KING

percent of the rulers I researched died violent deaths by assassination, execution or suicide as a result of being in office.”

Alpha male behavior is extremely visible, he points out, in recent American politics: former Vice President Gore’s reputed lessons on how to act like an alpha male during the presidential debates, the appeal of Senator McCain as an American war hero, former President Clinton’s unrestrained sexual appetite, and President Bush becoming “more presidential” since 9/11.

Ludwig admits that characterizing every ruler of a recognized nation in the 20th century was a massive undertaking.

One of the impressive features of the study, which took 18 years to complete, is that from the larger group of rulers, 377 were looked at in detail. “In this excerpted group, I looked at religious upbringing, education level completed, method used to rise to power, how their rule ended, and the cause of their death, among other things,” he says. One interesting outgrowth of this, he says, is the Political Greatness Scale that he created.

“I was wondering how I might do such a thing, when suddenly it hit me: I could take a look at who society regards as the greatest rulers of all time and use their challenges and accomplishments as a touchstone. I came up with 26 names, pre-20th century—Napoleon, Louis XIV, Bismarck, Moses, Genghis Khan, and others—and found certain common traits I could use to rate the achievements of 20th-century leaders.”

Ludwig’s research revealed an overwhelming gender discrepancy. In the larger group of nearly 2,000 rulers, 98.6 percent were male. He also found it “simply horrifying” that in the 20th century rulers contributed to over 200 million deaths from wars and oppressive social policies.

“And I happen to believe that these two things are connected,” Ludwig says. “Underlying these deaths is the strong biological component of the leaders—almost all male—and unless we address this, all other efforts at peace may be futile. At no point have we taken into consideration that our problems with killing each other may be related to our struggles for dominance.”

Ludwig believes one way to reverse the numbers of deaths from wars might be to adopt more of an “estrogenic approach” to ruling. “There not only should be far higher percentages of women in power, but they should be well represented at every level: cabinet posts, ambassadorships, and the highest military ranks. I believe that countries then might not be so confrontational.”

—Jeff Worley

“What an ugly beast is the ape, and how like us.”

—Cicero (106-43 B.C.)

World leaders, it turns out, are engaged in a lot of monkey business.

In *King of the Mountain*, Arnold Ludwig’s 10th book, the author profiles 1,941 rulers from 199 countries. One of the discoveries he made along the way was that political leaders tend to display the same characteristics as simian alpha males.

“As I got into this project, more and more questions began to present themselves. Why were these people so intent on vying for the top position? Why were they willing to suffer so much—jails, beatings and even exile—to get and hold on to this position?” Ludwig’s search for answers led him to reexamine the writings of Jane Goodall and other specialists in primate research.

“Male chimps have to test themselves in order to become the alpha male,” says Ludwig, emeritus professor of psychiatry at the University of Kentucky. “But if they ascend to this position, they get all sorts of privileges—more females, better food and shelter, and an army of deferential followers.” He adds that there is clearly a downside to all this. The alpha male must be willing to do almost anything to keep this position. “Once they gain ultimate power, they are at great personal risk. Between 12 to 18