

The Secret Behind Trump's Stupidity Revealed

The Underlying Reasons Behind Trump's Confidence Despite His Blatant Incompetence

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Donald Trump's unique brand of governance, marked by ignorance, arrogance, and a blatant disregard for facts, can be baffling.

But a psychological principle—the [Dunning-Kruger Effect](#)—offers a clear explanation for his behavior and, more surprisingly, his continued support.

What Is the Dunning-Kruger Effect?

The Dunning-Kruger Effect describes a cognitive bias where individuals with low ability in a given area overestimate their competence because they lack the self-awareness to recognize their limitations.

In short, they're too incompetent to realize they're incompetent.

In Trump's case, this theory provides a framework for understanding why he so confidently proclaims his greatness while demonstrating shockingly little understanding of the issues at hand.



How Trump's Incompetence Manifests

Trump's rise to power can largely be attributed to this effect. During his time in office, he routinely displayed a lack of understanding of global politics, science, and the basic workings of government.

Yet, Trump constantly asserted that he was a “stable genius” with unmatched knowledge.

His failure to grasp the complexities of critical issues, from healthcare to climate change, was often brushed off as intentional, bold disruption, but it was really a textbook case of Dunning-Kruger at work.

[*Psychology Today* reported](#) the day after Trump's first inauguration in an article titled “The Dunning-Kruger President” that:

Named for Cornell psychologist David Dunning and his then-grad student Justin Kruger, this is the observation that people who are ignorant or unskilled in a given domain tend to believe they are much more competent than they are.

Thus bad drivers believe they're good drivers, the humorless think they know what's funny, and people who've never held public office think they'[d] make a terrific president. How hard can it be?



The Dunning-Kruger President

The mainstream media quickly embraced this explanation for Trump's stupidity years ago when covering his 2016 campaign and the early months of his presidency.

[Salon published an article](#) in September 2016 explaining that “Trump is not merely ignorant. He is also supremely confident and feels superior — the most dangerous kind of idiot,” attributing his behavior to Dunning-Kruger.

[Bloomberg published an article](#) in May 2017 explaining that “We’re all ignorant, but Trump takes it to a different level” in an article titled: “Trump’s ‘Dangerous Disability’? It’s the Dunning-Kruger Effect.”

Conservative author and political commentator [David Brooks published an article for The New York Times](#) that same month explaining that Trump was the “all-time record-holder of the Dunning-Kruger effect” due to his infantile lack of mastery of “three tasks that most mature adults have sort of figured out by the time they hit 25.”

According to Brooks:

- “First, most adults have learned to sit still. But mentally, Trump is still a 7-year-old boy [...] bouncing around the classroom. Trump’s answers [during] interviews are not very long — 200 words at the high end — but he will typically flit through four or five topics before ending up with how unfair the press is to him.”
- “Second, most people of drinking age have achieved some accurate sense of themselves, some internal criteria to measure their own merits and demerits. But Trump seems to need perpetual outside approval to stabilize his sense of self, so he is perpetually desperate for approval, telling heroic fabulist tales about himself.”
- “Third, by adulthood most people can perceive how others are thinking. For example, they learn subtle arts such as false modesty so they won’t be perceived as obnoxious. But Trump seems to have not yet developed a theory of mind. Other people are black boxes that supply either affirmation or disapproval. As a result, he is weirdly transparent. He wants people to love him, so he is constantly telling interviewers that he is widely loved.”



Why Trump Supporters Don’t See His Flaws

The Dunning-Kruger Effect doesn’t just explain Trump’s behavior; it also sheds light on his supporters' unwavering loyalty.

Many of Trump’s core followers, particularly those without a college education or limited civic knowledge, may not realize how uninformed they are about key issues.

Thus, they fail to recognize Trump's gaffes and misinformation, instead seeing him as a strong leader who speaks their language. The phenomenon of cognitive bias not only fuels his confidence but helps him maintain popularity despite repeated failures.



Trump in 2025: The Cognitive Bias That Won't Go Away

As Trump winds his way through the opening weeks of his second term, the Dunning-Kruger Effect is once again playing out.

With unwavering self-confidence, Trump continues to deflect criticism and make outlandish claims of persecution and victimhood. His belief in his superiority remains intact, undisturbed by reality or public opinion.

The same voters who rallied behind Trump in 2016 continue to see him as the answer, even as the rest of the world looks on in disbelief and spearheaded his November 2024 win.



The Role of Fox News and Cognitive Bias

Prominent figures, including John Cleese, have pointed to the Dunning-Kruger Effect to explain the relationship between Trump and Fox News. Fox's slanted coverage reinforces

Trump's delusions of competence leave viewers equally unaware of their own biases.

Cleese humorously remarked that "stupid people are too stupid to realize how stupid they are," a statement that could easily be applied to both the network and its most fervent supporters.

This cycle of misinformation and overconfidence perpetuates Trump's perceived competence among his base, regardless of the facts.



Conclusion: The Dunning-Kruger Effect in Action

The Dunning-Kruger Effect offers a simple but powerful explanation for Trump's continued incompetence and his supporters' loyalty.

As we deal with the emerging consequences of Trump's second term, it remains a crucial lens through which to view his actions and the persistent divide in American politics.

While many recognize Trump's shortcomings, his base—blinded by the same cognitive bias—continues to believe in his self-proclaimed genius, ensuring that this dangerous dynamic persists.