



## ***How Does Sleep Affect Political Decision Making?***

Political decision making defines much of the world's security, much of its danger, its misery, and its opportunities for growth. Given that sleep plays a role in decision-making, it's important to consider the role of sleep in informing these political matters.

The hippocampus, which is the most important part of the brain for memory consolidation and learning, is very sensitive to sleep. Here, sleep plays a role in the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory – essential for political leaders, who must draw upon a wealth of information to make informed decisions. If a political leader's memory is out of place due to a lack of sleep, it's very possible that a nation could face an avoidable conflict (one created in response to a false or blurred memory).

Equally important to decision making is the amygdala, a brain region which defines emotional processing, mostly through fear and perceived threats. Sleep has a modulating effect on the amygdala, and adequate sleep can dampen its reactivity, contributing to more stable emotional fear-based responses. We wouldn't want a president who is prone to emotional responses to have a heightened amygdala response, as this too could lead to unnecessary conflict. With proper sleep, a more reasonable and less violent response is more likely than a more emotional one.

It seems that adequate sleep could save the world.