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Who Ups the Ante? Personality Traits and Risky Foreign Policy

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Who Ups the Ante? Personality Traits and Risky Foreign Policy

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M.A., Emory University, 2007

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Who Ups the Ante? Personality Traits and Risky Foreign Policy
By Maryann E. Gallagher

Why do some leaders take foreign policy risks, while others do not? To answer this question scholars of international relations have largely relied on theories of risk-taking, such as Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory, which focus on the role of situational circumstances rather than differences among individuals. This dissertation, however, argues that foreign policy risk-taking can be explained by examining differences in leaders' inherent risk propensities. It develops a personality-led theory of risk-taking based on the results of studies in behavioral economics, organizational psychology, trait psychology, and political psychology, which indicate that differences in individuals' inherent risk propensities are linked to personality traits. Using data on U.S. Presidents' Big Five personality traits, the theory is assessed statistically through two chapters examining presidents' decisions to initiate and escalate international conflicts. These chapters are followed by two case studies of presidential decision making during crises: Harry Truman during the 1948 Berlin Blockade, and John F. Kennedy during the 1961 Berlin ultimatum crisis. While the results of these four empirical chapters are mixed in regards to specific risk-related personality traits, they overall suggest that leaders' inherent risk propensities significantly influence their decisions to initiate conflicts and use force to carry out their policy objectives. This dissertation is the first study to apply the Big Five, the dominant paradigm in trait psychology, to leaders' foreign policy behaviors, and opens the door for future studies in political science to develop and test leader-level theories using objective measures of personality traits.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> Bush, whose hedgehog-like mind clears away contradiction and nuance like so much underbrush on his Texas ranch, has the instincts of an absolutist. He believes in a hierarchy of values and gravitates naturally to simplicity – what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong. To the absolutist, adherence to principle is the supreme virtue. In the Iraq context, this led him – with little evident self-doubt or agonizing – on a path of confrontation with Saddam Hussein within weeks of the September 11 attacks, even though no direct linkage has been established between al Qaeda and the Baghdad regime. In Bush's mind, the risks of bold action were less than the risk of inaction. (Harris 2004, 114)

It is common both inside and out of academia to attribute risk-taking to an individual's personality, as illustrated in the account above. However, few studies in international relations explore the influence of leaders' personalities as an explanation for risk-taking. This dissertation argues that some leaders are *inherently* riskier than others, and these differences significantly influence their decisions to take foreign policy risks.[1]

1.1. A Personality-led Theory of Risk-taking

Understanding decision makers' risk dispositions has important implications for the fundamental question of international relations: *why does war happen*? A leader's risk propensity is key to his or her resolve, or willingness to go to and carry out a war.[2] Although scholars have long recognized that "an actor's orientation toward risk is a

[1] Following in the tradition of microeconomics and scholarship in political science, risk-taking is defined as the leader choosing a high variance strategy based on the set of alternatives presented to her or him when making a foreign policy decision. Higher variance strategies have more numerous and divergent outcomes; they have a higher potential for both gain and loss, compared to an option with a more constrained probability outcome (McDermott [1998] 2004, 11).

[2] Morrow (1989, 942) proposes that a greater willingness to take risks is one of three sources of greater resolve. The other two are greater military capabilities and an objectively less favorable status quo.

psychological trait best evaluated through an in-depth examination of the decision maker's personality and environment" (Bueno de Mesquita 1981, 123), few have attempted to systematically analyze the psychological dimensions of elites' risk orientations. The leading explanation of risk-taking in international relations, prospect theory, examines the effect of circumstances on decision makers' cognitive processes. According to prospect theory, "people tend to evaluate choices with respect to a reference point, overweight losses relative to comparable gains, engage in risk-averse behavior in choices among gains but risk-acceptant behavior in choices among losses, and respond to probabilities in a nonlinear manner" (Levy 1997, 87). *Who* the decision maker is, matters very little because the predicted behavior is based on how a situation is framed. While the robustness of prospect theory has been substantiated through experiments over the past several decades, it has also been found that roughly one-third of subjects do *not* exhibit the predicted effects (Kowert and Hermann 1997; Levy 1992, 2003a; Mercer 2005a).

The past decade has witnessed a flurry of research across the disciplines of business, psychology, and political science on the heterogeneity of individuals' risk preferences. While they may ask different questions, underlying all these studies is essentially the same issue; namely, whether individuals have inherent risk propensities that incline them to be risk-takers or risk-avoiders. The results have indeed shown some people to have a tendency to take or avoid risks, regardless of how decisions are framed. Related studies that seek to understand why this is the case have demonstrated that certain personality traits dispose people to be consistent in their risk preferences (e.g. Kowert and Hermann 1997; Nicholson et al. 2005; Soane and Chmiel 2005). That is, some individuals are by nature risk-acceptant, while others are inherently risk-averse.

If it is possible to predict whether people will be inclined to take or avoid risks from their personality traits, then there is good cause to look to the personality traits of leaders in order to better understand their decisions. The results of these studies therefore form the foundation for a personality-led theory of risk-taking that can enlighten our understanding of the foreign policy decisions leaders make. Although there is a robust literature examining leaders' personalities, it has largely been of the psychoanalytic tradition and has focused on their idiosyncrasies, rather than the common patterns across leaders. Studies that have tried to assess the latter, have often resorted to organizing leaders by types, which are subjectively determined and unreliable.

In addition, until recently, political science research on leaders' personalities was hindered by the absence of a viable model of personality in the field of psychology (Mondak and Halperin 2008). In the past two decades, however, psychological research on personality has flourished, with advances in trait psychology coalescing around a framework for the systematic study of traits known as the "Big Five." The Big Five is a comprehensive, hierarchical model of trait structure. The five dimensions that the model is named after are: (1) Neuroticism; (2) Extraversion, (3) Openness to Experience; (4) Conscientiousness; (5) Agreeableness. The model demonstrates exceptional empirical strength – it is robust to variations in samples, types of raters, and instruments (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008), and is consistent across gender, culture, and time (McCrae and Allik 2002; McCrae and Costa 1999, 2003).

The empirical strength of the Big Five has ushered in "a paradigm shift" (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 148), providing a framework that encompasses many of the previously proposed models, as well as a common language for the cumulation of

knowledge. The Big Five has been employed in clinical settings, business environments, and historical analysis. The model has been useful for understanding the motivation behind actions in the past, as well as for making predictions regarding dispositions that will influence future behavior. The hierarchical nature of the five-factor model means that each of the factors is broad enough to encompass several different personality traits. For instance, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, and Excitement Seeking are all traits that belong to the Extraversion factor. Scholars have shown that predictions about behavior can be more accurately made when assessing the influence of specific traits, rather than the broader factors.

Scholars in multiple fields, including personality psychology, organizational decision making, finance, and evolutionary biology, have benefited from building upon this common language, although until recently it had received little attention in political science. However, as Mondak points out, "Political scientists interested in the impact of personality will be best positioned to speak both to one another and to scholars in other disciplines if we incorporate these [Big Five] models in our research" (2010, 18). Although some scholars have begun to apply the Big Five to analyses of mass political behavior, none have applied the model to leaders' personalities or international relations theory.

Personality inventories are used to measure individuals' Big Five factors, and ideally political scientists would administer these same questionnaires to world leaders in order to assess their personality traits. Leaders, however, are among the most inaccessible subjects. Not only are many no longer living, but those who are living are unlikely to make themselves available to researchers. In his study of presidents and risk-taking,

Boettcher laments, "The contemporary literature on personality and risk behavior usually relies on various personality inventories to measure subjects' personality characteristics. Researchers interested in studying presidential foreign policy decision making can seldom hope to administer such tests to the subjects of their inquiry" (2005, 12-13). This dissertation circumvents this problem by relying on data of American presidents' Big Five traits gathered from personality inventories that were completed by experts who were intimately familiar with the presidents.

This dissertation builds upon the results of previous studies that have uncovered significant relationships between individuals' personality traits and their tendencies to take or avoid risks. Four traits, in particular, are linked empirically and theoretically to risk-taking: Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation, and Altruism. This leads to four hypotheses, which together form a personality-led theory of risk-taking:

- *Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.*
- *Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.*
- *Leaders with lower Deliberative trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.*
- *Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to engage in risky foreign policy.*

The first trait, Excitement Seeking, is a subscale of Extraversion. It captures the tendency in individuals to seek out thrills and adventure; individuals who score high on this trait are expected to be foreign policy risk-takers. Likewise, Openness to Action, a component of the Openness to Experience factor, which captures the disposition to try new things, is also expected to be a positive indicator of risk propensity. Deliberation, on

the other hand, is negatively related to risk-taking. Deliberation, a subscale of Conscientiousness, indicates an individual's tendency to consider the consequences of his or her actions. Individuals who score low on this trait are hasty and impulsive, and thus prone to take risks, not because they sought them out, but because they overlooked the consequences of their decisions. The last risk-related personality trait, Altruism, is a subscale of the Agreeableness factor. Previous studies have found Altruism to be inversely related to risk-taking. Given their concern for the well-being of others, it is expected that more Altruistic people are less likely to take foreign policy risks.

1.2. Assessing the Influence of Personality Traits on Foreign Policy Decisions

Following the discipline's move towards mixed-method research (e.g., Lieberman 2005), both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques are employed in this dissertation. The objective of the quantitative analysis is to assess the four hypotheses above, while the case studies are primarily employed for theory development.

1.2.1. Quantitative Analysis

The first two empirical chapters of this dissertation employ statistical analyses to determine whether a president's risk-related personality traits significantly influence their decisions to engage in risky foreign policies, defined respectively as the use of force and the escalation of a crisis. Three different data sets are used to measure the use of force in the period 1945-2000: the Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set (Ghosn et al. 2004); the U.S. Use of Force data set, originally compiled by Blechman and Kaplan (1978) and most recently updated by Howell and Pevehouse (2007); and the

Opportunities to Use Force Data Set (Meernik 2004). Employing these different data sets not only acts a robustness test of the findings, but also circumvents the limitations of each data set. In addition to the key independent variables (i.e., the presidents' Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation and Altruism trait scores) the models will take into account control variables for the diversionary use of force, domestic institutions, and systemic factors.

In sum, logit estimations of the likelihood of the use of force, and Poisson regression estimations of the frequency that force was used, indicate that leaders' personality traits influence their decisions to engage in risky foreign policies. While the effect of the personality traits was not equal, there was robust support for *hypothesis 1*, that leaders with high Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policies, and *hypothesis 4*, that leaders with high Altruism scores are less likely to pursue such policies. Openness to Action trait scores had no predictive ability, but Deliberation trait scores were significant in several models, albeit in the opposite direction than was expected. These results were encouraging and suggest that while some further theorizing about the nature of the relationship between the Openness and Deliberation variables with foreign policy risk-taking is necessary, the variation in leaders' risk propensities does influence their decisions to use force abroad.

The results of the analysis of presidents' decisions to *escalate* crises were more ambiguous and warrant further testing. In addition to the MID data set, escalation was examined using the International Crisis Behavior Data Set (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000). Several different operationalizations of the dependent variable, escalation, were used in order to try to capture risky escalatory actions that presidents might take short of

war, including whether the president used violence or the military in response to the trigger of a crisis. The results do not indicate consistent relationships between leaders' risk-related traits and crisis escalation. On the one hand, presidents with higher Excitement Seeking traits are more likely to use violence in response to a crisis; however, they are less likely to see the crises and conflicts they are involved in escalate to war. It is difficult to determine whether leaders' traits actually influence this outcome (i.e., that leaders who are Excitement Seekers are reluctant to escalate to war) or if it is the artifact of the dependent variable. After all, the outcome, war, is not solely the decision of the U.S. president, but is dependent on the behavior of other states, who may decide to back down when faced with a crisis with a risky opponent.

The latter argument makes sense in light of the results from the previous chapter where Excitement Seeking is the strongest, most consistent predictor of decisions to use force, and its significant relationship to the president's immediate response to a crisis. It is possible that presidents who are risk-takers do use force more often and escalate more readily in response to a crisis trigger. However they are less likely to see crises escalate to wars because their opponents back down more readily. A selection model was estimated to examine whether leaders who initiate conflicts are also more likely to escalate those conflicts to war. The results of this model suggest that while personality traits play a significant role in the decision to initiate a conflict, their affect is muted when it comes to escalation. In addition, the results in Chapter 5 indicate some support for *hypothesis 3*, that leaders with higher Deliberation scores are less likely to escalate conflicts to war. While the results of this chapter are less encouraging than the previous one, it highlights

the importance of further developing the theory to consider the influence that other states have on risk-taking.

1.2.2. Qualitative Analysis

While statistical tests can be used to examine whether personality traits significantly influence foreign policy outcomes, they are unable to reveal nuances of the processes and pathways that condition the effect of a leader's personality on foreign policy. To this end, two cases of U.S. crises were investigated: President Truman's reaction to the 1948 Berlin Blockade, and President Kennedy's response the 1961 Berlin Crisis. These cases offer a first cut at understanding the mechanisms by which risk propensities of leaders influence the decision-making process. Additionally, the case studies offer variation in the types of behavior that are risk-taking. While the dependent variable in the case studies remained whether or not the leader adopted a risky foreign policy strategy, the cases relaxed the assumption of the quantitative chapters that risk-taking is equivalent to the use of military force. Instead, each of the options available to the president was evaluated for their relative riskiness, based on the variance in their potential outcomes.

Harry Truman's personality traits indicate that he was moderately risky; his low Excitement Seeking and Openness to Action scores suggest that he did not seek out risks for the thrills or adventure, but his very low Deliberation scores inclined him to take actions, or make "spot decisions" as he called them, without fully evaluating the consequences or risks that were entailed. Truman had three available options to respond to the Soviet blockade of Berlin: a low-risk option to withdraw from Berlin, a moderate-

risk option to launch an airlift to circumvent the blockade, or a high-risk option to break the blockade with an armed convoy. His decision making during the crisis serves as an illustration of how a leader's risk-related traits, in this case his very low Deliberation, can significantly shape foreign policy outcomes. Truman had ruled out his first option nearly immediately and was unwilling to consider it despite the advice of advisors. Moreover, he settled on the use of an airlift rather early on, and became its biggest proponent even while those around him highlighted the risks such a policy entailed.

While Truman's traits indicate that he was moderately risky, John F. Kennedy's traits suggest that he was an unequivocal risk-taker. He had the highest Excitement Seeking score of all American presidents, as well as high Openness to Action and low Deliberation and Altruism trait scores. Nevertheless, when having to choose between two options in response to the Soviet ultimatum on Berlin – a high-risk response that called for a military buildup alongside a declaration of national emergency without negotiations, or a moderate-risk response that involved a military buildup as well as diplomatic negotiations without a declaration of emergency – he chose the latter. The case explores the factors beyond personality that contributed to Kennedy's decision and highlights important two factors – the lessons learned from a previous crisis and the perceived threat of nuclear war, which need to be included along with personality variables in a well-developed theory of foreign policy risk-taking. In sum, the case studies illustrate that while the risk-related traits of leaders matter, there are external circumstances that condition the impact that personality has on behavior. These findings help to develop a more nuanced personality-led theory of risk-taking that will be addressed in the conclusion.

1.3. Layout of the Dissertation

The next chapter addresses the literature on risk-taking in international relations, with an emphasis on prospect theory. This is followed by a review of the literature on the influence of leaders' personalities in international relations and an explanation of the "Big Five" factor model of personality traits, the dominant paradigm in trait psychology. It then discusses the results of studies in business, psychology, and political science to establish the links between personality traits and risk-preferences, which motivate the four hypotheses that form the foundation of a personality-led theory of risk-taking. Chapter 3 examines issues of research design and focuses largely on the data set of U.S. presidents' personality traits that will be used throughout the following four empirical chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 will assess the four hypotheses regarding risk-related traits and foreign policy on two different types of risk-taking behavior – the initiation of force and the escalation of crises. Chapters 6 and 7 present case studies of presidential decision making during a foreign policy crisis: Harry Truman and the 1948 Berlin Blockade, and John F. Kennedy and the 1961 Berlin Ultimatum Crisis.

The concluding chapter reviews the findings of the four empirical chapters and addresses the implications for the fields of international relations and leadership analysis. For instance, in addition to shedding light on why some leaders choose conflict while others do not, the results also raise questions about the role of leaders' reputations and targeting strategies by other states. Understanding risky leaders can also inform scholarship on the duration of war, such as why some leaders "gamble for resurrection," thereby prolonging inevitable defeat. The interactions between personality traits and environmental factors will be discussed in light of the findings from the case studies. As

scholars have begun to pay more attention to the role of individual differences in shaping political outcomes, they have also sought to determine when personality has a direct influence and when its influence is mediated through other factors. Future research will be able to analyze past and current policy decisions through this new theoretical framework.

Chapter 2

Literature Review & Theory

The literature on decision making under conditions of risk in international relations has been largely dominated by rational choice expected utility theory, and more recently prospect theory. While these are often positioned as competing frameworks for decision making, what the two theories share is a general disregard for the inherent traits of the decision maker.[3] Although risk orientation of decision makers is acknowledged as fundamental to expected utility theory, risk propensity is often measured by some variable external and unrelated to the decision maker, such as a state's alliance portfolio. More recently, prospect theory has become the leading explanation of decision making under conditions of risk. However situational attributes framed as gains or losses drive risk-taking according to prospect theory; *who* the decision maker is does not matter since the situation determines whether or not an actor is inclined to be risk-acceptant.

However, a resurgence of interest in the heterogeneity of individuals' risk orientations, as well as advancements in the field of trait psychology, have led to several important developments that suggest that individuals have an inherent risk disposition. If some individuals are riskier than others, an immediate question for scholars of international relations to ask is: does a leader's risk propensity influence decisions of war

[3] See O'Neill (2001) for a critique of the treatment of risk in international relations. Mercer (2005b) offers and excellent analysis of relationship between rational choice and psychology-based theories in international relations. While they are often seen as competing approaches, several scholars have developed alternative theories that combine elements of rational choice and cognitive psychology. See for instance, Mintz's poliheuristic theory of decision making (e.g., Mintz 2002; Mintz and Geva 1997) and Vertzberger's sociocognitive approach to risk-taking (e.g. Vertzberger 1998).

and peace? This dissertation begins to answer this question by developing a personality-led theory of risk-taking.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature on risk-taking in international relations. This is followed by a review of how political science scholars have assessed the influence of leaders' personalities on decision making, and then an introduction to the Big Five factor model of personality traits. Finally, these three veins of research come together to inform a set of hypotheses that form the foundation of a personality-led theory of risk-taking. These hypotheses will be assessed through empirical analyses of leaders' decisions to initiate and escalate international conflict in the chapters that follow.

2.1. Risk-Taking in International Relations

Each day leaders make decisions that shape the policies of their state. Foreign policy decisions are especially important because, compared to most issues of domestic policy, their consequences are faster to manifest, often more grave, and potentially irreversible (Wildavsky 1969, 451). Few domestic policies irretrievably commit future generations to the extent that decisions to engage in war do. Leaders must consider the risks associated with each available option when making foreign policy decisions. Consider, for instance, the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis. President John F. Kennedy was approached with the following policy alternatives for dealing with the placement of missiles in Cuba: do nothing, use diplomatic pressure to resolve the crisis, approach Cuban leader Fidel Castro with a deal, invade Cuba, use surgical strikes to destroy the missiles, or blockade the island (Allison 1969). In comparison, some of these strategies were riskier than others. The anticipated outcomes, the likelihood of each outcome, and

the potential for unforeseen outcomes to occur had to be taken into consideration before Kennedy could choose a strategy.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the term *risk* refers to the relative variance in outcomes associated with each alternative strategy available to a leader during an international crisis. Risk-taking involves a decision maker choosing a high-variance strategy relative to other alternatives (McDermott [1998] 2004). The decision to choose a high variance option over a low variance option can be demonstrated by a simple example. For instance, imagine the scenario where a decision maker is given the choice between a certain win of $100 or a 50/50 gamble for $200 or nothing. Although the utility of each choice is the same (that is, $100), the risk-acceptant actor would choose the gamble, while the risk-averse actor would choose the certain win.

Unlike this example, the outcomes and associated probabilities of decisions are always somewhat unknown in politics.[4] Leaders who select a high variance strategy are less able to anticipate the outcomes of their decision, because such strategies have outcomes that are more numerous and divergent. Figure 1.1 represents two strategies of different variance. The flatter of the two curves represents the strategy of higher variance (Strategy A), while the narrowly peaked curve represents a strategy with little variance in

[4] In economics, risk is commonly distinguished from uncertainty. The classical distinctions "postulates that risk exists when decision-makers have perfect knowledge of all possible outcomes associated with an event and the probability distribution of their occurrence; whereas uncertainty exists when a decision-maker has neither the knowledge or the objective probabilities distribution of the outcomes associated with an event" (Verzberger 1995, 349; see also Boettcher 2005, 17; Bueno de Mesquita 1981, 33; Morrow 1994, 28-33). Scholars of international relations have found this distinction untenable because probabilities (risk) are rarely known outside of the laboratory. Thus, uncertainty and risk are inherent to all political decisions (e.g., Boettcher 2005, 17-20; McDermott [1998] 2004, 3; Taliaferro 2004a, 22-26; Vertzberger 1998, 19-22). It is possible to reconcile these differences while maintaining the integrity of the traditional definitions by following Boettcher's notion of "subjective risk under uncertainty." Subjective risk under uncertainty describes "occasions for decision where the complete set of potential outcomes (gains and/or losses) and outcome probabilities are not fully known, forcing decision makers to develop subjective estimate of potential outcomes, the values of those outcomes, and the probabilities associated with the occurrence of those outcomes" (2005, 19).

outcomes (Strategy B). A risky leader will be more likely than a non-risky leader to select strategy A.

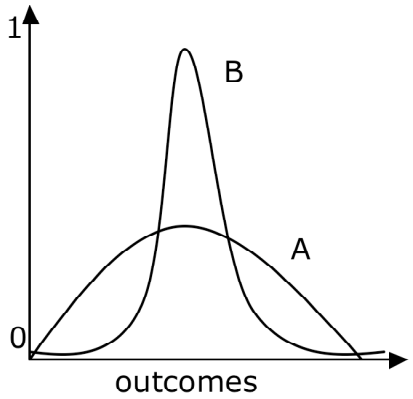

Figure 2.1. Variance of two actions A and B

By choosing high variance strategies, risk-takers are willing to accept a greater chance of potential adverse outcomes, or losses. The notion that risk entails a willingness to absorb potential losses has been well recognized by scholarship in behavioral economics and political science. March and Shapira's (1987) empirical analysis of business executives found that these decision makers attributed risk to the magnitude of possible bad outcomes (see also MacCrimmon and Wehrung 1986, 9). Because risky policy options have more numerous and more extreme outcomes, risk-acceptant leaders also accept the possibility of loss or harm. Leaders who are risk-averse on the other hand are likely to select policies that have fewer and less divergent outcomes.

The literature on risk-taking in international relations is dominated by economic theories of decision making. While expected utility theory dominates studies of bargaining and formal models of decision making, prospect theory has become a widely

accepted explanation of decision making during times of uncertainty and risk. Overall these microeconomic explanations ascribe differences in risk propensity to factors exogenous to the decision maker. In general, expected utility models rarely examine individual differences in risk propensity; rather, like preferences, risk propensity is usually assumed. Prospect theory ascribes differences in risk propensity to situational attributes. Whether a leader chooses a risky foreign policy strategy does not depend on *who* the person is, but rather the *circumstances* at hand when making a decision. The treatment of risk-taking in each of these literatures will be reviewed below.

2.1.1. Expected Utility Theory

Rational choice expected utility theory (see von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1947) provides the foundation for game theoretical studies of international relations and, until recently, has been the primary model used to explain risk-taking in political science (Morrow 1994). Simply put, actors are utility maximizers. Underlying the theory are the basic axioms that an actor's preferences over the outcomes of some action are ordered, complete, transitive, and fixed (see Morrow 1994, 16-23). When given a choice an actor will try to maximize her expected utility by weighting the utility of each possible outcome of a given course of action by the probability of its occurrence, summing all possible outcomes for each strategy, and selecting the strategy with the highest expected utility (Levy 1997, 88).

The effect of an actor's risk propensity is most apparent when comparing choices involving two options that have the same expected value but vary in their probabilities and payoffs. Recall the example above where a decision maker is given the choice

between a certain win of $100 or a 50/50 gamble for $200 or nothing. The risk neutral decision maker would be indifferent to this choice, since the expected utilities of the gamble or the certain win are the same. An actor with a convex or upward curving utility function indicates someone who has an increasing marginal utility for money (as compared to a risk-neutral actor), and is therefore risk-acceptant and would prefer the 50/50 gamble. On the other hand, a concave or downward curving utility function indicates than actor has a diminishing marginal utility for money, and is therefore risk-averse and would prefer the certain win of $100 (Morrow 1987; O'Neill 2001). Thus, "Risk propensities capture the fact that different decision makers may make different choices when faced with the same set of alternatives solely because of their attitudes towards choosing options with probabilistic outcomes" (Huth, Bennett and Gelpi 1992, 482).

In many models a risk preference, often risk aversion or risk neutrality, is assumed for all actors.[5] In the bargaining model of war, for instance, Fearon assumes that states are risk-averse or risk-neutral, because "leaders do not like gambling when the downside risk is losing at war" (1995, 388). He continues, "A risk-acceptant leader is analogous to a compulsive gambler – willing to accept a sequence of gambles that has the expected outcome of eliminating the state and regime. Even if we admitted such a leader as rational, it seems doubtful that many have held such preferences (Hitler being a possible exception)" (Ibid). While it is certainly possible to provide examples of rational leaders who were risk acceptant, the more important point is that Fearon, like many other

[5] Actors here could means states or leaders. For instance, realists in general are not concerned with the risk propensities of individual leaders and they tend to hold risk propensity constant across all states in the system. Boettcher differentiates among realists and notes defensive realists (e.g., Waltz 1979) implicitly assume risk aversion given states' survival motive, while offensive realists (e.g., Mearsheimer 2003), because they view states as always seeking hegemony, tend to assume risk acceptance (2005, 3).

scholars, assumes risk invariance. Such models do not account for the possibility that leaders have different risk preferences.

Nevertheless, other models of decision making do take into account differences in risk propensities. However, in these cases (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita 1985; Morrow 1987; Weitsman and Shambaugh 2002) risk propensity is most often measured according to a state's alliance portfolio, which gauges its willingness to trade security for autonomy. States whose alliance portfolio reflects a preference for security are understood to be risk averse; those who prefer autonomy are risk acceptant. While others have pointed out numerous problems with this measure, the most relevant point for this dissertation is that this measure does not take into account variance in leaders' risk propensities.[6] Despite Bueno de Mesquita's desire to create "an endogenously derived, continuous measure of risk-taking propensities" (1985, 157) that would capture a "decision maker's willingness (or reluctance) to take chances" (Ibid., 156), alliance portfolios, his measure of risk orientation, are exogenous to decision makers.[7] This treatment of risk orientation speaks to the larger irrelevance of first image explanations in internationals relations (until recently), which will be addressed further in the next section.

Expected utility theory has also been fundamental to research aimed at explaining a specific type of risk-taking known as "gambling for resurrection" (Downs and Rocke

[6] Others have critiqued this measure because of the assumption that alliance capabilities can be aggregated as power that a state in confrontation can rely on, and that those alliance commitments will be honored (Weitsman and Shambaugh 2002, 293-4). Morrow, whose measure of risk orientation is similar to Bueno de Mesquita's, notes that a small pool of available alliance partners puts additional constraints on this indicator (1987, 436). Finally, Boettcher states that both Morrow and Bueno de Mesquita's measures of risk propensity are tautological given that risk propensity at time *t* is based on behavior at time *t*-1 (2005, 4).

[7] Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi (1992; see also Huth, Gelpi, and Bennett 1993) attempt to account for decision makers risk preference by using a measure of risk acceptance that includes three factors: Bueno De Mesquita's alliance measure and two others measuring relative capabilities and domestic unrest which they relate to prospect theory.

1994). A gamble for resurrection occurs when the decision maker, most often understood as the leader of a state, accepts a high variance strategy that may help him avoid a seemingly certain negative alternative. It essentially is the decision to take a risk when there is nothing else to lose. Downs and Rocke (1994) propose that leaders who are on the losing end of a military conflict will face removal from office because their principals will want to deter their future executives from waging failed, aggressive campaigns. These leaders therefore have the incentive to take risks and continue failing ventures even after they have lost the support of their constituents, as it provides the only possibility that they or their party will not lose their position of power.

In a related study, Goemans (2000) also argues that that the public will punish its leaders for failed interventions, but links risk-taking to regime type. He argues that leaders of mixed regimes who are losing a conflict are likely to suffer more severe punishment (such as exile, imprisonment or death), as compared to leaders of other regimes. They are thus more likely to adopt a high-variance strategy, or gamble for resurrection, compared to leaders of democracies or dictatorships. While such a strategy may lower the overall expected utility for the state, if successful it can generate more favorable terms of settlement with which the leader can "buy off" the domestic opposition and avoid severe punishment. The theory provides a powerful explanation for war termination in World War I, however its applicability to other cases is questionable primarily because it does not take into account variation in *who* is in power; all leaders of mixed regimes that are losing during war are expected to behave in a similar manner. [8]

[8] See Reiter (2009) for a discussion of Goemans's theory, particularly as it applies to World War I Germany and World War II Japan.

While expected utility models can capture individual differences in risk propensity, they seldom do; risk aversion or neutrality is often assumed.[9] When variance in risk propensity is taken into account it is exogenously determined – either as some aggregated measure of a state's alliance portfolio or an attribute of regime type – neither of which accurately accounts for inherent risk propensity. However the greatest challenge to expected utility theory comes from over four decades of experimental studies that demonstrate that its predictions do not hold up when individuals make decisions under conditions of risk. These studies form the foundation of prospect theory, and will be discussed at length in the next section.

2.1.2. Prospect Theory

Expected utility is a normative model of how people *should* make decisions; however laboratory studies beginning in the 1970s demonstrated that people systemically violate three crucial axioms of expected utility: transitivity, dominance, and invariance (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982). To explain these systematic deviations, or "biases," in decision making, the two psychologists who led the experiments, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, proposed an alternative framework for choice under risk known as prospect theory.[10] Their Nobel-prize winning work demonstrated that, contrary to the expectations of expected utility theory, preferences are

[9] McDermott, Fowler, and Smirnov are critical of modelers who they claim make these assumptions "for the sake of mathematical convenience" (2008, 346).

[10] Kahneman and Tversky do not propose an explanation for where these biases come from, however recent work by McDermott, Fowler, and Smirnov (2008) suggest that there is an evolutionary basis. For comprehensive accounts of tenets of prospect theory see: Kahneman and Tversky (1979); Levy (1997); Levy (2003); McDermott ([1998] 2004, 17-33); Quattrone and Tversky (1988). For an overview of the applications of prospect theory to international relations see Levy (2003) and Mercer (2005a).

not stable. The way in which a decision is framed affects whether the decision outcomes are perceived as gains or losses, which influences a person's propensity to take risks.

Prospect theory focuses on the effect of exogenous situational circumstances on decision makers' cognitive processes. "Although individuals remain self-interested actors, their decisions take place within an environment that shapes the perception of alternatives" (Masters 2004, 704). The decision process, according to Kahneman and Tversky's studies, takes place in two phases: an initial editing phase where "acts, outcomes, and contingencies are framed" (Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 453), and a subsequent evaluation phase where the alternatives are evaluated and the prospect of highest value is chosen (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 274).[11]

There are several interrelated aspects of the decision process that highlight the differences between the normative predictions of expected utility theory, and the way people actually make choices as described by prospect theory. In their studies Kahneman and Tversky found that the way in which information is presented, or how a decision is framed, will affect a decision maker's choice. This makes intuitive sense if you consider how much easier it would be for a politician to garner support for a policy that he or she guarantees will provide a 90% employment rate, rather than a policy that guarantees a 10% unemployment rate (Mercer 2005a). The outcomes are identical but the way in which the choices are framed influences the decision to support such a policy. Put simply: how information is framed should not influence our judgment, but it does.

[11] Boettcher (1995, 564) points out that while the complete model of decision making constructed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) includes these two phases, they only explicitly test the evaluation phase. The choice decisions as they were presented to the subjects taking part in their studies had already been edited. Not surprisingly most applications of prospect theory to international relations have also focused on the evaluation phase. Farnham's (1994) analysis of President Roosevelt's framing of the decision to get involved in World War II is an exception.

The framing process involves the analysis of outcomes of decision alternatives as either gains or losses in relation to a neutral "reference point." Thus people attach value to a *change* in assets rather than net asset levels as expected by utility theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 277). According to Levy, "This reference dependence runs contrary to the postulate of a utility function defined over levels of assets, and it constitutes the central analytic assumption of prospect theory" (2003, 216). In addition, people experience diminishing sensitivity with increasing gains and losses. For example, an initial windfall of $1,000 is more highly valued than winning that same $1,000 after an initial gain of $10,000 (Berejikian 2004, 6-7). This relationship is expressed by an S-shaped value function, which is concave above the reference point and convex below it (Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 454).

The value function also captures the asymmetries Kahneman and Tversky observed in how people evaluate losses and gains. People tend to exhibit what is known as "loss aversion," meaning they overvalue losses relative to comparable gains (Levy 1997, 89). For instance, the displeasure associated with losing $10 is generally greater than the pleasure associated with winning $10 (Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Quattrone and Tversky 1988). This finding is reflected in tennis great Jimmy Connor's admission "I hate to lose more than I like to win" (Levy 1992, 175). Since "losses loom larger than the corresponding gains" (Quattrone and Tversky 1988, 721), the slope of the value function below the reference point will be steeper than the slope of the upside. Related to loss aversion is the "endowment effect" whereby individuals attach a higher value to things they have, compared to comparable things that they do not have (Levy 2003, 216). There are several implications of loss aversion and the endowment effect, including an observed

bias towards the status quo and an overvaluing of current possessions that can lead, for instance, to people refusing to sell an item at a price that they would not be willing to pay for the item in the first place (Levy 1997, 89-90).

In addition to loss aversion and endowment effects, the asymmetry between losses and gains also manifests itself in the experimental subjects' risk orientation. According to prospect theory, people tend to be risk averse when it comes to gains, but risk acceptant with respect to losses. They are willing to take risks in the hopes of avoiding loss, even though the result may be greater loss, and even though the expected value of the gamble may be considerably worse than the value of the certain loss (Levy 2003, 217). Since the willingness to take risks depends on the decision makers' reference point, and hence how a decision is framed, a "preference reversal" can occur if a choice is framed in such a way that the reference point changes, even if the values and probabilities associated with outcomes remain the same.

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) famously illustrated the framing effect and preference reversal in their "Asian disease" experiment. Two sets of respondents were given the same cover story and a problem from which they had to choose a program:

> *Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an usual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimate of the consequences of the programs are as follows*:
>
> **Problem 1:**
> If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved.
> If Program B is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved, and 2/3 probability that no people will be saved.
>
> **Problem 2:**
> If Program C is adopted 400 people will die.
> If Program D is adopted there is a 1/3 probability that nobody will die, and 2/3 probability that 600 people will die.

The majority (72%) of respondents in Problem 1 chose option A, the risk averse alternative. The authors found that "the prospect of certainly saving 200 lives is more attractive than a risky prospect of equal expected value, that is, a one-in-three chance of saving 600 lives" (1981, 453). However, the majority (78%) chose option D, the risk acceptant option, for Problem 2. The authors argue that this preference reversal is due to how the problems are framed. Despite the two problems being "effectively identical" the first problem is framed as a gain, lives are "saved," lending people to favor risk averse behavior, while the second problem presents a frame of losses, lives are "lost," and creates "a pronounced shift from risk aversion to risk taking" (Ibid.). Overall these reference-dependent, or framing, effects "violate the assumption of consistent and transitive preferences that is essential not only to expected-utility theory but also to nearly all rational choice theories as well" (Levy 1997, 93).

Tversky and Kahneman's results also highlight a second major departure of prospect theory from the expected utility model, namely that people respond to probabilities in a non-linear manner (1981, 454). According to prospect theory, people exhibit what is known as the "certainty effect," whereby they overweight outcomes that are certain compared to those that are merely probable (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 265). In the positive domain this will lead people to prefer a certain positive outcome as compared to a probabilistic option, whereas in a negative domain certainty will exaggerate the aversiveness of losses that are certain to losses that are merely probable (Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 455). For example, Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 466-8) demonstrated that when given the choice between a sure gain of $3,000 or a .80 chance of

winning $4,000, 80% of subjects chose the certain gain. On the other hand, when given a choice between a certain loss of $3,000 or a .80 chance of losing $4,000, 92% of subjects took their chances with the second option. Because of this certainty effect people attach a greater value to the complete elimination of risk than to the reduction of risk by a comparable amount (Levy 1997, 91). This is illustrated by a study where individuals were willing to pay a great deal more money to remove the last bullet from a gun in a game of Russian roulette than to remove the fourth bullet, even though each removal reduced the risk by the same percentage (McDermott [1998] 2004, 30).

People also have a tendency to overvalue small probabilities and undervalue high and moderate probabilities, except in the case of a very highly likely event which they will often treat as certain (Levy 2003; Boettcher 2004b; McDermott [1998] 2004). Levy explains, "This means that except for small probabilities people tend to give more weight to the utility of a possible outcome than to its probability of occurrence, whereas expected-utility theory posts that utilities and probabilities are given equal weight" (1997, 91-2). While small probabilities are overweighted, extremely small probabilities lead to unpredictable behavior.[12] In some cases, extremely rare events are treated as impossibilities and at other times they are overweighted, as illustrated by people buying lottery tickets and catastrophic insurance (McDermott [1998] 2004, 31-2; Levy 1997, 92).

Scholars have extended these basic tenets of prospect theory to international relations, most often through case studies that focus on loss aversion or an actor's risk propensity due to decision making from a position of losses or gains. McDermott ([1998]

[12] According to Kahneman and Tversky, "Because people are limited in their ability to comprehend and evaluate extreme probabilities, highly unlikely events are either ignored or overweighted, and the difference between high probability and certainty is either neglected or exaggerated. Consequently, π [the weighting function] is not well-behaved near the end points" (1979, 282-3).

2004), for example, analyzes four cases of U.S. foreign policy decision making under risk: President Eisenhower's reaction to the Soviet downing of an American U-2 spy plane and the 1956 Suez Crisis, and President Carter's decisions regarding the Shah of Iran's entry into the U.S. and the Iran hostage rescue mission. She assesses the domain of each decision as one of gains or losses based on the status quo, and uses the domain frame to predict the president's risk propensity. She then assesses the riskiness of each alternative policy option and whether the predictions of prospect theory fit with the empirical history. McDermott finds the best support for prospect theory in Carter's decision to launch the Iran hostage rescue mission, which was not the option with the highest expected value, but was chosen at a time when he was "clearly operating in a domain of losses" (47).[13]

Haas (2001) examines decision making by Kennedy and Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In a manner similar to McDermott's study (as well as many others) he uses the case to test the predictions of prospect theory against expected utility theory.[14] Hass argues that Khrushchev's decision to send missiles to Cuba and Kennedy's response are both examples of "excessively risky," non-value maximizing decisions that can be best understood by both leaders being in a domain of losses at the time of the crisis. He builds upon earlier work that seeks to compare rational choice and prospect theory's predictions by developing a baseline for expected utility theory through a game-theoretic

[13] Boettcher critiques McDermott and other authors who rely on the status quo to argue that decision makers are "in" a certain domain because he argues such placement runs counter to the situational nature of prospect theory (2004b, 341-342). For a critique of McDermott's (1992) earlier publication of this case study see Boettcher (1995).

[14] See for example, Bueno de Mesquita, McDermott and Cope 2001; Fanis 2004; Farnham 1994; McDermott and Kugler 2001; Morrissette 2010. Not all applications of prospect theory to international relations have been done using case studies. Examples of quantitative analyses of prospect theory include: Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi 1992; Huth, Gelpi, and Bennett 1993; Tessman and Chan 2004.

model of deterrence, which he can then compare to the expectations of prospect theory.[15] Fuhrmann and Early (2008) offer a more comprehensive comparative analysis by using the case of President George H.W. Bush's 1991 decision to launch the risky Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) to test the predictions of realism/neorealism, the bureaucratic politics model, expected utility, and prospect theory for nuclear arms reduction. The authors find that prospect theory explains the willingness to accept the risk of the PNIs and the timing of the decision better than any alternative theory. In addition, Fuhrmann and Early's work highlights the risks involved with diplomatic bargaining and cooperation.[16]

Barbara Farnham's (1994) case study of President Roosevelt during the Munich Crisis is exceptional among studies that apply prospect theory to international relations as she focuses on the editing phase of decision making rather than the evaluation phase, and explores the preference reversals that Roosevelt underwent regarding intervention in World War II. She discusses at length why this preference reversal could not be explained through the rational choice framework, but can instead be attributed to Roosevelt's frame change to one of losses, thus making him eager to intervene to stop the prospective war. Farnham convincingly argues that since there was no new information revealed or threats to the United States, Roosevelt's emotions were responsible for reframing the prospects of war in Europe as a loss that had to be avoided.

All of these applications of prospect theory describe the foreign policy behaviors of a state to be the result of decision making by an individual leader. Taliaferro (2004a,

[15] See also Berejikian 2002.

[16] See also Bueno de Mesquita, McDermott and Cope's (2001) application of prospect theory to the case of negotiations over the implementation of the Good Friday Agreements in Northern Ireland.

2004b), on the other hand, extends prospect theory to group decision making.[17] His "balance of risk" theory explains why great powers get involved in costly interventions in periphery states. It incorporates tenets of prospect theory into defensive realism, and suggests that when senior officials of great powers perceive losses in terms of their state's relative power, international status, or prestige, they will choose risk acceptant strategies. In addition to explaining why states launch interventions into the periphery, Taliaferro employs prospect theory to explain why leaders will continue to devote precious resources to unsuccessful interventions in attempts to recoup past losses or "sunk costs."

Scholars have begun to look beyond elites as the focus of decision making and have applied prospect theory to choice decisions by individuals to join terrorist groups (Kuznar and Lutz 2007) and rebellious movements (Masters 2003, 2004). Others have examined whether prospect theory can explain the reluctance of ethnic combatants to prolong civil wars rather than seek negotiations (Butts 2007), or provide insights regarding strategic bargaining behavior (Butler 2007). While the potential for its application is vast, prospect theory's influence in political science has not reached far beyond international relations, and more specifically, conflict and security studies (Mercer 2005a, 2).[18] According to Mercer (2005a) the tepid response from scholars

[17] Fanis (2004) also extends prospect theory to the group level as a way to explain the collective action of economic groups in Chile in the early 1970s. Tessman and Chan (2004) apply prospect theory to the behavior of states as unified actors. Berejikian (1997) extends the tenets of prospect theory to state choice through the case of the European Community's behavior during negotiations over the Montreal Protocol (an international agreement to limit the release of chlorofluorocarbons into the atmosphere). Studies that apply prospect theory to the behavior of states rather than leaders are often faced with strong critiques. Morrow for one notes that "the use of prospect theory to represent the decision of states requires the leap of faith that a theory of individual choice can represent the choices of collectives" (1997, 16). For a more detailed discussion of the problems of applying this individual level theory to groups see Boettcher (2004b).

[18] Notable exceptions include Quattrone and Tversky's (1998) experiments on policy and candidate preferences in American politics; Weyland's (1996, 2002) analysis of economic reforms in Latin America; Vis and Kersbergen (2007) and Vis's (2010) analysis of welfare state reform in Europe; Elms's

outside international relations stems from two problems: the difficulty of assessing whether actors locate themselves in domains of gains or losses, and the practical problems of moving beyond the lab to assess risk-taking in the field.

While prospect theory is an elegant explanation for decisions of risk inside a controlled laboratory, it is difficult to extend even its most fundamental tenets to the more complicated world in which political decision making takes place. Decision outcomes outside the laboratory are often ambiguous. In regards to their laboratory analysis, Tversky and Kahneman admit, "For simplicity, we restrict the formal treatment of the theory to choices involving stated numerical probabilities and quantitative outcomes, such as money, time or number of lives" (1981, 454). In an attempt to extend Kahneman and Tverksy's work to foreign policy decision making, Boettcher (1995) experimented with replacing numerical probabilities with verbal probabilities such as "very probable" and "highly likely," given that foreign policy decision makers rarely have the ability to use numerical probabilities and instead rely on verbally represented probabilities.[19] His results offer little support for the expectations of prospect theory and raise serious questions about its applicability to political decision making in the "real world." In his more recent work, Boettcher is critical of political scientists for having "happily borrowed intuitively compelling notions such as reference points, gain/loss coding,

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(2004) application to trade disputes; Patty's (2006) analysis of why the party of the President loses seats during mid-term elections.

[19] Only a handful of scholars have turned to the laboratory to assess the loss/gain framing effect on foreign policy decision making (e.g., Boettcher 1995, 2004a, 2004b; Kowert and Hermann 1997; McDermott, Cowden and Koopman 2002). Boettcher is also one of the few political scientists to use experiments to examine the how other actors within a group affect the framing of a problem on an individuals' risk propensities (2004b).

preference reversals, and loss aversion" (2004b, 332), while failing to specify the limits of prospect theory's applicability to political science.[20] He states,

> In part, this may be due to a lack of familiarity with (or understanding of) recent research on prospect theory in other fields; but it also stems from a reluctance to test prospect theory using experiments that mimic "real world" decisions. These experiments are difficult to construct, costly to execute, and they sometimes produce inconclusive (or even worse, incoherent) results. (2004b, 332)

The most damning problem for the application of prospect theory to international relations, and political science more broadly, is based in the theory's own internal inadequacy. That is, it lacks an unambiguous theory of framing, with "clear and consistent criteria for simply *identifying* the frame used by a particular decision-maker" (Ibid., 332).[21] The absence of such criteria means that the scholar using prospect theory to examine international relations lacks a valid and reliable way of knowing whether the decision maker perceived himself or herself to be in a domain of gain or loss. As Mercer

[20] One of the clearest examples of this is Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi's (1992; see also Huth, Gelpi, Bennett 1993) attempt to incorporate elements of domain specific risk propensity into a quantitative analysis of the effect of system uncertainty on conflict behavior among great powers. While other scholars have used objective measures to determine the domain of decision makers (for instance, Weyland 1996 relies on economic indicators like inflation to determine the domain of Latin American leaders and their publics), Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi's indicators (e.g., the annual number of strikes) are so far removed from the decision making process that it is impossible to know if they had any effect on the leader's reference point. Moreover they combine what they consider "individual components" (such as alliance portfolio, which as discussed earlier more appropriately reflect a state's expected utility and not the leader's) with "situational components" classified as relative industrial-military position (such as relative industrial growth which leads the leaders to perceive themselves to be in a domain of gains or losses) and domestic political conditions. They determine that a leader has a high-risk propensity if two of the three types of components are present. Clearly none of these measures are inherent. Moreover, their measure collapses indicators from expected utility theory with ideas from prospect theory without any discussion of the underlying contradictions between these models.

[21] Political scientists employing prospect theory have tried to address this issue by modeling the influence of a second actor in shaping a decision maker's frame during negotiations (Kanner 2004) or imposing various reference points to assess their influence on strategic bargaining (Butler 2007). Boettcher (2004b, 340-2) provides an insightful review of what he sees as the three standard approaches political scientists use to capture the frame: "the traditional focus on semantic manipulations of outcome descriptors, a new approach based on the hedonic tone of the decision problem, and a third indirect method that examines the overall domain inhabited by a decision-maker" (340).

explains, "An actor's domain drives the rest of the theory, so determining whether an actor is in a domain of gain or loss is crucial" (2005a, 3).

In the laboratory setting the frame can easily be manipulated by the way a situation is presented in the choice problem, as in the Asian disease example. Outside the lab, establishing the frame is much more complicated and requires the analyst to determine the decision maker's reference point, which again is problematic because prospect theory is "a reference-dependent theory without a theory of the reference point" (Levy 2003, 233). Scholars most often treat the status quo as decision maker's reference point.[22] If the status quo is considered acceptable than the actor is understood to be in a domain of gains and will be risk averse; if the actor is dissatisfied with the status quo then she is considered to be in a domain of loss and will be risk acceptant. In static situations outside of the laboratory the reference point may often be the status quo; however this is not always the case. An actor's reference point may not be the status quo but may instead be some point to which they aspire, or as Farnham (1994) demonstrates, may be affect-dependent. In addition, expectation levels, social norms, and recent loses can also influence an individual's reference point for any given decision (Levy 2003, 218).

If, for example, an aspiration level is the reference point rather then the status quo, then an actor who may seem to be in a domain of gains because of the status quo could actually locate herself or himself in a domain of losses, and thus engage in risk-taking behavior.[23] Mercer (2005a) provides a brief illustration of the importance of the

[22] There are several exceptions. Butler (2007), for instance, applies four different reference points to his strategic interaction models, each of which produces different types of bargaining behavior. Taliaferro (2004a) and Boettcher (2005) try to discern the aspiration level of decision makers by analyzing documents of conversations and memoranda that discuss the goals and expectations.

[23] Political scientists have generally been reluctant to treat an individual's aspiration level as the reference point and have instead focused on the external status quo. Two exceptions are Taliaferro (2004a)

reference point, and hence domain, in the case of George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq. He proposes that if Bush's reference point was the status quo, then the success of the Afghanistan war just prior to the Iraq invasion would indicate that he was in a domain of gains, and therefore should have been risk averse and unlikely to start the Iraq war.[24] On the other hand, it is also possible that his reference point was an aspiration level, namely the overthrow Saddam Hussein, which would mean that even after the initial success in Afghanistan he was in a domain of losses. "Because policy is often incoherent and evolves with the situation, it is usually possible to find evidence for a variety of different reference points" (Ibid., 6).

The reference point that an actor adopts when making decisions in the real world, that is, outside the laboratory, will be related in part to the way information is presented, but will also be affected by the "norms, habits, and personal characteristics of the decision-maker" (Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 453). Thus an actor's personality traits may provide some insight into where an actor sets her reference point, particularly if that reference point is an aspiration level. In this way the personality-led theory of risk-taking proposed in this dissertation may enlighten rather than compete with studies employing prospect theory. Kowert and Hermann (1997) proposed this connection more than decade ago. They suggested,

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and Boettcher (2005) who treat the aspiration level to be the minimum goal a leader is trying to achieve. Accordingly leaders' aspiration levels change frequently in relation to the different goals associated with each decision they have to make.

[24] Mercer goes on to counter this prediction and argues that being in a domain of gains could have actually encourage dissatisfaction with the status quo, i.e., Bush became dissatisfied with the situation in Iraq and was willing to "make bets with the house money" because things were going so well and he was in a domain of gains. Such behavior is plausible and in line with cognitive biases related to overconfidence (Johnson 2004). There are certainly other potential explanations for this decision, however this example serves to highlight the inability to reliably determine the domain of the decision maker outside of the laboratory.

> the special sensitivity of some individuals (the agreeable altruists) to loss may actually lead them to set unusually low reference points such that most of their decisions occur in the domain of gains. Likewise, sensation seekers may tend to set high or ambitious reference points. Their risk acceptant behavior in what seems to be the domain of gains may actually reflect a perceived failure to meet these ever-higher new standards. Consequently, behavior that appears to run counter to the predictions of prospect theory (risk aversion in the domain of losses or risk acceptance in the domain of gains) may be indicative of subjects whose reference points place them in the opposite frame. Their personal styles may help to predict the cues on which they focus to establish reference points. (632)

Although prospect theory is a descriptive theory how individuals make decisions, very little knowledge of the decision maker is needed in order to explain or predict behavior. Rather, "it is a theory concerned with the importance and impact of the environment on the person" (McDermott 2004b, 293). McDermott, an advocate of prospect theory's application to international relations, explains that "the situation in a large sense determines the domain of action. It also provides the exogenous shifts in the environment that… can precipitate the changes in risk propensity that can be witnessed among leaders" (Ibid., 294). While this may be the case when the status quo is the reference point, such statements are troubling when considering there are alternative reference points to consider, such as aspiration level, and various other factors which affect the placement of decision makers' reference points. McDermott's explanation points to one of the key problems with prospect theory as it is applied to political science – the assumption that decision makers, irrespective of who they are, will react in the same predictable manner given a certain situation. Thus, actions rather than individuals are endowed with risk attributes. Such a deterministic theory ignores the existence and variation of individuals' inherent risk dispositions.

Scholars have begun to examine why a sizeable number (approximately one third) of all subjects do not exhibit the framing effects predicted by prospect theory. This has

led to a burgeoning interest in the heterogeneity of risk orientations (e.g., Carducci and Wong 1998; Dahlback 1990; Filbeck, Hatfield, Horvath 2005; MacCrimmon and Wehrung 1990; Meertens and Lion 2008) and the influence of inherent risk orientation on the framing process (e.g., Kam and Simas 2010; Kowert and Hermann 1997; Lauriola and Levin 2001). At the center of such studies is the question of whether or not individuals have stable risk preferences. Research in psychology, behavioral economics, and political psychology on inherent traits and risk-taking have found evidence of personality traits are related to stable overall risk-preferences, and risk preferences in specific types of situations (e.g. health, career, finance) (Kam and Simas 2010; Kowert and Hermann 1997; Li and Liu 2008; Nicholson et al. 2005; but see also Slovic 1964; Weber, Blais, and Betz 2002). These findings form the crux of the theory in this dissertation and will be discussed at length below.

Several of these studies, however, are also relevant to this discussion because they speak to the weaknesses of prospect theory. For example, Kowert and Hermann's (1997) examination of influence of personality traits on risk-taking was motivated by the nearly one third of all subjects in prospect theory experiments who do not exhibit the framing effect. The authors point out that ignoring this sizeable number of subjects is troubling "when the behavior of a single leader often has dramatic policy consequences" (613). In a more recent study, Kam and Simas replicated Kahneman and Tversky's "Asian Disease" problem while controlling for risk orientations, finding that inherent risk orientations are just as important as framing for predicting risk-tasking.[25] In fact, they found that "the

[25] Attempts to replicate the framing effect have been problematic. In general these studies have found that framing has a smaller effect on choice than originally reported and that framing interacts with many other variables, such as gender or inherent risk propensity, whose presence or absence can either permit or

individual difference of *Risk Acceptance* predicts preference for a probabilistic outcome over a sure thing – *regardless of how that outcome is framed* (2010, 389; italics in original). The Kam and Simas study, along with Kowert and Hermann (1997), is among the few to use a within-subject design, which powerfully demonstrates that a *majority* of subjects *do not* exhibit a preference reversal – they are consistent in their risk preferences.[26] These studies demonstrate that *who* the decision maker is matters as much as the decision-making context.

In addition to the framing effect, various other tenets of prospect theory have been questioned as experiments have produced results that do not support its predictions. For instance, Weber and Milliman (1997) found that individuals were more risk-averse about time when in the domain of losses. This raises questions about the generalizablity of prospect theory's predictions across domains, or different settings. Fagley and Miller (1997) found that subjects made more riskier choices in the arena of human life than in monetary decisions, including making riskier choices when presented with a gain frame, and that women were more sensitive to framing effects then men who seem to take the same number of risks regardless of frame. Highhouse and Yuce (1996) demonstrated that risk-taking could depend on whether decisions are framed as a threat or opportunity, independent of loss and gain perspectives. Building upon this work, Xie and Wang (2003) investigated situational (gain-loss), dispositional (achievement motives), and informational (opportunity-threat framing) variables affecting the relationship between

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eliminate the framing effect. See Fagley and Miller (1997, 357-361) for an early review of the mixed results of studies that attempted to replicate Kahneman and Tversky's original framing effects findings.

[26] Within-subject design refers to the same group of subjects being exposed to more than one treatment. In the case of these studies it means that the same group that was exposed to the frame of problem 1 of the "Asian Disease" experiment, was also exposed to the frame of problem 2. This is contrasted with Tversky and Kahneman (1981) who use a between-subject design where each group is exposed to only problem 1 or problem 2.

decision makers' risk perceptions and risk preferences. Their findings showed that contrary to the predictions of prospect theory, participants were more risk-seeking in gains and under opportunity framing, while being more risk-averse in loses and under negative framing. They argued that the choice to accept a risk is mediated by whether it is perceived as an opportunity or a threat.

Although prospect theory has been successful at explaining behavior in certain situations, evidence contrary to its predictions and in support of an individual having an inherent risk propensity suggests that there is ample reason to consider alternative hypotheses for risky behavior. This dissertation proposes that an alternative theory for risk-taking based on individuals' traits can inform several of the critiques of rational choice and prospect theory that have been noted above.

2.2. The Influence of Leaders' Personalities

The lack of attention paid to the role of leaders in the political science literature is surprising in light of the enormous effects that individual leaders can have on world events.[27] Nearly a decade ago Byman and Pollack noted that the "tendency for scholars to ignore the role of personalities in international relations is particularly troubling" (2001, 108), and thus called for greater emphasis to be placed on analyzing the influence of leaders. They argued, "Explaining international relations while ignoring Hitler, Bismarck, Napoleon, and other monumental figures is like trying to understand art or music without Michelangelo or Mozart" (Ibid., 145).

[27] Betty Glad (2002a) notes that in nearly one hundred years of publication only 42, out of a totally of 4,856 articles, have been written on political leadership in the *American Political Science Review*.

The underdevelopment of first-image explanations of conflict and peace, to use the levels of analysis framework proposed by Waltz (1959), can be attributed in part to the dominance of neorealist or structuralist theory in international relations, which privileges third-image or system-level variables. To many political scientists, individuals ultimately do not matter; "the roar of the anarchic system, domestic politics, and institutional dynamics drown out the small voices of individual leaders" (Byman and Pollack 2001, 108). The problem is not convincing scholars that specific leaders matter. Few would disagree that Kaiser Wilhelm played a crucial role in the outbreak of World War I, that Hitler was responsible for World War II, or that the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 rested largely on the shoulders of George W. Bush. Indeed, laying these specific leaders out in this way only reinforces the biggest critique of leader-based theories, which is that "individuals are too individualistic" (Ibid.). Political scientists, on the other hand, seek theories that can demonstrate through rigorous empirical analysis that there is some systematic relationship between a key causal variable (i.e., who leads) and dependent variable (i.e., foreign policy outcomes). Although some scholars will still believe that "driving the cause of war and peace back into the personality of decision makers smacks of the 'mentalism' which rationalists and behaviorists gave up long ago in the name of science" (Mercer 2005b, 89-90), this dissertation opens the door for such analysis of leaders' personality traits.

This dissertation is in line with more recent scholarship that highlights the systematic influences of leaders on international relations. As if answering Byman and Pollack's call, scholars in the past decade have developed, and empirically assessed, leader-centric theories of conflict initiation and escalation (Chiozza and Goemans 2003,

2004; Horowitz, McDermott, and Stam 2005; Horowitz and Stam 2010; Potter 2007), crisis behavior (Keller 2005), management of territorial disputes (Chiozza and Choi 2003), and state targeting strategies (Bak and Palmer 2010; Gelpi and Grieco 2001). Horowitz, McDermott and Stam argue that testing for systematic leader effects is a valuable endeavor given the "relative paucity of individual-level variables in much of the mainstream quantitative international relations research" (2005, 662-3). If individual-level variables proved to be insignificant in such analyses, then the neorealist argument that leaders do not matter in international relations would have gained support. The evidence from these studies however indicates that leaders do matter, and leader-level variables ought to be incorporated into theories of international relations.

2.2.1. Leaders' Personalities

Political scientists have largely understudied the influence of personality on risk-taking. That is not to say that personality has not been recognized as an important causal factor of political behavior. Rather, few studies have explicitly examined the link between personality and decisions of risk (an important exception is Boettcher 2005). Much of the literature on decision making in international relations relies on theories from cognitive psychology rather than personality psychology. For the most part this vast literature examines how the beliefs systems, organizational schemas, and heuristics leaders use to process information shape their perceptions and behaviors (e.g. Janis 1982; Janis and Mann 1977; Jervis 1976; Khong 1992; Lebow 1981; Stein 1988; Walker 1977).

The development of work on personality in political science has largely followed the research trends in the field of personality psychology. Early work on personality and

leadership borrowed heavily from clinical and abnormal psychology, often using psychoanalytic theory to dissect the formative moments in leader's early lives (e.g. Freud and Bullitt 1967; George and George 1956; Lasswell 1930, 1948). The most famous of these psychobiographies is Alexander and Juliette George's *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (1956). They describe how Wilson's compulsive drive for power and domination, a reaction they attribute to his low-self esteem caused by his poor relationship with his father, led the president to both refuse to fight and refuse to compromise. This self-defeating behavior is illustrated by his ineptitude surrounding the Treaty of Versailles and the U.S. Senate's defeat of the League of Nations. While these clinical case studies provided considerable (and often intriguing) insights into the character of their subject, they were heavily criticized for stressing the idiosyncratic rather than systematic, and for relying on anecdotal evidence and subjective interpretation (Winter 1992).[28] Overall, they "raise[d] questions of evidence and proof" (Winter 1992, 85) and did not meet the standards of scientific investigation.

These criticisms sparked a movement by scholars to attempt to develop more systematic analyses to specify when an individual's personality would affect political outcomes. The most influential of these studies came from Fred I. Greenstein. In his seminal work on the influence of personality on politics Greenstein (1969) proposed that there are four conditions under which a leader's personality may be especially important: (1) when the actor occupies a strategic location, for instance the head of government; (2) when the situation within which decision making takes place is ambiguous or unstable,

[28] As scholars moved away from psychoanalytic explanations toward trait-based explanations of leader's behavior, the power of formative moments in shaping leaders personalities received little attention. Research into the power of these early experiences has recently been resurrected in an ongoing project to examine the systematic influence of experiences, such as military experience (Gelpi and Feaver 2002; Horowitz and Stam 2010) and participation in a rebel group (Horowitz and Stam 2010).

such as in conflict and crises; (3) when there are no clear precedents, routines, or standard role requirements; (4) when spontaneous or especially effortful behavior is required (Greenstein 1969). Barber's ([1972] 1992) categorization of presidents along an active-passive and positive-negative dimension followed in this tradition. While Barber attempted to systematize the treatment of presidential character he relied on a subjective, psychoanalytic reading of the president's lives in order to determine where they fell along each dimension. While some scholars continue to conduct psychobiographies, such as Jerrold Post's recent profiles of Saddam Hussein (Post 2005) and Kim Jong Il (Post 2004), they have been largely dismissed for their subjectivity and idiosyncratic nature.[29]

The study of leaders' personalities thus moved away from a focus on formative experiences of their past toward investigations of leaders' traits, or stable tendencies, motives, cognitions, and leader-based contextual variables that shaped political outcomes (Winter 2003). To circumvent the criticisms levied against psychoanalytic case studies and subjective typologies, many political psychologists began to employ "at-a-distance" techniques for their studies. Most personality research in the field of psychology is

[29] See also Glad 2002a and S. Renshon 2005. Although these types of studies were criticized by academics, the government, most notably the intelligence community, has a continued interest in producing such studies. For a discussion of the "two strands" of psychological assessment, political psychology within academia which sought objective, quantifiable assessment of leaders, and the qualitative psychodynamic approach supported by the government see Post, Walker, and Winter (2005). Post (1993, 2004) employs a more clinical analysis than earlier psychobiographies; he uses the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) to diagnose leaders with personality disorders. However, by treating leaders as "abnormal," he only furthers the criticisms against personality studies for being unable to explain systematic influence of leaders. While he attempts to shed light on the errors in decision making that stem from suffering from narcissistic personality disorder, compulsiveness, and paranoia, these categories are so loosely defined that virtually every leader at some point could have fit them. For instance, the clinical description of narcissistic personality disorder includes, "grandiose sense of self importance or uniqueness and preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success and power; hypersensitivity to criticism; and a lack of empathy. Self esteem, while outwardly appearing high, is actually quite fragile, with a need for constant attention and admiration" (Post 1993, 100). Undoubtedly every person who has obtained high political status has possessed these qualities. Moreover, few leaders will actually be diagnosed with such a disorder since, as Post admits, "the full-blown narcissistic personality disorder is inconsistent with the ability to sustain effective leadership" (Ibid.). If all leaders are somewhat narcissistic, but not enough to be considered as suffering from a full-blown disorder, then little predictive value is added by using such classifications, other than being able to read back on history to tell an interesting story.

carried out by directly testing the subject of interest with a battery of questionnaires. Leaders, however, are among the most inaccessible subjects – many are dead and those who are living are unlikely to have the time or desire to have their personalities evaluated and made available for public scrutiny. Therefore, researchers developed a variety of indirect methods that largely relied on content analysis of the leaders written and spoken words to evaluate their personalities.[30] Early studies employing content analysis relied on hand coding of texts; they were labor intensive, time consuming, and raised concerns about the potential for scorer bias (Dyson 2006, 291). In recent years however content analysis software has made it possible to code a large amount of text quickly and reliably. These improvements in data collection have also allowed for the inclusion of personality variables in large statistical analyses with other variables of interest.

While the focus of this project is on personality traits, the development of our understanding of other elements of leaders personalities have helped to advance leader-centric theories of international relations. For instance, psychologist David G. Winter has extensively researched world leaders' needs for achievement, affiliation, and power (Winter 2002, 2007). His research on America presidents has demonstrated that presidential power motivation predicts U.S. entry into war, whereas a need for affiliation is related to signing arms control agreements (Winter 2002). In terms of being able to predict individual leaders' behaviors, Winter's analyses have a mixed record. He was largely correct when in January 2001, for instance, he predicted that the new president,

[30] For an overview of "at-a-distance" measures, see Song and Simonton (2007); Winter (1999, 2005b); Walker, Schafer and Young (1999). See Schafer (2000) for a discussion of the problems and concerns associated with using content analysis of leaders' speeches to assess their characteristics. Hermann's leadership trait analysis (1999) relies on spontaneous responses of leaders, usually during interviews and press conferences, whereas operational code analysis has traditionally relied on public speeches (but see Rasler, Thompson, and Chester 1980). Recent work by J. Renshon (2009) however, compares operational code results based on public versus private speech content analysis and finds there is no significant difference.

George W. Bush, would endorse more aggressive foreign policies given his high power motivations, would rely on a small, secluded group of close friends and advisors who were similar to himself when making decisions due to his high affiliation motivation, and would overall enjoy being president due to his high power and below-average achievement motivation (Winter 2001). On the other hand, in June 1990 he, along with several other political psychologists, published an article where they described President George H.W. Bush as a peacemaker who was not prone to seek political ends through violence or war given his high affiliation and average power motives. Yet, six months later that same president was commanding the Gulf War (Winter 2005b).[31]

Cognitions, or individuals' beliefs and reasoning process, have been the source of interest for many scholars, with the most widely studied being leaders' operational codes (Winter 2003, 123). Operational code analysis seeks to capture leaders' beliefs about the nature of politics and conflict in the world by content analysis of their speeches. It was popularized by Alexander George (1969), but was later revised by Steven Walker and colleagues (Walker 1977; Walker, Schafer, and Young 1998; but see also Holsti 1970). Operational code analysis has been applied to the beliefs of a variety of political leaders including: John Foster Dulles (Holsti 1970), Henry Kissinger (Walker 1977), Jimmy Carter (Walker, Schafer and Young 1998), Lyndon Johnson (Walker and Schafer 2000), Bill Clinton (Walker, Schafer and Young 2005), Saddam Hussein (Walker, Schafer and Young 2005), Tony Blair (Schafer and Walker 2006), George W. Bush (J. Renshon 2008), and John F. Kennedy (J. Renshon 2009). Unlike personality traits, which are stable, leaders' beliefs can change throughout a crisis, as evident in several of these case studies.

[31] See Winter et al. 1991b for the original article and Winter et al. 1991a for the response.

Several political psychologists have focused on the study of leaders' cognitive style, or *how* information is processed. Their key variable of interest has been leaders' conceptual /integrative complexity.[32] Individuals who are cognitively simple (i.e., lower in conceptual complexity) are more rigid, single minded and decisive; they tend to see the world in black and white. Individuals who are more conceptually complex seek out information before acting and consider a range of alternatives; they tend to see the world in more nuanced terms (Young and Schafer 1998, 81). Conceptual complexity can be measured at-a-distance through content analysis that determines the ratio of high complexity words (e.g., may, possibly, sometimes) to low complexity words (e.g., always, only, without a doubt) (Hermann 1980, 21). Research has found that the lower a leader's conceptual complexity, the more likely their state is to be involved in an international conflict (Hermann 1980, 1984). Building on these findings, Keller (2005) examined the link between conceptual complexity and compliance with constraints in international relations. He found evidence that leaders with low cognitive complexity are more likely to challenge constraints and are more likely to escalate international crises

[32] Conceptual and integrative complexity are related variables; while both variables are concerned with how information is processed, "conceptual complexity theory traces consistent levels of complexity that characterizes a given individual's functioning," while "integrative complexity theory emphasizes that differentiation and integration vary from situation to situation for each individual" (Sudefeld, Guttieri and Tetlock 2005, 249). The focus here is on conceptual complexity because of its inclusion in Hermann's work, which will be discussed below. Studies of integrative complexity have yielded similar results to those for conceptual complexity, such as leader's integrative complexity dropping in the lead up to violent conflicts, while high integrative complexity is associated with negotiated, non violent solutions to conflict (Suedfeld and Tetlock 1977; Wallace and Suedfeld 1988). Satterfield's (1998) study of Churchill, Stalin, Hitler, and FDR finds that optimism, low integrative complexity, and the interaction of the two predict high levels of aggression and risk-taking; whereas pessimism, high integrative complexity, and their interaction were predictive of passivity and caution. For a more comprehensive discussion of integrative complexity see: Suedfeld, Guttieri and Tetlock (2005); Suedfeld and Tetlock (1977); Tetlock (1985) .

than leaders who have a higher cognitive complexity and are considered "constraint respecters."[33]

In terms of social context, factors such as gender, religion, age, and culture all shape the expression of an individual's personality to some extent. These "macrocontext" factors are carried around by the individual and are thus considered a part of their personality, as compared to "microcontext" or circumstantial factors, which apply only to an immediate situation (Winter 2003, 128). For instance, in *War and Gender* (2001) Joshua Goldstein provides an excellent analysis of the role that gender has played in shaping attitudes toward and participation in war. While it is usually understood that women are biologically less aggressive and therefore less active participants in war, Goldstein uses historical evidence to demonstrate the regular participation of women in war across time and culture, and that it is in fact cultural socialization that generates gender differences in attitudes towards and participation in war – not biology.

Trait based theories of decision making in political science were largely dismissed during the 1970s and 1980s in part because of the criticisms levied against psychobiographical works, namely that they equated to idiosyncratic, nonscientific stories. In addition, deep divisions within personality psychology at the time led to "a period of demoralization" so serious that some believed it "was on its last legs" (McCrae and Costa 2003, 20). As two of the leading scholars in personality psychology explain, "questions about the cross-situational consistency of behavior (Mischel 1968), the validity of trait measures (Fiske 1974), and even the objective reality of traits themselves

[33] The connection between cognitive complexity and constraint challengers vs. respecters was originally developed by Preston (1997) and used to explain the different advisory organizations that leaders establish. According to Preston, leaders who have a low cognitive complexity will be apt to set up advisory systems where they are in charge, whereas those who have a high cognitive complexity and are constraint respecters will set up more collegial advisory systems.

(Shweder 1975) had thrown the field into crisis" (McCrae and Costa 2003, 20). While the past 30 years have marked a renaissance in theory and research, these factors contributed to political scientists neglect of leaders' personality traits for much of the end of the twentieth century.

This notwithstanding, there are several notable examples of research from this period by political scientists that focused on personality traits as the causal variables in explaining individuals' decision-making patterns and leadership style. Such studies include Lloyd Etheredge's (1978) examination of the effects of dominance and introversion/extroversion personality characteristics on the foreign policy decisions of U.S. elites, and Graham Shepard's (1988) replica study analyzing a later temporal period. Both authors measured U.S. elites' on extraversion and dominance based on their interpersonal style to test the hypotheses that high dominance individuals would more readily advocate the use of force and more extraverted elites would advocate cooperative inclusive policies towards the Soviet Union. Both studies conclude that personality does play an important role in determining foreign policy as evidenced by their results, which showed that intra-elite variation in personality characteristics corresponded with variation in policy preferences. Similarly, Schafer's (1997) analysis of individual-level factors that may cause policy makers to pursue more cooperative policies during international conflict lends support to Shepard and Etheredge's findings. Results from his experiment controlling for a conflict situation, while allowing for variation in individual-differences and policy preferences, showed that social dominance is negatively correlated with cooperative policy preferences. Overall, these studies provide evidence to "reassure those

who think personality characteristics are crucial ingredients in foreign policy" (Shepard 1988, 122).

Simonton's research on the personality traits of U.S. presidents was another major attempt, this time by a psychologist, to assess the traits of leaders in an objective manner. In his study, Simonton (1986, 1988) had student raters read excerpts from presidential biographies (after all identifying information had been removed) and then evaluate the subjects using an adjective checklist or lists of trait phrases. Factor analysis produced five types of presidential styles: the interpersonal, charismatic, deliberative, creative, and neurotic (Simonton 1988). He then correlated the styles with various objective indicators of presidential performance (e.g., number of significant acts passed, legislative victories, vetoes overturned) and subjective measures of presidential greatness based on ratings by historians. In these and later studies he consistently found a strong positive relationship between intelligence, (measured as president's IQ scores, Intellectual Brilliance trait score, and Openness trait score) and presidential greatness (Simonton 2006).

One of the most significant attempts to integrate these various elements of personality, and direct the attention of scholars to the impact of leaders, has been made by Margaret Hermann (see also Winter 2007). Hermann's research over the last four decades has analyzed foreign policy behavior by examining the beliefs, motives, decision styles and interpersonal traits of world leaders (Hermann 1980a, 1980b, 1999; Hermann et al. 2001; Kaarbo and Hermann 1998). She finds that there are seven "traits" that can be used to assess leadership style: (1) the belief that one can influence or control what happens, (2) the need for power and influence, (3) conceptual complexity, (4) self-confidence, (5) the tendency to focus on problem solving and accomplishing something

versus maintenance of the group and dealing with others' ideas and sensitivities, (6) distrust or suspiciousness of others, and (7) the intensity with which a person holds an in-group bias (Hermann 1999).[34] By assessing a leader on these traits you can understand his responsiveness to constraints, openness to information, and motivations, which taken together will allow you to identify his leadership style profile as one of eight types (expansionist, evangelistic, actively independent, directive, incremental, influential, opportunistic, collegial). Hermann has developed software for her leadership trait analysis that allows the researcher to assess the leadership styles and traits of over 122 world leaders through content analysis of interviews and spontaneous statements.[35]

Although most of the studies mentioned rely on content analysis, at-a-distance measurement of personality variables can also be conducted by expert surveys. Kowert (1996), for instance, asked 42 experts on American presidents to each perform a California Q-sort for one of six post-World War II presidents.[36] After normalizing the data he reports those traits that were found to be extreme, meaning those that most strongly identified with the president and those that least identified with him. For instance, John Kennedy, who will be the subject of the case study in Chapter 7 of this dissertation, had the highest scores on traits that speak to his extraversion and intellect including, "personally charming," "physically attractive," "sees to the heart of important problems," "power oriented," "high aspiration level for self," "apparent high intellectual

[34] Hermann's earlier work (e.g., Hermann 1980b) analyzed six somewhat overlapping "traits," or what she more appropriately called "leadership characteristics": (1) nationalism, (2) ability to control events, (3) need for power, (4) need for affiliation, (5) conceptual complexity (6) distrust of others.

[35] Research employing Hermann's leadership trait analysis includes: Boettcher (2005); Dyson (2006); Keller (2005); Shannon and Keller (2007).

[36] California Q-sorting is a method of personality assessment where the analyst organizes a set of 100 cards, each of which describes a personality trait, into nine groups from most to least characteristic of the subject being described. For more information on this technique see Block (1978).

capacity," "initiates humor," and "interested in members of the opposite sex." His lowest scoring traits were "emotionally bland," "gives up in the face of adversity," "subtly negativistic," "has readiness to feel guilty," "genuinely submissive," "self-defeating," and "feels cheated, victimized by life" (Kowert 1996, 430). Kowert goes on to assess the presidents' effectiveness and compares this to historian's ratings of presidential greatness. He finds that there is no strong evidence that effective leaders are great ones too.

In a more recent study, Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004; see also Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2002) assessed the personality traits of American presidents from George Washington to George W. Bush through expert-completed questionnaires. The data they gathered will be utilized extensively in this dissertation. Their work marks the first attempt to develop a systematic study of leaders' traits using the Big Five model, the dominant paradigm in personality psychology. While the data they gathered and their methodology will be discussed at length in the next chapter, their study highlights an important change in crafting typologies of leaders' personalities as compared to past studies.

In their analysis, Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004) group the presidents according to similarities in their personality dimensions in order to provide brief case studies of how particular personality traits were exhibited in these presidents' behaviors. The authors explained, "Instead of beginning with theoretical dimensions and fitting presidents into preset categories, we allowed the presidents to define the categories" (2004, 60). That is, they calculated the average scores of raters for each president on the 592 personality and ability items evaluated in the personality questionnaires. They then

correlated the scores of all the presidents on the same items and chose those two presidents who were most similar to form the "kernel" of each type. Other presidents were added if they most fit with those presidents rather than with those not in the group. The eight groups they identify are: Dominators (e.g., Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson), Introverts (e.g., John Adams and Woodrow Wilson), Good Guys (e.g., Dwight Eisenhower and Gerald Ford), Innocents (e.g., Ulysses S. Grant and Howard Taft), Actors (e.g., Warren Harding and Ronald Reagan), Maintainers (e.g., Harry Truman and George H.W. Bush), Philosophes (e.g., Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Jimmy Carter), and Extroverts (e.g., Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy). This method of typology therefore depends on the individuals in the sample and the rules set out by the researcher for group inclusion. It is easily replicable and can change as new presidents are elected. On the other hand it is atheoretical and simply groups presidents by empirical observations.

The greatest criticism facing many personality-based studies in political science is that their conclusions are often subjectively determined and vulnerable to reliability problems. Leaders in personality-based studies are grouped into subjectively determined "types," for example narcissists versus compulsive leaders (Post 2004) or active-positives versus active-negative leaders (Barber [1972] 1992). Whether a leader enters a group or not is largely dependent on the researcher and their interpretation of the leader's personality, behavior, and attitudes. Hence replication is difficult and reliability is questioned. In addition, it is often that case that using such typologies means that the researcher fails to account for the variation among leaders belonging to a certain group, and is also presented with the difficulty of typing individuals who do not belong to any

ideal type. For instance, in trying to fit Dwight Eisenhower into one of four types of presidential character, Barber classified him as a "passive-negative," but noted, "this case presents certain difficulties" ([1972] 1992, 179), namely that he did not fit the description of any one type. When a leader does not fit a particular type, the focus is usually placed on her idiosyncrasies.

Because there are an endless number of personality dimensions that can be studied, these analyses fail to contribute to cumulative knowledge. Even many studies that employ at-a-distance measures, which certainly address the issue of replication, focus on personality dimensions that belong to such a variety of frameworks that they are often incompatible with other personality studies. In addition, at-a-distance measures that rely on content analysis of leaders' written or spoken words have been criticized for various biases, including not being valid indicators of the leaders' personality because they are largely the work of speech writers (Rasler, Thompson, and Chester 1980; Schaffer 2000; Song and Simonton 2007). This dissertation improves upon the extant literature by employing objective, reliable measures of leaders' personality traits, which unlike other "at-a-distance" measures, belong to the Big Five, the dominant paradigm in personality psychology. These traits have been found by previous research in organizational psychology, and political science to be related to individuals' inherent risk propensities. Thus, this dissertation makes an important contribution by linking the influence of leaders' personalities in international relations to the Big Five.

2.3. The Big Five Model

Research in the past three decades has demonstrated that personality traits can be comprehensively conceptualized and reliably measured in terms of five broad dimensions: Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism. These five factors or Big Five, as they are called, explain most of the variance in individuals' personality traits and allow for systematic analysis of individual differences. As McCrae and Costa have put it, "Trait psychology, often considered passé in the 1970s, has come back with a vengeance and is now the dominant paradigm in personality psychology" (2003, 3).

Before discussing the Big Five model, it is necessary to step back and explain what is meant by personality traits, as they are the key components of the model. Personality traits are defined as "individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Cost and McCrae 2003, 25).[37] Simply put, traits can be thought of as tendencies or dispositions. They have a biological basis and thus are consistent; they transcend different situations and are largely stable over time. That is not to say that people may not act different in an unusual circumstance – a mild-mannered woman might lose her cool upon finding out that her teenage son totaled her car, or a normally outgoing extraverted student might not have much to say in class that meets at 8:30 am on Friday mornings. Everyone has moments where they behave "out of

[37] Political scientists whose work examines personality traits widely accept this definition (e.g. Gerber et al. 2010; Mondak 2010; Sears, Huddy, and Jervis 2003; Winter 2003). Traits are the basis for, and therefore different from "characteristic adaptations," which are understood as the manifestation of traits, such as attitudes, values, behaviors, and social skills. While these characteristics adaptations can change over time, across cultures, and families, traits do not (McCrae and Costa 2008, 164). See Gerber et al. (2010, 113) for a discussion of political attitudes as character adaptations.

character," or what is atypical compared to their "normal personality." Thus personality traits capture an individual's normal dispositions.

2.3.1. What is the Big Five?

The Big Five traces its roots to Allport and Odbert's pioneering efforts to extract an organizing framework, or taxonomy, of traits from peoples' natural language (Allport 1937; Allport and Odbert 1936).[38] Starting with the lexical hypotheses that all of the important and socially relevant personality traits could be captured in everyday language, the two psychologists used an English-language dictionary to retrieve 4,500 trait terms that people used to describe themselves and one another (i.e., friendly, talkative, shy) (John, Naumann, and Soto 2010, 117; McCrae and John 1992, 184). Although Allport and Odbert organized these traits into loosely grouped clusters, it was Cattell (1947) who first used factor analysis to develop the true initial framework. From the 35 trait terms that he analyzed (data-analytic limitations required that he eliminate more than 99% of Allport and Odbert's terms) he identified 12 factors, which later became part of his 16-factor model (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 118). Other scholars followed suit, leading to a massive number of traits being considered and "a bewildering array of personality scales from which to choose, with little guidance and no organizing theory or framework at hand" (Ibid., 114).

At this time a different group of personality psychologists were also developing personality trait models, however they relied on questionnaires to assess traits, rather than the lexical tradition. These questionnaires were made up of scales intended to measure

[38] Excellent reviews of the history of the Big Five can be found in Digman (1990), Mondak (2010, 24-33), and John, Naumann, and Soto (2010), which is an updated version of John and Srivistava's (1999) earlier review.

specific traits or aspects of personality. Scales soon grew by the hundreds as each individual researcher created their own to examine the discrete constructs they thought important (McCrae and John 1992, 185). For instance, there were questionnaires to measure dogmatism, social interest, and depression, not to mention closely related concepts such as loneliness and hopelessness (McCrae and Costa 2003, 30). A hierarchical framework was needed to organize related traits into a manageable number of domains to facilitate research, rather than examining traits by piecemeal as had become the case. Moreover a single model was needed to "facilitate the accumulation and communication of empirical findings by offering a standard vocabulary, or nomenclature" (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 116). It was not until the late 1980s that the results of factor analysis in both the lexical and questionnaire traditions converged and helped to build a consensus around a single, comprehensive framework known as the Big Five (Goldberg 1990, 1993) or the Five-Factor Model (McCrae and Costa 2003; McCrae and John 1992).[39]

The title "Big Five" is not intended to reflect the factors' greatness but rather to emphasize that each of these factors is a very broad dimension (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 119). It is a hierarchical model; each factor consists of six individual, yet related, personality traits or facet scales as they are also called (Costa and McCrae 1992).[40] For

[39] The terms Big Five and Five-Factor Model are widely used interchangeably and will be treated as such in this dissertation (Mondak 2010, 28; Srivastava 2010; see John, Naumann, and Soto 2008 for a more detailed comparison of the two models). Any major differences between Goldberg's conception of the Big Five and Costa and McCrae's Five-Factor Model will be discussed below. Most crucial for this dissertation is that they agree that five factors are sufficient for capturing nearly all the variance in personality traits and they largely agree on the substantive components of these factors (i.e., the traits which make up each factor). Indeed, the fact that these traditions converge on the same five factors is a major strength of the model.

[40] There are slight differences in the component traits between the five factor models, which largely has to do with whether it follows from the lexical tradition or questionnaire tradition. For example,

instance, “Trust,” “Straightforwardness,” “Altruism,” and “Modesty,” are among the more specific traits that are subsumed under the Agreeableness factor. A helpful analogy to elucidate the hierarchical nature of the framework is to consider that the factors are to personality, “what the categories ‘plant’ and ‘animal’ are to the world of biological objects” (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 140).

The five dimensions of personality traits are: Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Table 2.1 identifies the six subscales or facet traits that are associated with each factor.

The first factor, Extraversion, is perhaps the most familiar and most studied of the five factors. In essence, it captures where an individual directs his or her energy: to the inner world as thoughts and reflection, or to the outer world as action (Chauvin, Hermand, Mullet 2007, 173). Extraverts are characterized as being sociable and outgoing; they tend to make friends easily. They are also described as enthusiastic, energetic, adventurous, talkative, assertive, and outspoken (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004, 9). Costa and McCrae make it a point to note that those who score low on Extraversion, (i.e., introverts), should not be characterized as the opposite of an extravert, but rather are best understood as lacking extraversion (1992, 15). Thus introverts are reserved rather than unfriendly, even-paced rather than sluggish, they are not enthusiastic or prone to high exuberance like extraverts, but that does not mean they are unhappy or pessimistic. While extraverts would be likely to approach strangers and introduce themselves at a party, or

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the facets of Neuroticism according to Saucier and Ostendorf’s (1999) lexical-based model are Insecurity, Emotionality and Irritability. The facets for Costa and McCrae’s (1992) questionnaire-based model are Anxiety, Anger Hostility, Depression, Self-Consciousness, Vulnerability and Impulsiveness. This explanation relies heavily on Costa and McCrae’s model because the data used in subsequent chapters was gathered using their questionnaire, the NEO-PI-R. In addition, Costa and McCrae’s is the most widely used and empirically validated model (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 141).

take the lead in organizing a project, introverts would be more likely to keep to themselves and avoid confrontation with others (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 120).

Table 2.1. Big Five factors and their traits

Factor	Facets
Neuroticism	N1: Anxiety
	N2: Angry Hostility
	N3: Depression
	N4: Self-Consciousness
	N5: Impulsiveness
	N6: Vulnerability
Extraversion	E1: Warmth
	E2: Gregariousness
	E3: Assertiveness
	E4: Activity
	E5: Excitement Seeking
	E6: Positive Emotions
Openness to Experience	O1: Openness to Fantasy
	O2: Openness to Aesthetics
	O3: Openness to Feelings
	O4: Openness to Actions
	O5: Openness to Ideas
	O6: Openness to Values
Agreeableness	A1: Trust
	A2: Straightforwardness
	A3: Altruism
	A4: Compliance
	A5: Modesty
	A6: Tender-Mindedness
Conscientiousness	C1: Competence
	C2: Order
	C3: Dutifulness
	C4: Achievement Striving
	C5: Self-Discipline
	C6: Deliberation

Extraversion (E) and Agreeableness (A) make up what is considered the interpersonal complex (McCrae and John 1992). Agreeableness, the second factor, captures the more humane aspects of humanity (Digman 1990). Agreeable people are

fundamentally altruistic; they are sympathetic and eager to help others because they trust people and believe they will be helpful in return (Costa and McCrae 1992, 15). Thus, people who are high on Agreeableness are often described as being kind, forgiving, appreciative, trusting, softhearted, modest, and considerate of others. They are the friends who are most likely to lend a shoulder to cry on or the notes from a missed class (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008). By contrast those who score very low on Agreeableness are described as antagonistic, stubborn, egocentric, skeptical of others' intentions, and competitive rather than cooperative. If these same people are also extraverted then they are likely to be bold, assertive, and domineering (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004, 11). While being antagonistic will not earn you as many friends as being agreeable, being skeptical and looking out for one's own interests can be an advantage in the battlefield and the courtroom (Costa and McCrae 1992, 15).

The Agreeableness factor along with Conscientiousness (C), describe dimensions of character with moral overtones (McCrae and John 1992). The essence of Conscientiousness is self-control and constraint. People who have high scores on this factor are cautious, follow the rules, and think before acting. They are described as being hard working, organized, precise, prudent, responsible, and dependable. They are also strong-willed and determined to achieve; "probably few people become great musicians or athletes without a reasonably high level of this trait" (Costa and McCrae 1992, 16). It is not surprising that Conscientiousness also predicts high levels of work performance (Dudley et al. 2006) and academic achievement (Wagerman and Funder 2007). People high in Conscientiousness "value personal responsibility, tradition, and virtue."

The fourth factor, Neuroticism (N), is sometimes labeled as its opposite state, Emotional Stability. Neuroticism "represents individual differences in the tendency to experience distress, and in the cognitive and behavioral style that follow from this tendency" (McCrae and John 1992, 195).[41] The traits that compose this factor include anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability. Overall, Neuroticism captures the general tendency to experience negative affects such as fear, sadness, anger, guilt and disgust, which can interfere with adaptation and lead those with high Neuroticism scores to have irrational ideas, to be less able to control their impulses, and to be unable to cope with stress (Costa and McCrae 1992, 14). On the other hand, individuals with low Neuroticism scores are considered emotionally stable and therefore have a higher tendency to be calm, even-tempered, relaxed, and better at coping with stressful situations.

Finally, Openness to Experience (O) can be understood as the dimension which "contrasts poets, philosophers, and artists with farmers, machinists, and 'down-to-earth' people who have little interest in theories, aesthetics, or fanciful possibilities" (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004, 9). Of all the factors, Openness to Experience has been the mostly highly debated. It has alternatively been labeled Intellect, Intelligence, and Culture (McCrae and John 1992; Zuckerman et al. 1993). At the root of the controversy over Openness is the breadth of the factor. Scholars from the lexical tradition who rely on trait adjectives have a more narrow understanding of this factor, because, as McCrae and John explain, "many traits related to O are not represented among English trait adjectives – there is for example, no single English word that means 'sensitive to art and beauty'"

[41] It is important to note that Neuroticism is a dimension of normal personality. While individuals suffering from neuroses generally score higher on this factor, simply scoring high on Neuroticism or one of its facet traits does not indicate a psychiatric disorder.

(1992, 197). Researchers using questionnaires on the other hand have found a much broader factor that captures differentiated emotions, aesthetic sensitivity, and a need for variety, in addition to intellectuality. Open individuals are thus characterized as having more active imaginations, creativity, intellectual curiosity, and independent judgment. They crave experiences that will be stimulating and actively seek out information. People high in Openness prefer variety and are willing to entertain novel ideas and unconventional values. Not surprisingly, men and women who score low on Openness tend to be more conventional in behavior and conservative in outlook.

While it may seem natural to lump some of these factors together and assume, for instance, that Neuroticism is bad and Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness are good. This is problematic for two reasons. First what is "good" and what is "bad" is entirely relative. Individuals with high Neuroticism may be at an advantage in situations that warrant suspicion such as war; likewise a society of easygoing individuals may not compete as well with other societies. Second, this lumping overlooks the independence of each of these factors. It might be expected that individuals high in Neuroticism are likely to be introverted, closed minded, disagreeable, and unreliable, but, as McCrae and Costa explain, "It doesn't work that way" (2003, 51). The independence of each of these factors means that an individual high in Neuroticism is just as likely to be introverted, as extraverted; they are just as likely to be conscientious, as unreliable.

Despite over twenty years of research confirming that these five factors explain the overwhelming variance in personality traits, there are some trait psychologists who

remain skeptical of the Big Five.[42] Nevertheless, the skeptics have been unable to produce a model to compete with its empirical strength. It is widely accepted that models with more many more factors, such as Cattell's 16-factor model (Cattell 1956), which dominated the field of personality structure for a number of years after its inception in the late 1950s, are no longer viable (Zuckerman et al. 1993). Indeed, not even a sixth factor has been able to withstand replication tests (McCrae and John 1992).[43]

Other scholars have proposed models with fewer than five factors, such as Eysenck's (1991) three-factor model, which consists of Extraversion, Psychoticism, and Neuroticism.[44] These models usually fold one or more of the Big Five dimensions into a larger dimension, such as Eysenck's "psychoticism" factor, which is a combination of the inverse scales of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Similarly, Digman (1997) proposed that there were two overarching dimensions to personality: socialization (a combination of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and low Neuroticism) and self-Actualization (a combination of Extraversion and Openness to Experience) or α and β, respectively (McCrae and John 1992; McCrae and Costa 1999). These fewer-than-five-factors models face the problem of mutual inconsistency, (i.e., they are not easily relatable to one another) and they tend to neglect one or more of the persistent factors captured by the Big Five. The Big Five on the other hand is a comprehensive framework that overlaps and relates quite easily with many of the other models. Thus, beyond its

[42] See Block (1995) for a critique of the five-factor approach.

[43] Proponents of the five-factor model are not opposed to the possibility of other factors, there just has not been empirical evidence to support a factor beyond these five. For instance, Saucier and Goldberg (1998) examine the variance in personality not captured by the Big Five and find that while there are potential factors for characteristics like attractiveness and religiosity, these are not traditionally understood as personality traits. Thus, their attempt to find what else there is beyond the Big Five actually lends strength to the comprehensiveness of a five-factor model.

[44] See Zuckerman et al. (1993) for a comparison of Eysenck's Three Factor model, Costa and McCrae's Five-Factor Model, and Zuckerman and Kuhlman's Alternative Five model.

empirical strength the value of the model is apparent in its usefulness as an integrative, comprehensive, and efficient tool for organizing many other existing theories of personality. Overall the Big Five provides "a common language gauge for psychologists from different traditions, a basic phenomenon for personality theorists to explain, a natural framework for organizing research, and a guide to the comprehensive assessment of individuals" (McCrae and John 1992, 177).

There are various instruments to assess peoples' five factors.[45] They include scales of trait-descriptive adjectives, such as the 50-item or 100-item International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) where subjects are asked to rate themselves on bipolar (e.g., "silent - talkative") or univocal scales (e.g., "talkative") (Goldberg 1992). Other instruments, such as the Big Five Inventory (BFI), rely on self-ratings in response to short phrase descriptions of traits (i.e.: "tends to find fault with others") (John, Donahue, and Kentle 1991).

The most commonly used instrument, however, is Costa and McCrae's (1992) Revised NEO-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R). Its reliability and validity have been tested more than any other Big Five measure (Nicholson et al 2004, 11; John, Naumann, Soto 2008, 141). The NEO-PI-R is a questionnaire that consists of 240 items, which measures the six individual traits of each of the five factors.[46] Individuals are given

[45] For a comprehensive review and comparison of Big Five measures see John, Naumann, and Soto (2008, 118-137). Srivastava (2010) provides a shorter, but nonetheless informative comparison as well with links to access the various instruments that are public domain.

[46] See Appendix A for a sample of the items from the questionnaire. The NEO-PI-R takes approximately 30-45 minutes to complete, which has limited its applicability in cases where time is of the essence, such as in phone surveys. Costa and McCrae have an abbreviated, 60-item inventory known as the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), but even sixty items can be unwieldy when you only have a few minutes for assessment. Researchers have therefore developed much shorter scales such as the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann 2003). There is however a tradeoff with shorter batters; they reduce the time needed to administer the assessment, but they lack specificity, which

statements (i.e., "I really like most people I meet") and are asked to rate how much they agree/disagree with them on a five point scale (McCrae and Costa 2003). The NEO-PI-R exists in a self-rating format and an observer-rating format; a family member, friend, or anyone who knows the person well can complete the observer form. Observer ratings have been used to demonstrate the validity of Big Five self-assessments since critics have claimed that self-ratings may be susceptible bias because of self-delusion, social desirability effects, or lying.[47] The average correlation between self-completed and spouse-completed forms of the NEO-PI-R is 0.56; when the observer is a peer the average correlation is 0.50 (McCrae and Costa 2003, 42).[48] A recent meta-analysis found the mean correlations between self-rating and observer ratings on specific factors ranging from 0.46 for Agreeableness to 0.62 for Extraversion (Connolly, Kavanagh, and Viswesvaran 2007). While self-ratings and observer ratings are not identical they demonstrate a consistent, strong relationship between the results of the two forms of the NEO-PI-R.

The Big Five also gains its strength because of its universality. The presence of these five factors has been found to be consistent across gender, culture, and time (McCrae and Allik 2002; McCrae and Costa 1999, 2003). The cross-cultural validity of the Big Five has been tested through the administration of various batteries across many cultures and language families. The NEO-PI-R questionnaire alone has been translated

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means they can only be use for assessing the broader five factors, not specific traits. The decreased reliability and validity of these scales has led some scholars to caution against their use unless absolutely necessary (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 138; Paunonen 2003, 413).

[47] To be clear, this criticism has been raised for all personality instruments that rely on self-ratings, not just the NEO-PI-R.

[48] When comparing peer-peer rating and spouse-peer ratings the average correlation 0.41. Costa and McCrae point out that higher correlations can be obtained with peer ratings if multiple ratings are aggregated, as will be the case with the data used in this dissertation. Furthermore, four raters appear to the optimal number, there are diminishing returns from aggregating more raters (1992, 48).

into more than 40 languages, with results showing that the Big Five factors and traits are both transcultural and transhistorical (Costa and McCrae 1992; McCrae and Allik 2002; McCrae and Costa 2008).[49] Rather than rely on translated questionnaires, Hofstee et al. (1997) used factor analysis to organize the trait-descriptive adjectives native to other languages and then compared them to the Big Five. Their study found support for the universality of the five factors in Dutch, English, and German, and Hendriks et al. (2003) have confirmed a five-factor structure among Romance, Slavic, Semito-Hamitic, and Altaic language families in addition to the Germanic languages.

Further evidence for the universality of the Five-Factor Model has come from the existence of the same gender differences across cultures. Analyses using the NEO-PI-R in the United States have found that women tend to score higher than men on Neuroticism, especially the Anxiety facet, and on Agreeableness, especially on the Straightforwardness and Altruism facets (Costa and McCrae 1992, 55). It would be expected that the treatment of men and women, and their societal roles, in different cultures would lead to markedly different outcomes in personality traits. However, a comparison of 26 cultures demonstrated results that are quite contrary to this expectation. Although the magnitude of gender differences varied, the direction was always the same: Women were higher in Neuroticism, Agreeableness, and Openness to Feelings; Men were higher in Assertiveness and Openness to Ideas (McCrae and Costa 2003, 203).

Moreover, longitudinal studies have demonstrated the remarkable stability of personality traits over time (Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner 2005; McCrae and Costa 2003). This idea is fundamental to psychologists understanding of what traits are (i.e. stable

[49] McCrae and his colleagues have been more extreme in their positions on the Five Factor Model, compared to other proponents. For instance, they have concluded from cross-cultural studies "that there is no 'transfer' from culture and life experience to basic personality traits" (McCrae and Allik 2002, 305).

dispositions). While peoples' attitudes and behaviors may change due to the circumstances of their environment, their traits remain relatively stable after age 30 (McCrae and Costa 2003, 2008). Of course psychologists do not believe personality is "set in plaster;" there is a great deal of research being done on the changes that do take place in adults even after age 30 (e.g., Roberts, Walton and Viechtbauer 2006). Such changes largely have to do with natural biological maturation that all people experience as they age. Thus, "the 30-year old extravert is still likely to be an extravert at age 70, though not quite as active or keen on excitement" (McCrae and Costa 2008, 167). Other scholars have found evidence that stability in traits peaks later in adulthood, some time after age 50 (Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner 2005, 467). Nevertheless, the overwhelming evidence suggests that traits remain remarkably stable throughout adulthood (Ibid.).

The reason why an individual's traits are stable over his or her life is because they are in large part biologically determined.[50] An important source of evidence for the biological origins of personality comes from heritability studies of twins that seek to understand how much of the variance in personality is due to genetics, and how much is due to their shared (e.g., familial experiences growing up in the same home) or non-shared environment (e.g., individual interactions with teachers and friends).[51] The

[50] It should be noted that not all Big Five proponents subscribe to the biological basis of traits. McCrae and Costa are among the "essentialists" (Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner 2005, 466) who argue that traits are biologically determined and unaltered by environmental factors - although they qualify this assertion by acknowledging that this is "a very radical position and it is probably wrong in the absolute sense" (McCrae and Costa 2003, 193). For McCrae and Costa the Big Five are not simply an empirical phenomenon but constitute the heart of their Five Factor Theory, which seeks to explain an attitudes and behaviors as a product of biologically determined traits (see McCrae and Costa 2008 for the most updated version of their Five Factor Theory). Other Big Five scholars like Saucier and Goldberg (1996) are agnostic about the origin of traits and focus solely on the phenotypic or outward expression of traits. For more on the biological basis of personality and recent advances in behavioral genetics see: Bouchard and Loehlin (2001); Canli (2006); Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner (2005).

[51] See Medland and Hatemi (2009) for an introduction to twin studies written for political scientists.

subjects of these studies are monozygotic twins (identical twins) who share the same genes, thus any differences in their personality can be attributed to the environment, and dizygotic twins (fraternal twins) who share only 50% of their genes, similar to any other set of siblings. In one twin study, Loehlin et al. (1998) used three different instruments of the Big Five dimensions to test the heritability of traits among a sample of monozygotic and dizygotic twins. They found that the five factors are approximately equally heritable, with 50 to 58 percent of individual variation along the five factors being genetic in origin.[52] The other half of the variance in traits was associated with the non-shared environment. Loehlin et al.'s results align well with the overall literature on twin studies, which finds that "about half the variance in personality traits scores is attributable to genes and almost none is attributable to a shared family environment" (McCrae and Costa 2003, 194).[53] Indeed, despite the intuitive assumption that shared family experiences shape a person's personality, the evidence from these studies shows that the

[52] A point of comparison to put this in perspective is to consider the heritability of height, which at 0.80 is one of the highest heritable attributes (Mondak 2010, 41).

[53] There is reason to believe that the heritability of traits may be even higher than reported by McCrae and Costa. Reimann, Angleitner, and Strelau (1997) conducted a study where they compared the levels of genetic influence on traits as determined by self-reports, peer ratings, and combined self-reports and peer ratings of 600 pairs of monozygotic and 304 pairs of dizygotic twins. They were testing the hypothesis that self-reports by dizygotic twins are distorted by "contrast effects" where the twins overemphasize their behavioral differences as they compare themselves to their co-twin instead of the population average, thus obscuring real shared environmental influences. The results of their study invalidated the hypothesis that self-reported data by dizygotic twins is distorted, but even more importantly, they demonstrated that heritability levels of the Big Five factors when determined solely by peer reports or combined peer and self-reports were even higher (ranging from .57 to .81 and .66 to .79, respectively) then usually reported by self ratings alone. Still some personality psychologists believe that the environment plays just as important a role in trait development as genetics. Buss (1991, 2008) for instance argues that variance in individuals' personalities is in part an evolutionary response to the environment. In a recent revision of their Five-Factor Theory, McCrae and Costa concede that "one undeniable way" that the environment can affect personality traits is through the "mediation of biological bases" – as could happen if your head was impaled by a metal rod (2008, 168). They also acknowledge that some psychotropic medications as well as psychotherapy can lead to changes in personality.

environmental factors that matter are the idiosyncratic experiences of the individual, not the shared experiences of members of a family (Mondak 2010, 40).

Additional support for the biological basis of the Big Five has been achieved through primate studies. For instance, King and Figueredo's analysis of the personality structure of 100 zoo chimpanzees concludes that the "application of the five-factor model to chimpanzees is an obvious test of the generalizability of the five-factor model and a confirmation of the basic nature of the factors" (1997, 267).

While critics remain, and there are differences among Big Five scholars regarding the preferred instruments they use to assess traits, the consistency and replicability of the Five Factor model gives it astounding empirical strength, which has led to the vast consensus of personality psychologists accepting it as the dominant framework for personality structure. It is important, however, to note that *traits are tendencies – they are stable dispositions towards certain behaviors, not absolute determinants*. "The requirements of the social roles we play, the facts of the current situation, the mood of the moment, and acquired habits all join in shaping the choice of a particular act, word, or emotional reaction" (McCrae and Costa 2003, 26). Thus, traits are important because they influence how individuals interact with their environment (e.g. for those in college it might affect their choice of classes) and interpret information in their environment (e.g. how they interpret health risks).

Nevertheless, the ability of traits to predict long-term patterns of behavior is extraordinary. Personality traits have been show to be as important as socioeconomic status and cognitive ability for predicting life outcomes such as mortality, divorce and occupational attainment (Roberts et al. 2007). Studies examining the links between traits

and health have found that low Conscientiousness predicts the likelihood of engaging in risky health behaviors, while high Conscientiousness predicts life longevity; low Agreeableness predicts cardiovascular disease; and the highly extraverted cope better with illness (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 143). In terms of interpersonal relationships Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and low Neuroticism predict greater relationship satisfaction and less conflict, abuse, or dissolution (Ibid). Knowing an individual's Big Five traits can even allow you to predict how they organize their individual space (e.g. high Openness tends have colorful, diversely decorated space, while highly conscientious tend to have nearly organized space) (Carney et al. 2008).

The Five-Factor Model has been an enormous asset to human resources departments who use it to evaluate the fit between an individual and a job (Soane and Nicholson 2008). For example, Agreeableness and Neuroticism predict performance in jobs where employees work in groups, Extraversion predicts success in sales and management positions, Openness predicts success in artistic jobs, and Conscientiousness predicts academic performance, such as grade point average, and general job achievement (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 142). Bar-Joseph and McDermott (2008) provide an interesting example of how organizations can work with employees' personality traits to improve their operations. They propose that the intelligence community begin to pay more attention to the personality traits of their analysts in light of recent intelligence blunders, such as the mistaken belief that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. While the ideal intelligence analyst would have high Conscientiousness and high Openness, it's not always possible to find these traits in one person. They therefore suggest creating working groups that balance analysts who are

highly Conscientious, and therefore are organized and meticulous in carrying out programs, but lack imagination and have a high need for cognitive closure, with other analysts who have high levels of Openness, which is crucial to overcoming psychological biases toward existing beliefs over contradicting information.

While research employing the Big Five has flourished in personality and organizational psychology, political science has been slow to follow suit. This neglect largely stems from the belief that studying the psychology of individual differences boils down to idiosyncrasies. An important exception, however, is a group of political scientists keen to studying the systematic influence of traits on political attitudes and mass political behavior (e.g., Gerber et al. 2010; Mondak 2010; Mondak and Halperin 2008; Mondak et al. 2010; Schoen 2007).[54] Recent research in this vein has examined the link between the Big Five and political ideology, partisan identity, and voting behavior in the U.S. (Barbaranelli et al. 2007; Carney et al. 2008; Gerber et al. 2010; Jost, West, and Gosling 2009; Mondak 2010; Mondak and Halperin 2008). Overall these studies have found that individuals with higher Openness to Experience factor scores are more likely to be ideologically liberal, identify themselves as Democrats, and vote for more liberal candidates, while people with higher Conscientiousness scores are more likely to be ideologically conservative, identify as Republicans, and vote for more conservative candidates. [55]

[54] This scholarship is heavily influenced by the work of psychologists working on these issues as well (e.g. Barbaranelli et al. 2007; Caprara et al. 2006; Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Zimbardo 1999, Riemann et al. 1993; Vecchione and Caprara 2009).

[55] Caprara et al. (2006) report similar personality-ideology relationship in their Italian sample; Schoen (2007) also reports similar results in his German sample.

While their research has done much to raise political scientists' awareness of the Big Five, none of these works attempts to explain the behavior of elites, nor do any of them speak directly to international relations. If Big Five traits can be used to predict political behavior of citizens then it is reasonable to expect that the same can be done for the behavior of world leaders.

2.4. A Personality-Led Theory of Risk-Taking

In his seminal book, *The War Trap*, Bueno de Mesquita states:

> The measurement of risk taking in international politics, however, is virtually unchartered territory…virtually no one has tried to measure the risk-taking orientation of foreign policy decision makers for more than a handful of usually experimental situations. An actor's orientation toward risk is a psychological trait best evaluated through an in-depth examination of the decision maker's personality and environment. Such an analysis, unfortunately, is impossible here. (1981, 122-3)

Nearly three decades later, this assessment still stands. Although scholars of international relations recognize that leaders' risk propensities play a critical role in predicting the types of policies their states engage in, it is difficult to falsify this claim without an objective measure of personality. Leaders' traits are most often understood as idiosyncratic and are dismissed as being part of the error term of any systematic analysis. This dissertation challenges this view by presenting the first cut at a theory of risk-taking that accounts for the variance in leaders' inherent risk propensities based on their personality traits.

2.4.1 Inherent Risk Orientation

As discussed earlier in this chapter, scholars from across the fields of personality and organizational psychology, behavioral economics, and political science have produced a prolific body of research on the heterogeneity of individuals' risk orientations. Much of this research has been in response to earlier work, most notably prospect theory, which discounts the influence of individuals' characteristics in making decisions. The results of these studies have shown that traits inherent to individuals, as well as demographic and socioeconomic factors, influence peoples' dispositions towards taking or avoiding risks. Personality "seems to be the strongest contender for major effects on risk behaviour" (Nicholson et al. 2005, 158) and will be discussed at length below. Among the non-trait influences, numerous studies have shown that gender is related to risk-taking; men are more likely than women to take risks (Byrnes, Miller, and Schafer 1999; Fagley and Miller 1990, 1997; Levin, Snyder, and Chapman 1988; Kam n.d.; Kam and Simas 2010).[56] Age and education also seem to matter, as younger and more educated individuals are more likely to take risks (Byrnes, Miller and Schafer 1999; Kam n.d.; Weber, Blais and Betz 2002). In a study combining several of these factors, MacCrimmon and Wehrung (1990) found that business executives who were the most successful (measured as wealth, income, position, and authority) were risk-takers, whereas those who were more mature (measured as age, seniority, and dependents) were the most risk averse.

[56] Lauriola and Levin (2001) propose that there may be a trait basis to this finding given that women score higher on Neuroticism and Agreeableness, which are negatively related to risk-taking. Alternatively, McDermott, Fowler, and Smirnov (2008) propose an evolutionary basis for these sex differences.

Differences in cognitive abilities have also been found to influence risk propensities. Frederick (2005) found that individuals with higher cognitive abilities were more willing to gamble in a domain of gains, but less willing to take risks when faced with losses.[57] That is, contrary to the predictions of prospect theory, individuals with higher cognitive abilities were more willing to accept a sure loss and avoid a gamble with the potential for even greater loss. While Frederick found no evidence of prospect theory's reflection effect among those with high cognitive ability, he did find supporting evidence among those individuals with low cognitive ability.

Research in political science has generally approached the heterogeneity of risk orientations from a different perspective; rather than try to explain why there is variance in individual's risk propensities, much of the work in political science has focused on inherent risk orientation as the key explanatory variable for political behavior. For instance, risk orientations have been applied to studies of political participation (Berinsky 2000; Kam n.d.; Peterson and Lawson 1989), voting behavior (Morgenstern and Zechmeister 2001; Berinsky and Lewis 2007), political ideology and party identification (Kam and Simas 2010), and public opinion on trade policy (Ehrlich and Maestas 2008). While this research has called attention to the important influence of risk orientations on political outcomes, none of these studies has considered variations in the risk propensities of leaders. Given that their decisions have such far-reaching consequences, scholars should especially have an interest in studying their risk propensities.

[57] Frederick's primary instrument of cognitive ability is a "cognitive reflection test" which measures "the ability or disposition to resist reporting the response that first comes to mind" (2005, 35). It is reasonable to relate high cognitive reflection to high Conscientiousness, given the element of self-restraint underlying the construct, as well as high Openness which captures individuals' tendency to consider alternatives.

It is important to recognize that there are different ways to measure risk orientation. Broadly speaking, there is the standard behavioral economics approach, which measures risk orientation by observing the choices subjects make when presented with a gamble; and the psychometric approach, which assesses risk orientation in applied settings (e.g. driving behavior, health behavior, extreme sports) through a questionnaire, similar to the instruments used to assess personality traits. Often studies will combine both of these approaches to examine the influence of subjects' risk orientations on framing effects or to compare multiple measures of risk orientation and assess the validity of the instruments (e.g. Dahlback 1990; Kam and Simas 2010; Kowert and Hermann 1997; Li and Liu 2008; MacCrimmon and Wehrung 1990). Recent research has shown that these different approaches may tap into different types of risk-taking. Giving respondents a choice among gambles, for instance, may not be adequate for predicting their orientations towards the types of risks encountered in daily life because gambling choices tend to capture a single dimension of risk-taking that is associated with thrill seeking, such as extreme sports or other types of stimulating activities, and misses instrumental risk-taking that is associated, for instance, with careers, finance, and health decisions (Ehrlich and Maestas 2008, 15; Meertens and Lion 2008).

Studies that assess risk orientation through questionnaires employ different instruments and may also examine risk-taking in different arenas (e.g. health, career, finance). Zuckerman's Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) is among the best known and most widely used of the instruments that measure risk propensity. It was originally developed in the 1960s but has been updated several times to shorten it and remove anachronistic terms. The current version, the SSS-V, consists of 40 items across four subscales: Thrill

and Adventure Seeking, Experience Seeking, Disinhibition, and Boredom Susceptibility. As evident by these scales the SSS-V is particularly aimed at capturing subjects' need for arousal and has been found to be highly correlated with participation in high-risk sports, reckless driving, high-risk sex, as well as financial and legal risks (Zuckerman 1994, 2007).[58] It is not suitable, however, for predicting more mundane risk-taking behaviors that do not hold an element of thrill or excitement, such as behavior regarding environmental risks and some health risks (Meertens and Lion 2008).

Others instruments used to measure individuals' dispositions towards risk include the Choice Dilemmas Questionnaire (CDQ) used by Kowert and Hermann (1997), and the Domain Specific Risk Taking Scale (DOSPERT) (Weber, Blais, and Betz 2002; Soane, Dewberry and Narendran 2010). While there are many instruments available, scholars often create their own in order to measure risk-taking in a certain arena.[59]

The crux of the research on heterogeneity in risk-taking is whether or not risk orientation is a stable trait. From a prospect theory perspective, risk-taking is exogenously driven. The frame of the information received is more important than who receives the frame. If, however, individuals have a stable risk orientation that influences their reference point, it would affect how susceptible they are to the expected framing

[58] Zuckerman (2007) reports that the Big Five factor Openness to Experience showed the highest correlations with the SSS-V (r = .45 for the total SSS). When correlated with the facet traits for Openness to Experience, those with Openness to Values, Actions and Fantasy were highest. While sensations seekers may engage in risky activities like the ones pointed out, the drive for arousal means that "many or most experiences sought by high sensation seekers are not at all risky" (Zuckerman 2007, 49). For instance "listening to rock music" or "looking at intensely erotic or violent movies or television."

[59] For instance, for their study of risk-taking in everyday behavior, Meertens and Lion (2008) their own instrument which they named the Risk Propensity Scale (RPS). Likewise, Kam and Simas (2010) (see also Kam n.d.) create their own index of risk orientation by combining scales from several instruments. Others have used a single self-rated question to measure subject's risk orientation (e.g., Ehrlich and Maestas 2008; Morgenstern and Zechmeister 2001).

effect, and may explain why some people do not exhibit the behavior predicted by prospect theory. The various measures used to gauge risk disposition might seem to suggest that there are different, "domain specific" types of risk propensities (e.g. risk propensity regarding investment or extreme sports), and there is some evidence of individuals who have domain specific risk tendencies (e.g. Weber, Blais, and Betz 2002). However, others have found strong evidence for a general, underlying disposition for risk-taking or risk aversion (e.g. Kam and Simas 2010; Kowert and Hermann 1997; Nicholson et al. 2005; Zuckerman 2007; Zuckerman and Kuhlman 2000). It is to these studies that the focus of this discussion turns, as they have found evidence that risk dispositions are related to inherent traits.

The primary area of research on heterogeneity in risk orientations focuses on the links between personality and risk preference. These studies have been varied in the personality constructs they employ. For instance, Zuckerman and Kuhlman (2000) have found that risk-taking is related to three personality traits: impulsive sensation seeking, aggression, and sociability. Carducci and Wong (1998) have found that type-A personalities are more willing to accept risk in everyday financial situations. Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Filbeck, Hatfield, and Horvath (2005) found that individuals who have a preference for making decisions by thinking, rather than feeling, are more risk tolerant in terms of the amount of variance and skew they are willing to accept on an investment. In examining the influence of personality traits on the framing effect, Lauriola and Levin (2001) found that subjects who scored higher on Openness to Experience and lower on Neuroticism were willing to take risks to achieve a gain, and those higher on Neuroticism were more willing to take risks in the domain of loss.

Given the rise of the Big Five as the dominant framework of personality traits, many of these studies focus on the relationships between risk propensity and the Big Five factors: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience.[60] Olson and Suls (2000), for instance, found that people high in Openness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism were more likely to make extreme risky judgments. Kam (n.d.) also founds evidence of a broad disposition towards risk acceptance that has a significant, positive correlation with Extraversion and Openness to Experience, and a negative correlation with Conscientiousness. Soane and Chmiel (2005) found evidence of both domain specific and general risk orientations among their subjects. Individuals who were consistent in their risk orientation across the three different domains (i.e., work, health, and finance) tended to be risk-averse and scored high on Agreeableness and Conscientiousness dimensions, and low on Neuroticism. On the other hand, those who were inconsistent in their risk preferences were higher on Openness and Neuroticism. In another study, Soane, Dewberry and Narendran (2010) found that high Extraversion and Openness, and low Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness had a direct effect on risky choice behavior in four domains (social, ethical, gambling, and recreational risk-taking). One caveat, however, is that Neuroticism was predictive of risk-taking when it came to gambling behavior, and health and safety. Other studies have identified this latter relationship (e.g., Nicholson et al. 2005), and have attributed it to the need of those with high Neuroticism for some short-term relief from their anxiety, whereby they develop

[60] In a related study, Chauvin, Hermand and Mullet (2007) examine the relationship between personality facets using the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) and risk perception, which is different than risk orientation as the former captures how much risk a subject associates with a hazard. The relationship between the perception of risk and the behavior of taking a risk may be inverse depending on the type of risk and the individual's disposition. Chauvin, Hermand and Mullet find for instance that people with high scores on traits of Conscientiousness perceived fewer risks associated with pollution and weapons, while those with higher scores on traits of Agreeableness perceived greater risks associated with sex and deviance.

risky habits such as smoking and drinking. In another study examining personality and health risks, Bogg and Roberts (2004) found that high Conscientiousness scores were among the strongest predictors of avoiding risky behaviors, such as excessive drug and alcohol consumption.

While these previous studies linking risk-taking and the Big Five provide an important foundation for the theory below, this dissertation takes a more detailed approach to interpreting inherent risk propensities, and focuses on facet traits, not factors. Research by Paunonen (2003) and Paunonen and Ashton (2001) has shown that personality facets predict behavior better than the broader Big Five factors. Moreover, they show that a substantial part of the criterion variance predicted by the facet scales was variance that was not predicted by the factor scales (Paunonen and Ashton 2001; Chauvin, Hermand, and Mullet 2007).

The problem with focusing on the broader factors to make predictions is that each factor is an aggregate of several traits, and each trait may or may not predict the behavior of interest. Consider, for instance, the difference between using Excitement Seeking (i.e., a facet of Extraversion) to predict risk-taking as compared to the broader factor Extraversion, and thus all of its facet traits. Traits such as Gregariousness and Warmth, which are part of the Extraversion factor, but have no relationship to risk-taking can effectively cancel out the predictive variance of Excitement Seeking (Paunonen 2003, 413).[61] In the manual for the NEO-PI-R, Costa and McCrae encourage researchers to focus on the facet scales as they allow a more "fine-grained" analysis (1992, 16). There are meaningful individual trait differences within domains that are missed if the

[61] Evidence for this point can be found in Kowert and Hermann's (1997) study, which found that the Extraversion factor is not significantly correlated with risk-taking, but Excitement Seeking, a subscale of Extraversion, is significant across different measures of risk-taking.

researcher only focuses on the aggregate factors. For instance, two individuals who both have average Agreeableness factor scores may behave very differently depending on their facet scores of the traits that are part of the Agreeableness factor (e.g., if one scores very low on Altruism but very high on Compliance, and the other scores very high on Altruism but very low on Compliance). In addition, Costa and McCrae point out that while Extraversion has been linked to psychological well-being in one of their earlier studies, a closer examination of the relationship showed that only two facets, Warmth and Positive Emotions, were chiefly responsible for the association; Excitement-Seeking, another facet of Extraversion, was not at all related to well-being (Costa and McCrae 1992, 16). Thus, the best specified theory should focus on the influence of specific traits and not the aggregate factors.

In order to make predictions based on facet traits there need to be studies that have considered the link between risk-taking and personality that use a personality instrument capable of evaluating facets, as well as factors, such as the NEO-PI-R. Many studies have examined risk-taking and Big Five traits but have not used the NEO-PI-R; such as Lauriola and Levin (2001) who use a Short Adjective Checklist, Kam (n.d.) who uses the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), and Soane and Chmiel (2005) who use the Big Five Inventory. While the NEO-PI-R is the most valid and reliable instrument to measure the Big Five, it also takes a considerable amount of time to administer. Other studies have employed the NEO-PI-R to examine risk-taking, yet only report the impact of the five factors and not the facet traits (e.g., Olson and Suls 2000; Soane, Dewberry, and Narendran 2010). Overall these studies are helpful for providing guidance about the

broader factor-level relationships with risk-taking, but provide little information about the specific traits that are more appropriate for predicting behavior.

One of the most influential studies that has pushed scholars in organizational and personality psychology to explore the relationship between risk propensity and individual differences was conducted by two political scientists, Kowert and Hermann (1997), in an effort to address why nearly one third of experiment subjects do not exhibit the framing effect as predicted by prospect theory. Their study is crucial for building a theory of personality-led risk-taking in international relations for two reasons. First, they analyzed the relationships between Big Five facet traits and risk-taking, not just the aggregate factors, which as explained allows for a stronger, more specified theory. Second, theirs is one of the few studies to evaluate risk-taking in the domain of foreign policy. Among the framing problems given to the subjects of their study were scenarios related to sending aid and security forces abroad.

In their study, Kowert and Hermann administered the NEO-PI-R and two instruments of risk propensity, the Personal Risk Inventory, which asks subjects about their own personal experiences and desires, and the Choice Dilemmas Questionnaire, which describes situations (e.g. economic, medical, political) with risky choices based on different odds and thus allows the researchers to evaluate framing effects.[62] Their results showed that individuals with low ratings on the Conscientiousness factor of personality, particularly the Deliberation (C6) facet, were more risk inclined. The authors determined that these individuals could be characterized as being hasty, impulsive and careless; they

[62] Kowert and Hermann also administered the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to their subjects for an alternative assessment of personality type dimensions. Others who have examined the link between risk-taking and personality traits using the MBTI include Filbeck, Hatfield, and Hovarth (2005), and Li and Liu (2008).

ignore risks rather than take calculated risks. They also found a strong relationship between individuals who scored high on the Openness factor, particularly the Openness to Fantasy (O1) and Openness to Action (O4) subscales. Due to their propensity to take risks that entailed physical harm rather than abstract (e.g., economic) losses, the researchers determined that these individuals are "adventure seekers" who actively seek out risks. Similarly, individuals who scored high on the Excitement Seeking facet of Extraversion (E5) were characterized as intentional risk-takers. Measures of Agreeableness, especially Altruism (A3), were associated with risk-avoidance. The authors speculated that this could be because "these individuals fear the harm that could come to others through their own risky behavior" (619).

Their analysis of the interaction between personality and framing uncovered that some individuals do exhibit the reflection effect predicted by prospect theory, however among those who did not, they found that individuals who scored higher on the Openness subscales preferred risks more strongly when problems were framed as gains. In other words, "open and intuitive sensation seekers were willing to take risks when they have something to gain (in another setting, such individuals might be considered gamblers)" (625). Altruism produced the opposite effect. Higher Altruism scores were significantly related to risk aversion when problems were framed as losses, but not gains. Given that several of the problems used to evaluate risk-taking framed losses in terms of lives lost, this finding fits with the notion that those who are more altruistic are particularly risk averse if it comes at the expense of losses that might hurt others. Finally, those who had low Anxiety (N1) and low Deliberation scores took risks regardless of the frame. Overall their results suggest that individuals can be classified as those who behave as prospect

theory would expect, or as those who ignore risk, those who embrace it, and those who avoid it.[63]

In addition to Kowert and Hermann's study, research by Nicholson et al. (2004, 2005) provides evidence of the Big Five traits that can be used to predict risk propensity, and additional support for the existence of an inherent risk attitude. The Risk Taking Index employed by Nicholson et al. allowed the authors to test whether individuals have a generalized risk propensity and/or whether their risk orientation is related to specific situations by encompassing measures of both domain-specific risk-taking and overall risk-taking. Participants in the study, business executives and MBA students, were administered the NEO-PI-R and asked about their current and past risk behavior in six different domains: recreation, health, career, finance, safety and social risk-taking. The authors hypothesized that the Extraversion scale would best predict risk behavior, most importantly because of the Excitement Seeking facet. They also expected that Openness to Experience would act as "a cognitive stimulus for risk seeking – acceptance of experimentation, tolerance of uncertainty, change and innovation" (2005, 161). Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness were all expected to be inversely related to overall risk propensity.

The authors find support for their proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships of the Big Five factors to risk behavior. Extraversion and Openness were positively related to risk-taking in each domain and the overall disposition, while Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness were negatively related. Substantively their results show that "high extraversion (especially sensation seeking)

[63] Kam and Simas (2010) conduct a similar analysis however they construct their own scale to measure risk propensity. Nevertheless their results show that a majority of people are consistent in their risk orientation – either risk averse or risk accepting – regardless of how a question is framed.

and openness supply the motivational force for risk-taking; low neuroticism and agreeableness supply the insulation against guilt or anxiety about negative consequences, and low conscientiousness makes it easier to cross the cognitive barriers of need for control, deliberation, and conformity" (2005, 169).

Of the facet traits, Excitement Seeking (E5) was the overall greatest predictor in four out of six specific risk-taking domains and the strongest predictor of overall risk-taking. Other facets that were significant predictors of risk-taking across several of the domains, as well as the overall risk-taking scale included: Openness to Action (O4); Openness to Values (O6) or tolerance of multiple perspectives; low Deliberation (C6) or spontaneous decision making; Competitiveness (A4); Activity (E4), a facet of Extraversion which captures a preference for a fast-paced life; low Anxiety (N1); a lack of Straightforwardness (A2); and a lack of Self Discipline (C5). In light of these results and the stability of personality traits over the adult lifespan, they propose that these common traits should be associated with a consistent risk-taking disposition. Importantly they note that scholars should not try to group all subjects as risk-seeking or risk-avoiding. Rather, in a manner similar to Kowert and Hermann (1997) they conclude that some people are consistently risk-takers, some are consistently risk averse, and a third group will have domain-specific patterns of risk behavior. Thus the authors conclude that personality profiles can be used to predict risk-taking in specific domains as well as overall risk-taking.

2.4.2. Hypotheses

The purpose of this dissertation is to assess whether leaders' inherent risk propensities influence their decisions to engage in risky foreign policies. In order to

examine this question there needs to be an objective way to account for leaders' risk propensities. The studies discussed above indicate that there are common traits that are consistently related to risk-taking, which informs what will be called the personality-led theory of risk-taking. While many previous studies have examined the broader Big Five factor relationships, scholars have noted that theories ought to be specified at the facet, not factor level, in order to more accurately predict behavior. The studies by Kowert and Hermann (1997) and Nicholson et al. (2005) provide important data about the relationships between the more specific subscales and risk-taking, and motivate the hypotheses that follow. The results of these two studies are summarized in the table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Relationships between traits and risk-taking

	Factors	**Facets**
Kowert and Hermann (1997)		E5: Excitement Seeking (+)
	Openness to Experience (+)	O1: Openness to Fantasy(+) O4: Openness to Action (+)
	Agreeableness (-)	A3: Altruism (-)
		N1: Anxiety (-)
	Conscientiousness (-)	C6: Deliberation (-)
Nicholson et al. (2005)	Extraversion (+)	E5: Excitement Seeking (+) E4: Activity (+)
	Openness to Experience (+)	O4: Openness to Action (+) O6: Openness to Values (+)
	Lower Agreeableness (-)	A2: Straightforwardness (-) A4: Compliance (-)
	Low Neuroticism (-)	N1: Anxiety (+/-)
	Low Conscientiousness (-)	C5: Discipline (-) C6: Deliberation (-)

Given the discussion of these studies and the summarized results in Table 2.2 it is clear that there are certain traits that are consistently related to individuals' overall risk propensity. Accordingly, there are four traits based on these results that are hypothesized to capture leaders' inherent risk propensities: Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Altruism, and Deliberation. Before discussing the hypotheses associated with each of these traits a discussion of why other traits are not considered in this dissertation is warranted.

The results of the previous studies and theoretical expectations drove the selection of the four risk-related trait variables. Each of them was among the strongest and most consistent predictors of risk-taking across various domains in the two studies. In general most traits that were not chosen did not consistently predict risk-taking across various domains. For instance, Openness to Values was significantly correlated with risk-taking in the Nicholson et al. study, but not in Kowert and Hermann's. The opposite is true for Openness to Fantasy. While Altruism was not related to most of the measures of risk-taking in Nicholson et al.'s study (it was inversely related to risk-taking in one domain - safety risks, such as fast driving) its consistent negative significance across Kowert and Hermann's models, and their finding that altruists are especially cautious of risks regarding losses indicates that there is strong empirical evidence for its inclusion. Moreover the argument that altruists are risk-averse given their concern for others provides a theoretical basis for its inclusion.

Finally both studies have found some weak evidence of a significant relationship between Impulsivity (N5) and stronger evidence of a relationship between Anxiety (N1) and risk-taking, although the direction of the relationship with the latter changes

depending on domain. These results for Impulsivity were not significant enough to be considered in the summary of these studies; there were many traits that were significant in one or two domains of risk-taking, but the purpose of this study is to focus on those traits that are indicative of an underlying, cross-situational risk propensity. Moreover, it does not theoretically make sense to include this trait in a measure of a leaders' risk propensity regarding foreign policy risks. Overall the Neuroticism factor as measured by the NEO-PI-R tends to pick up underlying feelings of guilt and disappointment with oneself. Rather than simply being someone who makes decisions with haste, an individual who scores high on the Impulsivity subscale tends to view their impulsiveness with guilt and disappointment. Although research has shown that people with high Neuroticism scores tend to engage in risky health behaviors, such as smoking and drinking in excess, these behaviors are much more likely to be coping mechanisms for dealing with high anxiety and depression, other facets of Neuroticism, than engaging in them for the thrill of it (McCrae and Costa 2003, 48).[64] This explains in large party why

[64] Further evidence that the trait Impulsiveness, as captured by the Five Factor Model, is not appropriate for including as a measure of a leaders' risk propensity is provided by Zuckerman's (1993) Alternative Five model. His model identifies five factors - Impulsive Sensation Seeking, Aggression-Hostility, Activity, Sociability, and Neuroticism-Anxiety - all of which bear similarities to Eysenck's Big Three and the Big Five model. Zuckerman separates Eysenck's Extroversion factor into its three component parts: impulsivity, activity, and sociability. Activity, characterized as highly energetic and unable to relax, and Sociability, or friendliness, constitute their own factors. In testing the Alternative Five, Zuckerman and Kuhlman (2000) take issue with the NEO-PI's inclusion of Impulsivity and Hostility as facets of Neuroticism, as it obscures the intuitive relationship between these traits and risk propensity. Rather they understand Impulsivity to be associated with Extraversion and more appropriately should be an Impulse Sensation Seeking factor. They split Neuroticism as captured by the Big Five into two different traits: Neuroticism-Anxiety, which is associated with emotional upset, worry, obsessive indecision and sensitivity to criticism, and Anger-Hostility. They test the relationship between the Alternative Five and risk disposition through the administration of the Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire (ZKPQ) and a Life Experiences Questionnaire. Using the Alternative Five-factor model they predict that neuroticism-anxiety would not be strongly related to risk behavior, "although the literature is not clear due to the use of neuroticism measures confounded with impulsivity and hostility in some of the previous work" (1004). They find that three of the personality factors, Impulsive Sensation Seeking, Aggression-Hostility, and Sociability were significantly related to general risk-taking (as measured by active participation in activities such as drinking, smoking, drug use, sex, driving and gambling). Neuroticism-

the Anxiety facet is also related to risk-taking; the kinds of risks accepted (e.g., smoking, safety) are merely a way to cope with anxiety. On the other hand, low Conscientiousness scores, particularly on the Deliberation subscale, indicate a tendency to be incautious, careless, and impulsive (Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner 2005). In essence a low Deliberation score is indicative of the type of low impulse control that is more appropriately associated with risk-taking, rather than the actual Impulsiveness trait, which is heavily associated with guilt and maladjustment. In addition, high Deliberation is indicative of the well thought out decision making of someone with low anxiety.

Based on the results of previous studies, the following four hypotheses are predicted:

> *Hypothesis 1: Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.*

The results of Kowert and Hermann (1997) and Nicholson et al.'s (2005) studies lend strong evidence to the hypothesis that individuals who score high on the Excitement Seeking (E5) personality trait are more inclined to take risks. As stated, Nicholson et al. (2005) go so far as to posit that Excitement Seeking is the primary predictor of risk-taking and their results support this hypothesis. High scorers on this trait crave stimulation and excitement. They live life on the edge and are the people most likely to go skydiving or bungee jumping. It is not surprising then that they are often described as daring, adventurous, spunky, and clever. Those who score low on this trait "feel little need for thrills and prefer a life that high scorers might find boring" (Costa and McCrae 1992, 17). Excitement Seeking captures individuals' need for arousal, which other studies

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Anxiety and Activity factors showed little or no relationship to the composite risk-taking score or any of the specific areas of risk-taking.

have shown is related to engaging in high-risk activities (Zuckerman and Kuhlman 2000). In terms of foreign policy, they would be the leaders who would seek out challenges and high profile campaigns abroad. Rather than wait for foreign policy to happen they should be much more likely to initiate policy. Thus given the previous findings, it is expected that having a high Excitement Seeking score will directly affect the propensity of a leader to engage in risky foreign policy and moreover, this trait will have the strongest influence of all the traits considered.

> *Hypothesis 2: Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.*

Like Excitement Seekers, individuals with high Openness for Action (O4) scores are often described as adventurous people who actively seek out risks. These traits are different from one another, however, in their motivations and behavioral manifestations. Whereas Excitement Seekers are motivated by thrill and arousal, Openness to Action captures more of an individual's open mindedness and desire for variety.[65] It can be seen behaviorally in the willingness to try different activities, go to new places, eat unusual foods, or develop multiple hobbies give their wide variety of interests (Costa and McCrae 1992, 17). These things may or may not produce thrills, but they do allow high scorers to be imaginative and versatile. They prefer novelty and like to deviate from the routine. Low scorers on the other hand find change difficult and prefer to stick with the tried-and-true (Ibid.). Previous results indicate that a high Openness to Action score may indicate a greater risk propensity toward activities that involve the individual personally, such as being risk-acceptant of health or sports risks, rather than more abstract risks, such as

[65] For instance, someone who is high on Openness to Action, but not on Excitement Seeking, might enjoy taking cooking or painting classes during the week while doing yoga and volunteering on weekends. None of these activities is particularly thrill seeking but they do demonstrate an interest in variety and trying new things.

economic gambles. This may dampen its influence in the domain of foreign policy, although overall the expectation is that leaders who are high on Openness to Action should be more willing to consider alternative types of foreign policies even if they are high variance strategies. Therefore it is expected that they will take risks more often than those leaders with low Openness to Action scores.

Hypothesis 3: Leaders with lower Deliberative trait scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.

Previous studies have also concluded that individuals with low Deliberation (C6) trait scores were more likely to take risks (Kowert and Hermann 1997). Because people with low Deliberation scores often act without thinking of the consequences, they can be though of as risk ignorers. That is, unlike those who seek out risks and pursue them, they tend to ignore the risks at hand in their haste. They may make more risky choices however the motivation behind their actions is different than those seeking risk for the thrill of it. They tend to be spontaneous and are able to make snap decisions when necessary (Costa and McCrae 1992, 18). These are considered hasty, impulsive, careless and impatient. It is possible that the effect of this personality trait will be dampened by the institutional structure of decision making, particularly in a democracy, which ensures that some deliberation goes into all foreign policy decisions. Whether this effect remains present during foreign policy decision making is a question best left to empirical analysis.

Hypothesis 4: Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to engage in risky foreign policy.

In addition to finding that some people are active risk-seekers, previous research has found that individuals who score high on Altruism (A3) trait are risk-avoiders. High scorers are described as generous and tolerant, while those who score low on Altruism

are more self-centered and reluctant to get involved in the problems of others. Given that the more altruistic someone is, the more sensitive they are to the needs of others, it is reasonable to argue, as Kowert and Hermann do, that these people may be more concerned with the potential negative consequences their actions may have on others and therefore choose to avoid risks.[66] The next chapter lays out the argument that risky foreign policies are most often those that involve military action. Since the use of military force can mean the loss of lives for soldiers, as well as potential civilian collateral damage, is it especially likely that a president's Altruism score will depress the likelihood that they use force to carry out their foreign policy objectives. Unlike leaders who may simply not be adventure seekers or those who ignore risks, leaders who score high on the Altruism facet are expected to frame the costs associated with each strategy in terms of the loss others will have to endure, rather the costs to the leader himself. If an altruistic personality inhibits leaders from taking military action because of their desire not to inflict costs on others, then this would be most evident in the way they frame their position against a high-risk policy option.

These four hypotheses lay the foundations for a personality-led theory of risk-taking. The influence of each trait is independent of the other traits. In other words, support for a personality-led theory of risk-taking is not dependent on all four traits being significant predictors of risk-taking. The theory is intentionally underdeveloped as the primary objective is to first establish whether or not these traits, which are empirically

[66] The findings that altruists avoid risks are at odd with scholars such as Monroe who identify altruistic people by their willingness to accept risks of harm for themselves in an effort to protect the welfare of others (1996, 6) (e.g. rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe). Monroe has written extensively about the inability of rational choice theory to account for altruistic behavior, and the treatment of altruism in the social sciences, including economics and psychology, as well as natural sciences such as evolutionary biology. See for example, Monroe (1991, 1994, 1996).

and theoretically the strongest predictors of risk propensity, do in fact explain some significant amount of the systematic variance in leaders' decisions to engage in risky foreign policies. In order to assess this relationship, these hypotheses will be tested in the next two chapters through quantitative analysis. This will be followed by two case studies of decision making during crisis, which will help to elucidate the relationship observed through the quantitative analysis, and develop the theory beyond these four hypotheses.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on risk-taking in international relations and identified the weaknesses of both expected utility theory and prospect theory in accounting for the role of individual differences in risk-taking. The personality-led theory presented in this dissertation is intended to compliment, rather than replace, expected utility and prospect theory explanations of risk-taking. As identified by Kowert and Hermann (1997) over a decade ago, understanding individuals' inherent risk propensities opens the door for understanding why people differ in their utilities for risk and why some people behave in manners counter to the predictions of prospect theory. In the latter case, an individual who scores high on Excitement Seeking and Openness to Action may set their reference points exceptionally high, disposing them to be risk-takers; they would perceive themselves to be in a domain of loss even when choices are framed as gains. This has theoretical implications when the individual is an undergraduate subject in a lab study; they are much graver and important when the individual is the decision maker for a state.

This chapter also addressed the literatures on leadership and personality in political science. This dissertation aspires to contribute to this work an objective way to account for the systematic influence of leaders' personality traits based on the Big Five. In this way it would join the literature on leaders' personalities with more recent research in political behavior that has found strong evidence of the influence of Big Five traits on mass political behavior, and overall elevate studies that incorporate personality into politics beyond criticisms of idiosyncrasy.

Chapter 3

Issues of Research Design

Scholars have been limited in their ability to objectively and systematically study the influence of leaders' personality traits on their states' foreign policy behaviors largely for two reasons. First, they have limited access to leaders and are therefore unable to administer the questionnaires that are usually used to objectively assess personality traits. This has led them to develop at-a-distance measures, which most often rely on content analysis of leaders' written or spoken words to evaluate their personal characteristics.

Second, it was only within the last two decades that personality psychologists have come to a consensus that there are five factors - Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience - that capture the majority of variance in peoples' personality traits. Prior to the acceptance of the Big Five, scholars studied different aspects of personality without a common language or framework to tie their work together and facilitate the accumulation of knowledge. These deficiencies within psychology had consequences for political scientists who wanted to analyze the influence of leaders on international relations. They encouraged studies that were criticized for their focus on the idiosyncratic differences in leaders and subjectivity, which encouraged a general perception that leader-centric analyses could not be systematic.

This dissertation breaks from the past and proposes that leaders' inherent traits can be assessed to determine their propensity to take foreign policy risks. The previous chapter reviewed the literature that informs the theory and put forth four hypotheses that

will be evaluated in the four empirical chapters that follow. This chapter discusses how the data for American presidents' personality traits were gathered, thus allowing this dissertation to overcome some of the obstacles that past studies of leaders' traits have encountered. It also addresses broad issues of research design related to both the two quantitative analysis chapters and the two case studies that constitute the remainder of this dissertation.

3.1. Big Five Scores of U.S. Presidents

The data on Presidents' personality traits used in this dissertation were originally collected by Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004) for their study *Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House*. This is the only study to date that measures the Big Five traits of a set of world leaders. While the personality-led theory of risk-taking is generalizable to all world leaders, data limitations restrict the analysis in this dissertation to U.S. presidents.

3.1.1. Assessing Presidents' Personality Traits

The scores for each president's personality traits were determined by administering the observer form of the NEO-PI-R to presidential biographers, or "specialist" raters, each considered expert on a president.[67] Recall from the previous chapter that the NEO-PI-R is the most commonly used and tested Big Five instrument. It

[67]Shorter versions of the personality assessments were also administered to a group of "generalist raters," who were either authors of reference books on the presidents or board members of the Center for the Study of the Presidency, to compare with the experts' findings. Additionally, raters completed two other personality inventories to assess Big Five traits: the California Q-sort and Goldberg's 100 Adjective Clusters. As previously explained, the California Q-sort is a collection of one hundred personality descriptions, where raters sort the descriptions by how closely they describe the subject. The third measure, Goldberg's 100 adjective synonym clusters, is composed of 100 clusters of adjectives that are most commonly used in conjunction to describe people (e.g., gullible, naïve, suggestible) rated on a 9-point scale (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2002).

exists in a self-rated or observer-rated format, which can be completed by a family member, friend, or anyone who knows the person of interest well. The rater does not need to have had personal contact with the person being rated, just an adequate information base about the person's behavior and characteristics (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004, 5). Multiple raters were obtained for each president in order to improve the reliability of the scores. Overall, one hundred seventy six questionnaires were completed by one hundred fifteen presidential specialists (some specialists completed multiple questionnaires, because they had written books on more than one president) and by Rubenzer and Faschingbauer. The number of raters for each president ranged from 1 to 13, with an average of 4.1 raters.[68]

If Big Five scores are determined by observer ratings that are based on a leader's decisions made in office, then endogeneity could be a problem. There are several reasons, however, that suggest this is not a serious concern for this project. First and foremost, the instrument used to measure personality traits, the NEO-PI-R, *does not* measure risk. Raters were never asked to consider how risky they believed a leader was. Instead the NEO-PI-R is a 240-item inventory where raters are given statements such as "In meetings he lets others do the talking," or "He rarely indulges in anything," which they rate their agreement/disagreement with on a 5 point Likert scale.[69] Thus, raters were never asked directly about the president's risk-taking in office. Second, the raters who filled out the personality inventories were told to rate the individuals based on the 5-year period *before* they became president in order to retain the distinction between personality and behavior

[68] The standard deviation for the number of raters was 2.9. According to the NEO-PI-R Professional Manual (McCrae and Costa 1992), four is the optimal number of raters; "there are diminishing returns for aggregating more raters" (48).

[69] See Appendix A for a sample of items from the NEO-PI-R.

in office (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2002). Finally, the results of the "observer" form of the questionnaire filled out by the specialists should be reliable with the expected results of a hypothetical "self" form (McCrae 1993). That is, it is likely that each president would have received similar scores on their traits had they filled out the questionnaire for themselves.

3.1.2. Comparing Presidents' Personality Traits

Compared to the average American, Rubenzer and Faschingbauer found the average president slightly higher on Neuroticism, considerably higher on Extraversion and Conscientiousness, and considerably lower on Openness to Experience and Agreeableness (2004, 19). When looking at the facet traits, they found that the presidents scored much higher on Assertiveness and Achievement Striving, and somewhat higher on Self-Discipline and Openness to Feelings. The presidents scored much lower than the average American on Straightforwardness, Openness to Actions, and Openness to Values (2004, 19-20). While this may give the impression that there is a "presidential type" or that the presidents share strong similarities in their traits that sets them apart from the general public, Rubenzer and Faschingbauer's analysis finds that "on twenty-six of the thirty NEO Facet Scales, they [the presidents] differ *more* among themselves than does a sample of the general population" (2004, 20-21) (italics in original). This suggests that the variation across the presidents is at least as great as the variation we would expect from a random selection of forty-two citizens. It seems intuitive that becoming president involves some self-selection, which leads to a certain type of individual reaching office; nevertheless there remains large variation in personality traits across this small

population. Conclusively, the data show that with changes in each administration come changes in the personality of the chief executive.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide the risk-related traits for presidents George Washington through George W. Bush, and their descriptive statistics.[70] The first trait, Excitement Seeking has been the most consistent predictor of risk-taking in previous studies. While the average Excitement Seeking score for all presidents was 51.8, the president with the highest excitement seeking trait score – more than two standard deviations above the mean - was John F. Kennedy (71.7). He was followed by presidents Clinton (70.9), Teddy Roosevelt (68.9), and Reagan (66.8). Like Excitement Seeking, it is hypothesized that Openness to Action will be positively related to risk-taking. The President most open to action was Thomas Jefferson (61.5), followed by Clinton (59.3), Kennedy (57.6), Teddy Roosevelt (56.9), and George H. W. Bush (52.6).

Deliberation and Altruism on the other hand are expected to be negatively related to risk-taking. The president with the lowest Deliberation trait score is Andrew Jackson (21.1), followed by President George W. Bush (24.4), Andrew Johnson (26.9), Truman (29.1), and Kennedy (30.5). Those who were the most deliberative and therefore expected to be less inclined to take risks include Rutherford B. Hayes (71.3), Martin Van Buren (70.7), and Calvin Coolidge (69.2). The most altruistic president was Hayes (69.1), which along with his Deliberative trait scores suggests that he would be among the least likely to engage in risk-taking. The least altruistic, however, was Lyndon Johnson (20.5), followed by Nixon (23.2), father and son John Adams (26.4) and John Quincy Adams (31.7), and Calvin Coolidge (33.1).

[70] No presidential specialists returned the questionnaires for George W. Bush, so unlike the other forty-one presidents his traits scores are based on questionnaires filled out by Rubenzer and Faschingbauer after they read biographies of the president. His trait scores therefore warrant some reservation.

Table 3.1. Presidents' risk related personality traits scores

President	E5 - Sensation Seeking	O4 - Openness to Action	C6 - Deliberation	A3 - Altruism
Washington	56.0	42.6	65.9	46.5
Adams, J.	49.7	43.0	39.7	26.4
Jefferson	45.5	61.5	53.7	47.8
Madison	46.8	44.5	65.8	47.1
Monroe	45.1	47.7	51.3	49.6
Adams, J.Q.	38.8	51.9	57.1	31.7
Jackson	65.2	40.1	21.1	37.5
Van Buren	55.3	49.1	70.7	38.8
Harrison	50.5	46.1	40.0	50.8
Tyler	50.1	48.1	56.2	49.5
Polk	51.8	48.1	48.9	36.2
Taylor	47.2	52.3	51.3	53.9
Fillmore	37.9	42.6	65.2	55.7
Pierce	51.8	44.4	48.9	54.8
Buchanan	38.8	29.6	53.4	45.0
Lincoln	51.6	50.0	56.8	58.5
Johnson, A	53.6	36.4	26.9	43.0
Grant	56.2	44.4	38.0	47.7
Hayes	47.2	52.3	71.3	69.1
Garfield	48.3	47.7	46.9	48.5
Arthur	57.9	50.0	51.3	36.5
Cleveland	46.8	34.3	59.2	53.3
B. Harrison	52.7	36.1	60.7	49.5
Cleveland	46.8	34.3	59.2	53.3
McKinley	45.1	36.4	60.2	56.1
Roosevelt, T.	68.9	56.9	34.1	48.2
Taft	41.1	31.8	53.6	60.4
Wilson	43.1	36.1	50.7	44.1
Harding	64.9	42.6	33.5	60.1
Coolidge	35.3	26.5	69.2	33.1
Hoover	39.1	35.6	47.5	42.6
Roosevelt, F.	62.7	45.9	42.0	45.1
Truman	43.5	28.1	29.1	55.6
Eisenhower	49.2	45.4	61.6	51.2
Kennedy	71.7	57.6	30.5	44.4
Johnson, L.	62.6	37.6	33.3	20.5
Nixon	47.2	39.2	48.2	23.3
Ford	53.6	38.9	48.9	61.0
Carter	51.3	51.5	53.6	53.8
Reagan	66.8	32.6	38.2	49.9
Bush, G.H.W.	56.6	52.6	47.7	45.7
Clinton	70.9	59.3	36.2	47.7
Bush, G. W.	60.9	27.7	24.4	44.1

Table 3.2. Descriptive statistics of all U.S. Presidents' Big Five traits

Mean	51.8	43.2	48.9	46.9
Standard Deviation	9.2	8.9	13	10.1
Minimum	35.3	26.5	21.1	20.5
Median	50.5	44.4	50.7	47.8
Maximum	71.7	61.5	71.3	69.1

3.2. Empirically Assessing Presidents Traits and Risk-Taking

This dissertation employs a multi-method research design to capitalize on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative analyses (Bennett and Braumoeller 2005; Gerring and Seawright 2007; Lieberman 2005; Mahoney and Goertz 2006). In the first two empirical chapters, quantitative analyses are used to determine whether certain personality traits significantly influence decisions to engage in risky foreign policy, defined respectively as the use of force and the escalation of a crisis to war. Following these chapters are two detailed case studies of decision making during a foreign policy crisis. The primary purpose of these cases will be theory development; they will help develop the causal mechanisms that link the personality traits of a decision maker to the foreign policy behavior of states. In addition, the case studies will allow for comparison with the predictions of prospect theory, which is not readily testable with quantitative analysis.

3.2.1. Quantitative Analysis

The fundamental argument of this dissertation is that personality traits of leaders significantly affect the foreign policy behavior of states. The primary causal variable, an individual leader's inherent risk propensity, is related to four personality traits –

Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation, and Altruism. The scores for these traits come from Rubenzer and Faschingbauer's data on American presidents' Big Five trait scores as described above.

The dependent variable, risk-taking, is defined in this dissertation as choosing a high variance strategy. In the two quantitative empirical chapters the dependent variable will be operationalized as the initiation and escalation of force. It is certainly possible that in some situations the use of brute military power is *not* the most risky option available to a decision maker; there may be times where a leader takes a greater risk in sitting down to the negotiating table rather than ordering a military attack.[71] Nevertheless, there are several reasons that make the initiation and escalation of force the most valid measures for large-N studies of risk-taking.

For one, any deployment of military force is truly a risk; it is a high-variance strategy in that the potential outcomes associated with it are numerous and divergent. As Morrow simply states: "Conflict is risky; sometimes initiators of conflict win, sometimes they lose, and they never know when they initiate conflict what the outcome will be" (1987, 423). Thus, it is understood that there is always some uncertainty when resorting to force to carry out foreign policy, and that it creates large divergences in possible outcomes, particularly that the state may experience victory or defeat. Policymakers recognize the risks inherent in resorting to military force to carry out foreign policy. In a press conference, President Eisenhower commented,

> Nothing can be precluded in a military thing. Remember this: when you resort to force as the arbiter of human difficulty, you don't know where you are going; but,

[71] For an example of cooperation as risk-taking see Fuhrmann and Early's (2008) analysis of President George H.W. Bush's decision to launch nuclear arms reduction through the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives.

> generally speaking, if you get deeper and deeper, there is just no limit except what is imposed by the limitations of force itself. (Eisenhower 1955, 10)

Relative to the use of force, diplomatic strategies are less likely to create such extreme potential outcomes. To be clear, there are certainly times where diplomacy is risky and states could suffer diplomatic defeat or enjoy success, but generally speaking the outcomes associated with diplomacy are not as extreme as war. Also, the speed of decision making and volatility of outcomes in military encounters compared to diplomatic negotiations suggests that the former exacerbates the noise in the system and diminishes the ability to anticipate the consequences of such interaction. Bercovitch and Reagan concur, noting that, "Of the many forms of international behaviour states may engage in, none poses greater risks or potential losses than being in, or entering, a conflict" (1996, 4).

There is also a clear precedent for equating military intervention with risk-acceptant behavior in the conflict and security literatures (Vertzberger 1995).[72] Indeed, Adomeit points out, "Risks, in the mind of the political scientist, refers to conditions which are more or less likely to result in war" (1982, 17). The close association of risk with conflict is evident in phrases such as "the gamble of war" (Fearon 1995), war as a "costly lottery" (Ibid.) or "the manipulation of risk" (Schelling 1966), referring to the manipulation of the risk of war. It is often implicit in scholars' explanations. For instance, Levy (2003) states:

> "The status quo bias is reflected in the common observation that states appear to make greater efforts to preserve the status quo against a threatened loss than to improve their position by a comparable amount. They are sometimes willing to fight to defend the same territory that they

[72] Examples of scholarship that examine risk-taking as military intervention include, Boettcher 2005; Bueno de Mesquita 1981, 1985; Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi 1992; Huth, Gelpi, and Bennett 1993; McDermott, Horowitz, and Stam 2005; Morrow 1987; Tessman and Chan 2004.

> would not have been willing to fight to acquire in the first place. This is illustrated by Ross' (1984, 247) argument that Soviet leaders were willing to engage in the 'use of decisive and perhaps risk action far more readily for *defending* as opposed to *extending* Soviet gains'" (247, italics in original).

Thus it is understood in this example that a "risk action" refers to the willingness of the Soviets to engage in military conflict. In a more explicit manner, Tessman and Chan (2004) apply prospect theory to the theory of power-cycles to generate predictions about initiating and responding to deterrence challenges. For their analysis they equate a state with a high risk-propensity as one that initiates or stands up to a deterrent threat; whereas states that are more accommodating for the sake of avoiding conflict escalation are classified as risk-averse. Similarly, studies that focus on the leader-level of analysis may equate a leader's tolerance or willingness to accept risk with how aggressive a state is (Byman and Pollack 2001, 137). In this manner, states led by risk-tolerant leaders are expected to be more likely to start conflicts.

In Chapter 4 the four hypotheses generated by previous studies of personality traits and risk-taking are assessed using three different data sets on the use of force. In Chapter 5 the hypotheses are tested by examining the likelihood that presidents escalate conflicts. The significant results indicate that the influence of individual leaders ought not be treated as simply part of the error term in analyses of war. Leaders' personality traits have a systematic influence on foreign policy outcomes. Moreover, the results offer a theoretical explanation for the significance of presidential fixed effects included in other studies (e.g. Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007).

3.2.2. Qualitative Analysis

The theory espoused in this dissertation constitutes the first step in developing a sophisticated theory of risk-taking based on inherent risk propensity. It is informed by three different veins of literature – risk-taking from behavioral economics and international relations, leadership studies from political psychology, and research on the Big Five from personality psychology – that have not been linked together before. While the statistical analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 can be used to examine whether there is a significant and systematic relationship between leaders' personality traits and foreign policy outcomes, they are unable to reveal nuances of the processes and variables that condition the relationship.

Therefore, the last two empirical chapters will offer in-depth case studies to investigate how leaders' risk propensities influenced decision making during two American foreign policy crises. The two cases, Harry Truman's reaction to the 1948 Berlin blockade and John F. Kennedy's reaction to the 1961 ultimatum on Berlin, are plausibility probes for the purpose of theory development, not theory testing (see Eckstein 1975, 92-113). Their objective is to uncover new or omitted variables, hypotheses, and causal pathways through the "process tracing" of each case (George and Bennett 2005). If the significant influence of the risk-related traits is observed in the quantitative analysis, the issue for the case studies is to explore *how* leaders' inherent risk propensities influence the decision-making process.

At the outset of each case a prediction will be made about the risk propensity of the president based on his personality traits. However, consistency between the theory's expectations and the case outcome should not be taken as support for a causal

interpretation, as the relationship could be spurious (George and Bennett 2005, 183). On the other hand, an inconsistent outcome does not necessarily mean that the theory is incorrect, but instead might indicate that it is underspecified, and that there are variables whose direct and interactive effects need to be taken into account. It is for this reason that George and Bennett note the usefulness of combining the congruence method with process tracing (2005, 181-8).[73] This type of within-case analysis proceeds by "evaluating evidence about the causal processes and mechanisms that link the independent variable to the dependent variable" (Collier, Mahoney, and Seawright 2004, 96).[74] Thus, the focus of the case studies will be on the process of decision making during each crisis to gather insights that will develop the personality-led theory beyond the four initial hypotheses proposed.

In addition to developing the nascent theory, the case studies offer several other benefits. First, the case studies do not require the assumption that risk-taking is equivalent to the use of military force. That is, there are no *a priori* assumptions about what types of strategies are risk-acceptant, as is the case in the quantitative analysis. Risk-taking is understood more appropriately as the president choosing a high variance strategy relative to the alternatives presented to him during the crisis.

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[73] Although process tracing can be used to test well-established, highly specified theories, it can also be an invaluable tool for theory development. George and Bennett (2005, 205-232) note its ability to generate and analyze data on causal mechanisms, check for spuriousness, and permit causal inference using even a single case. It may also point out variables that were not considered in the initial model and lead inductively to the explanation of deviant cases and the derivation of new hypotheses.

[74] A causal-process observation is akin to a "smoking gun" in that it provides insight into the mechanisms at play for the proposed hypotheses to have explanatory power. Causal process observations could include statements that link the risk-related traits of a leader to their decision. For instance, support for the hypothesis linking Altruism to risk aversion could be garnered if a leader with a high Altruism score justifies a decision against a risky policy because of concerns for the lives that will be lost. That same justification coming from a leader with a low Altruism score would undermine support for the hypothesis and require further investigation of the factors that weighed into that decision.

Second, the most prominent explanation of risk-taking, prospect theory, is not readily testable with large-N statistical tests. Scholars employing prospect theory have therefore relied on in-depth case studies (e.g. Boettcher 2005; Farnham 1994; McDermott [1998] 2004; Taliaferro 2004a). The case study analysis makes it possible to compare the predictions of the personality-led theory with rival explanations for risk-taking, particularly prospect theory.

The universe of cases considered for this analysis was limited by several factors. First, data on leaders' personality traits only exists for American presidents, thus only American foreign policy crises were considered. A crisis was a necessary condition for case consideration, because this theory explains how the personality of an individual leader matters. Under conditions of crisis the decision-making unit of a state contracts to, or close to, the individual leader, regardless of regime type (Hermann et al. 2001). Such a situation provides the opportunity for personality traits to play a more amplified role in decision making and policy outcomes. Second, the temporal period was limited from 1945 to 1980 (i.e., the Truman to Carter administrations). Restricting the cases to this post-World War II period controlled for the U.S.'s position as a superpower. It was also due in part to data limitations, since many of the primary documents from more recent administrations are still classified.[75] Third, case selection controlled for involvement in another war, due to the influence this variable is likely to have on decision making. Of the potential cases available, the two chosen, the 1948 Berlin Blockade and 1961 Berlin Ultimatum Crisis, share many similarities in terms of the context of the crisis, but

[75] For example, Executive Order 12598 signed by President Bill Clinton permitted the declassification of materials after twenty-five years. This order has since been amended by the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, in some cases delaying declassification even longer.

allowed for variation on the key independent variables (i.e. the presidents' risk related personality traits).[76]

Data for the case studies were gathered from archived materials at the Truman Presidential Library and Kennedy Presidential Library. They included: minutes from National Security Council and other high-level meetings, memoranda between the president and his advisors, intelligence reports, diplomatic and military cables, private correspondences, and oral history interviews. Memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies of the presidents' advisors provided important information as well. Finally, these materials were supplemented by the vast secondary literature on Truman and Kennedy, and their respective foreign policy crises. The relevant data sought in these documents include strategies that were discussed with the president for resolving each crisis, the likelihood of success and other potential outcomes of alternative strategies, and most importantly, the president's reaction to each strategy option.

Each of the case studies begins with a brief background of the crisis and a discussion of the respective president's predicted risk-propensity based on his personality traits. For each case study, an overview of the crisis is followed by an analysis of the alternative strategies presented to the president, the outcomes expected from each strategy, and the President's reaction to each strategy. Finally, the chapters conclude with a discussion of the implications of the case for the personality-led theory of risk-taking.

[76] To be clear, while these cases share similarities (i.e., Soviet Union as adversary and geographical context), there are also important differences (i.e., nuclear deterrence is relevant in 1961, but not 1948). The cases are evaluated individually and are explicitly not chosen for a "most similar" or "controlled-comparison" design (Lijphart 1975; George and Bennett 2005). See Przeworski and Teune (1970, 32-4) and George and Bennett (2005, 165) for the problems with such a comparative case design.

Chapter 4

The Use of Force as Risk-Taking

Chapter 3 provided a discussion of the research design of this dissertation. In this chapter the argument that leaders' personality traits significantly influence their decisions to engage in risky foreign policies will be empirically assessed through an analysis of U.S. presidents' use of military force abroad. As previously discussed, the use of force is an acceptable proxy for risk-taking. Uses of force are generally high variance strategies compared to diplomatic alternatives available. There is also precedence for equating the use of force with risk-taking in the international relations literature.

4.1. Overview of the Data Sets

The models in this chapter will be estimated using the most widely used data sets employed in the use of force literature: the U.S. Uses of Force data set originally compiled by Blechman and Kaplan (1978), and most recently updated by Howell and Pevehouse (2007), the Militarized Interstate Dispute data set (Ghosn et al. 2004), and James Meernik's Opportunities to Use Force data set (Meernik 2004). The Meernik data set is unique in that it looks at opportunities to use force, and therefore controls for the selection bias that may affect the results of other studies. The Blechman and Kaplan data set has sparked a number of follow-up studies that have developed and expanded upon their original data, while the MID data set is seen by many as the benchmark for conflict analysis. While the unit of analysis and dependent variable varies by data set, the

temporal period will consistently be the post-World War II period.[77] The use of different data sets not only acts as a robustness test of the findings, but also seeks to circumvent limitations of each data set.

4.1.1. U.S. Uses of Force

The quantitative "Use of Force" literature originated largely from a data set created by Barry Blechman and Stephen Kaplan (1978) for their book, *Force Without War*. Their data chronicles U.S. uses of force "short of war." Examples of such incidents include the Berlin Airlift, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the response to the U.S.S. Pueblo being seized by North Korea. The uses of force are ranked on a five-point severity scale from (1) most to (5) least severe. Most quantitative studies in the use of force literature rely solely on major, or nuclear-capable, uses of force; those with a severity rating from 1 to 3.[78] These are believed to be the most important and consequential events. To qualify as a major use of force, a deployment must have included at least two or more aircraft carrier task groups, or more than one ground battalion, or one or more land-based air force combat wing or a strategic nuclear unit (Blechman and Kaplan 1978). Minor uses of force on the other hand include no more than one battalion or squadron, and no aircraft carriers. While these minor uses involved troop movements, they were much less likely

[77] The Use of Force and MID data sets span from 1945 to 2000; the Opportunity to Use Force data set covers the period 1948 until1998. Personality trait data are available for all U.S. Presidents, however only the MID data set could be extended to well before the World War II period – MIDs are recorded beginning in 1816. The decision to look at MID initiation from 1945 on was made for three reasons. The first was to allow for more direct comparisons with the results from the models using the other two data sets. Second, many of the control variables, including economic variables and presidential approval ratings, could not be extended beyond the Franklin Roosevelt administration. Lastly, scholars have argued that there has been a fundamental shift in presidential power and the U.S.'s standing in the international order since World War II (Wildavsky 1966; Neustadt 1991).

[78] For an exception to this, see Howell and Pevehouse (2005, 2007). See Mitchell and Moore (2002) for a discussion of truncation bias and a comparison of models using major, minor, and all uses of force.

to be politically relevant (Fordham 1998b). Blechman and Kaplan's original data set recorded incidents from 1946 to 1976 and has been updated by several scholars (e.g., Fordham 1998a, 1998b; Fordham and Sarver 2001; Zelikow 1987). The most recent version was updated by Howell and Pevehouse (2007), and from 1945 to 2000.

The logistic regression models used in this analysis will assess whether leaders' risk-related personality traits influence the likelihood that they use force in a given quarter.[79] Like most other statistical models examining the use of force, the unit of analysis will be the quarter-year (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 55; Fordham 1998b, 573; Mitchell and Moore 2002; Ostrom and Job 1986). The dependent variable will be a dichotomous measure coded 1 if the U.S. used major force abroad during that quarter, and 0 if it did not. Presidents chose to use force in 98 of the 224 quarters examined in this study. It is possible that more than one use of force took place during a quarter. Indeed, there were a total of 141 uses of force, and in 14% or 31 quarters, more than one use of force was exercised. The greatest number of uses of force in any quarter was five, by John F. Kennedy. Ronald Reagan and Dwight Eisenhower are tied for having the highest ratio of quarters where there was a use of force compared to all quarters that they were in

[79] The literature on the use of force has varied in its unit of analysis as well dependent variable, although the quarter is the predominant unit of analysis. While some scholars use the dichotomous dependent variable (e.g., Ostrom and Job 1986), others use an event count (e.g. Howell and Pevehouse 2007; Fordham 1998a, 1998b). Both forms of the dependent variable will be used in this analysis in order to speak to both veins of the literature. The most compelling reason to use the quarter-year as the unit of analysis is to improve the comparability of this study with other studies, most of which rely on this unit of analysis. In addition, the quarter is more appropriate than other time measures such as the month-year, which is not well suited for count models since it greatly reduces the variation of the dependent variable; there are few months where there is more than one use of force. Indeed the same concerns have been raised about using the quarter-year as the unit of analysis, however this is certainly less of a problem for quarters than months. The maximum number of uses of force in any quarter was 5 and at least one use of force took place in 44% of all quarters in the data set. Using a longer time period, such as year, also has problems. For one, it limits the number of observations significantly (Fordham 1998b, 573). In addition many of the domestic politics arguments are sensitive to changes in smaller time increments (e.g., presidential approval, unemployment, etc.). The quarter also offers a more accurate account of who is president, especially given unexpected changes in the office during a year (e.g. Kennedy's death in office, Nixon's resignation).

power. These two presidents each employed at least one use of major force in 63% of the quarters that they were in power. In terms of the greatest absolute number of uses of force, Ronald Reagan has the greatest with 36 major uses of force during his eight-year tenure.

Table 4.1. Presidents and uses of force by quarter

President	Total Uses of Force	Frequency (quarters force used /total quarters in office)
Truman	11	26%
Eisenhower	28	63%
Kennedy	12	58%
Johnson	16	55%
Nixon	7	32%
Ford	8	54%
Carter	5	19%
Reagan	36	63%
Bush	9	50%
Clinton	9	25%
Total	141	63%

4.1.2. Militarized Interstate Disputes

Studies of U.S. conflict involvement that do not use the Blechman and Kaplan data set often instead rely on the Correlates of War Project's militarized interstate dispute (MID) data set.[80] The term "militarized interstate dispute" refers to incidents "in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property, or territory of another state" (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996, 168). Like the Use of Force data set, the MID data set includes a number of militarized incidents where there was no actual physical violence, but the threat was present because of military mobilization. The creators of the data set sought a population of "serious" disputes that captures three types

[80] For example see Brule 2006; Clark 2000; Fordham 2002; Gelpi and Feaver 2002; Gowa 1998.

of state behavior: "the explicit threat to resort to armed force, the display or mobilization of armed force, and finally, the use of armed force but short of the sustained combat that characterizes a war" (Ibid., 196-7).

In an examination of the advantages and disadvantage of the MID and Use of Force data sets, Fordham and Sarver (2001) conclude that Blechman and Kaplan's (1978) is the preferred data set for studying American Uses of Force and that the MID data is not appropriate for such studies.[81] The key reason, which is quite relevant for the analysis below, is that the MID data set includes incidents where force was used without the authorization of state leaders. For example, if U.S. military forces along a demilitarized zone were to open fire without the president's authorization, the event would be captured in the MID data set. As this is a study of leaders' personalities and their decisions, it is quite necessary to rely on a set of instances where the state leader was most likely involved in decision making. Nevertheless, the MID data set is so widely used in the study of conflict that to exclude it from this analysis would undermine the contribution of this study.

To maintain comparability with the Use of Force model, the dependent variable will capture whether the U.S. was responsible for initiating a MID during a given quarter. Given that all MIDs "carry the implication of war" (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996, 166) the initiation of such an action clearly opens the range of potential outcomes and is

[81] Fordham and Sarver (2001) conclude that each data set excludes important cases. For instance the Kaplan and Blechman data set excludes "martial" uses of force, and the MID data excludes uses of force against non-state actors, such as military actions against Lebanese terrorists during the 1980s and in Somalia and Bosnia during the 1990s. The MID data set is quite incomplete, covering only 36.3% of all the incidents in the Use of Force data set. The MID data also includes a significant number of cases that are theoretically irrelevant, such as military incidents that are not the result of a leader's decision, such as incidents involving military personnel or private actors that were not authorized by the president. Fordham and Sarver remedy these issues by updating the Blechman and Kaplan data set and suggesting that it be used for studying U.S. uses of force rather than the MID data set.

therefore a risk. A militarized interstate dispute was initiated in 115 or nearly half (49%) the quarters from 1945-2000. Multiple MIDs were initiated in 18% of the quarters.

Table 4.2. Presidents and MID initiation by quarter

President	**Total MIDs initiated**	**Frequency (quarters MID initiated /total quarters in office)**
Truman	6	16%
Eisenhower	31	63%
Kennedy	11	67%
Johnson	23	55%
Nixon	14	58%
Ford	10	69%
Carter	12	44%
Reagan	32	60%
Bush	10	56%
Clinton	28	50%
Total	115	49%

4.1.3. Opportunities to Use Force

According to James Meernik, "If we are to understand why presidents use force, we must also understand why presidents sometimes *do not* use force" (2004, 12). For this reason he created the Opportunity to Use Force data set. By treating the unit of analysis as the opportunity to use force, this data set controls for the selection bias that may enter other studies that only look at uses of force. Meernik defines an "opportunity to use force" as "those situations where we can reasonably suppose that the president considered the use of military force as a policy option" (Ibid.).[82] Of the 605 opportunities available from 1948 to 1998, presidents used force in 318 cases, or 53% of the time.

[82] Meernik's criteria used to identify an "opportunity" or international event that was likely to be perceived as sufficiently threatening to the U.S., and would therefore cause the President to consider the use of military force is borrowed from Ostrom and Job (1986, 10). These are situations where there was evidence of one of the following:
1) the situation involved a perceived current threat to the territorial security of the U.S., its current allies, major clients, or proxy states;
2) the situation posed a perceived danger to U.S. government, military, or diplomatic personnel; to significant numbers of U.S. citizens, or to U.S. assets;

Table 4.3. Presidents and Meernik's opportunities to use force [83]

President	Opportunities	Uses of Force	Frequency
Truman	40	11	27.5%
Eisenhower	82	50	60.9%
Kennedy	55	35	63.6%
Johnson	66	39	59.0%
Nixon	54	16	29.6%
Ford	25	8	32.0%
Carter	45	20	44.4%
Reagan	110	74	67.2%
Bush	51	24	47.0%
Clinton	77	41	53.2%
Total	605	3185	52.5%

4.1.4. Summary of Key Independent and Dependent Variables

While Rubenzer and Faschingbauer collected data on 42 presidents, the temporal period covered in the empirical analyses in the following chapters ranges from the Truman administration until the Clinton administration. Table 4.4 shows the summary

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3) events were perceived as having led, or likely to lead to advances by ideologically committed opponents of the U.S. (i.e., communists or "extreme leftists' broadly defined) be they states, regimes or regime contenders;
4) events were perceived as likely to lead to losses of U.S. influence in region perceived as within the U.S. sphere of influence, especially viewed as Central and South America;
5) events involved inter-state military conflict of potential consequence; in human and strategic terms; or events, because of civil disorder, threatened destruction of a substantial number of persons.
These criteria come from attributes from situations where presidents did use force in the past as defined by Blechman and Kaplan (1978). For an explanation and defense of this method of "criterion matching" see Meernik (2004, 13-14). While the purpose of using this data set was to correct for the selection bias of studies that only look at cases where force was used, Howell and Pevehouse (2007, 246-7) point out the bias that is introduced by relying on whether or not the president perceived a threat for an event to enter the data set. They therefore create their own data set of "opportunities" based on a third party's observations: *New York Times* cover stories. This data set is currently unavailable. For a comprehensive critique of Meernik's operationalization of "opportunity" and the general limitations of his opportunity to use force data set see Howell and Pevehouse (2007, 245-7).

[83] Data from Meernik (2004). The data set only covers the period from 1948-1998, therefore data for both the Truman and Clinton presidencies are incomplete.

statistics of the risk-related trait scores specifically for these 10 presidents, as well as the number of uses of force they used, the number of MIDs they initiated, and the frequency with which they used force when given the opportunity to do so.

The average score for Excitement Seeking among the presidents that served during this period set was 57.84. The president with the highest score on this personality trait was John Kennedy, followed by Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan; the presidents with the lowest Excitement Seeking scores were Harry Truman and Richard Nixon. Clinton and Kennedy had the highest Openness to Action scores, while Truman was the lowest on Openness to Action.

The least Deliberative of the presidents were Truman and Kennedy, while Eisenhower had the highest deliberation trait score. The average Altruism trait score for these presidents was 45.29. Gerald Ford and Harry Truman had the highest Altruism scores of these presidents, while LBJ's was more than two standard deviations below the average.

Given that Excitement Seeking and Openness to Action are expected to be positively related to risk-taking, and Deliberation and Altruism are expected to be negatively related to risk-taking, this brief overview of the presidents on the extreme ends of these traits scores suggests that Kennedy and Clinton were among the most risky presidents, while Truman and Eisenhower were among the least risk-acceptant.

Table 4.4 also presents data on the outcomes of the dependent variables (i.e., the number of opportunities each president had to use force abroad and the frequency that each capitalized on this opportunity) that will be analyzed in the statistical models. While no conclusions can be drawn at this point, a quick glance offers several interesting

observations about the relationship between a president's inherent riskiness and his use of force as a tool of foreign policy. For instance Kennedy, Clinton, and Reagan had the highest Excitement Seeking trait scores of these post-war presidents. Interestingly, as Table 4.4 shows, the post-war presidents who most frequently resorted to the use of force to achieve political ends when given the opportunity to do so were Reagan and Kennedy, and Reagan used force more often and initiated more MIDs than any other president. Keep in mind that Reagan's tenure lasted eight years, while Kennedy was in office just shy of three years. Thus the ratio of a president's use of force when given the opportunity to do so is a more accurate indicator of their propensity to use force than simply looking at the absolute numbers.

The presidents with the highest Altruism scores, Truman and Ford, had two of the three lowest ratios of use of force given the opportunity to use force. They were also among the presidents with the fewest total uses of force and MID initiations. Nixon, perhaps surprisingly, since he is so often associated with the political risks he took during Watergate and the secret widening of the Vietnam War into Cambodia, was also among the least likely of presidents to capitalize on the opportunity to use force, and had below average total uses of force and MID initiations. It is certainly possible that the U.S.'s involvement in Vietnam curtailed his propensity to use force as a means of foreign policy. On the other hand, his risk-related trait scores suggest that he did not have a strong propensity towards risk-taking, certainly not for the thrill of it.

One surprising observation, given the expected relationships between the personality traits and foreign policy outcomes, is Eisenhower's high propensity to capitalize on the opportunity to use force. His trait scores indicate that he should be risk-

averse; he has average or below average Excitement Seeking and Openness to Action scores and above average Altruism and Deliberation scores. Indeed, he has the highest Deliberation score of any post-war president, but he capitalized on the opportunity to use force more than 60 percent of the time and followed Reagan in the total number of uses of force and MIDs initiated. Like Reagan, however, Eisenhower spent two terms in office. Thus, it is reasonable that he would have a higher absolute number of uses of force than those who were in power for one term or less. Nevertheless, his eight years in office offer little explanation for his using force so often when given the opportunity to do so. While no conclusions can be drawn at this point, these simple relationships are suggestive of the results presented in the analysis below.

Table 4.4. Summary of presidents' risk-related traits and dependent variables

	Key Independent Variables				**Dependent Variables**		
President	Excitement Seeking	Openness to Action	Deliberation	Altruism	Total Uses of Force	Total MIDs initiated	% Use of force/ opp.
Truman	**43.5**	**28.1**	**29.1**	55.6	11	**6**	**27.5%**
Eisenhower	49.2	45.4	**61.6**	51.2	28	31	60.9%
Kennedy	**71.7**	57.6	30.5	44.4	12	11	63.6%
Johnson	62.6	37.6	33.3	**20.5**	16	23	59.0%
Nixon	47.2	39.2	48.2	23.3	7	14	29.6%
Ford	53.6	38.9	48.9	**61.0**	8	10	32.0%
Carter	51.3	51.5	53.6	53.8	**5**	12	44.4%
Reagan	66.8	32.6	38.2	49.9	**36**	**32**	**67.2%**
G.H.W.Bush	56.6	52.6	47.7	45.7	9	10	47.0%
Clinton	70.9	**59.3**	36.2	47.7	9	28	53.2%
Mean	57.35	44.28	42.73	45.31	14.1	17.7	48.4%
Min	43.5	28.1	29.1	20.5	5	6	27.5%
Max	71.7	59.3	61.6	61	36	32	67.2%

Note: bold numbers indicate the minimum and maximum scores in each category.

4.2. Testing the Theory

Recall from Chapter 2 that previous studies have found certain personality traits (i.e., Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation, and Altruism) to be linked to individuals' underlying risk-propensities (Kowert and Hermann 1997; Nicholson et al. 2005). These findings are the basis of a personality-led theory of risk-taking that will be empirically assessed below.

4.2.1. Hypotheses

The generalized hypotheses laid out in Chapter 2 can be specified for each of the data sets employed in the analysis below.

Hypothesis 1 – Excitement Seeking:

a. Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to use force abroad.

b. Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to initiate a militarized interstate dispute.

c. Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to use force when given the opportunity to do so.

Hypothesis 2 – Openness to Action:

a. Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to use force abroad.

b. Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to initiate a militarized interstate dispute.

c. Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to use force when given the opportunity to do so.

Hypothesis 3 – Deliberation:

a. Leaders with lower Deliberation trait scores are more likely to use force abroad.

b. Leaders with lower Deliberation trait scores are more likely to initiate a militarized interstate dispute.

c. Leaders with lower Deliberation trait scores are more likely to use force when given the opportunity to do so.

Hypothesis 4- Altruism:

a. Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to use force abroad.

b. Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to initiate a militarized interstate dispute.
c. Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to use force when given the opportunity to do so.

4.2.2. Control Variables

While there are few studies that examine the use of force as dependent on characteristics of the individual leader, there is a large body of research examining the influence of state and systemic variables. In addition to the presidents' personality traits, the statistical models estimated in the analysis below will incorporate controls for several alternative explanations for the use of force. In theory it is possible that the use of force in one quarter influences the use of force in another quarter. In order to account for this potential time dependency the analysis follows Carter and Signorino's (2007) method and includes covariates of the time since the last use of force, measured as the number of quarters, and the square and cube of this variable.

It is commonly asserted that leaders will use foreign intervention to divert their public's attention away from poor domestic conditions, thereby creating a "rally around the flag" effect; yet empirical tests of the "diversionary war hypothesis" have produced mixed results. Scholars have most often relied on two types of measures of poor domestic conditions to examine the diversionary war hypothesis, economic and domestic political. Economic factors have often been found to be significant predictors of the use of force abroad (e.g., Fordham 1998a, 1998b, 2002; but see Gowa 1998; Meernik 1994). Economic downturns harm the welfare of voters while focusing attention on the failures of the current administration's economic policies, thus making the diversionary use of

force an attractive option for leaders.[84] To assess the impact of economic downturns that could encourage a "diversionary use of force," the analysis will include a control for the inflation rate, measured as the percent change in the consumer price index (CPI), and the unemployment rate, both from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.[85] Fordham (1998b) demonstrates that while both provide measures of a poor economy, they are expected to have different influences on the decision to use force abroad given the consequences of such action for the economy. High unemployment reduces the costs of force abroad as a military commitment abroad may improve unemployment at home. On the other hand, high inflation increases the cost of using force abroad since a military commitment usually worsens inflation.

Domestic political conditions are the second set of indicators studied in the diversionary war literature. Ostrom and Job (1986) found that the president's public approval ratings were a significant determinant of the use of force. Subsequent research, however, has not supported their findings (e.g., Howell and Pevehouse 2005; Fordham 1998b; Meernik 1994). Although there has been mixed evidence to support the notion that changes in public opinion have a significant effect on the decision to use force, the analysis below will include the variable *Approval* for the president's approval rating according to Gallup polls taken in the prior period.[86] It has become common in the use of

[84] Alternatively, Leeds and Davis (1997) show that crises are less likely to occur during economic downturns because other states recognize that leaders have the incentive to use force and will therefore avoid initiating a crisis.

[85] The models were also estimated using an alternative measure of economic climate – the percent change in the GDP. GDP never showed significance in any of the models. CPI is chosen in the models below as it is the more common economic measure in use of force studies.

[86] The approval rating for the three months of the quarter was averaged. In the instance where there was no poll taken in a month, the approval rating was interpolated given the nearest months' ratings. The data are then lagged by one quarter.

force literature to control for the effect of presidential approval, and all previous studies rely on a measure of approval from the current period. In theory, however, if low approval ratings cause leaders to use force for diversionary means, then there ought to be a lag of time between the approval ratings and the use of force.

It is generally accepted that the president plays the primary role in formulating and implementing foreign policy. Nevertheless, the anticipation of Congress's reaction may restrain the President from engaging in risky foreign policy (Howell and Pevehouse 2005). Whether or not the political composition of Congress has a significant effect on the President's likelihood to use force remains an issue of debate (Clark 2000; Gowa 1998; Fordham 2002; Howell and Pevehouse 2005). The most extensive study on the restraining and abetting effects of Congress on foreign policy comes from Howell and Pevehouse (2007). They find strong evidence that a unified government, one in which the president and the majority of Congress are of the same political party, increases the frequency of presidents using force abroad and the likelihood that they will capitalize on opportunities to use force. Therefore the models in this analysis will control for the influence of domestic institutions, particularly the constraints that Congress and partisanship may have on the President's ability to initiate the use of force. The effect of a divided government will be controlled for using the variable *Unified,* which will be coded 1 if the majority of Congress is of the same party as the president, and 0 if the government is divided. Additionally, a variable for the partisanship of the president will be included to see whether there is support for the notion that Republican presidents more frequently employ major uses of force abroad compared to Democratic presidents

(Howell and Pevehouse 2007). The variable *Republican* will be coded 1 if the president is a Republican, and 0 if the president is a Democrat.

In addition to domestic factors, systemic elements may influence leaders foreign policy decisions. Three variables are included to capture elements of the international environment. *Ongoing War* will capture periods where the US was involved in a war (e.g.: Korea, Vietnam, and the 1991 Gulf War). Participation in a war has been shown to have a significant dampening effect on the President's propensity to initiate an additional conflict (Fordham 1998b; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). Not only is it reasonable to assume that there are fewer forces available for deployment, but the costs of combat mean that the public is less likely to favor such behavior. Certain temporal periods are also expected to be associated with times when the President's leeway on foreign policy decision making was improved or constrained. The most obvious case is the *Cold War*, 1945-1989, which has been found by previous studies to increase the propensity to use force (Howell and Pevehouse 2007).

Realist scholars would argue that security and power are paramount to a state's interests. The greater your power the more feasible the use of force becomes. Thus when the U.S. finds itself in a hegemonic position it may have more incentives to monitor and intervene in conflicts worldwide. The empirical evidence supports the claim that the U.S. is more likely to take risks by using force abroad when it has greater capabilities (Fordham 2004). To control for this effect the variable *Power* will measure the U.S.'s relative share of global capabilities according to the Correlates of War, National Material Capabilities data set (version 3.02).

Finally, two situation-specific variables were used to estimate whether leaders capitalized on the opportunity to use force. The first variable, *Prior Use of Force*, captured whether or not the U.S. had used force in the crisis locale in the previous 12 months. It has been proposed that once leaders deem an issue to be in their national interest by using force once in the area, they are more likely to re-intervene and use force again (Meernik 2004); deciding *not* to act would be seen as a lack of resolve over the issue. This is readily illustrated by the U.S.'s involvement in Iraq throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. The second variable, *Violence*, captures whether the opportunity to use force was triggered by violence against American citizens or economic assets abroad. The U.S.'s international credibility comes into question when its citizens or assets have been targeted and there is no response. Why should allies believe that the U.S. is willing to protect their interests if it is not willing to protect its own? (Ibid.). Both of these variables have been found to have a significant positive effect on the likelihood that the U.S. used force when given an opportunity (Ibid.).

4.2.3. Equations

Taking into account the key independent variables and the control variables discussed above, the following equations were used to assess the influence of personality traits on risk-taking:

Model 1: Use of Force Data Set

$$\text{Force} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E5 + \beta_2 O4 + \beta_3 C6 + \beta_4 A3 + \beta_5 \text{Unemployment} + \beta_6 \text{Inflation} + \beta_7 \text{Approval} + \beta_8 \text{Unified Government} + \beta_9 \text{Republican} + \beta_{10} \text{Ongoing War} + \beta_{11} \text{Cold War} + \beta_{12} \text{Power} + \beta_{13} t + \beta_{14} t^2 + \beta_{15} t^3 + \varepsilon$$

Model 2: MID Data Set

$$\text{Force} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E5 + \beta_2 O4 + \beta_3 C6 + \beta_4 A3 + \beta_5 \text{Unemployment} + \beta_6 \text{ Inflation} + \beta_7 \text{Approval} + \beta_8 \text{ Unified Government} + \beta_9 \text{Republican} + \beta_{10} \text{Ongoing War} + \beta_{11} \text{Cold War} + \beta_{12} \text{Power} + \beta_{13} t + \beta_{14} t^2 + \beta_{15} t^3 + \varepsilon$$

Model 3: Opportunity to Use Force Data Set

$$\text{Force} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E5 + \beta_2 O4 + \beta_3 C6 + \beta_4 A3 + \beta_5 \text{Unemployment} + \beta_6 \text{ Inflation} + \beta_7 \text{Approval} + \beta_8 \text{ Unified Government} + \beta_9 \text{Republican} + \beta_{10} \text{Ongoing War} + \beta_{11} \text{Cold War} + \beta_{12} \text{Power} + \beta_{13} \text{Prior Use} + \beta_{14} \text{Violent Trigger} + \varepsilon$$

4.3. Analysis and Results

The models assessed the effects of the four personality traits – Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation and Altruism – that previous studies have found to be related to an individual's risk propensity, along with control variables for diversionary war, domestic institutions, and systemic factors. The dependent variable for these models was a dichotomous, "use/no use," value (i.e., the use of force in a given time period, the initiation of a militarized interstate dispute, and the use of force given an opportunity to do so). Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, logit analyses were appropriate for testing the hypotheses. Unlike in OLS, the coefficients in logit analysis do not simply indicate the magnitude of a variable's effect on the dependent variable. Instead it is more helpful to discuss the marginal effect, or percentage increase in the probability of the use of force, if there is some change in an independent variable.

Table 4.5. Personality traits and uses of force – comparison of 3 data sets

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Variable	**Use of Force**	**MID**	**Opportunity to Use Force**
Excitement Seeking (E5)	.089 (.036)***	.080 (.038)**	.08 (.019)***
Openness to Action (O4)	-.009 (.032)	.048 (.034)	-.01 (.018)
Deliberation (C6)	.03 (.033)	.043 (.034)	.044 (.02)** [a]
Altruism (A3)	-.069 (.026) ***	-.042 (.022)*	-.03 (.012) ***
Unemployment	.528 (.217)**	.343 (.172)**	.163 (.104)*
Inflation	.615 (.244)***	.187 (.194)	-.16 (.283)
Approval	-.001 (.017)	-.024 (.016)*	-.019 (.01)**
Unified Government	.186 (.621)	-.053 (.603)	-.467 (.344)
Republican	1.173 (.798)*	1.013 (.761)	-.461 (.434)
Ongoing War	-1.217 (.734)*	.274 (.721)	-.777 (.391)**
Cold War	.031 (.659)	.454 (.669)	.571 (.369)*
Power	20.793 (6.681)***	7.071 (5.714)	8.434 (3.456)**
Prior Use of Force	___	___	.927 (.218)***
Violent Trigger	___	___	1.525 (.232)***
Constant	-11.21 (4.439)***	-10.045 (4.393)**	-6.692 (2.104)***
N	224	224	605
Pseudo R^2	0.15	0.11	0.16
Prediction Success No Use Use Total	 75% 58% 68%	 54% 71% 63%	 73% 72% 72%
Proportional Reduction of Error	27%	24%	42%

Note: Logistic regressions on the use of force and MIDs in a given quarter also included time dependency variables t, t^2, and t^3. All time dependency variables were insignificant (results not shown). Huber-White robust standard errors reported in parentheses. Two-tailed tests reported; ***=p≤.01; **=p≤.05; *=p≤.1; [a]= significant but the sign of this estimate is not in the predicted direction.

Table 4.6. Marginal impact on the likelihood of a use of force – comparison of 3 data sets

Explanatory Variable	Change in the Probability of a Use of Force	Change in the Probability of Initiating a MID	Change in the Probability of a Use of Force Given the Opportunity
Excitement Seeking (E5)	38%	34%	35%
Deliberation (C6)	--	--	21%
Altruism (A3)	-35%	-22%	-17%
Unemployment	36%	24%	12%
Inflation	29%	--	--
Approval	--	-12%	-12%
*Republican**	24%	--	--
*Ongoing War**	-23%	--	-16%
Power	54%	--	20%
*Cold War**	--	--	12%
*Prior Use of Force**	--	--	23%
*Violent Trigger**	--	--	35%

Note: Predicted probabilities were generated varying each independent variable from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean except for variables noted with an asterisk which denote a one unit change, while holding others at their means or modes.

The first model was estimated on the Use of Force data set and successfully predicted 68% of all the cases. Compared to a naïve model, the proportional reduction of error was 27%. The second model employed the MID data set and predicted the actual outcome 63% of the time, which is a 24% improvement over the null. The third model examined whether presidents who have riskier personality traits are more likely to capitalize on the opportunity to use force. The model predicted the actual outcome 72% of the time, which is a 42% improvement over the null prediction.

Two of the four risk-related personality traits were significant in the first two models, while three of the four were significant in the third model. As expected leaders who have higher Excitement Seeking scores are more likely to use force when given the opportunity. This trait, along with a violent trigger, had the greatest impact on a

president's likelihood to use force when presented with such an opportunity, and had the single greatest effect on the likelihood that a MID is initiated. Holding all other variables constant at their means, going from a president with an excitement seeking score one standard deviation below the mean to a president whose excitement seeking score is one standard deviation above the mean would increase the probability of a use of force in a given quarter by 38%. This same move would mean a 35% increase in the likelihood that a president capitalizes on the opportunity to use force and a 34% increase in the likelihood that they initiate a MID. Thus, it is clear that presidents with higher Excitement Seeking scores are more likely to engage in risky foreign policy.

In addition to Excitement Seeking, Altruism had a significant influence on the dependent variable across the models. Opposite to the effects of Excitement Seeking, leaders who are more altruistic are less likely to use force as a policy instrument. Going from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean, while holding all other variables constant, decreased the likelihood of a president initiated a MID by 22% and decreased the use of force in a given quarter by 35%. The same change decreased the probability that he would capitalize on an opportunity to use force by 17%.

The presidents' level of Deliberation was only significant in the opportunity to use force data set. Surprisingly, the sign of the coefficient for Deliberation score was opposite of what was expected. Previous results, as well as intuition, would suggest that presidents with lower Deliberation trait scores would be more likely to engage in risky foreign policy, because these individuals are thought of as being hasty or impulsive. The results above however, suggest that leaders who are *more* deliberative are in fact more

likely to use force abroad. This finding raises questions about the influence of deliberation and decisiveness on risk-taking that has been found in previous studies, and will be explored further in the discussion below.

The Openness to Action trait did not have any significant influence on leaders' likelihood to use force or initiate a MID. That Openness to Action is not a significant predictor of risk-taking in the realm of foreign policy is not entirely surprising given Kowert and Hermann's (1997) observation that individuals who score high on this trait are often risk-takers when it comes to personal wellbeing issues such as health, not abstract issues such as economics, or in this case, international conflict.

In addition to these personality traits, the variables for economic factors are significant across the models as expected. High levels of unemployment consistently increase the likelihood that a leader will employ a major use of force or initiate a MID in a given quarter or capitalize on the opportunity to use force. While the variable for inflation was not significant in the second and third models, it had a strong influence on the probability that a use of force takes place in a given quarter. These results provide support for the diversionary war hypothesis. It seems clear that during economic downturns, measured as high unemployment or high inflation, leaders are more likely to use force abroad. The diversionary war hypothesis also gains some support from the finding that a lower approval rating in the period before an opportunity arises will increase the probability that a president capitalizes on such opportunity or initiate a MID. Having a Republican president, rather than a Democrat, while holding all other variables at their mean, increases the likelihood of a use of force by 24%. While this finding is not

consistent across the models, it provides some supports for the common stereotype of Republicans being the more hawkish party.

The results show that U.S. power, or its share of international capabilities, highly magnifies the probability of a use of force. Although one could argue that having a clear preponderance of power would indicate less need to use force, it seems that when given the opportunity to impose their will on others by using force, American leaders will do so. A change from one deviation below the mean to one deviation above the mean, while holding all other variables constant, increases the probability of a U.S. use of force in any given quarter by 54%. These results provide evidence for Realist claims that power is a predictor of force; however, they also indicate that power alone is not the only variable that matters. As expected, an ongoing war depresses the probability that a leader will capitalize on the opportunity to use force. While holding all other variables constant at their means, a change from not participating to participating in a war decreases the likelihood of using force by 23%. Finally, as expected a previous use of force in the locale in the past twelve months increases the likelihood that a leader capitalizes on the opportunity to use force, as does a violent trigger against American citizens or economic assets.

4.3.1. Count Models

The results above suggest that risky leaders are more likely to use the military to carry out their foreign policy objectives in any given quarter. However, the coding of the dependent variable as a simple yes or no may introduce aggregation bias (Mitchell and Moore 2002). The dichotomous dependent variable means that the president only has to

choose to use force once every quarter in order to take a risky action. Yet, it should be expected that leaders who are inherently riskier would use force more *frequently* to conduct foreign policy compared to those who are risk averse. To more appropriately capture the frequency with which presidents take risky action, and to speak more directly to studies that look at the number of uses of force in a quarter (e.g. Howell and Pevehouse 2007), count models of the uses of force and MID initiations will be used to test the robustness of the findings above.

Table 4.7. Poisson regression model of use of force and MIDs initiated /quarter

	Model 4	*Model 5*
Variable	**Uses of Force**	**Militarized Interstates Disputes**
Excitement Seeking (E5)	.048 (.016)***	.052 (.019)***
Openness to Action (O4)	-.014 (.019)	-.008 (.017)
Deliberation (C6)	.019 (.02)	.051 (.018)*** [a]
Altruism (A3)	-.027 (.012)**	-.025 (.013)**
Unemployment	.243 (.079)***	.174 (.077)**
Inflation	.129 (.051)***	-.025 (.155)
Approval	.005 (.01)	-.008 (.009)
Unified Government	.258 (.331)	-.156 (.274)
Republican	.477 (.471)	-.38 (.379)
Ongoing War	-.555 (.408)	-.02 (.395)
Cold War	.243 (.413)	.055 (.315)
Power	7.856 (2.752)***	2.666 (3.116)
Constant	-6.027 (1.808)***	-4.762 (2.203)**
Note: Robust Standard Errors reported in parentheses. Two-tailed tests reported: ***=p≤.01; **=p≤.05; *=p≤.1; [a]= significant but the sign of this estimate is not in the predicted direction.		

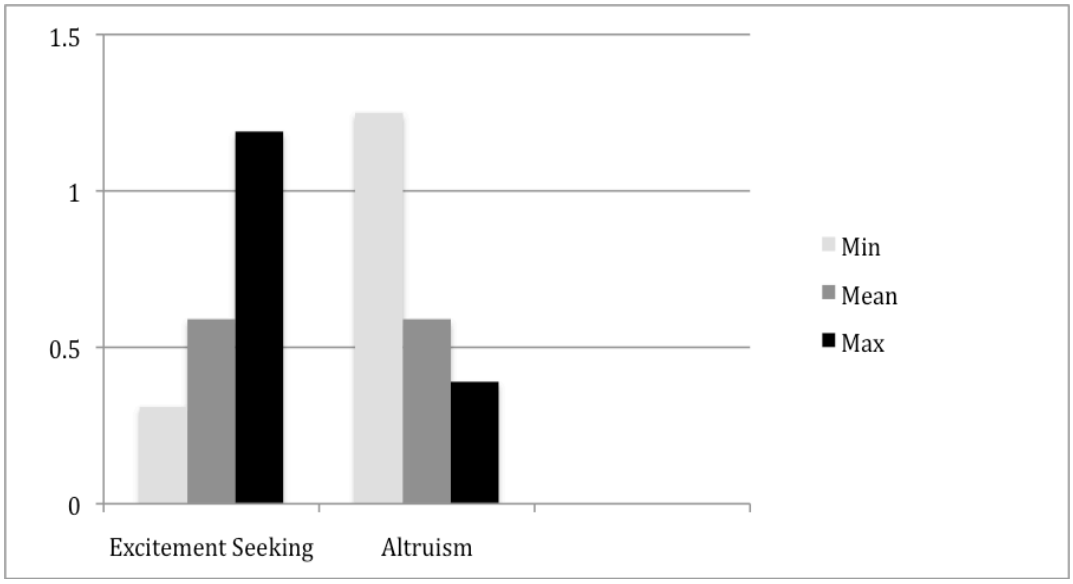

Figure 4.1. Uses of force per quarter

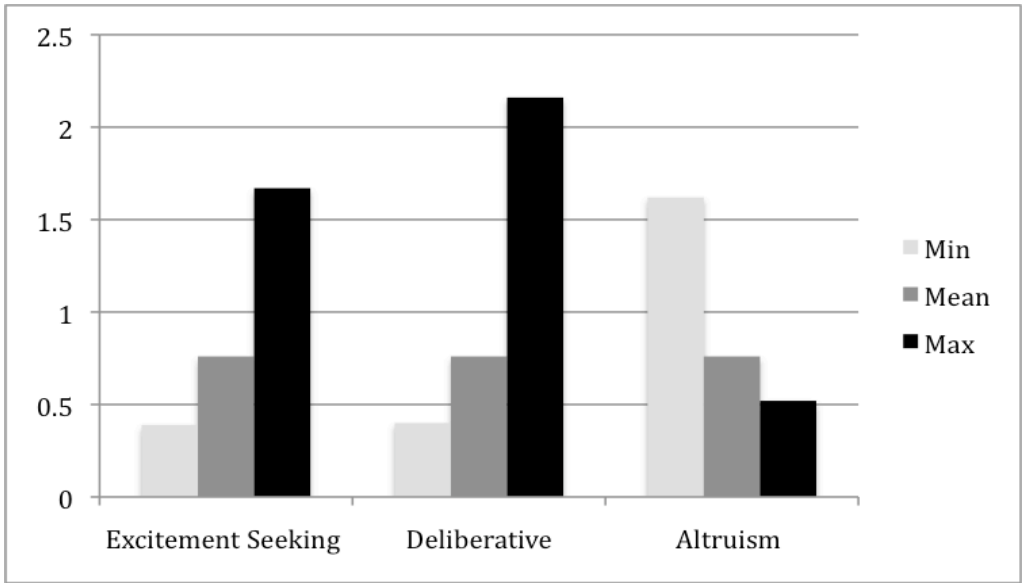

Figure 4.2. MIDs initiated per quarter

Table 4.7 shows the results of the count models that were obtained using a Poisson regression model.[87] The tests confirm the results of the main analysis: personality

[87] Two diagnostic tests were run to determine whether the Poisson or negative binomial estimating model would be more appropriate. The Poisson assumes that events are independent and the mean of the data is equal to the variance (Brandt et al. 2000). It was anticipated that there was over-dispersion in the

traits, particularly Excitement Seeking and Altruism, significantly influence the frequency with which leaders use force. In fact, the models' results are nearly the same as the earlier results. The only exceptions for *Model 4,* the use of force model, are two control variables that were significant in the original model (party of the president and an ongoing war) and are no longer significant. In the count of MIDs initiated, *Model 5*, the only change from the earlier results is the significance of a leader's Deliberation trait. This result suggests that counter-intuitively, and counter to the theory espoused, leaders who are more deliberative initiate more MIDs.

A president's Excitement Seeking score remains a significant, positive predictor of the frequency with which they use force. That is, as a president's Excitement Seeking score increases the number of uses of force they use also increases. The substantive effects of the risk-related traits on foreign policy outcomes are most evident in figures 4.1 and 4.2 above. Figure 4.1 illustrates the number of uses of force predicted in a given quarter for different values of Excitement Seeking and Altruism, the significant key independent variables. As seen in the graph, the number of uses of force when holding all variables constant at their mean (or mode in the case discrete variables) is 0.59. Substantively speaking this means zero, since you cannot observe half a use of force. Keeping all variables constant, but changing the Excitement Seeking score to Kennedy's,

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data, and therefore the negative binomial model would be more appropriate than the Poisson model. In the first test, after regressing the data using a Poisson model, the goodness of the fit of the model was assessed using the "estat gof" command in STATA 9, which tests the null that that the Poisson is the appropriate model. In the case of the use of force data, the null could not be rejected (p=.35). It could be rejected in case of the MID data (p=.04), which suggested that the negative binomial model would be more appropriate. However, using a negative binomial model in STATA produces a likelihood ratio test of α, the dispersion parameter. If α equals zero then the model's results are no different than the Poisson. To assess the appropriateness of the negative binomial model for the equations the α output of each was evaluated. The results of the models for both data sets showed that α was indistinguishable from 0 (prob>=chibar2 = 0.5 for the use of force; prob>=chibar2 = 0.23 for MIDs), and thus the models reverted to the Poisson distribution. For more on the differences between these models see Brandt et al. (2000) and Mitchell and Moore (2002).

which is the maximum score of these presidents, increases the number of uses of force by 0.6, to more than one use of force per quarter. Changing the Altruism trait score to Johnson's score, which was the lowest of these presidents, while holding all other variables constant, similarly increases the number of uses of force per quarter to 1.25.

The effects of the traits are even more striking when the dependent variable is the number of MIDs initiated, as seen in Figure 4.2. The predicted number of MIDs initiated per quarter when holding all variables at their means is 0.76; again, substantively, this means that no MIDs would be initiated. However, changing just the President's excitement seeking score to the highest score in the group (i.e., Kennedy's) increases the number of MIDs to 1.67. A nearly identical increase in the number of MIDs initiated is observed when changing the Altruism score of the President to the lowest in the group (i.e., Johnson's). Notice also that a change from the president with the lowest Excitement Seeking score (i.e., Truman) to the one with the highest score (i.e., Kennedy), while holding all other variables constant at their means, increases the number of MIDs initiated by nearly 1.5.

Figure 4.2 also illustrates the substantive effect of a president's Deliberation score on the number of MIDs they initiate. While holding all other variables constant at their means, a change in the Deliberation score of the president from the average across all post-war presidents to the highest score, that of Eisenhower, translates into an increase of nearly 1.5 MIDs. In other words there is a change from *less than one* MID being initiated in the quarter to *more than two* MIDs. This effect is both substantively powerful and surprising given the expectations of the theory laid out in Chapter 2.

Finally the level of unemployment, the change in the inflation rate, and the U.S.'s capabilities all positively influence the propensity of presidents to use force abroad. Most other control variables are of the expected and same sign as the first set of models, however none of these variables achieved statistical significance.

4.4. Discussion

These empirical results above represent the first attempt to assess systematically the influence of leaders' inherent risk propensities on foreign policy. Moreover it is the first quantitative analysis to employ data on leaders' Big Five personality traits. The results confirm the overarching thesis that leaders' risk-related personality traits significantly influence the propensity of leaders to adopt risky foreign policy strategies. However, the traits do not contribute equally. The influence of president's Excitement Seeking and Altruism traits are significant and signed in the expected direction, lending strong support to hypotheses 1 and 4. The influence of Openness to Action and Deliberation are less clear and require further consideration.

Before discussing the key independent variables, there are some comments to be made about the findings with regard to the control variables. The results above lend moderate support for the diversionary war theory, in particular traditional arguments that economic downturns will increase leaders' propensities to engage in diversionary actions. The variable for unemployment was the only control variable that was significant across all models. Other scholars have also found that unemployment is especially likely to lead to the diversionary use of force (e.g., Fordham 1998a, 1998b). The other economic indicator, the inflation rate, showed a positive, significant relationship in both the use of

force models; however, it failed to achieve statistical significance in the other three models and even switched signs in two models. This is not entirely surprising, given that inflation has not been a robust predictor of the use of force in many previous studies. As noted above, higher inflation may provide the incentive for a president to launch a diversionary use of force, but this will often also further increase inflation and thereby worsen the political situation. On the other hand, high unemployment provides a similar incentive and the use of force can actually ameliorate the problem by putting people to work. The last diversionary factor, the president's approval rating, was properly signed in four out of the five models and statistically significant in two of the models. There was little to no support for the two remaining domestic politics variables – whether there was a unified government and whether the president was a Republican. They did not achieve statistical significance, except for the Republican variable in *Model 1*, and were inconsistent in the direction of their relationships to the dependent variables.

There was, however, stronger support for realist variables capturing power and security. The variable *Power*, which was the U.S.'s share of global capabilities, was positively signed in all models and significant in three, indicating that the U.S. has been most likely to use force at a time that it was most powerful in the international arena. The variable for the Cold War was always positive, but only significant in one of the models. While an ongoing war had the intended negative impact on risk-taking across nearly all the models, it was only significant in two of them surprisingly, given the constraints that wars put on military resources. Overall these results suggest that while leaders' personality traits matter, so do traditional systemic explanations for conflict.

Turning to the presidents' inherent risk-related traits, the results consistently indicate that leaders who are excitement seekers are more likely to engage in risky foreign policies. They are more likely to use force to carry out their foreign policies, to initiate militarized interstate disputes, and they are more likely to capitalize on opportunities to use force abroad. In the opposite manner, leaders who are more altruistic are less likely to use force as a tool of foreign policy. They are less likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes, and they are less likely to use force when given the opportunity to do so. These results are robust across all data sets and specifications of the dependent variable.

While it is clear that a leader's Excitement Seeking and Altruism traits influence the likelihood that they adopt risky policies, the same cannot be said for the other two personality traits that have been linked to risk-taking in previous studies. The Openness to Action trait fails to achieve significance in any of the models above, and even more surprisingly, the coefficient is signed opposite to what would be expected in all but one model. Thus, although this trait has been linked to risk-taking in terms of health and recreation, it does not seem to matter for foreign policy. People who are open to action are seeking variety in life, whether it be new hobbies, travel, experiences, food – these are all very much experienced by the individual. This does not easily translate into taking risks in foreign policy. Unlike Excitement Seeking, arousal and thrill is not the goal. These leaders should be more open to accepting high-risk foreign policies, however they should likewise be more open to low-risk ones as well; being open and willing to break from the routine is what matters.[88] In addition, studies have consistently shown that high

[88] Preliminary results of an analysis modeling the variance of foreign policy outcomes finds that Openness to Action is positively related to the dependent variable. That is, presidents who have higher

scores on the Openness factor predict political liberalism and identification as a Democrat, while high scores on Conscientiousness predict political conservatism and identification as a Republican (Barbaranelli et al. 2007; Caprara et al. 2006; Carney et al. 2008; Gerber et al. 2010; Jost, West, and Gosling 2009; Mondak 2010; Mondak and Halperin 2008). In looking at attitudes towards specific policies, Schoen (2007) finds that Germans with higher Openness scores were in favor of doing away with the German military and opposed to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.[89] While one should not extrapolate too much from these studies, as their focus was on the larger factors and not the specific Openness to Action subscale, they nonetheless provide some insight into why presidents with higher Openness to Action score may be more reluctant to use force abroad.

Most unexpected, a leader's Deliberativeness trait is positively related to risk-taking in all of the models and is a significant predictor of a president's likelihood to capitalize on the use of force and the frequency that they initiate MIDs. This finding runs counter to the expected relationship between Deliberation and risk-taking. It was expected that those who score low on Deliberation – individuals who are hasty, spontaneous, and do not consider the consequences of their actions – would be more likely to engage in risky foreign policies. These results, however, provide strong evidence that in fact it is those presidents who are the most deliberative that use force more readily.

Openness to Action scores demonstrate a greater variance in their decisions to use force. Theoretically, these results fit with expectations given that people who are more open prefer change and variety, not necessarily the most thrilling alternative. These results are part of a working paper by Allen and Gallagher (n.d.).

[89] In a study done in the U.S., Mondak (2010) also finds that Openness is related to opposition to the war in Iraq, even after accounting for numerous controls such as ideology and partisanship. Neither Schoen nor Mondak directly evaluate risk propensity, whereas Kam's (n.d.) finds that liberals in the U.S. are more likely than conservatives to be risk-takers. However her risk instrument only accounts for risks that are focused inward on the individual, not for foreign policy.

One possible explanation may be that leaders high on Deliberation will over evaluate the decision to use force and find themselves under greater time constraints and with fewer options to choose from. If this outcome is a result of more deliberative people putting off their decisions, then this could be explored empirically through statistical analysis examining the time from the onset of an opportunity until action. Alternatively, these potential explanations could be assessed through comparative case studies of leaders under similar crisis conditions but different levels of deliberation, where the researcher could examine whether leaders who have higher deliberation scores find themselves under greater time constraints due to their own decision-making process, and if they are therefore forced to make decisions in haste and/or have fewer options available. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that people who have high deliberation scores are not indecisive. In addition, these potential explanations fail to explain why leaders with higher Deliberation trait scores actually initiate risky foreign policies, as seen in *Model 5*. Thus, there seems to be a different relationship between Deliberation and risk-taking that needs to be taken into account.

Deliberation captures the degree to which an individual considers the consequences of their actions. Therefore, it is possible that those who are more deliberate value the deftness of the military force as a tool of foreign policy. Having thought through their options, they may prefer the use of the military to other instruments of foreign policy, not because of their search for stimulation in the risks that war entails, but because of the power that the use of force wields to carry out the president's prerogatives. This idea finds support in previous research in personality psychology and political science. For instance, in a study examining personality and risk perception, Chauvin, Hermand and

Mullet (2007) find that "the more rational, orderly, perfectionist, and cautious the participant the lower was their perceived risk of weapons" (179). The notion that those who are more cautious and orderly - those who have high Conscientiousness scores and would be considered more deliberate - may in fact have a lowered perceived risk of weapons may help to explain their inclination, or at least non-aversion, to using such weapons to carry out their foreign policy. That is, if they do not perceive the use of weapons as risky, but rather as most effective, then they may be more willing to use them to carry out their policies. Overall Chauvin, Hermand, and Mullet report that individuals are considered to be "more rational," tended to consider the risks associated with weapons to be smaller than their "less rational" counterparts (2007, 182).[90]

In another study, Schoen (2007) examines personality traits and mass political attitudes in Germany and finds that those with high Conscientiousness tended to express foreign policy attitudes averse to international cooperation and supportive of the use of military force. He explains,

> High scorers on Conscientiousness are strong-minded, disciplined, deliberate and orderly. They are thus likely to regard international cooperation as a source of force that might inhibit their doing what they perceive to be right. At the same time, the do not necessarily reject international involvement, since they may regard international involvement as an appropriate means to pursue a goal. Finally, individuals at the high end of Conscientiousness should support the use of the military force if they perceive it to be an appropriate devise for achieving their aims. (413)

Both of these studies suggest that highly deliberate individuals may engage in risky foreign policy not because they are risk-seeking, like Excitement Seekers, and not because they ignore the risks involved, as would be expected from those who are very

[90] Their use of the term rational refers to the common parlance for those who make well thought out, calculated judgments, and is not related to the assumption of rationality employed in the rational choice framework widely used in political science. Rational, in their study, is synonymous with high Conscientiousness.

low on Deliberation, but because they have weighed the alternatives and consider the use of force to be the most appropriate means of achieving their foreign policy objectives. Moreover, the results for Deliberation and Openness, while not being supportive of the expectations of the theory, do make some sense given the results of other studies that have found a significant relationship between Openness and liberal ideology, and Conscientiousness and conservative ideology.

In sum, two of the four hypotheses are strongly supported by the analysis in this chapter. Leaders who are excitement seekers are more likely to engage in risky foreign polices, while those who are more altruistic are less likely to do so. While empirical results of the relationship between Deliberation and risk-taking are opposite from what was expected, there are plausible explanations for why leaders who have higher Deliberation trait scores may actually more likely to accept riskier foreign policy options. Their motivation for doing so is different than those who actively take risks for the sake of risk, or act in haste and therefore ignore the risks their choices entail. The only personality trait variable that does not significantly predict risk-taking is Openness to Action.

Finally, not only do these results lend support to a personality-led theory of risk-taking, but they also offer a theoretical explanation for the significance of presidential fixed effects included in other studies (e.g., Fordham 1998a; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). While scholars often acknowledge the consistency that exists within each administration through the inclusion of such variables, they offer very little theoretical explanation for why there is such consistency. There are a number of potential factors that may be unique to each presidential administration (e.g. advisors and cabinet

members), however the results of this chapter provide evidence that the personality of the president, particularly their acceptance or aversion to risks, is a significant predictor of foreign policy behavior. Studies that overlook the importance of *who* is in charge will remain underspecified without the inclusion of presidential fixed effects. Studies that include these control variables, but treat them as simply accounting for idiosyncrasies of each administration, fail to acknowledge the systematic differences that may be driving the significance of fixed effects.

Chapter 5

Crisis Escalation as Risk-Taking

The previous chapter examined whether leaders' inherent risk propensities significantly influence their decisions to use force abroad. The results overall lend support to the personality-led theory of risk-taking and established that differences in leaders' traits matter when it comes to predicting foreign policy behavior. This chapter addresses the same question, namely, do presidents' risk propensities influence their decisions to engage in risky foreign policies, but focuses more specifically on crisis escalation.

There is a vast literature on crisis escalation that focuses on the impact of decisions makers' personalities and related cognitive processes, but these largely rely on case study analysis (for an important exception, see Keller 2005).[91] This chapter seeks to contribute to the literature by assessing whether president's inherent risk propensities can predict their decisions to escalate crises.

5.1. Overview of the Data Sets

Two distinct data sets are employed in this chapter to analyze presidents' decisions to escalate crises. The first, the International Crisis Behavior data set (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000), is a widely used data set of foreign policy and international crises. The second, the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set (Ghosn et al. 2004), is the

[91] See, for example: George and Smoke 1974; Holsti 1972, 1990; Jervis 1976; Lebow 1981; Snyder and Diesing 1977; Shlaim 1983. While these works highlight the psychology of leaders during crisis escalation, there is also a substantial vein of literature that examines the influence of systemic, dyadic, and state variables on escalations, often through quantitative analysis.

same data set that was used in Chapter 4.[92] While MIDs are not identical to crises, the prevalence of this data set in the escalation literature warrants that it be included as a robustness check on the results obtained from the analysis of the ICB data.

5.1.1. Crises

In theory, crisis situations are an ideal set of observations to examine risk-taking, because these are the cases where you are mostly likely to see the influence of an individual leader's personality. During crises a state's decision-making unit contracts, regardless of regime type, such that the state's leader (or small group of leaders) plays a central role in foreign policy decision making (Hermann et al. 2001). Furthermore, under crisis conditions a leader's personality traits are accentuated and their tendencies become more extreme (Hermann 1999). Thus, these are the cases where you are most likely to see the dispositions of presidents influence their states' behavior in the international arena.

The first data set employed here is the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) data set. According to the ICB, a foreign policy crisis is the result of a *change* in the *perceptions of the highest level decision makers* of a state regarding: (1) a threat to one or more basic values, (2) accompanied by an awareness of the finite amount of time to respond, and (3) a heightened probability of war (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000, 3).

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[92] Brecher and Wilkenfeld (2000) make some distinction, arguing that crises are a subset of larger *reoccurring* conflicts. Their distinction however does not differentiate between crises and conflict incidents such as MIDs. Overall the theories used to explain onset and escalation of a conflict are identical to those of crisis onset and escalation. The primary difference in these terms hinges on the level of analysis that data for each data set is collected. That is, a conflict is present in the MID data set based on an event between two or more states, whereas a crisis in the ICB actor-level data set comes into existence based on a leader's perception of threat. Perceptions do not play a role in the onset of a MID. In addition, a MID by nature indicates that there was an explicit threat, display, or use of force, whereas a crisis can be initiated by other actions such as a political act that satisfies the three criteria of a crisis. For a more detailed comparison of these data sets, see Hewitt (2003, 670-3). For a review of these data sets' collective insights on escalation, see Leng (2004).

Decision makers will perceive a change in these three conditions due to some "trigger" (e.g. threatening physical and/or verbal acts by another state, or a destabilizing event in the international system). This event marks what Brecher and Wilkenfeld term the crisis onset.[93] "Operationally, onset is indicated by the *outbreak* of a crisis, that is, the eruption of higher-than-normal disruptive interaction" (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000, 12). Such interaction generates stress for the decision makers involved, which is then heightened by time constraints and the possibility of military hostilities erupting. It is rare that the leader of a state who perceives such threats would choose not to respond; rather the security dilemma that arises under anarchy most often leads to a response against the triggering entity.[94] Thus, what started as a foreign policy crisis for one state, after it responds against the triggering state, evolves into an international crisis.[95]

Crisis escalation for many studies in international relations means specifically *escalation to war.* This is not, however, always the case. Some studies, for instance, have examined the distinct types of escalation, such as a change from pre-onset to full-blown crisis; a change from a non-violent to a violent crisis; a change from no or low-level violence to *severe* violence (Brecher 1996). Others have examined the different stages of escalation (Huth and Allee 2002), and types of escalatory mobilization (Lai 2004). The analysis below focuses largely on the escalation of a crisis to war; however, given that

[93] Brecher and Wilkenfeld develop a unified model of crisis that captures four related phases/periods: onset/pre-crisis, escalation/crisis, de-escalation/end-crisis, and impact/post-crisis. This dissertation focuses on the onset and escalation of crises only.

[94] Although it is unlikely, cases of non-response happen. Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1988) list 65 such cases of "failed" international crises.

[95] The distinction between a foreign policy crisis and an international crisis is relevant to how Brecher and Wilkenfeld's data are organized. They have a systems-level data set consisting of observations of international crises and an actor-level data set of foreign policy crises. Both data sets are employed in the analysis below.

leaders can take risky escalatory action short of war, several alternative operationalizations of escalation are considered.

Given that the focus of this dissertation is on American presidents, limiting escalation to the occurrence of war can be problematic for several reasons. For one, geopolitical factors enabled the U.S. to have a highly isolationist foreign policy practice prior to World War I. In other words, it can be argued that presidents before this period had less incentive and opportunity to become embroiled in foreign policy crises. The foreign policy orientation of the U.S. drastically changed following World War II, at which point it assumed superpower status and shortly after found itself immersed in more than four decades of the Cold War with the Soviet Union.[96] Scholars have shown that states with relatively equal power are more likely to go to war with one another, compared to states with disparate capabilities (Bremer 1992; Kugler and Lemke 1996; Lemke and Werner 1996; Oneal and Russett 1997; Reed 2003). Given that there were few formidable opponents to the U.S., it was unlikely to face many challenges by other states.[97] These historical factors may have put some limits on the likelihood that the U.S. would go to war with another country.[98]

More importantly, crisis escalation is a dynamic process. That is, crises do not escalate from one side alone, but instead have been characterized as a game of competitive risk-taking, or a bargaining process where information is revealed about each

[96] See Braumoeller (2009) for an excellent analysis of U.S. foreign policy during the inter-war years, which disputes the argument that the U.S. was isolationist during this period.

[97] The United States and the U.S.S.R. (later Russia) assumed superpower status following World War II. There was only one case where the U.S. was a crisis actor before it was a superpower: the Panay Incident involving Japan.

[98] This should not suggest that it was impossible for the US to go to war during this period, clearly history points to U.S. involvement in several wars during this period (i.e., the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Gulf War).

side's intentions, capabilities, and resolve (Leng 2004; Powell 1987, 1988; Schelling 1960; Snyder and Diesing 1977). During crisis escalation, actors from both sides of the crisis attempt to demonstrate their resolve. The outcome of a crisis is not usually determined by one state's leader, but by the interaction between those states. Thus when measuring escalation of a crisis by its outcome, it is necessary to keep in mind the strategic interaction that could be affecting the outcome.

A final and related point is that while war is the highest level of escalation possible, lower level escalatory actions that precede it can be risks as well. Crises are dynamic processes and few go directly from trigger to war. Instead, leaders may take actions throughout the crisis that increase the risk of war. For instance, a crisis can be escalated by a non-violent triggering event, to which the response is a violent escalatory action that increases the risk of war. An example of this is the foreign policy crisis that was triggered for the U.S. on December 15, 1989, when Manuel Noriega was named head of the Panamanian government and soon after declared war against the United States. In response to what is coded as a political, non-violent trigger, American president George H.W. Bush escalated the crisis by choosing a violent response; namely, the deployment of 26,000 troops to Panama to bring Noriega back to the United States to stand trial on drug trafficking charges. In order to address some of the problems with defining escalation solely as escalation to war, two alternative operationalizations of the dependent variable are included to account for how the president responded to the trigger of a crisis are also considered (i.e. by using the military or by using violence).

The ICB data set from 1918 to 2000, lists a total of 61 foreign policy crises for the United States; the first crisis did not occur until 1937. Of these 61 crises, 53 are

considered in the analysis below; eight crises were dropped because they were intra-war crises.[99] Intra-war crises are not appropriate for studying escalation as the greater crisis has already reached the highest possible level of escalation – war. Given the dichotomous dependent variable, logit was used to estimate three values of the dependent variable – escalation to military response, escalation to violence, and escalation to war.

The first two operationalizations of risk-taking present an alternative measure of escalatory behavior measured as the response chosen in reaction to a crisis trigger. The ICB dataset has nine values that express a state's response to a crisis trigger: no response-inaction; verbal act; political act; economic act; other non-violent act; non-violent military act; multiple including non-violent military act; violent military act; multiple including violent military act. The response variable was recoded to represent military responses and non-military responses, as well as violent and non-violent responses.[100] These two types of escalation are different from one another, as there are cases where the president may have chosen, for instance, to mobilize troops but they were never used in combat. These dependent variables shed light on those presidents who are more likely to employ the military or violence to handle foreign policy crises, thereby raising the risk of war. Mobilization of troops, for instance, could be considered a military response, but not a violent response. On the other hand, if the president had mobilized troops and they were used involved in small clashes, this would be considered a military response as well as a

[99] The majority of these dropped crises were during the Vietnam War. The eight crises dropped included: Korean War II; Korean War III; 1965 Pleiku; 1968 Tet Offensive; 1969 Vietnam Spring Offensive; 1970 Invasion of Cambodia; 1972 Vietnam Ports Mining; 1972 Christmas Bombing.

[100] Responses to a trigger were coded as 1, a military response, if they involved a non-violent military act, multiple actions including a non-violent military act, a violent military act and multiple actions including a violent military response. All other responses were coded 0. Alternatively, only a violent military act or multiple actions including a violent military response were coded as being a violent response.

violent response. Looking at the response to a crisis trigger ameliorates the effect of an adversary's strategic response, since it is less concerned with the final outcome (i.e., war or no war) of the crisis, and focuses attention on the decision making of the President.

The last dependent variable captures the traditional notion of escalation to war; however, the variable has been modified to also take into account those cases where serious clashes occurred.[101] This adaption was made because, according to the ICB data set, there are only three cases of crises from 1918-2000 where the U.S. was a crisis actor that escalated to war: Pearl Harbor, Korean War (I), and the Gulf War.[102] This list omits the Gulf of Tonkin Crisis and therefore does not account for escalation to war in Vietnam. This omission is problematic given the decade the U.S. spent fighting in Vietnam and the six crises that were dropped from the data set as intra-war crises. In order to preserve the integrity of the ICB coding, all crises that escalated to serious clashes were coded 1 for this dependent variable. This adds an additional seven crises to the three previously listed: Gulf of Tonkin, Mayaguez, Invasion of Grenada, Gulf of Syrte II, Invasion of Panama, UNSCOM II – Operation Desert Fox, and Kosovo.[103] Although they were not wars by the standard definition used in international relations, they were all cases where the president chose to use combat military force – be it by air

[101] The coding is based on the ICB variable *sevvio*, which captures the intensity of violence used by a crisis actor in their response to the crisis (no violence; minor clashes; serious clashes; full scale war). The logit model was estimated with this operationalization of the dependent variable, as well as operationalizing escalation as war only. Allowing the dependent variable to account for war and serious clashes had little substantive impact on the empirical results. While Excitement Seeking was significant when using this operationalization, as seen in Table 5.3, neither models' overall fit is statistically significant.

[102] Wars are coded as incidents "where military combat is sufficiently sustained that it will result in a minimum of 1,000 total battle deaths" (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996, 171).

[103] While some scholars consider the Kosovo conflict to be a war (e.g., Chapman and Reiter 2004), the ICB data set does not code it as such.

strikes such as in the second Gulf of Syrte Crisis, Operation Desert Fox, and Kosovo, or by ground forces as in Mayaguez, Grenada, Panama.

Table 5.1 provides data on the dependent variables organized by president. It shows the total number of foreign policy crises the U.S. experienced, the number of crises to which they responded with a use of the military or violence, and the number that escalated to serious clashes or war, labeled *escalate serious violence*. Given the conceptual overlap in these three operationalizations of escalation, the number of total crises is not the same as the three values combined.

Table 5.1. Presidents and crisis escalation according to the ICB data set 1918-2000

President	Total Crises	Military Response	Violent Response	Escalate Serious Violence
Roosevelt	2	1	1	1
Truman	7	3	1	1
Eisenhower	8	3	0	0
Kennedy	6	4	0	0
Johnson	6	6	3	1
Nixon	4	3	0	0
Ford	3	3	1	1
Carter	3	3	1	0
Reagan	4	4	3	2
Bush	2	2	2	2
Clinton	8	7	3	2
Total	53	39	15	10

5.1.2. Conflicts

The focus of this chapter is crisis escalation. However, there is a large quantitative literature in international relations that focuses on *conflict,* or dispute, escalation rather than *crisis* escalation. Studies that examine conflict escalation most often rely on the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set (e.g. Bolks and Stoll 2003; Kinsella and

Russett 2002; Rasler and Thompson 2006; Reed 2000).[104] To reiterate from the previous chapter, the MID data set captures incidents where "the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property, or territory of another state" (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996, 168).

Similar to crisis escalation, the escalation of conflict has most often meant escalation to war in the extant literature. Since war is the highest level that hostilities can reach, it is understandable that scholarship would rely on this operationalization. However, as proposed above, it is not the only type of escalation, and may not provide adequate information about the desires of a given president. Therefore, two measures of the dependent variable were employed in the analysis. The first was whether the conflict escalated to war; the second was whether the conflict escalated to the use of military force or war.[105] As argued in the previous chapter, using force to carry out foreign policy goals raises the potential for war and is an escalated level of hostility compared to the many alternative strategies that leader can use to resolve disputes.

Table 5.2 below displays the total MID involvement for all presidents from 1816 through 2000, as well as how many of those MIDs escalated to force and war. In all the U.S. was involved in 340 MIDs from 1816 to 2000; 90 involved the use of military force and 9 escalated to full blown wars.

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[104] While MIDs are most often used in the study of conflict escalation, there are alternative data sets as well. Huth and Allee (2002) for example, created their own data set of territorial disputes to study escalation as it proceeded through three phases: the challenge to the status quo, escalation to diplomatic negotiations, and escalation to military coercion.

[105] War and use of military force are based on the hostility level of the dispute variable in the MID data set. This variable is coded as: 1- no militarized action; 2-threat to use force; 3-display of force; 4-use of force; 5-war.

Table 5.2. Presidents and MID escalation 1816-2000

President	Total MIDs	Escalate to Force	Escalate to War
James Monroe	6	6	0
John Quincy Adams	1	1	0
Andrew Jackson	4	2	0
Martin Van Buren	4	0	0
William Henry Harrison	0	0	0
John Tyler	2	1	1
James K. Polk	1	0	0
Zachary Taylor	1	0	0
Millard Fillmore	2	0	0
Franklin Pierce	7	2	0
James Buchanan	6	1	0
Abraham Lincoln	5	2	0
Andrew Johnson	5	0	0
Ulysses S. Grant	8	2	0
Rutherford B. Hayes	3	0	0
James A. Garfield	0	0	0
Chester A. Arthur	2	0	0
Grover Cleveland	6	1	0
Benjamin Harrison	3	0	0
Grover Cleveland	5	1	0
William McKinley	3	0	2
Theodore Roosevelt	10	1	0
William Howard Taft	5	2	0
Woodrow Wilson	19	12	2
Warren G. Harding	1	0	0
Calvin Coolidge	3	2	0
Herbert Hoover	2	1	0
Franklin D. Roosevelt	12	4	1
Harry S. Truman	10	1	1
Dwight D. Eisenhower	35	4	0
John F. Kennedy	17	3	0
Lyndon B. Johnson	24	8	1
Richard Nixon	16	4	0
Gerald Ford	10	8	0
James Carter	14	2	0
Ronald Reagan	44	4	0
George H. W. Bush	11	6	1
William J. Clinton	33	9	0
Total	340	90	9

5.2. Testing the Theory

This chapter asks: Are presidents with higher inherent risk-propensities more likely to escalate international crises? According to the theory presented in Chapter 2, a leader's risk-related personality traits should significantly predict the types of foreign policies they choose.

5.2.1. Hypotheses

The generalized hypotheses laid out in Chapter 2 can be specified for examining escalation behavior:

Hypothesis 1- Excitement Seeking:

a. Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to escalate foreign policy crises.

b. Leaders with higher Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to escalate inter-state conflicts.

Hypothesis 2 – Openness to Action:

a. Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to escalate foreign policy crises.

b. Leaders with higher Openness to Action trait scores are more likely to escalate inter-state conflicts.

Hypothesis 3 – Deliberativeness:

a. Leaders with lower Deliberative trait scores are more likely to escalate foreign policy crises.

b. Leaders with lower Deliberative trait scores are more likely to escalate inter-state conflicts.

Hypothesis 4 – Altruism:

a. Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to escalate crises.

b. Leaders with higher Altruism trait scores are less likely to escalate inter-state conflicts.

5.2.2. Control Variables

Personality traits of the American President are not the only factors influencing whether or not a crisis escalates. Therefore a control for whether or not the crisis was initiated by a militarized trigger or a violent trigger was included. In a study of the ICB data, Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997) present evidence of matching, or tit-for-tat, behaviors in the responses to crisis triggers. Nonviolent triggers were matched by nonviolent responses 69 percent of the time, while violent triggers were met with violent responses 68 percent of the time. Empirical studies have also shown that the higher the magnitude of conflict initiation, the greater the likelihood of war (e.g. Maoz 1983). This suggests that there should be positive relationships between these control variables and the overall escalation outcome since they trigger a crisis at a higher magnitude of hostility.

Similar to the crisis models, two specifications were estimated for the MID escalation models; the first only accounts for the effect of personality traits, while the second includes a control variable to account for whether or not the U.S. originated the dispute. As the results of chapter 4 show, dispute initiation is at least in some part related to a president's personality traits. Including this control variable may therefore introduce post-treatment bias, while not including it could possibly introduce omitted variable bias (King and Zeng 2006).[106] It is expected that disputes that the U.S. initiated are less likely to go to war because of the great power difference between the U.S. and most other states in the international system. Opponents of the U.S. are likely to recognize the vast difference in capabilities and settle before a dispute can escalate to war.

[106] See King and Zeng (2006) for a discussion of post-treatment bias and other biases that are prevalent in statistical analysis of international relations.

5.2.3. Equations

The following equations were used to estimate the influence of personality traits on risk-taking:

Model 1: Crisis Escalation (U.S. Crisis Actor)

$$\text{Escalation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E5 + \beta_2 O4 + \beta_3 C6 + \beta_4 A3 + \beta_5 \text{Trigger} + \varepsilon$$

Model 1a: Crisis Escalation (All U.S. Involvement)

$$\text{Escalation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E5 + \beta_2 O4 + \beta_3 C6 + \beta_4 A3 + \beta_5 \text{US Crisis Actor} + \beta_6 \text{ Gravity of Threat} + \varepsilon$$

Model 2: Conflict Escalation

$$\text{Escalation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E5 + \beta_2 O4 + \beta_3 C6 + \beta_4 A3 + \beta_5 \text{US MID Initiator} + \varepsilon$$

5.3. Analysis and Results

5.3.1. Crisis Escalation

Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, logit analysis was used to estimate all the models. Table 5.3 demonstrates that despite the small sample size (N=53), the personality traits hypothesized to predict risk-taking garner some support. The influence of presidents' risk-related personality traits is not equal across the traits or operationalizations of the dependent variable; Excitement Seeking is the only trait that is consistently significant in the model. Still, that there is consistency in even one trait is encouraging.

Table 5.3. Personality traits and immediate response to a crisis trigger

	Violent Response		Militarized Response		Escalate Serious Violence		
Excitement Seeking	.12 (.057)**	.091 (.058)*	.111 (.07)**	.099 (.047)**	.087 (.057)*	0.57 (.067)	.083 (.056)*
Openness to Action	-.07 (.048)* [a]	-.042 (.048)	-.058 (.044)	-.042 (.044)	-.058 (.048)	-.03 (.057)	-.052 (.044)
Deliberation	.025 (.036)	.009 (.038)	.024 (.037)	.022 (.037)	.013 (.036)	-.004 (.04)	.013 (.036)
Altruism	.01 (.026)	.01 (.027)	-.024 (.026)	-.032 (.027)	.032 (.033)	.033 (.03)	.029 (.033)
Violent Trigger	___	1.271 (.784)*	___	___	___	1.226 (.879)	___
Violent / Militarized Trigger	___	___	___	.757 (.763)	___	___	.364 (.688)
Constant	-6.303 (3.542)*	-5.46 (3.627)*	-2.557 (3.197)	-2.444 (3.171)	-6.092 (3.857)*	-5.196 (4.053)	-6.151 (3.774)

N = 53. Logit analysis with Huber-White robust standard errors in parentheses. Two-tailed tests reported; ***=p≤.01; **=p≤.05; *=p≤.1. ; [a]= significant but the sign of this estimate is not in the predicted direction.

By and large, however, the models tell us little, since the test of the overall model fit is insignificant for all but one, the escalation to violence without controls.[107] In examining this model, only two risk-related traits, Excitement Seeking and Openness to Action are significant predictors, although the effect of the latter drops out when controlling for a violent trigger to the crisis. As expected, presidents tend to respond to violent triggers with violent responses, yet again the significance of this finding is suspect since the overall fit of the model is not statistically significant. The results for the Excitement Seeking trait were as expected. The substantive impact of this variable suggests that a change in the president's Excitement Seeking score from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean, while holding all other personality trait variables constant, increases the likelihood of a violent response to a crisis trigger by 42%. This same change in the president's Openness to Action trait,

[107] The insignificance of these models was determined by the test statistic for the overall model fit, *Prob > Chi2*.

however, decreases the likelihood of a violent response by 28%. The finding for Openness to Action is surprising in light of the theory, but matches well with the results from Chapter 4. The results of these chapters will be compared in greater detail below.

Given the small size of the data set, and hence the weak power of the models above, the relationship between each risk-related personality trait and the trigger response variables was assessed by using Fisher's exact tests. This basic statistical test can be used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables, but not the direction of that relationship. To facilitate the cross-tabulation, each of the continuous personality trait scores was recoded on a five-point scale from *very low* to *very high*.[108] The p-value for each test of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is listed in Table 5.4, with significant results bolded. The results show that a president's Excitement Seeking and Deliberation scores are significantly related to whether they choose a violent or militarized response to a trigger. To get a sense of the direction of this relationship, Table 5.5 displays the actual times presidents chose to respond to a crisis with violence, depending on either their Excitement Seeking or Deliberation trait. A clear pattern is evident when looking at the relationship between Excitement Seeking and Violent responses; the higher a president's risk-related trait score, the more likely they were to escalate a crisis. The data for

[108] The NEO-PI-R comes with a form to interpret the raw score results of the personality inventory, which provides T scores based on different normative samples. The T scores have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. In this way trait scores can be interpreted as being very low (T score of 20-34), low (35-44), average (45-55), high (56-65), and very high (66-80) (Costa and McCrae 1992). Presidents' trait scores were thereby ranked from very low to very high on a 1 to 5 scale. Thus a president with a T score on their Altruism trait of 40 would be coded as low on this trait.

Deliberation illustrates the opposite pattern; those with low Deliberation scores were more likely to escalate.[109]

Table 5.4. Fisher's exact test of relationship between traits and crisis escalation

	Violent Response	**Military Response**	**Escalate Serious Violence**
Excitement Seeking	**.031**	**.112**	**.134**
Openness to Action	.976	.211	.899
Deliberation	**.028**	**.042**	.163
Altruism	.343	.451	.424
Note: bolded numbers indicate a significant relationship.			

Table 5.5. Significant traits from Fishers' exact test and actual crisis escalations

Excitement Seeking			**Deliberation**		
	Non-Violent Response	Violent Response		Non-Violent Response	Violent Response
Very low	---	---	*Very low*	79%	21%
Low	86%	14%	*Low*	43%	57%
Average	89%	11%	*Average*	67%	33%
High	40%	60%	*High*	100%	0%
Very High	36%	64%	*Very High*	---	---

Overall these results suggest that presidents who have higher excitement seeking scores are more likely to escalate foreign policy crises. This result fits with *Hypothesis 1a* and the general expectation that presidents who have high Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to be risk-takers. The results also point to some, albeit weak, evidence for *hypothesis 3a*, in that there is a significant relationship between Deliberation and escalation, at least in terms of the response chosen to a crisis trigger.

[109] The only president with above average Deliberation scores in this data set was Dwight Eisenhower. In all eight cases Eisenhower responded in a non-violent manner.

5.3.2. Alternative Set of Crises – All Cases of U.S. Involvement

Given that the small number of observations in the data set of all cases where the U.S. was a crisis actor (meaning that it directly experienced a foreign policy crisis), a larger dataset of all cases of U.S. involvement was analyzed as a robustness check. This data set consists of 242 observations of international crises from 1918-2000 in which the U.S. was involved. Unlike the previous analysis, this data set includes an additional 191 cases where the U.S. had a role to play in the crisis, but was not a crisis actor. [110] That is, the U.S. did not experience a foreign policy crisis, but rather it was involved in the crisis that other states were experiencing. American participation in these cases spanned from low-level involvement in a crisis such as political statements, or economic interventions such as the withholding of aid or the selling of weapons, to high-level direct military involvement. Given that the U.S. was not a crisis actor in more than three quarters of these cases, its unclear how important the president's personality was to determining the outcome of the crisis, measured as war or no war. For instance, Table 5.6 lists the number of crises that the U.S. was coded as having been involved in by president, and the number of these that escalated to war. It indicates that the U.S. was involved in twenty-nine crises, six of which escalated to war, when Jimmy Carter was president. Compare this to table 5.1 which shows that during Carter's time in office the U.S. was involved in a total of three crises and *none of them* escalated to war. Therefore some caution should be taken before reading too deep into the results of this model. Nevertheless this larger set of observations relieves some of the selection bias that would be introduced in just looking

[110] Only 51 cases of crises where the U.S. was a crisis actor are included in this expanded data set. Two cases (i.e., Pearl Harbor and Dien Bien Phu) from the previous data set where the U.S. was a crisis actor were dropped since they are considered intra-war crises when analyzed from the systems level on analysis.

at those cases where the U.S. was a direct player and greatly increases the number of observations.

Table 5.6. U.S. presidents and international crises (ICB) 1918-2000

President	US Crisis involvement	Escalation to War
Woodrow Wilson	11	1
Warren G. Harding	2	0
Calvin Coolidge	4	0
Herbert Hoover	6	2
Franklin D. Roosevelt	13	3
Harry S. Truman	21	4
Dwight D. Eisenhower	28	1
John F. Kennedy	14	2
Lyndon B. Johnson	18	2
Richard Nixon	13	6
Gerald Ford	10	1
James Carter	29	6
Ronald Reagan	34	3
George H. W. Bush	13	3
William J. Clinton	23	2

Like the previous analysis, the only criterion for exclusion from this data set was that the crisis was an intra-war crisis. The dependent variable, *escalate*, is coded 1, if the crisis escalated to full-scale war, and 0 otherwise.[111] Among the observations, 36 crises escalated to war. Logit analysis was used, given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable. In addition to the risk-related personality variables, two variables controlling for whether the US was a crisis actor and the gravity of the crisis were estimated in the model.[112] It was expected that cases where the U.S. was a crisis actor would have been less likely to escalate to war, because of the power differential between the U.S. and

[111] This is based on the ICB systems codebook definition for the variable *violence,* which "identifies the extent of violence in an international crisis as a whole, regardless of its use or non-use by a specific actor as a crisis management technique" (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000).

[112] The models are first estimated without the inclusion of these variables to avoid any potential post-treatment bias that their inclusion may introduce since the U.S. being a crisis actor and the gravity of the crisis are in some part consequences of the presidents in power.

nearly every other state in the system. The second variable, the type of threat posed by the crisis, is likely to have a positive effect on the likelihood of a crisis to escalate to war.[113] As the threat in any crisis becomes more grave and thereby threatening the existence of any crisis actors, the likelihood that a crisis will escalate to war is expected to increase.

Table 5.7. Presidents' personality traits and escalation of crises (ICB) 1918-2000

	Escalate to War	**Escalate to War**
Excitement Seeking	-0.071 (.037)* [a] **-18%**	-.069 (.039)* [a] **-15%**
Openness to Action	.046 (.034)	.039 (.034)
Deliberation	-0.04 (.0222)* **-8%**	-.035 (.024)* **-6%**
Altruism	-.029 (.017)* **-7%**	-.023 (.017)
US Crisis Actor	—	-.302 (.482)
Gravity of Threat	—	.531 (.137)*** **7%**
Constant	3.242* (2.126)	1.535 (2.2)

Note: N=242. Logit analysis with Huber-White robust standard errors in parentheses. Two-tailed tests reported; ***=p≤.01; **=p≤.05; *=p≤.1. [a]= significant but the sign of this estimate is not in the predicted direction. Marginal effects for significant variables presented in bold were generated varying each independent variable from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean, or a one unit change above the median in the case of discrete variables, while holding other variables constant at their means/medians.

The results presented in Table 5.7 show that as presidents' Excitement Seeking, Deliberation and Altruism scores increase the likelihood that the crises they are involved

[113] This variable is coded as follows: 0- economic threat, 1-limited military damage, 2-political threat, 3-territorial threat, 4-threat to influence, 5-threat of grave damage, 6-threat of existence. Two cases, the 1952 Catalina Affair and the 1979 Soviet threat against Pakistan were originally coded as "7-other" but were recoded as having a threat of "1-limited military damage."

in escalate to war decrease. The effect of a leader's Altruism trait, however, is not robust to the inclusion of control variables. When taking into account whether the US was a crisis actor and the gravity of the crisis, only Excitement Seeking and Deliberation significantly predict the likelihood of a crisis escalating to war. As expected, presidents who are more deliberative are less likely to see the crises they are involved in escalate to war. While the effect of this trait is less pronounced, compared to Excitement Seeking, it is still significant. Keeping all other variables constant at their means, a change from the least deliberative president, Harry Truman, to Dwight Eisenhower, one of most Deliberative, decreases the likelihood of crisis escalation by about 11%.

Contrary to *Hypotheses 1a* it seems that crises involving an American president with a higher risk propensity, understood as a higher Excitement Seeking Score, are *less* likely to escalate to war. While this may seem counter intuitive, given that we would expect excitement seekers to escalate more readily, its significance makes a good deal of sense if you consider the operationalization of the dependent variable and the perception of the opposing state(s) in the crisis. While the latter is something that this project cannot measure, it is reasonable to argue that crises involving a riskier President are less likely to escalate to *war,* because leaders of the opposing states seek settlement to crises before they can reach such a level of hostility. Wars are costly, thus a state may be more willing to seek settlement if dealing with a known risk-taker, rather than find itself engaged in war. To put the finding of the model in perspective, keeping all other variables constant at their means, a change from having John F. Kennedy, the president with the greatest Excitement Seeking score, in office to Woodrow Wilson, who has one of the lowest excitement seeking scores, *increases* the likelihood that a crisis escalates by nearly 21%.

So while Wilson's personality traits would indicate that he was quite risk-averse, the strategic decisions of other states may make it more likely that he would be involved in a war than a more risky president. It should be reiterated however, that the U.S. was not a direct player in many of these crises and therefore it is unclear how relevant the president's personality was on the outcome.

While the variable accounting for whether or not the US was a crisis actor is signed as predicted, indicating that crises where the US was an actor are less likely to escalate, this variable is not significant. Alternatively, the gravity of the threat of the crisis is significant and positively related to the likelihood of escalation. In other words, as the threat at the heart of the crisis becomes more grave and threatening to the existence of the crisis actor, the crisis is more likely to escalate to war. It would also stand to reason that the gravity of a crisis depresses the influence of a leaders' risk propensity because the more grave the threat, the more likely that the president, regardless of their risk propensity, will escalate the crisis.

5.3.3. Conflict Escalation

The results in table 5.8 below lend some support to the central thesis that leaders' personality traits influence their foreign policy decisions, and speak to the results presented above on the escalation of crises. The results should be viewed with some hesitation, however, since the model for any escalation including the control variable for U.S. initiation is not statistically significant (prob>chi2 = 0.194).[114] Similar to the results regarding all crises with U.S. involvement (table 5.7), as a leader's Excitement Seeking

[114] The test statistic for the model fit for the two escalation to war models was (prob>chi2 = 0.1). The model for escalation to war without the control for the U.S. initiation was statistically significant (prob>chi2 = 0.001).

personality trait score increases, the likelihood of escalation *decreases*, regardless of whether escalation is considered to simply be an act of force or the highest possible hostility level attainable, war. Interestingly, the effect of a leader's Excitement Seeking trait is significantly less strong when it comes to determining the likelihood of an escalation to war, as compared to the likelihood of an escalation that accounts for the use of force as well. A change in the President's Excitement Seeking score from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean, while holding all other variables constant, translates into only a 4 percent decrease in the likelihood of a conflict escalating to war. This same change has a much greater effect, a 19 percent decrease, on the likelihood that the conflict escalates more broadly speaking. Since this analysis is focused on the highest level of hostility in the overall dispute, it is again possible that the results reflect the strategic interaction of other states. In the case of disputes involving a particularly risky president, such as one who has a high Excitement Seeking score, leaders of adversary states may seek to settle these disputes short of the use of military force, because of the potential that such escalation could erupt into war with a risk-taker.

These results look similar to those of crisis escalation in that a leader's level of Deliberation exhibits a significant negative influence on the likelihood of the conflicts they are engaged in escalating. While a leader's level of Deliberation does not seem to significantly affect the likelihood that the conflicts escalate to war, the effect is quite strong when it comes to any escalation involving the use of force, which accounts for both full-scale war and the use of military force. The effects of the Openness to Action and Altruism traits are correctly signed, but neither of these variables is statistically

significant. Only in the case of escalation to war did it seem to matter whether the US initiated the MID.

Table 5.8 shows that a change from the U.S. being the initiator of a MID (as was most often the case in these 340 observations) to the U.S. not being the initiator increases the likelihood of the conflict escalating to war by 6%. This result lends support to the notion that the strategic behavior of the other state in the conflict is influencing the value of the dependent variable; it is likely that cases when the U.S. initiates a MID are less likely to escalate to war because the opposing side recognizes that they have very little chance of success if the conflict should escalate to war and seeks settlement short of such extreme escalation.

Table 5.8. Presidents' personality traits and conflict escalation (MIDs)

	War		**Any Escalation**	
Excitement Seeking	-.074 (.04)* [a] **-4%**	-.078 (.04)** [a] **-3%**	-.044 (.019)** [a] **-19%**	-.044 (.018)** [a] **-20%**
Openness To Action	-.007 (.037)	.007 (.039)	.01 (.016)	.009 (.015)
Deliberation	-.019 (.033)	-.015 (.031)	-.024 (.014)* **-11%**	-.024 (.014)* **-12%**
Altruism	-.001 (.028)	-.009 (.035)	-.005 (.012)	-.005 (.012)
Originator	__	-1.646 (.737)** **+6%**	__	.185 (.344)
Constant	1.572 (2.97)	2.591 (3.154)	2.631 (1.361)*	2.472 (1.401)*

N= 340. Results from logit analysis with Huber-White robust standard errors. Two-tailed tests reported; ***=p≤.01; **=p≤.05; *=p≤.1. [a]= significant but the sign of this estimate is not in the predicted direction. Marginal effects for significant variables presented in bold were generated varying each independent variable from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean while holding other variables constant at their means/medians. The median for the variable Originator was 1, meaning the US was the originator of a MID. The marginal effects measures a change in this variable is from 1 to 0.

5.3.4. Selection Bias

Scholars have long recognized the potential for selection bias in empirical examinations of conflict escalation (e.g. Huth and Allee 2002; Rasler and Thompson 2006; Reed 2000).[115] The problem of selection bias stems from researchers not taking into account that the (often unobservable) factors that lead to conflict onset are related to those that lead to conflict escalation.[116] Statistical models do not easily capture factors such as resolve, willingness to fight, and prior beliefs; nevertheless these factors play a crucial role in determining a state's utility for initiating and escalating a conflict. For instance, if a leader's level of resolve or commitment increases the likelihood of conflict onset, it is possible that such a show of resolve will compel others to find solutions to their conflicts with that leader short of militarized action. In this case there is a negative correlation between onset and escalation, in that the unobservable variables that increase the likelihood that a state experiences a conflict decreases the likelihood of escalation.[117] As Reed explains: "There may be a statistical link then between the error terms [of the conflict onset and escalation equations] that should closely mirror the theoretical link scholars posit when they refer to a continuous process of conflict moving from low stages like onset through higher stages like escalation" (2000, 86). Leaders who initiate conflicts are thought to be of the highly resolved kind (Morrow 1985, 1989). Given their greater

[115] For a more general discussion of selection bias in the overall conflict literature see Morrow (1989).

[116] Similarly, selection bias is also introduced into data analysis by scholars who try to explain escalation to war by looking at a population of ongoing crises or disputes and differentiating those that escalate to war as compared to those that do not. Such populations omit the important information from cases where conflict onset did not occur, effectively cutting out those "dogs that didn't bark." If, however, the covariates of onset and escalation are related then it is necessary to include those cases where conflict onset did not occur.

[117] Reed (2000) finds evidence of such a relationship.

resolve, these risky leaders are more likely to escalate the conflicts they start. In other words, riskier leaders are highly resolved, and are more willing to accept the potential losses that come with choosing war over a diplomatic settlement. One way to account for correlation in the error terms of the onset and escalation equations is to model the two simultaneously. To this end, the unified model of conflict onset and escalation first employed by Reed (2000), has become the most common way for scholars to account for these problems of selection bias.[118]

To test for this selection effect a Heckman-style censored probit model was estimated using the MID data set. The Heckman assumes that the outcome (war/no war) can only be observed based on a selection model, in this case whether the president initiated the conflict (Lai 2004).[119] The output of the analysis produces a measure of the correlation between the error terms of the selection and outcome models, rho. The selection phase of the model accounts for leader's selecting themselves into a conflict by

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[118] Alternatively, Keller (2005) proposes: "an emphasis on crises provides a set of nominally similar cases in which decision makers had an opportunity…to behave aggressively" (215) as compared to studies that rely on observations of conflict which truncate the dependent variable since these already constitute decisions to escalate tensions to some higher level of risk. In addition, looking at the number of wars a leader has been involved in does not control for the opportunity to act aggressively; one leader may be presented with several crises where they can escalate hostilities, while another may be presented with none. Keller's position therefore is to control for potential selection bias by using the ICB data, which he implies, does not necessarily assume that conflict has ensued. Several elements of this argument are problematic. First, Keller does not differentiate between a conflict and crisis but insinuates that the way the two types of data are coded makes one less vulnerable to selection bias problems. However, cases can enter both the MID (conflict) and ICB (crisis) data sets based on a low level of hostility. More importantly, his "solution" fails to address the bigger issue; the need to take into account the bias generated by the similarity in latent factors that leads to both the onset of a crisis and crisis escalation.

[119] It is certainly possible for presidents to escalate conflicts that they did not initiate, however this latter class of conflicts are not included in the outcome model. The mechanisms behind initiation and escalation are theorized to be the same; a leader who has a high-risk propensity will have high resolve, making them more likely to initiate conflicts as well as escalate those conflicts to war.

initiation.[120] The selection equation is the same as Model 2, used in Chapter 4, to estimate the likelihood of conflict initiation. The outcome equation then assesses whether leaders who initiate a conflict are more likely to escalate it to war. It is expected that leaders who select themselves into a conflict by initiating it are more likely to continue to take escalatory risks that will lead to war.

Sartori's (2003) binary selection model is used to estimate whether a leader selects into a conflict by initiating it, and whether the conflict then escalates to war. Sartori's model distinguishes itself from other selection models, because it eliminates the need for an exclusion restriction, that is, an extra variable in the selection equation. Scholars often include an exclusion restriction in selection models, even when the inclusion of such a variable is not theoretically warranted. It is reasonable however, to assume that the same factors that affect initiation of a conflict will affect the likelihood a conflict escalates to war. Sartori's model is useful for such situations and relies on the assumption that the error term is the same for the outcome and selection models.[121] The identifying assumption is likely to be true under three conditions: (1) identical explanatory factors explain the selection and subsequent outcome of interest, (2) the selection and outcome of interest involve similar decisions or goals, and (3) the decisions

[120] Recall that the initiation of force was hypothesized to be a function of the four risk-related personality traits (Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation, and Altruism), the unemployment rate, quarterly change in inflation, quarterly change in presidential approval, whether there was a unified government, a Republican-led government, an ongoing war, the cold war, the US's capabilities, and time variables to control for potential temporal dependence (Carter and Signorino 2007).

[121] For this test it is assumed that the errors across the selection and outcome equations are positively correlated. This assumption is justified based on the argument that the same variables that increase the likelihood of crisis initiation are also likely to increase the likelihood of escalation. Sartori makes a strong case for this positive relationship (2003, 2002) although others have argued that there may in fact be a negative correlation between these two equations (Lemke and Reed 2001). In addition to Sartori's empirical evidence, the theory presented in this dissertation suggests that the relationship should be a positive one.

occur within a short time frame and/or are close to each other geographically. Decisions to escalate conflicts to war meet these conditions.[122]

Table 5.9. Selection model of MID initiation and escalation

Selection		**Outcome**	
Excitement Seeking	.052 (.020)***	*Excitement Seeking*	-.031 (.030)
Openness to Action	.029 (.02)*	*Openness to Action*	-.001 (.022)
Deliberation	.027 (.02)	*Deliberation*	-.026 (.029)
Altruism	-.029 (.014)**	*Altruism*	.002 (.018)
Unemployment	.211 (.1)**	*Unemployment*	.103 (.113)
Inflation	.155 (.122)	*Inflation*	-.157 (.173)
Approval	-.017 (.011)*	*Approval*	.01 (.013)
Unified Government	.038 (.363)	*Unified Government*	.312 (.431)
Republican	.744 (.478)*	*Republican*	.193 (.578)
Ongoing War	.066 (.414)	*Ongoing War*	.116 (.524)
Cold War	.247 (.398)	*Cold War*	-.221 (.428)
Power	4.947 (3.333)*	*Power*	-6.515 (4.529)
Constant	-6.171 (2.265)***	*Constant*	3.107 (3.393)
LR test of independent equations (rho=0): *chi2*(1) = 1.20 *Prob>chi2* = 0.272			
Note: Total N=224; censored N = 109; Models also included time dependency variables t, t^2, and t^3. All time dependency variables were insignificant (results not shown). ***=p≤.01; **=p≤.05; *=p≤.1;			

Does selection into a conflict significantly affect the relationship between personality traits and war? The results in Table 5.9 clearly indicate that the answer is no. Not a single variable in the outcome equation was significant. To check the robustness of

[122] Sartori (2003) herself makes the case that her model would be well suited for analyses of escalation.

these results a Heckman bivariate probit model was used, which relaxes the correlation assumption and yields an estimate of rho, the correlation between the error terms of the two equations. In this case rho was *not* significantly different than zero (p=0.273), indicating that the two equations are independent of one another.[123] Given the lack of a correlation in the errors of these equations, the standard probit/logit model with no selection is deemed most appropriate (Sartori 2003).[124]

What these results indicate is that risk propensity of the president is significant for the initiation of a conflict, however is not relevant for whether those conflicts escalate to war. In other words, presidents who are risk-takers will initiate conflicts more often, but their impact on whether these conflicts escalate to war is muted. This makes sense in light of the overall results from this and the previous chapter. The significance of presidents' risk-related traits with respect to initiation and the use of force were robust across the models in Chapter 4. While there is some evidence that these traits influence the immediate response to a crisis trigger (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4), their relevance in escalation to war is doubtful given the overall empirical results of this chapter.

5.4. Discussion

The results above present a mixed picture for the personality-led theory of risk-taking. Similar to the results of Chapter 4, an individual's Excitement Seeking score is the strongest and most significant personality trait to predict risky foreign policy

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[123] As stated above, Sartori's binary selection model requires that you assume the correlation of the errors. The value of rho presented here comes from a robustness check of Sartori's model using a more tradition Heckman bivariate probit model through the "heckprob" command in STATA.

[124] The traditional logit and Heckman probit models yielded similar results for the outcome model as Sartori's model – none of the variables were significant.

behavior. It was consistently significant in the models above, across datasets and units of analysis employed. Most interestingly however, the predicted sign of the relationship between Excitement Seeking and escalation was reversed from the hypothesized relationship in the empirical analysis of MID escalation and all crises where the was U.S. was involved in some capacity. While this finding raises some concerns about the theory espoused in Chapter 2, it seems likely that the reversed signs are due in part to the operationalization of the dependent variable. While presidents with *higher* excitement seeking scores are *less* likely to see the crises they are involved in *escalate to war*, they are *more* likely to directly take escalatory action in *response to the trigger* of a crisis. The logic of this finding, and the notion that the dependent variable -war/no war- does not take into account the strategic interaction of the other states involved in a crisis, are discussed below.

Of the remaining three key independent variables only a president's Deliberation score had a significant effect in more than one model. Presidents with lower deliberation scores were more likely to see the crises and conflict they were involved in escalate. The Deliberation trait score was also the only other significant variable in cross tabulations of the presidents' risk related traits and responses to crisis triggers. The negative relationship between Deliberation and risk-taking fits the expectations of *hypothesis 3*.

Presidents' Altruism and Openness to Action traits were largely insignificant in the analysis presented above. The results for the latter of the two traits were not surprising, given that the variable was not at all significant in the analysis on the use of force and conflict initiation presented in Chapter 4. In the one model where it was significant, it was signed in the opposite direction of the predicted relationship. This

result is also similar to the findings in the previous chapter, and indicates that serious reconsideration of the relationship between Openness to Action and risk-taking, at least in the domain of foreign policy, is necessary. The findings for Altruism were more surprising given its robust significance across the models in the previous chapter. When it comes to escalation of international crises and conflicts, the direction of the Presidents' Altruism trait scores were negative across the models, as expected, yet the variable was a significant predictor of the dependent variable only once, and that result was not robust to the inclusion of control variables.

The results of this chapter suggest the hypothesized relationships between the key independent variables and the dependent variables are not straightforward when analyzing escalation. This may be due to the way we measure escalation, namely as war, and the likely strategic dynamics at play in cases of escalation. Unlike the use of force, the decision to go to war very rarely depends on the actions of just one state. Rather, escalation of a crisis to war is an interactive process between states, and requires a more in-depth analysis of each case to fully capture the effect of a leader's personality on escalation. For instance, one could hypothesize that leaders with greater risk propensities will be more willing to go to war. However, it is likely that adversaries of such leaders are aware of this too and therefore the outcome, war, may not be observed. Given that war is costly, adversaries who know they are dealing with a risky leader have greater incentives to find solutions short of war. In a similar manner, the strategic actions of adversaries can inverse the predictions for leaders who are risk-averse. While intuitively one would hypothesize that leaders who are risk-avoiders will be less likely to escalate

conflict, it is also possible that adversaries will take greater escalatory measures against such a leader, thereby forcing a war.

On the other hand, the results of the selection model indicate that the influence of leaders' inherent risk propensities, while significant for dispute initiation, are not relevant to whether the disputes they initiate escalate to war. The dynamics of initiation and escalation seem to be different, at least as far as personality is concerned. It may be that when it comes to initiation leaders are better able to act on their inclinations, whereas once they are involved in a crisis the situation sets the parameters for acceptable responses. Empirical support for this notion can be seen in the significance of the gravity of threat variable in Table 5.7; when a crisis is caused by a threat to a state's existence the leader's risk-propensity might be irrelevant since there are fewer options on the table. There may be other factors, such as concerns about reputation, nuclear weapons, or institutional constraints that may depress the influence of leaders' risk propensities. Process tracing of case studies of crisis decision making are an excellent method for investigating the other variables that are relevant in crisis escalation that limit the significance of the leaders' risk propensity.

Understanding the relationship between personality and escalation is further complicated by the traditional treatment of escalation as the onset of war. While some international conflicts will escalate to this highest level of hostilities, others may escalate and yet be resolved short of war. A more in-depth reading of a crisis can provide insights into the various decisions and actions taken as part of the escalation process. Not only would a closer study provide a more nuanced look at the types of escalation that may have been employed, but it would also be able to provide a better understanding of how

relevant the president's personality was to determining the foreign policy chosen for the state.

The methods employed in this chapter speak to the larger literature in international relations, which focuses on escalation of crisis to war, but also try to circumvent the problems that this operationalization introduces by including alternative specifications of the dependent variable, most notably the immediate response taken by the leader to the triggering event of a crisis. Process tracing of individual crises through case studies can elucidate how personality traits translate into foreign policy decisions.

Chapter 6

Harry Truman and the Berlin Blockade

The United States experienced its first major foreign policy crisis of the Cold War on June 24, 1948, when the Soviet Union suspended all road, rail, and barge traffic into the Western zones of Berlin. While decision makers in Washington were hardly caught off guard by this maneuver - a similar blockade had taken place earlier that spring - they nevertheless lacked the contingency plans to deal with the crisis. For those who were present in Berlin at the time it seemed as if "The war clouds were everywhere. It was a question of what hour or day the war might break out" (Draper, January 11, 1962, Oral History Interview).

With Soviet troops blockading all ground access to West Berlin, a quick and effective response was needed in order to provide for the Western Allies' military garrisons, not to mention the two and a half million citizens living in the city. President Harry Truman had three major options before him: withdraw from Berlin, send an armed convoy along the Autobahn to break the blockade, or rely on an airlift to circumvent the blockade. Consensus among his advisors could not be reached; each alternative drew support as well as criticism from groups within his administration. While his advisors debated the merits of each option, Truman relied on his gut and quickly ruled out the option to withdraw American troops from Berlin. He soon thereafter made his decision in favor of an expanded airlift rather than using an armed convoy. The Soviet blockade continued for nearly a year but the airlift proved to be a viable strategy that maintained

America's prestige, provided for those inside the city, and most importantly avoided a war with the USSR.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the decision-making process in response to the Berlin Blockade crisis in order to illustrate how President Harry Truman's inherent risk propensity affected his policy choice. The insights gained from this analysis will be used to further develop the personality-led theory of risk-taking and suggest new avenues of research. Empirical analyses in the two previous chapters established that some risk-related personality traits significantly influence decisions to initiate and escalate conflict, however the personality-led theory of risk-taking remains largely underdeveloped. It is too deterministic to predict a policy outcome by simply knowing a leader's risk-related trait scores. The vast literature on foreign policy decision making has shown that a host of factors, in addition to individual traits, can influence policy outcomes. Thus, it is expected that there are times when the inherent traits of a leader have a greater influence on decision making, and times when the influence of a leader's inherent dispositions is conditioned by circumstantial or environmental factors, such as advisors, domestic pressures, and the perceived risk of nuclear war. This chapter will offer a first look at the influence of a leader's risk disposition on decision making and with the intention of providing insights to develop the personality-led theory of risk-taking.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of Truman's personality and inherent risk propensity. This is followed by an overview of the crisis, including the response options that were considered and their relative riskiness, and a discussion of Truman's final choice. The concluding section assesses the influence of Truman's risk propensity

on the decision-making process and proposes avenues for further development of the personality-led theory of risk-taking.

6.1. Harry Truman

Harry Truman, "the man from Missouri," first entered the national stage in 1934 when he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Over the next decade he earned a reputation for toeing the Democratic Party line, as well being a trustworthy, honest crusader against government fraud and waste (McCullough 1992; Steinberg 1962). While he was seen as admirable, he was in no way remarkable. Thus, many people, including Truman himself, were shocked when he was selected to be Franklin Roosevelt's running mate for his fourth term as President in 1944. An article published in *Time* just prior to the 1944 election introduced the junior senator to the wider American public and described him as:

> …modest, honest, healthy, simple, kindly, straightforward, with a pleasant sense of humor, the average level of Congressional intelligence… His defects are lacks: he is obviously not a man whose nobility of purpose, splendid idealism or farsighted vision of the American destiny has ever stirred or could stir the country.

As if predicting the near future, the article went to say that if Roosevelt were to be reelected and die in office, leaving the reins of the country in Truman's hands, "There is no reason to suspect that he would make a great President – and there is no reason to believe that he would be the worst" (*Time* 1944). [125]

[125] Although it seemed to those reporting in 1944 that the junior senator from Missouri would not make a great president, Truman has consistently been ranked among the ten greatest American presidents. See, for example: Federalist Society, "Wall Street Journal Rankings of Presidents," November 2000. Rankings completed by 78 scholars of history, political science and law. Truman ranked #7; Times Online, "Greatest US Presidents," October 2008. Truman Ranked #7; C-SPAN rankings of 65 historians in 2000 and 2009. Truman ranked #5 both times.

As expected, Franklin Roosevelt was reelected in November 1944, however he passed away on April 13, 1945, just 82 days into the new administration. During his short period as Vice President, Truman was largely ignored by Roosevelt and met alone with him only twice (Steinberg 1962). Truman reflected on receiving the news that he would be President in his final address to the American public nearly eight years later. He recalled:

> When Franklin Roosevelt died, I felt there must be a million men better qualified than I, to take up the Presidential task. But the work was mine to do, and I had to do it. And I have tried to give it everything that was in me. (Truman 1953, 1197)

While Truman was not considered to be a charismatic leader, he had an innate likeability that helped him relate to people. He was a simple, "down to earth" man (Gossnell 1980, 108) with "incurable optimism" (Ibid., 542), and was known for being "intensely loyal to old friends" (Elsey, March 17, 1976, Oral History Interview). He was an avid reader of history and had a strong sense that it was the duty of the President to use history to inform his decisions.[126]

Truman was a shoot from the hip speaker and a quick decision maker. He believed that decision making was an important part of the job of a president, and equated indecisiveness with a lack of Presidential leadership (Truman 1953). When it came to decision making Truman prided himself on his ability to make quick, gut decisions, and move on. According to Major General Robert B. Landry, US Air Force Aide to the President, Truman used to say, "I've trained myself that when matters are brought to my

[126] A president, according to Truman, "must know the historical background of what makes the world go round. After all, there is little real change in the problems of government from the beginning of time down to the present. Those problems today are just about the same as they were for Mesopotamia and Egypt, for the Hittites, for Greece and Rome, for Carthage and Great Britain and France" (Hillman 1952, 10). Truman had little formal education and never attended college, but his love for history led him to read every volume in the Independence Library - near 5,000 books, including 3 volumes of encyclopedias (Acheson, June 30, 1971, Oral History Interview).

attention for a decision, I make a decision, and then I dismiss it" (Landry, February 29, 1974, Oral History Interview). In *Mr. Citizen*, a book Truman wrote after leaving office in 1953, he reflected on his gut reactions, or "spot decisions," stating:

> All the time I was President, one event followed another with such rapidity that I was never able to afford the time for prolonged contemplation… Many of the important decisions I had to make in the White House were what I described to myself as 'spot decisions.' By 'spot decisions,' I meant decisions which were almost instinctive with me – when I had to confront an emergency or serious situation. I never revealed to anyone what my 'spot decision' was in advance of calling for all the facts available and consulting the experts or departments of government involved. Once the facts were examined and the experts heard, I then made the final decision. Looking back, I find that my final decisions usually corresponded to my first 'spot decisions.' (262)[127]

In addition to following his instincts, Truman's decision making was characterized by his lack of involvement in the search for alternatives. As he saw it, his role was to be the final decision maker; it fell to those around him to find and present the available options. He was interested in knowing the position of his advisors, yet in the end all decisions were to be his alone. When asked about Truman's decision-making style, Under Secretary of the Army, General William H. Draper recalled:

> I would describe it [the problem] briefly, for five or ten minutes; he would ask a few questions; I would give him the two or possibly three alternative decisions that could be made; he would make one of them, and that would be that. He would go on to something else. That's the way he ran the Presidency. He constantly carried out the little motto on his desk, 'The Buck Stops Here.' (January 11, 1962, Oral History Interview)

6.1.1. Truman's underlying risk propensity

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are four personality traits that indicate an individual's underlying risk propensity: Excitement Seeking (E5), Openness to Action

[127] Alternatively Truman referred to these as "jump" decisions. In an interview he was asked about these "intuitive decisions," and says "[you] get all those facts and put them together and, in the long run, if your heart's right and you know the history and the background of these things it'll be right" (Truman 2001, 321).

(O4), Deliberation (C6) and Altruism (A3). Excitement Seeking and Openness to Action scores are positively related to risk-propensity, while Deliberation and Altruism are negatively related. Recall that the hypotheses regarding these four traits are derived from experimental studies where they have most often been related to risk-taking and that there is no one specific personality trait that assesses risk-taking. In the case of Harry Truman, two of his trait scores indicate that he would be likely to shy away from risks, one trait offers no clear prediction, and the final indicates that he would have a strong tendency towards taking risks. *The balance of these four traits suggests that Truman's inherent risk propensity was moderately risky.*[128]

President Truman's Excitement Seeking score, the trait most often associated with risk-taking in previous studies and in this dissertation, is *low*.[129] High scorers on this trait "crave excitement and stimulation" (Costa and McCrae 1992, 17). Truman, a man once described as "plain as an old shoe," was anything but a thrill seeker. Related to Excitement Seeking is the Openness to Action trait. Both of these scales speak to an individual's adventure seeking qualities. Truman's Openness to Action score is, not surprisingly, *very low*. These scores indicate that Truman was not likely to engage in foreign policy risks because he was seeking excitement and stimulation.

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[128] In *Presidential Risk Behavior in Foreign Policy: Prudence or Peril?* (2005), William Boettcher classifies Truman as a risk-taker, however rather than rely on Big Five trait scores, his analysis is based on Margaret Hermann's eight leadership traits for US Presidents. Boettcher suggests that three characteristics, "belief in ability to control events," "need for power," and "task emphasis" should be positively associated with risk-taking; while the "need for affiliation" and "conceptual complexity" should be positively associated with risk aversion. The former describes "potential motivated" individuals, such as Harry Truman, who tend to have a best-case focus that encourages risk-taking, while the latter describes "security motivated" individuals with a worst-case focus that tends to encourage risk aversion.

[129] Modifiers (very low, low, average, etc.) referring to Truman's trait scores relative to average adult norms as scored on the NEO-PI interpretive form will be italicized to indicate that these are more than simply descriptive terms.

Truman's Altruism trait score is *average*, suggesting that he was not likely to have a strong inclination to avoid risks because of an overwhelming concern for the lives of others involved in carrying out such strategies. On the other hand, this average Altruism trait score does not suggest that he is more likely to take risks either. Truman's overall high Agreeableness scores, and the testimony of those who knew him as a loyal friend and kind person, clearly suggest that he was not negligent to the needs of others. Additionally, he served in the military during World War I and knew first hand the human costs associated with using force. It is not possible to make a strong prediction about how this trait affected his foreign policy decision making. While the President was unlikely to shy away from using force if necessary, he was also unlikely to be too liberal with using it as a tool of foreign policy as he was well aware of the costs that came with such actions.

President Truman's score on the final risk-related trait, Deliberation, was *very low* – in fact he has the lowest score on this trait of all U.S. Presidents in the post-war period.[130] Previous research examining risk-taking and personality traits has found that lower Deliberation trait scores indicate a higher propensity to take risks (Kowert and Hermann 1997; Nicholson et al. 2005). As discussed in Chapter 2, Deliberation is understood as "the tendency to think carefully before acting" (Costa and McCrae 1992, 18). While high scorers are considered to be cautious, low scorers are understood to be hasty in their decision making and often speak or act without considering the consequences of their behavior. Low Deliberation scores might also indicate that an individual is spontaneous or able to make snap decisions. As discussed above, President

[130] It should be noted that President George W. Bush's Deliberation score is actually lower than Truman's at 24.4 however since the data in the empirical analysis is limited until 2000, the post-war presidents under consideration end with Bill Clinton.

Truman prided himself on being able to do the latter. When faced with a problem he relied on his "spot decisions" and then moved on to the next pressing issue. He was known for not contemplating or overanalyzing decisions. Truman's very low Deliberation score indicates that he was unlikely to spend time weighing the costs and benefits of a given strategy. Rather, he relied on his gut reaction to make a decision and then moved on to the next problem at hand.

Overall, Harry Truman's personality traits indicate that he was a moderate risk-taker.[131] He prided himself on his ability to make quick, intuitive decisions. And while he was not one to engage in thrill seeking or adventures in his personal life, he was certainly willing to take some political risks.[132] The balance of his personality traits suggests that Truman's inherent disposition would be moderately risky. More important for this analysis of his decision making are the expectations that his process for choosing a strategy in response to a crisis would be swift and instinct driven. Moreover, it is expected that he would not make decisions for the purposes of seeking out adventures or try to test a risky strategy for the thrill of it.

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[131] While the survey of the President's traits suggest he was moderately risk-acceptant, point predictions of the likelihood of Truman initiating a conflict, using force abroad, or capitalizing on the opportunity to use force abroad indicate that he was about a third less likely than the average president to take risky actions. These predictions were made comparing the likelihood of an event, given all variables held at their means or medians, to the likelihood of an event when the personality scores were set to President Truman's scores and all remaining control variables were held at their means or medians.

[132] Those familiar with Truman's tenure might point to certain decisions made in office as evidence of risk-taking, such as his decision to use the atomic bomb in World War II, to desegregate the military, to support the Marshall Plan for European recovery, to approve MacArthur's Inchon landing in the Korean War, and later to fire the popular general. Despite taking these actions, Truman also made many decisions that were less risky. Moreover, is critical for this dissertation to examine the predictions generated by his trait scores and not let the knowledge of Truman's decisions in office dictate the predictions of his risk propensity. For one, each of these decisions deserves consideration in its own right to determine the relative riskiness of the alternative chosen. More importantly, predicting Truman's risk propensity based on the risks he actually took in office is a tautological argument and undermines the contributions of this project. This dissertation circumvents much of this criticism by having had the specialists and biographers rate the presidents on their personalities five years *before* entering office.

6.2. The 1948 Berlin Blockade

On June 24, 1948 the Soviet Union halted all traffic to the American, British, and French sectors of Berlin. The Soviets argued that the blockade was in "economic self-defense" in reaction to the Western Allies' decision to form a common currency and expand their new Deutsche Mark to the Western sectors of Berlin (Harrington 1979).[133] General Lucius D. Clay, Military Governor of the U.S. Zone in Germany, dismissed the Soviets claims stating:

> We should not confuse currency as [the] real issue. It is a pretext. Accepting their view now will gain only a few weeks and then it will start again… currency in Berlin is not the issue- the issue is our position in Europe and plans for western Germany. (Clay1974, 2:706)

The four-power agreement for Germany established at the Potsdam and Yalta conferences at the end of World War II had been rapidly falling apart in the year prior to the blockade amid rising suspicions from both the U.S. and the Soviets. In June 1947 the US instituted an economic recovery plan for Europe, the Marshall Plan, which was extended to Germany. American policy makers strongly believed that overall European economic recovery was dependent upon a viable German economy. The Soviets on the other hand feared a resurgent Germany and even worse, a strong Germany coupled with its capitalist foes (Harrington 1998).[134] The deadlock over Germany's future led the three Western powers to develop plans in the spring of 1948, known as the "London Program," to break from the four-power agreement with the Soviets, merge their zones, introduce a

[133] Initially the Soviets cited "technical difficulties" as the reason for the closures and drastically reduced the supply of electricity to the Western sector because of "shortages of coal," due to the suspension of rail traffic (Clay 1974, 2:701). Clay later argued that the link between the currency reform and the blockade as self-defense must have been a lie since the Russians had launched the little-blockade in April, months before the currency reform (Clay 1950b).

[134] Clay also proposed that the Soviets wanted to keep Germany from recovering in order to create an economic situation that would be ripe for communism to take hold (Clay 1950b).

new currency to stimulate the economy and create a separate West German state. The Soviets had little recourse to prevent the progress of the London Program and thus targeted Berlin, the Allies' strategic Achilles heel. The existence of the Western zones of Berlin over 100 miles within Soviet occupied Germany provided the Soviets with the opportunity to blockade the city; the developing Cold War gave them the motive (Harrington 1998).

It can hardly be said that the blockade took the Allies by surprise.[135] Earlier that spring the Soviets had launched a smaller version of the blockade, requiring all those traveling in Western military trains to submit documentation, and asserting the right to board and inspect the trains. In an urgent, top-secret message on March 31, 1948 from General Clay, to Omar Bradley, Army Chief of Staff, Clay reported that these impediments would make travel between Berlin and the American zone in West Germany impossible, except by air. "Moreover," he argued,

> it is undoubtedly the first of a series of restrictive measures designed to drive us from Berlin… the right of free entry into Berlin over the established corridors was a condition precedent to our entry into Berlin and to our evacuation of Saxony and Thuringia, and we do not intend to give up this right of free entry. (Clay, March 31, 1948).[136]

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[135] Many authors point out that the Truman administration failed to have proper contingency plans in place despite earlier warnings by Clay, Murphy, Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith, and Hillenkoetter, director of the CIA, in addition to the little blockade earlier that spring. George and Smoke (1974), and later Oneal (1982), suggest reasons *why* the administration had not been proactive. One possibility was that no one truly believed that the Soviets would cut off supplies to the city for an extended period of time because of the fear of alienating the German people and international public opinion. Alternatively, Oneal also proposes that those in Washington may not have planned for the blockade because "they could not see an acceptable way of meeting such a challenge. The implications were simply so grave that rational analysis was effectively precluded… psychological avoidance seems to have created the conditions for surprise amidst abundant warning" (1982, 238). Related to this idea, George and Smoke point out that "probabilistic thinking" whereby the American leaders had convinced themselves that the Soviets would not take advantage of the Allies' vulnerable position may have also played a role. They also suggest that leaders in Washington may have been "lulled into complacency" by Soviet tactics over the year prior to the blockade that amounted to little more than annoyances and harassment, that became part of the environment in Berlin.

[136] The United States' legal right to free access to Berlin was a subject of much confusion and debate during the blockade. In the era of good feeling that established the quadripartite control of Berlin at

Clay ended his message by stating that unless he heard otherwise from Washington, he would instruct his guards to open fire on any Soviet soldiers who attempted to board their trains, understanding the "full consequences" of such action. In closing he provided the rationale for the stance he would take over the next fourteen months of the crisis:

> Unless we take a strong stand now, our life in Berlin will become impossible. A retreat from Berlin at this moment would, in my opinion, have serious if not disastrous political consequences in Europe. I do not believe that the Soviets mean war now. However, if they do, it seems to me that we might as well find out now as later. We cannot afford to be bluffed. (Ibid.)

A strong stand, however, was not taken. In response to Clay's calls for guidance from Washington, Truman sent instructions endorsing Clay's proposed action, with a qualification that his guards could not use their weapons, except in self-defense. These directions provide a glimpse of what the response to the actual blockade would look like: take actions that resist the Soviets' changes to the status quo without resorting to excessively provocative measures that might escalate hostilities (Shlaim 1983). The administration failed to articulate a policy on Berlin that would have either credibly signaled their resolve to the Soviets of a staying American presence, which may have avoided the blockade, or conversely, reduced the commitment to Berlin so that an eventual withdrawal would have been less politically costly. What is more disturbing is the failure of the administration to develop contingency plans in the event of another, more long term blockade, like the one that followed three months later (Forrestal 1951).

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the end of World War II, the American and British leaders failed to secure agreements on ground and rail access to Berlin. The initial response by decision makers in Washington, that the Soviets could not do this because the Allies had a right to free access in Berlin, was legally unfounded and unlikely to have mattered to the Soviets. The Allied Control Council, the four power group responsible for overseeing Germany, did however approve an agreement, for safety reasons, establishing 3 air corridors linking Berlin to the Western occupied zones in November 1945. Thus the Allies did have a signed agreement granting unrestricted air access to Berlin, but not ground and rail access (Harrington 1998).

In immediate response to the June 24th blockade, General Clay launched a provisional airlift, similar to the "little-lift" that had been used to supply the Western military garrisons during the spring (Clay 1950b). Clay had a teleconference with Secretary of the Army, Royall on June 25 to discuss how the US should respond. Royall "impressed upon his risk-acceptant subordinate the need to exercise restraint and show some flexibility in order to avert the escalation of the crisis" (Shlaim 1983, 201). Royall stated explicitly, "I do feel strongly that the limited questions of Berlin currency is not a good question to go to war on;" to which General Clay replied, "If [the] Soviets go to war, it will not be because of [the] Berlin currency issue but only because they believe this is the right time" (Clay 1974, 2:702). General Clay suggested that Washington consider sending a sharp note of protest to the Soviet government and explore the options for manipulating external commercial pressures against the Soviets (Ibid.).[137]

Although the provisional airlift was in effect to supply the Western garrisons, no one seriously considered using the airlift beyond this limited effort. It was not until after the teleconference with Royall when Clay met with his British counterpart, Sir Brian Hubert Robertson, who had already obtained the consent of his government to carry out an airlift to feed all the inhabitants of the city, and after receiving the assurance of the leader of the German Social Democratic Party, Ernst Reuter (mayor-elect of Berlin) that

[137] At the Cabinet meeting on June 25th Truman decided against both of Clay's suggestions as neither were expected to be highly effective. A unilateral note might lead to a "typewriter war" and would undermine the perception of a united front among the Western Allies (*Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Vol. II Germany and Austria* (*FRUS)* 1973, 928). In terms of retaliation outside of Berlin, the British Military Governor, Robertson, made it known that "London has not viewed favorably [the] idea of instituting some form [of] retaliatory action against Soviet ocean shipping such as restrictive regulations re bunkering, passage through Suez Canal and like measures… London felt this would create too provocative a situation" (Ibid., 888). Moreover, Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Lewis W. Douglas, argued that it seemed to "wave the strand of straw, disguised as a club" and would have "no effect" (Ibid., 895). Those present at the June 25th Cabinet meeting came to this same conclusion. In addition to the Soviet Union being largely self-sufficient, "such measures could lead to general economic warfare which would result in stoppage of Soviet supplies of manganese to the United States" (Ibid., 928).

the people of Berlin would be willing to make the necessary sacrifices, that Clay began to set in motion the plans for a large-scale airlift (Harrington 1979; Shlaim 1989).

At this point it was estimated that there was enough food in stock to last the city thirty-six days, and enough coal for forty-five (Clay 1950a). Clay called up General Curtis LeMay, commander of the US Air Force in Europe and ordered him to drop all other uses of the aircraft so that his entire fleet of C-47s could be placed on the Berlin run. The C-47s, known as the "Gooneybird," had been the workhorse of the air force during World War II and were passenger transports, not freight transports (Harrington 1979). Given that the city of Berlin required a minimum of 2,000 tons daily, more planes with greater capacities were needed.[138] On June 27 Clay requested that two groups of C-54s be assigned to the airlift in order to increase the US's delivery of supplies to approximately 600 to 700 tons per day (Clay 1974, 2:708).[139] Even in combination with the 750 tons that Britain's Royal Air force could deliver daily, this increased effort would still be about 600 tons shy of the minimum need. While it would not be enough to adequately provide for the city, the airlift would at least make a statement about the West's commitment to Berlin and thereby improve the morale of the Berliners (Harrington 1979).

At the June 25 Cabinet meeting President Truman was briefed about the Berlin situation and the lengthy teleconference between Clay and Royall that took place earlier that day. Recalling this meeting, Truman wrote in his memoirs:

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[138] This estimate was later adjusted and the minimum necessary was raised to 4,500 tons (Harrington 1979).

[139] The C-54s were four engine planes that could carry ten tons of cargo, as compared to the twin engine C-47s that could carry a maximum of two and a half tons (Clay 1950a).

> On 26 June, the day after I discussed the Berlin crisis with the Cabinet, I directed that this improvised "air lift" be put on a full-scale organized basis and that every plane available to our European command be impressed into service. In this way we hoped that we might be able to feed Berlin until the diplomatic deadlock could be broken. (1956, 2:123)

True to his personality, Truman made his decision to put the airlift on an organized basis with little deliberation or consultation with his advisors. The decision, however, was to buy time. The airlift at this point was seen as a band-aid, not a solution. It relieved some of the crisis stress and would buy the administration time to explore the viable long-term options. Truman's decision at this time in no way precluded more serious discussions about how to respond to the blockade.

In the initial aftermath of the Soviet blockade President Truman was faced with the question of whether or not the US should stay in Berlin. Many of his advisors, particularly those in the military, argued that the Western sectors of Berlin were too difficult to defend and created a strategic vulnerability for the Allies that risked the military's prestige and war with the Soviets. "Berlin," they feared, "could become like the sword of Damocles, and the Western garrisons virtual hostages to be threatened whenever the Soviet Union wanted to increase the pressure on the United States and its allies" (Oneal 1982, 261). Continuing to stay in Berlin and making proclamations of allegiance to standby and protect it would only raise the costs of what was believed to be an inevitable future withdrawal. Essentially the position of his military advisors was that "the Western powers could not remain in Berlin, therefore they must not" (Harrington 1979, 81).

The proponents of withdrawal pointed out that American forces were vastly outnumbered and therefore all reasonable steps should be taken to avoid an escalation of

the conflict. The military had gone through a major disarmament following the end of World War II and simply did not have the forces available for a war with the Soviets in Eastern Europe. According to Forrestal, the United States' total reserves were about two and one third divisions, of which probably one could be mobilized with any speed. This was far fewer than the "twenty good divisions" that Clay estimated would be needed to hold the Russians off at the Rhine and prevent them from overrunning Western Europe (Forrestal 1951, 459-460). The Soviets had about 360,000 ground and air troops in Germany, compared to a Western force of approximately 210,000 (Memorandum for the President: Summary from 16th meeting of National Security Council, July 23, 1948). By cutting their losses and withdrawing, the U.S. would greatly reduce the risks of war with the Soviets now and in the future. The forces and resources that were withdrawn from Berlin could be used to shore up the U.S.'s position in Western Germany.[140] The proponents of withdrawal pointed out that any reputation costs the U.S. incurred from withdrawal would certainly be lower than the humiliation of having to withdraw later in the crisis after attempts to stay in Berlin failed.

While withdrawal would minimize the chance of war with the Soviets, there were those who believed it would be tantamount to "the Munich of 1948" (*FRUS* 1973, 920). Staying in Berlin under the blockade would be difficult, they argued, but withdrawal would spell greater problems down the road. It was likely to have political repercussions far beyond Berlin itself by implying a willingness to withdraw from Vienna and West Germany. It would spread doubts to America's allies of her commitment and ability to

[140] In a message from Draper to Royall on June 27, 1948 he raises this "withdraw and consolidate" benefit. Draper's conclusion in the memo however is that since the U.S. had already publicly declared its intent to stay in Berlin it should stand strong. "If the Russians had decided on a war, which doubted, American departure from Berlin would not prevent it. If they did not want a war, a firm stand in Berlin should not bring it on" (Shlaim 1983, 217).

resist the spread of communism. It would be a strong signal to the Soviets of weak resolve, which might lead America to have to defend herself more often in the future (Ibid). There were also those who argued that the blockade was a violation of the agreements established in the aftermath of World War II. The U.S., they protested, had legal ground for being in Berlin and a moral obligation to protect and provide for the citizens of the city, especially those anti-communist supporters who were encouraged to speak out and would clearly be in danger if US forces withdrew.[141]

Clay, a strong proponent of staying in Berlin argued:

> the Soviet government has a greater strength under its immediate control than Hitler had to carry out his purpose. Under the circumstances which exist today, only we can assert world leadership, only we have the strength to halt this aggressive policy here and now. It might be too late the next time. I am sure that determined action will bring it to a halt now without war. It can be stopped only if we assume some risk. (Clay 1950b, 44)

According to his perspective, Moscow was bluffing and the best course of action for the U.S. was to stand up to the U.S.S.R.

An ad-hoc emergency meeting of advisors was called together at Secretary Royall's Pentagon office on the afternoon of Sunday June 27 to discuss the response options available to the U.S. Those present contemplated the effect withdrawal would have on the United States' "position in Europe, on the spread of Communism and on the success of the European program," the likelihood of "recurring crises and frequent humiliation" if the U.S. chose to stay in Berlin, and the risks of war that would come with trying to supply Berlin by force (Forrestal 1951, 453). Consensus could not be reached and the question of withdrawal was presented to the President the next day.

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[141] Those on both sides of the argument made the case that the US had some moral obligation to the people of Berlin. Those who favored withdrawal proposed that the US should leave Berlin precisely because of the humanitarian crisis that the blockade was creating. If the Americans left the blockade would be lifted, and the expected starvation of 2.5 million people would be averted.

On June 28, Royall, Lovett and Forrestal briefed the President on the previous day's meeting and provided him with statements prepared by the Departments of Army and State exploring the possible courses of action. According to Forrestal, "When the specific question was discussed as to what our future policy in Germany was to be-namely, were we to stay in Berlin or not? – the President interrupted to say that there was no discussion on that point, we were going to stay period" (Forrestal 1951, 454).[142]

The meeting ended with the President authorizing that instructions be sent to Clay to arrange a local meeting with Marshall Sokolovsky, commander of Soviet forces in East Germany, on the currency issue and agreeing to send two squadrons of B-29s to Germany, with two others going to England once British approval was obtained.[143] These B-29s, known as the atomic bombers, were the same type of plane that had been sent to Hiroshima and Nagasaki a few years earlier. These planes, however, were not carrying atomic weapons, nor were they even capable of delivering such weapons. Still, some scholars have proposed that their arrival issued in the "shadow of deterrence" that would dominate US-Soviet relations throughout the cold war (Betts 1987).[144]

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[142] On June 30, the President had his decision to stay in Berlin publicly announced by Secretary of State, Marshall, in a statement issued by the State Department. The next day at a press conference Truman was asked about the US's commitment to stay in Berlin, and confirmed that Marshall had expressed the official position of the United States Government (*FRUS* 1973, 931). From that point on any discussions of a withdrawal strategy would carry with them far greater political costs.

[143] The British quickly accepted the offer to receive the planes and Forrestal met with the president to provide him with the JCS's positive assessment for sending the B29s to England. "The President said that he had come independently to the same conclusion" (Forrestal n.d., 5). The arrival of the sixty bombers led to the establishment of the first U.S. Strategic Air Command base in Great Britain. Shlaim discusses the significance of this decision as it provided to our Allies a "concrete token of [America's] commitment to the defense of Europe" and "signaled to the Russians that an attempt to seize West Berlin might provoke bomber raids into the Soviet Union" (1983, 237).

[144] Whether or not the presence of the B-29s actually had a deterrent affect on the Soviets in this crisis is unknown. Betts (1987) argues that while it is possible, there was no reason to believe that the Soviets planned to interfere with the airlift before the B-29s were sent. The decision by Truman to send the bombers to Britain is not given more attention here because it was not a risky decision, nor did Truman consider it a major response strategy. The previous footnote alludes to the fact that there was virtually no debate about whether or not to send the bombers; all of Truman's advisors and allies were in favor of the

While the option to use the atomic bomb was never explicitly on the table, the fact that it was part of America's arsenal was never far from anyone's mind, especially the President's. It was the strongest card in the deck that the U.S. had, but Truman refused to let it be flaunted. Those who believed that the nuclear card needed to be played pointed out that the United States was dramatically outnumbered in terms forces on the ground and had no way to credibly stand up to a potential Soviet invasion of the Western sectors of Berlin, except for using the specter of the atomic bomb. Nevertheless their arguments fell on deaf ears; the President was unwilling to consider a nuclear option in response to the blockade (Shlaim 1983). Betts comments on the irony of Truman's reluctance in his analysis of nuclear blackmail during the Cold War, noting, "At the time when the United States faced *no* Soviet retaliatory capability the nuclear signal in the crisis was among the weakest and most cautious of any discussed" (1987, 163). [145]

On July 6 the United States sent a note of protest to the Soviet government (the British and French governments had sent near identical notes) stating that the blockade was a clear violation of existing agreements concerning the administration of Berlin by

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decision. Secretary of State Marshall analyzed the implication and inferences that would be derived by the Russians, Americans and British citizens from sending the planes, and concluded that the action would signal the U.S.'s commitment to the Western Allies, provide useful experience for the Air Force, and help the British get accustomed to having a foreign power on their soil. Moreover, there was a sense that time was of the essence; the Americans should accept the British invitation while it was available (Forrestal 1951). The planes would play no direct role in the airlift, were not nuclear capable, and were more or less seen as an easy way to bolster the Western Allies' presence in Europe without a major increase in manpower and without escalating the crisis. Others who point out that this decision was not a risky one have noted that "if Truman 'had wanted to rattle his saber, he would have sent at least one squadron from the 509th' [the only air force unit that had planes rigged for nuclear delivery]; that Soviet intelligence and deduction must have ensured that Moscow knew the groups in Europe did not have a nuclear mission; that in 'deploying groups with conventional capability, Truman indicated hope for a diplomatic settlement'; and that continuation of the blockade for ten months after the bomber reinforcement implies that the move was not effective" (Borowski 1981, quoted in Betts 1987, 29).

[145] Additional evidence of this point is provided by Murphy's account of the July 22, 1948 NSC meeting where Truman decided on a response strategy for the blockade. He notes that "Strangely enough nobody, either military or civilian, mentioned that the United States Government in 1948 possessed a growing stockpile of atomic bombs while Russia had none yet" (1964, 316). For all purposes the nuclear option was off the table.

the four powers, they would not give up their rights to those powers, and they were willing to enter negotiations about Berlin but only after the blockade was lifted. The Soviets responded to the note of protest arguing that the Berlin currency issue could not be addressed without settling the entirety of the German problem – an issue the Allies were not willing to reopen.[146] Furthermore, the Soviets refused to lift the blockade until these issues were resolved. The two sides found themselves at a diplomatic impasse. The Americans were not willing to talk until the blockade was lifted and the Soviets were not willing to lift the blockade until the Western Allies had agreed to four-power talks to reopen the German question.

If the United States was going to remain in Berlin it needed to quickly develop a response strategy that would provide for the needs of the city. Clay and Murphy were summoned back to report on the current situation in Berlin and discuss the available options at the July 22 meeting of the NSC. Clay addressed the meeting with an update on the state of the airlift. He reported: "The airlift has increased our prestige immeasurably…Two months ago the Russians were cocky and arrogant. Lately they have been polite and have gone out of their way to avoid accidents" (Memorandum for the President: Summary from 16th meeting of National Security Council, July 23, 1948). As he saw it, the airlift was no longer a makeshift experiment but a successful and viable operation. The airlift, Clay related, had been averaging 2,400 to 2,500 tons per day, more than enough to handle food requirements, but inadequate to handle the essential need for

[146] From the perspective of those inside the White House, the Soviet proposal was merely for show and propaganda. It called for the restoration of four-power control of Germany, the formation of an all-German government, the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany and the withdrawal from Germany of the occupation forces of all the Powers within a year after the conclusion of the peace treaty. In effect they were seeking to reopen the question of how Germany should be governed, which the Allies had already decided upon when they established the London Program. For them there was no turning back to reopen this question.

coal. The minimum required to sustain Berlin without extreme hardship was estimated to be 4,500 tons per day; 3,500 tons per day might suffice now but additional tonnage would be required during the winter. The airlift operation at that point involved 52 C-54s and 80 C-47s making two round trips per day. Clay argued for an additional 75 C-54s to increase the total tonnage by 1,000 tons per day, which, together with the British, might then reach the necessary 4,500 tons (Memorandum for the President: Summary from 16th meeting of National Security Council, July 23, 1948; Truman 1956).

With these necessary increases the airlift would be a viable option for supplying the city. "The essence of the airlift was that it did not force the crisis issue, but simply circumvented the blockade" (Shlaim 1983, 210). It flipped the equation in favor of the Allies, and in the words of Thomas Schelling (1966), "relinquished the initiative" to the Soviets by putting on them the onus for initiating violence. With the airlift the U.S. could deliver the supplies needed without firing a single shot or risking escalation. "To stop them, the Soviets would have to use force, and that ran the risk of starting a war with the only country that had atomic weapons" (Harrington 1998, 6). As long as there was a supply of food in Berlin, there was less urgency to take drastic steps to solve the crisis, and diplomatic channels could be pursued. Additionally, the airlift, unlike withdrawal or the armed convoy, did not commit U.S. forces in such a way as to preclude the adoption of some other strategy in the future. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) did not see the airlift as a long term solution, they supported its immediate expansion in order to "provide a cushion of time during which some other solution to the Berlin problem may be found and during which appropriate action may be taken toward meeting all eventualities" (Forrestal, July 28, 1948, Report to the National Security Council).

The airlift strategy was not without its critics, particularly General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff, who argued that augmenting the airlift would "seriously reduce our air capabilities for implementing emergency war plans" and put a "major and serious drain on available supplies of aviation gasoline" (Forrestal, July 28, 1948, Report to the National Security Council). In addition to stripping the air force of its transport teams, thereby leaving the nation extremely vulnerable should it need to wage strategic warfare, Vandenberg argued that an airlift was logistically impossible. For one, an expanded airlift would come with a very high price tag and would require building an additional airfield.[147] Moreover, although the airlift could deliver food, medical, military, coal, gasoline, and diesel supplies it offered "little provision for clothing, maintenance material, raw material, or industrial supplies," which was likely to lead to worsening unemployment, morale, and stamina of the population (Ibid.).

Most worrisome was the likelihood that "the Soviets may devise and employ means, by interference in the air corridor, or vitiating or stopping air transport operations, or by other pressures within Berlin nullifying its [the airlift's] purpose" (Ibid.). In addition to directly attacking an incoming plane the Soviets could use instruments such as balloons to interfere with the lift. In the case of such an accident, would the U.S. then retaliate with force? Concerns about such accidents were warranted. According to General Draper, "the Russians were buzzing the planes. They didn't shoot any down, but they came right near us. It's a wonder there weren't any accidents, and so starting a war,

[147] At this point two airports existed in the Western sectors of Berlin – Templehof in the American sector and Gatow in the British sector. Despite adding two additional runways to Templehof and one to Gatow an additional airport was needed to handle the delivery of supplies. A third airport, Tegel, was built in the fall in the French sector (Clay 1950a)

because that would have probably done it" (Draper, January 11, 1962, Oral History Interview).

Alternatively, there were those who criticized the airlift for not being risky enough. They argued that by avoiding the blockade the U.S. was cowering in the face of the Soviet threat. An airlift would signal weak resolve and amounted to little more than the U.S. giving up its hard-won rights to land access in Berlin (Murphy 1964).[148] If the US did not make a strong stand in the face of this Soviet threat, they argued, it could expect to be tested again and again.

While Clay was supportive of the airlift strategy, he preferred breaking the blockade by sending an armed ground convoy along the Helmsted-Berlin autobahn. He and other supporters of the convoy plan believed that this was the best way to get the needed supplies to Berlin, signal America's resolve to the international community, and stem Soviet aggression in the future.[149] Clay, went so far as to argue, "such a showing might well *prevent* rather than build up Soviet pressures which could lead to war," (italics added) (*FRUS* 1973, 918). A strong show of power would extinguish the crisis because the Soviets would step down rather than escalate.[150] In a personal message to Under Secretary Draper on July 10 regarding the U.S.'s options, the General stated:

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[148] Clay found the airlift an acceptable second choice to the armed convoy, however Murphy did not and considered resigning over the decision. He later argued that our decision not to challenge the Russians when they blockaded the city sent a signal of weak resolve that later led to Communist provocation in Korea (Murphy 1964).

[149] The armed convoy plan called for two hundred trucks carrying approximately one thousand tons of supplies, escorted by the equivalent of a constabulary regiment reinforced with recoilless rifle troops, and an engineer battalion that would be responsible for clearing and repairing any road obstacles, to travel along the Helmsted-Berlin autobahn from the US sector of West Germany to Berlin. It was expected that the official plan would be prepared and approved with the British and French who would provide about one infantry battalion and a detachment of tank destroyers (Miller 2000; Clay 1974, 2:736-8).

[150] General Walter Bedell Smith, the Ambassador to Moscow, suggested that even if an armed convoy were met with resistance, it would not spell war for the two countries. In a message to the State

> Recognizing fully the commitment implied, but convinced that the Soviets will avoid hostilities, I am strongly of the view that if the blockade is not lifted… we should advise the Soviet Government that we are prepared to overcome these technical difficulties and that we propose on a specific date to send in a convoy accompanied by the requisite bridge equipment to make our right of way into Berlin usable. There is of course an inherent risk in this course since once this convoy crosses the border it is committed to the movement to Berlin. In my own mind I am convinced that it would get to Berlin and that the technical difficulties would cease to exist. (Clay 1974, 2:734)

Five days later in response to the Soviets' letter rejecting the request to lift the blockade before negotiations could begin, Clay again urged the use of an armed convoy, this time to Army Chief of Staff Bradley, stating:

> The intransient Soviet position as indicated in the note should be tested and I see no way in which it can be tested except by proceeding promptly with the movement of the armed convoy as I recommended previously. I would therefore like to recommend that we be given authority to proceed with this convoy movement as quickly as it can be arranged here. (Ibid., 740)

Bradley replied later that evening, turning down the request, stating: "Decision for such action can obviously be taken only by highest level" (Ibid., 740).

Proponents of the convoy plan argued that the probability the Russians would allow the convoy through was high. For one they were certain that the Soviets did not want a war; Moscow was aware that if force was used to interfere with the convoy it risked World War III with an atomic capable foe. Also, the Soviets had created a face-saving out for themselves by tying the blockade to technical difficulties; they could easily announce that these difficulties had been repaired, thus enabling them to maintain their

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Department, Smith said that while it would be likely that "any move by the Western powers to supply Berlin with an armed overland convoy would be met by the Soviets with armed force, since the whole position and prestige of the USSR would be at stake and Moscow would not be able to retreat… a 'little shooting' would not necessarily produce a conflict" (State Department, July 20, 1948, Summary of Telegrams). Surprisingly this point did not seem to get raised at any of the NSC or Cabinet level meetings during the crisis.

prestige while allowing the convoy to pass through to Berlin (Clay 1974, 2:733).[151] The convoy could therefore break the blockade and end the crisis without damaging Soviet prestige, while sending a strong signal of American resolve and improving the U.S.'s reputation among its allies.

The JCS were among the major opponents of the convoy option, citing two shortcomings of this alternative. First, they argued, the convoy could become abortive through "Soviet passive interference" – for example, the destruction of bridges or the placement of nails on the roads to blow out the tires of the convoy (Forrestal, July 28, 1948, Report to the National Security Council).[152] Such a situation would humiliate the American military and present a logistical nightmare for rescue. Additionally, the first caravan of trucks might make it through to Berlin, however the plan did not provide for keeping the autobahn open for additional convoys. In a teleconference between decision makers in Washington and Berlin to discuss the logistics of the plan, those in Washington raised the question, "Are you prepared to occupy the autobahn in its entirety?" (Clay 1974, 2:738). While it would be impractical, if not impossible, to occupy the one-hundred twenty five mile long road, there was no other solution for ensuring that the convoy would not be rendered impotent by passive interference. Most importantly, however, the JCS were concerned that the convoy would likely lead to "Soviet interference by military action" that would "shift the stage from one of local friction to that of major war

[151] George and Smoke (1974) also make this point in their analysis of the Soviet's decision to launch the blockade, which according to the authors, was a low-risk decision. They argue that "from the Soviet standpoint the blockade was a *controllable* and *reversible* gambit... they [Soviet leaders] could at any time find a solution to the "technical difficulties" and open up ground access to West Berlin" (emphasis in original) (118).

[152] Years later when asked about the convoy strategy, General Omar Bradley still echoed these sentiments. "Our contention was that they might not oppose it by armed force, which of course would be war, but they could stop you in so many ways short of armed resistance… and you'd be in a hell of a fix" (1955, interview Post-Presidential Papers).

involvement" (Forrestal, July 28, 1948, Report to the National Security Council). Their position was clear: unless the U.S. was ready to go to war, the convoy option was not advisable.

6.2.1. Relative Riskiness of the Alternative Strategies

As discussed in previous chapters, the option that possesses the greatest variance in outcome is considered the most risky. A variety of strategies were considered, at least in passing, for dealing with the Soviet blockade. In addition to finding a solution that would preserve the U.S.'s three basic foreign policy objectives – to maintain the Western position in Berlin, avoid war, and continue with the political reconstruction of Germany – decision makers also needed a feasible solution that would prevent the starvation of the 2.5 million people living in the Western zones.[153]

The variance in potential outcomes with the withdrawal option was lowest of the strategies considered. Most importantly, it minimized the chance of war with the Soviets, which was the greatest concern of the JCS. On the other hand, withdrawing offered very little in terms of a positive payoff. There would be no benefits to the U.S.'s reputation if they withdrew; if anything the appearance of being "coerced" out of Berlin could ignite a domestic political backlash. Yet the political costs were less than those which would be levied against the administration if it was forced to withdraw after attempting to stay, or if it appeared to the American public that they instigated a war without doing everything possible to negotiate a solution (U.S. Public Opinion on the Berlin Situation, July 29,

[153] Shlaim (1983) identifies these as the U.S.'s three foreign policy values during the Blockade Crisis. However, he overlooks that the selected strategy not only had to preserve these values, but also needed meet the practical demands of the crisis situation, primarily delivering supplies to the people of Berlin.

1948). Given the disparity in troop levels, the fear of war trumped all other concerns about reputation.

The variance in outcomes of the airlift indicates that it was the moderately risky alternative. While the chance of war with the Soviets was greater than it was if the U.S. chose to withdraw, it was still not as high as it would be with an armed convoy. Alternatively, the airlift was not a strong signal of the U.S.'s resolve in the way that a show of force such as the convoy would be. By circumventing the convoy the Americans would be avoiding direct confrontation with the Soviets, which would show the U.S.'s intent to stay and defend Berlin, and improve the morale of the citizens of Berlin and Western Europe. It was not, however, a strong stand against the U.S.S.R.'s actions. Thus, the risk of war for the U.S. was lower with the airlift than if it used an armed convoy, but higher than withdrawing from Berlin all together. On the other hand, the positive outcomes, particularly the strengthening of the U.S.'s reputation, were greater with the airlift strategy than the withdraw option, but lower than the boost that would be received by such a bold stance as the convoy.

As the riskiest strategy, the potential outcomes of the armed convoy option were both the most costly and most beneficial for the U.S.; it had the highest potential for leading to war as well as the highest potential to improve the U.S.'s reputation. A failure of the convoy could bring about war with the USSR, a war where the U.S. was seriously outnumbered, or could bring great humiliation without the Soviets even firing a single shot. On the other hand, if the convoy should succeed, as Clay and Murphy expected it would, it offered the greatest payoff for the U.S. A successful convoy would break the

blockade and send a strong signal of America's resolve, which could prevent Soviet aggression in the future.

6.2.2. Truman's Decision

President Truman ruled out the option to withdraw early in the crisis. At the June 28th meeting with Lovell, Royall, and Forrestal the President announced his decision that the U.S. would remain in Berlin – "period."[154] Secretary Royall expressed his concern over the potential consequences of staying in Berlin, including the possibility of having "to fight our way into Berlin" if fighting broke out with the Russian troops. According to Forrestal:

> He expressed some apprehension that even if we sent a note to Moscow, clearly demonstrating our right to remain in Berlin on the basis of past promises by the Soviets, we might then be subjected to greater loss of face. In other words, to the degree that we had made the case good with our own public and abroad, withdrawal would be to that extent that much more humiliating. (National Security Council, n.d.)

The President, however, was unwavering in his decision to stay.[155] He proposed that "we would have to deal with the situation as it developed," but was adamant "that we

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[154] There are contradictory reports as to whether Truman would have been willing to stay in Berlin if it meant going to war. Forrestal records that during a meeting on July 19 with the President and Secretary of State Marshall, Truman ended the meeting by saying "our policy would remain fixed; namely, that we would stay in Berlin until all diplomatic means has been exhausted in order to come to some kind of accommodation to avoid war" (Forrestal 1951, 459). However at a second meeting that day the President snapped at Averell Harriman when he suggested that the Allies reach an "absolute determination" to stay in Berlin, barking that he had already decided they would stay "even at the risk of war" (Harrington 1979, 128).

[155] Despite the President's adamancy to stay in Berlin early in the crisis, the Department of Defense continued to plan for what they believed was a very real eventuality. In the case that there should be some "reasonable justification," such as humanitarian consideration for civilians in Berlin, the military wanted to be prepared to "withdraw without undue loss of prestige" because in their view "neither air transport nor armed convoy in themselves offer a long-range solution to the problem" (Forrestal, July 28, 1948, Report to the National Security Council). The need to have a withdrawal plan was echoed in a report by the CIA in September after the breakdown in negotiations with the Soviets. Highlighting the risks associated with both staying and leaving the memo states: "Any of the courses predicated on the Western Powers' remaining in Berlin is likely in the long run to prove ineffective. The Western position in the city would increasingly deteriorate, and ultimate Western withdrawal would probably become necessary. Regardless of the set of circumstances leading to it, Western withdrawal from Berlin would seriously

were in Berlin by terms of an agreement and that the Russians had no right to get us out by either direct or indirect pressure" (Ibid.). As it became clear that the legality of the U.S.'s access rights to Berlin was ambiguous, the President modified his justification for remaining in Berlin. He began to focus on the need to send a strong signal of U.S. commitment and resolve to the U.S.S.R and its European allies. The President acknowledged the heightened risk of war – whether intentional or accidental – that came with the choice he was making. In his memoirs he stated that the US had to make a "a show of strength."

> We had to face the possibility that Russia might deliberately choose to make Berlin the pretext for war, but a more immediate danger was the risk that a trigger-happy Russian pilot or hotheaded Communist tank commander might create an incident that could ignite the powder keg. (1956, 2:124)

Once Truman decided that the U.S. would stay in Berlin, he was unwilling to revisit the issue. He had made his "spot decision" and stood by it. In a diary entry on July 19,1948, Truman wrote:

> Marshall states the facts and the condition with which we are faced. I'd made the decision ten days ago to *stay in Berlin*. Jim wants to hedge… [I insist] we will stay in Berlin- come what may. Royall, Draper and Jim Forrestal come in later. I have to listen to a rehash of what I know already and reiterate my "Stay in Berlin" decision. I do not pass the buck, nor do I alibi out of any decision I make. (Truman 1980, 145)

The President had rejected the least risky strategy available, yet "the risk of war weighed heavily on Truman," and would prove to be "one of the crucial considerations against the use of force to resolve the problem" (Shlaim 1983, 180). With time being of the essence Truman came to a decision about how to respond to the crisis at the July 22

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damage Western, and especially US, prestige throughout the world. Such action could also bring about increased Soviet pressure in western Germany and elsewhere" (Consequence in a Breakdown in Four-Power Negotiations, September 28, 1948).

meeting of the National Security Council. The two fullest accounts of this meeting consist of a set of fairly detailed NSC meeting minutes, and Truman's memoirs. In both cases the President's questions focus on the risks of war associated with the airlift and the ground convoy. Truman later reflected on this meeting, "I stated it as my judgment that if we moved out of Berlin we would be losing everything we were fighting for. The main question was: How could we remain in Berlin without risking all-out war?" (1956, 2:125).

While it is quite likely that the JCS's position on the logistical difficulties of carrying out the convoy were voiced to the President, they did not play a major role in the discussion that took place at the meeting. Instead the President asked Clay "what risks would be involved if we tried to supply Berlin by means of armed convoys" (Ibid.). Clay explained that he expected they would be met with roadblocks which would be easy to clear, however "the final Russian effort to stop armed convoy might, of course, be armed attack" (Memorandum for the President: Summary from 16th meeting of National Security Council, July 23, 1948).

Lovett followed up with a question about the likelihood of a Russian attack or blockade of the air corridors, to which Clay responded was unlikely unless they meant to go to war, and he was certain that was not their aim.[156] Although the Air Force Chief of Staff, Vandenberg, was the most vocal critic of the airlift plan at the meeting, Truman had made his decision to support the plan and dismissed Vandenberg's misgivings much like he dismissed the concerns Royall raised when he initially decided against the

[156] Harrington (1979) makes an interesting point about the contradictions in Clay's arguments throughout the crisis. On the one hand Clay says that Soviets are the greatest expansionist threat in our history and the US must not make concessions or else she will always to choose between retreat and war. On the other hand, however, he pushes for the convoy alternative on the basis that he is certain that the Soviets do not want war.

withdrawal option. In defense of the airlift President Truman asked Vandenberg rhetorically, "would he prefer to supply Berlin by ground convoy. Then, if the Russians resisted that effort and plunged the world into war, would not the Air Force have to contribute its share to the defense of the nation?" (Truman 1956, 2:125) Recalling the incident in his memoirs Truman stated that before Vandenberg could answer, the President answered his own question, and decided, "The airlift involved less risks than armed road convoys. Therefore, I directed the Air Force to furnish the fullest support possible to the problem of supplying Berlin" (Ibid., 125-6). To ensure the success of the continuing airlift an additional airfield would be built along with an increase of 75 additional C-54s. The military would use the airlift to supply the city, while diplomatic channels were explored to try to make contact with Stalin.

6.3. Discussion of Case

By April of 1949 the Berlin airlift had become so efficient that it was delivering more supplies to the city than were brought in by rail before the start of the blockade. Some 278,228 flights over the time of the crisis had delivered over 2 million tons of food and supplies to the beleaguered city (Miller 2000). Progress had been made in terms of negotiations with the Soviets, and the blockade was officially lifted on May 12, 1949.[157] President Truman later recalled that the airlift was not only a technical achievement but was instrumental for winning the support of the German people.

> It had turned them sharply against Communism. Germany, which had been waiting passively to see where it should cast its lot for the future, was veering toward the cause of the Western nations… Berlin had become a symbol of America's – and the West's – dedication to the cause of freedom. (Truman 1956, 2:129-30)

[157] The airlift actually continued until September 30, 1949 to ensure that there was a three-month surplus of supplies in reserve.

Harry Truman, a moderately risky man, had three strategies to decide between in response to the Berlin Blockade Crisis. The most risk-seeking alternative was to break the blockade with an armed convoy. While a successful show of strength would signal the U.S.'s resolve, strengthening its reputation and calling the Soviets bluff, it also could easily lead to armed conflict and humiliating defeat for the U.S. military. The second alternative, an expanded airlift, was a less risky strategy that could be coupled with pursing diplomatic channels to resolve the crisis. While this strategy would circumvent the blockade, and thereby reduce the risk of armed conflict, it was expensive, unlikely to provide a long-term solution in the face of diplomatic deadlock, and might signal weakness on the part of the Americans to defend their rights to access. The airlift, however, was riskier than the third alternative, withdrawal. This lowest variance strategy minimized the chance war with the Soviets, but offered no beneficial outcomes for the U.S.'s reputation.

Truman's choice, to rely on the moderately risky airlift alternative, fits the expectations of his inherent risk propensity. He was willing to accept the higher risk of war that came from remaining in Berlin; yet from the beginning supported the alternative that did not stand up to the Soviets, but rather went around them. The decision was his alone, and he asserted the decisiveness and leadership he was known for in defending the alternative to those who were less supportive of it as a long-term strategy. His characteristic decisiveness and quick thinking, both elements of inherent risk propensity, were key to his decision making. Shlaim's (1983) account of the Truman's decision making during the crisis best summarizes the influence of these risk-related traits:

> His ability to tolerate stress exceeded that of the great majority of his subordinates, and the character of his response followed his usual pattern of assuming personal responsibility and making a clear-cut decision on the spot. He made up his mind on the basis of the information he received, without probing for additional information that might illuminate some of the more tangled and obscure facets of the problem. He did not prevaricate or show any inclination to engage in the extensive and prolonged consultations which some of his advisers sought to foist on him. And his choice of the airlift strategy was not preceded by a critical scrutiny of the challenge or a careful search and evaluation of the alternatives available at the time for dealing with challenge. Having decided on a course of action, he did not concern himself with the details but assumed that his wishes would be carried out. (1983, 209)

The analysis above finds support for the personality-led theory espoused in this dissertation. It improves the extant literature on risk-taking, and highlights how inherent risk propensity, a factor never before measured, plays a significant role in crisis decision making. Moreover it provides a better fitting explanation for Truman's policy choice than alternative theories. 1948 was an election year and all the polls at the time of the crisis suggested that Truman would very likely lose the election in November to the Republican Candidate, Thomas Dewey. While the diversionary theory of war would expect Truman to use the threat of the Soviet blockade to his advantage to garner a rallying effect, history suggests that the president did not actively try to manipulate public opinion or use the crisis to his electoral benefit.[158] In support of this point, scholars have identified Truman's decision to have his non-partisan Secretary of State George C. Marshall announce the U.S.'s decision to remain in Berlin as an indication of "a deliberate foregoing on his part of the opportunity to exploit the crisis for domestic advantage" (Miscamble 1980, 310).

[158] While Truman did not try to create a rallying effect, he was nevertheless aware of the public's view on Berlin. For instance, on September 14, 1948 a meeting was held between several of Truman's advisors and the owners and editors of the nation's major newspapers to discuss how the American public viewed our position in the Berlin Crisis and to gauge their potential reactions to different courses of action should hostilities escalate (Forrestal 1951). This meeting, however, came after Truman had made his decision to support the airlift.

Truman's advisors from the State Department also urged caution in choosing a response strategy.[159] They wanted to avoid any action to lift the blockade that would be regarded as aggression, including the convoy, because of concern over American and international opinion. A memo by the State Department published on July 15, 1948 stated: "We feel that the American public must be assured of our best efforts to avoid the use of force. [Ambassador to the United Kingdom] Douglas has indicated that he agrees with this position because of its importance to public opinion everywhere" (Summary of Telegrams). Generally the consensus was that the American people did not want war, yet they near equally did not want to be bullied around by the Soviet Union (U.S. Public Opinion on the Berlin Situation, July 29, 1948).

Prospect theory, the primary framework used by political scientists to interpret risk-taking, is unable to explain Truman's choice in response to the crisis. According to prospect theory, Truman's dire electoral position in the summer of 1948 would have had him operating in a domain of losses and therefore more risk acceptant. This need to recoup his losses was compounded by the chip on Truman's shoulder for not having been elected to the Presidency in his own right; he was determined to win the election of 1948 to prove that he was deserving of the position. Along with strong Republican opposition, Truman faced such substantial opposition from within his own party that there was concern from his advisors that he would not even win the Democratic Party nomination

[159] To the contrary, Oneal (1982) states: "Throughout the blockade, State Department officials had consistently adopted a more aggressive posture than their Defense counterparts, being less willing to consider withdrawing from the city and more willing to try the armed convoy" (276). However, my reading of state department documents is that with the exception of Murphy those at the higher levels were urging caution. One possible explanation is that Oneal is referring to those at the "working level" in the State Department who, according to Howard Trivers (1972), were in favor of Clay's envoy proposal.

(McCullough 1992).[160] According to prospect theory, his position in a domain of losses should have inclined Truman to choose the most risk-seeking option - the armed convoy. The case above however details how Truman instead favored the more moderate airlift strategy. Thus, the predictions based on the personality-led theory of risk-taking fit the empirical history better than the predictions based on prospect theory.

Finally, given that there was intense disagreement over the best policy among Truman's advisors and no option could garner a consensus, Truman's choice could not be predicted by expected utility theory. If it were clear that the airlift had the highest expected utility then there would have likely been more support behind it. Instead, the three options had similar expected utilities, and of the three alternatives it was the one that had the least support among Truman's advisors.

This case study supports the findings in the previous empirical chapters, which indicate that personality traits significantly influence decisions to take foreign policy risks. It also makes an important contribution to our understanding of *how* personality matters. Truman was the type of leader who relished making decisions but took little interest in the search for or contemplation of alternative strategies. His low deliberation trait scores inclined him to make a decision and move on. As is evident in this case study, Truman followed his gut; he made his "spot decision" not to withdraw from Berlin, ignoring the concerns of his military advisers, and chose to respond to the blockade with

[160] There were rumors that Eisenhower would contest in the Democratic primary, which if he had would have put the war hero in an excellent position to unseat the President as party leader. Truman did win the nomination of his party however he was predicted to lose the general election. While Dewey was the most formidable opponent with the backing of the strong, well-financed Republican party, Truman also faced opposition from Henry Wallace of the Progressive Party and Strom Thurmond of the Dixiecrats (McCullough 1992).

an airlift rather than the armed convoy as advocated by his commanding general in Berlin.

Overall this chapter finds support for the theory that leaders' inherent risk propensity affects their foreign policy decisions. In the next chapter a similar case of post-war decision making will be analyzed, however the leader, and thus the key independent variables, is different. Unlike Truman who had a moderately risky personality, John F. Kennedy, was the quintessential risk-taker. The following chapter will assess whether Kennedy's inherently risky personality affected his decision making in the 1961 Berlin Crisis.

Chapter 7

John F. Kennedy and the 1961 Berlin Crisis

In early June, 1961, just six months after his inauguration as the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy was confronted with an ultimatum by the Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev - negotiate the status of Berlin or deal with the consequences of a Soviet-East German peace agreement. A peace treaty would bring an end to all commitments stemming from Germany's surrender in WWII, including the quadpartite control agreements. Thus, the treaty would turn over Soviet occupation rights to the GDR and invalidate America's access and occupation rights to West Berlin. Given the extent to which America's prestige was tied to Berlin, Kennedy was under intense pressure to respond in a way that would signal America's resolve and commitment to Berlin. At the same time he was wary that escalation of the crisis could run the risk of nuclear war.

The President ultimately had two response strategies to choose from. The first was a high-risk militarized response that involved the declaration of a national emergency and avoided all negotiation. The alternative was a more moderate-risk, mixed response that involved diplomatic as well as military action. While Kennedy's personality traits suggest that he was inclined to take risks, his concern that the crisis could escalate to nuclear war led him to accept the more moderate-risk alternative. The decision was not an easy one for the president. He deliberated over the decision to the point that his Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, remarked, "He's imprisoned by Berlin" (Schlesinger 1965, 390). John Ausland, Deputy Director of the Berlin Taskforce,

similarly recalled, “Of all the unfinished business John F. Kennedy inherited from President Eisenhower, none caused him more heartache than Berlin” (Ausland 1996, *xv*).

This chapter explores the role that John F. Kennedy’s inherent risk propensity played in his decision making and response to Khrushchev’s ultimatum. Although Kennedy did not choose the high-risk alternative, as his personality traits would suggest, the case is still informative for it illustrates the conditions where situational constraints can influence the dispositional tendencies of decision makers. As a plausibility probe, the case helps to develop the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter 2. The chapter begins with a discussion of Kennedy’s personality and risk propensity. This is followed by an in-depth examination of the Berlin Crisis, the relative risks associated with the alternative response strategies the President considered, and the policy option he chose. The conclusion reviews potential explanations for why the quintessential risk-taker did not choose the riskiest alternative in response to the Soviet ultimatum, and the implications of this case study for the personality-led theory of risk-taking.

7.1. John F. Kennedy

John F. Kennedy’s electoral victory over Richard Nixon was one of the closest in American history. One element repeatedly credited with Kennedy’s success was the force of his personality, characterized by confidence and vigor. Throughout his life it was remarked that Kennedy possessed a seemingly endless reserve of energy that drove him to seek adventure and excitement. The President recognized what he called his “curiosity” as his greatest strength, but acknowledged that his worst quality was his irritability and impatience with the boring and mediocre (Burns 1959, 262; Schlesinger

1965, 95). Thus, the most unfavorable and most laudable aspects of the President were two sides of the same coin.

To some, Kennedy's addiction to excitement displayed a man "living his life as if it were a race against boredom" (R. Reeves 1994, 19). Arthur Schlesinger, a White House aid and confidant of the President, however, attributed much of Kennedy's intensity and stimulation seeking not to a race against boredom but, rather, a race against time. Kennedy had suffered since childhood with severe intestinal problems and developed a severe "weak back" in college that led him to undergo life-threatening surgery three times to relieve the pain. He had his last rites given to him on at least three occasions, which left him with a keen awareness of his mortality and made him all the more willing to live life on the edge. According to Schlesinger, the President's precarious health "seemed to give his life its peculiar intensity, its determination to savor everything, its urgent sense that there was no time to wait" (1965, 95).

Kennedy's underlying "restless energy" manifested itself in subtle ways, such as the constant tapping of his fingers against his teeth, but clearly had more profound effects on his behavior (Sorensen 1965, 12; Rusk 1990, 293). For instance, despite his poor health, JFK convinced his father to pull the necessary political strings to have him admitted into the Navy during World War II (Dallek 2003, 81-82).[161] He was later awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal and the Purple Heart for the heroism he showed after the patrol boat he commanded was destroyed. Years later, when he began his run for the presidency, many advisors tried to discourage him, arguing that he was too young, too inexperienced, and too Catholic to win the election (Ibid., 229-235). Kennedy

[161] Dallek (2003) provides an extensive account of Kennedy's health problems throughout his biography. See also McDermott (2008, 118-156) for more on Kennedy's health and the effects of the medications he took, especially during the Vienna summit.

possessed, however, a tremendous amount of self-assurance and ambition, and chose to run despite the odds against him. These examples serve to illustrate the consistent elements of Kennedy's personality: curiosity, ambition, and thrill seeking.

While these qualities clearly had some positive influences on JFK, they also encouraged less admirable behaviors. John H. Davis, Kennedy family biographer, and cousin of Jacqueline Kennedy, recalled that "John Kennedy thrived on danger, risk and intrigue" (Davis 1984, 320). This was most evident in his personal life, where Kennedy's philandering ran the risk of damaging his marriage as well as his political career, and put the U.S.'s national security at risk. Sexual compromise and blackmail were known instruments of espionage, yet the President made "no systemic effort to ensure, by security investigation or otherwise, that all of the women with who he was involved lacked the motive or the ability to use evidence of their relationship to blackmail him on behalf of a hostile government or organization" (Beschloss 1991, 611). What is even more striking is that Kennedy actually chose to involve himself with women who increased these risks for him. Two of his most well known relationships were with Inga Aravd, a Nazi supporter, and suspected spy, and Judith Campbell, mistress to mafia don Sam Giancana.[162]

Beyond his confidence and vigor, Kennedy was often described as good humored and stoic. His detachment from emotion allowed him to have a very rational, "dispassionate attitude toward personal political matters" (Burns 1960, 263). "Even his

[162] While much has been written about the "dark side of Camelot" (e.g., Collier and Horowitz 1984; Davis 1984; Hamilton 1992; Hersh 1997; T. Reeves 1997), even those who uphold the President in a positive light recognize the dangers inherent in his reckless personal behaviors. Kennedy biographer Richard Reeves relates these behaviors to his personality in his book *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, where he writes "He was a compartmentalized man with much to hide, comfortable with secrets and lies. He needed them because that was part of the stimulation: things *were* rarely what they seemed" (1994, 19).

instincts," it was said, "came from reason rather than his hunches" (Sorensen 1965, 13). He was not strongly ideological, but instead was pragmatic and analytic. "He would prefer to present a dozen assorted reasons for a position than a single, overarching one that to most intellectuals might seem compelling" (Burns 1960, 263). When forming his policies the President was not motivated by abstract theories but was interested in "truths upon which he could act and ideas he could use in his office" (Sorensen 1965, 14).

JFK's disdain for boredom combined with his inquisitiveness and analytic nature led him to be intimately involved in the policy making process.[163] While he solicited the opinions of his advisors and enjoyed seeing them debate issues, he was frank in stating: "The National Security Council… is an advisory body to the President. In the final analysis, the President of the United States must make the decision. And it is his decision. It's not the decision of the National Security Council or any collective decision" (Sorensen 1965, 285). The President's actions gave force to these words; "he often overruled the principal NSC members and on at least one occasion overruled all of them" (Ibid.). Through his "activist approach" he abolished much of the hierarchy and organized machinery of previous administrations (Rusk 1990, 293-4). Instead, he "relied on informal meetings and direct contacts – on a personal White House staff, the Budget Bureau and ad hoc task forces to probe and define issues for his decision – on special Presidential emissaries and constant Presidential phone calls and memoranda- on placing Kennedy men in each strategic spot" (Sorensen 1965, 282). Kennedy once remarked about his leadership style that "The President can't administer a department… but at least

[163] In his autobiography, Secretary of State Dean Rusk lamented how the President's "insatiable curiosity" and "habit of involving himself in many issues" often meant more work for Rusk (Rusk 1990, 528). He recalled that Kennedy "would read something on page twelve of the *Washington Post* and call up State's desk officer in charge of that area, seeking more information," which "scared the hell out of the desk officer" (Ibid.) and meant Rusk would have to learn all there was to know about the issue.

he can be a stimulant… There is a great tendency in government to have papers stay on desks too long… One of the functions of the President is to try to have it move with more speed. Otherwise you can wait while the world collapses" (Ibid.).

7.1.1 Kennedy's underlying risk propensity

While there is clearly historical evidence to support the notion that Kennedy was a risk-taker, the decision to code Kennedy as having a high-risk propensity is determined by his personality traits. Recall from Chapter 2 that previous research in behavioral economics and personality psychology has found that there are four risk-related personality traits: Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Altruism, and Deliberation. John F. Kennedy's scores on all four of these traits indicate that he had a strong tendency toward high-risk behavior. Simply stated, Kennedy's personality traits suggest that he was the quintessential risk-taker.[164]

His Excitement Seeking (E5) trait score, the trait most often associated with risk-taking in previous studies and in this dissertation, is *very high*.[165] In fact he has the highest Excitement Seeking score of any U.S. President. Individuals who score high on this trait crave excitement and stimulation, and are known for their pleasure seeking and daring behavior (Costa and McCrae 1992, 17; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004, 11). Kennedy's excitement seeking in his personal life, most notably his philandering, had the

[164] The probability of Kennedy's initiating a militarized interstate dispute was 30% higher than the average president. He was 20% more likely to use force abroad in any quarter. And, surprisingly, he was only 8% more likely to capitalize on an opportunity to use force. These predictions were made comparing the likelihood of an event, given all variables held at their mean or median, to the likelihood of an event when the personality scores were set to President Kennedy's scores, and all remaining control variable were held at their mean or median.

[165] Modifiers (very low, low, average, etc.) referring to Kennedy's trait scores relative to average adult norms will be italicized to indicate that these are more than simply descriptive terms.

potential to spell huge risks for his political career. Nevertheless the President was willing to accept these risks and continued to engage in such behaviors. Related to Excitement Seeking is the Openness to Action (O4) trait. Kennedy's Openness to Action score is, not surprisingly, *high*. Taken together these two trait scores speak to the thrill seeking, often fearless, element of the President's personality.

Kennedy's Altruism (A3) trait score is *low*. As previous research has shown, individuals with low Altruism scores are more likely to take risks. One potential explanation for this finding is that people who are more altruistic are concerned with the effects their risk-taking actions could have on others. In the domain of foreign policy this might translate into a reluctance to use force because of concern for the lives of service people called to duty. Kennedy's low Altruism trait score suggests he would be less inhibited to use force, and would thus be more willing to adopt risky foreign policies.

On the final risk-related personality trait, Deliberation (C6) the President's score is *very low*. Previous research has shown that lower Deliberation scores are related to higher risk-taking. High scorers on this facet are cautious and deliberate, whereas low scorers like Kennedy are described as hasty and may have a tendency to speak or act without fully considering the consequences of their decisions (Costa and McCrae 1992, 18). Among some low scorers, such as Harry Truman, this trait manifests itself as an individual being spontaneous and able to make snap decisions. In Kennedy's case however, this low score most reflects the lack of deliberation that went into many of his personal decisions.

Taken together, the President's personality traits indicate that he was inclined to engage in high-risk behavior. The personality-led theory of risk-taking is not

deterministic. The predictions are based on *tendencies*, not certainties. Given President Kennedy's disposition towards risk, it is expected he would be more likely to choose the highest-risk alternative in response to a foreign policy crisis. While this prediction does not hold true for the 1961 Berlin Crisis explored below, the case study offers important insights as to what factors condition the effects of leader's risk propensity and helps to develop the personality-led theory of risk-taking.

7.2. The 1961 Berlin Crisis

Much like the 1948 Berlin Blockade Crisis, the crisis that erupted in the summer of 1961 was rooted in the division of Germany following World War II. The Allied powers set up a quadpartite system to govern post-war Germany, and its divided capital, Berlin. West Berlin's location more than 100 miles within Soviet-controlled East Germany was a source of vulnerability for the West, and made it the setting of several Cold War crises. In November 1958 mounting fears of a nuclearized West Germany led the Soviet Union to demand that the Western allies negotiate a German peace treaty within six months and establish Berlin as a "free city," or deal with the consequences of a unilateral Soviet peace treaty.[166] While discussions between the Eisenhower administration and the Soviets were initially promising, they broke down after an American U-2 reconnaissance plane was shot down over the Soviet Union. Soviet

[166] See Zubok (1993) for an analysis of the various factors that motivated Khrushchev to launch the ultimatum and ultimately not carry through with the threat.

Premier Nikita Khrushchev, believing he would have more success with Eisenhower's successor, chose to postpone his ultimatum until after the 1960 presidential election.[167]

Immediately after assuming the presidency, John F. Kennedy focused his administration's attention on revising the existing contingency plans for Berlin. He was certain that it was a matter of time until the Soviets resurrected their ultimatum, and wanted to have a complete picture of the U.S.'s relative power vis-à-vis the Soviets. He requested that Dean Acheson, Secretary of State during the Truman administration, serve as a special advisor on Germany and Berlin, and review the contingency plans.

In an interim report in April, Acheson cautioned that a crisis was likely in the coming year. He pointed out that the Allies were divided and the West was unprepared to counter effectively a Soviet interruption of access to West Berlin. Acheson argued that the U.S. should be willing to protect, even to the extent of nuclear war, her three vital interests, or "the essentials," that made up a substantial part of the status quo: the maintenance of Allied presence and garrisons in West Berlin; freedom of air and surface access to West Berlin; the continued freedom and viability of West Berlin (Catudal 1980, 144).[168] A known hardliner, Acheson argued that when it came to defending the U.S.'s interests in Berlin, "All courses of action are dangerous and unpromising. Inaction is even worse" (Acheson, April 3, 1961, Memorandum for the President). The U.S. was

[167] For a comparison of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations' respective handling of the 1958 and 1961 ultimatum crises see Schake (2002) and Bundy (1988, 371-8). Bundy treats what many, including the International Conflict Behavior data set, see as two crises as part of one larger crisis that spanned from 1958 until shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

[168] Kennedy stressed these three essentials at the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev and in his July 25 radio and television address to the nation, which deliberately leave out any mention of East Berlin. Scholars, including Catudal (1980), Beschloss (1991), and Harrison (2003), have suggested that the President therein gave Khrushchev a green light to take whatever action, including building a wall, he deemed necessary in the Soviet sphere of influence so long as it didn't interfere with these essentials. In the days following the building of the Berlin Wall on August 13 the President remarked, "It's not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war" (Beschloss 1991, 278).

being faced with a "Hobson's choice," and in response to the impending crisis, "a bold and dangerous course may be the safest" (Ibid.).

Khrushchev reserved his decision to re-issue the ultimatum on Berlin until he and President Kennedy met face to face in Vienna in early June. Those present at the time recalled that Kennedy did not intend to use the summit to make any new proposals; his objective was to "preserve the status quo" (R. Reeves 1994, 157) and open up lines of communication that would help avoid a disastrous, nuclear miscalculation by either side.[169] Khrushchev, on the other hand, was eager to put Berlin on the table. Having deferred the problem of Berlin for more than two and half years he was under extreme domestic pressure to stand up to Kennedy and stand by his 1958 ultimatum. He faced additional pressure from the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries who were concerned that Khrushchev was becoming "soft" after years of trumpeting the dangers of a "revanchist" West Germany. They were also pushing him to take some action in Berlin that would quell the exodus of refugees from East Germany, which was threatening to destabilize the entire region (Harrison 2003, 157-175).

Thus Khrushchev demanded that a peace treaty with Germany be signed, and threatened that if the U.S. refused to sign a treaty then the Soviet Union would proceed unilaterally. A unilateral Soviet-East German agreement would solidify the existence of two separate Germanys, but most importantly, would end the state of war, thereby nullifying all commitments stemming from Germany's surrender, including occupation rights and access rights to Berlin. Khrushchev proposed that West Berlin be preserved as

[169] While Berlin was not on the President's agenda, he was well prepared for it to be on Khrushchev's. In the days before the Vienna meeting, Llewellyn Thompson, Ambassador to the Soviet Union, had seen Khrushchev who was again threatening to sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR if an agreement with the West could not be reached (*FRUS* 1993, 66-69).

a "free city," but its links to the outside world would be turned over to the "sovereign" East Germans. Thus the Allies' access routes from West Germany to West Berlin would no longer be guaranteed, but would instead be at the discretion of the GDR. Furthermore, any violation of the GDR's sovereignty would be regarded by the U.S.S.R. as an act of open aggression and would be defended by the Soviets (Sorensen 1965, 584-5).[170]

Khrushchev's ultimatum initiated a crisis for the U.S. "If we accepted the loss of our rights in Berlin," the President told Khrushchev at their meeting, "no one would have any confidence in our commitments or pledges" (Sorensen 1965, 584). He protested:

> Our leaving West Berlin would result in the United States becoming isolated. It would mean abandonment of the West Berliners and all hope for German reunification, abandonment of America's obligations and America's allies. Our commitments would be regarded as mere scraps of paper. (Ibid.)

The President was willing to concede that the simple signing of a peace treaty would not be considered a belligerent act as "the United States could not and would not interfere with decision taken by the Soviet Union in its own sphere of influence" (Catudal 1980, 118).[171] However any interference with the U.S.'s rights in West Berlin or its vital access lanes would be considered "a most serious challenge with unforeseeable consequences" (*FRUS* 1993, 110). Khrushchev was willing to sign an interim agreement with the U.S. that would postpone a peace treaty with the GDR, and thereby preserve U.S. access to

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[170] Much of what American historians have written on the Vienna summit comes from the official Memorandum of Conversation from the summit reprinted by the State Department in the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *1961-1963, Volume XIV* pp. 87-98 (here after abbreviated *FRUS*) and the memoirs of Sorensen (1965), Schlesinger (1965) and Rusk (1990). However with the end of the Cold War scholars gained access to Soviet documents from the crisis as well as Khrushchev's writings. Harrison (2003), Taubman (2003), and Zubok's (1993) works are largely based on these new materials and offer much more from the Soviet perspective. Although it is older, see also Adomeit's (1982) comparison of Soviet risk-taking in the 1948 and 1961 Berlin crises.

[171] As Schoenbaum points out, by threatening to sign the peace treaty the Russians had put the U.S. in a dilemma because they were "not threatening force or war… they were only threatening peace – the conclusion of a peace treaty with East Germany. The first belligerent act, if it came, would come from the West" (1998, 338).

Berlin, for six months. However when pushed on this point the Secretary General stood firm that after six months the U.S. would have to go.[172]

Tensions peaked during a private meeting between the two leaders and their interpreters at the end of the summit. After revisiting many of the points they had raised earlier, Khrushchev concluded by saying that he wanted peace, however if the United States wanted to start a war over Germany, "let it be so" (Sorensen 1965, 585).[173] Not wanting to seem "soft," and yet not wanting to act too rash, Kennedy retorted: "It is you, and not I, who wants to force a change" (Salinger 1965, 182). Khrushchev then restated his ultimatum in unequivocal terms: "The decision to sign a peace treaty is firm and irrevocable and the Soviet Union will sign it in December if the U.S. refuses an interim agreement" (*FRUS* 1993, 97). "If that is true," Kennedy replied, "it will be a cold winter" (Rusk 1990, 221; Salinger 1965, 182; Sorensen 1965, 586).[174]

An official Soviet aide-memoire was given to the U.S. at the end of the meeting outlining the Soviet stance on Berlin. Although the deadline for Khrushchev's ultimatum

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[172] Throughout the talks Khrushchev repeatedly called for an interim agreement since the Eisenhower administration had seemed willing to go down this route and was open to some concessions. Such an agreement, from Khrushchev's perspective, would allow for a way out of the crisis without damaging his prestige. According to Beschloss (1991, 220), this was a major reason why Kennedy refused such an idea. He was unwilling to sign an agreement that would allow Khrushchev to postpone the crisis without public embarrassment, just as much as he feared such an agreement would signal to Khrushchev that he would not fulfill America's commitment to the city. While Beschloss's account indicates that the President was unwilling to negotiate because of some desire to humiliate Khrushchev, there are no other accounts that make this point. Rather, it seems clear that given Kennedy's preoccupation with Soviet perceptions of his strength he most likely refused this proposal for fear that it would weaken his image.

[173] Salinger's account and that recorded in the *FRUS* (1993) are very similar in nature to Sorensen's; however, there are semantic differences. In this case the former sources cite Khrushchev as saying that if the U.S. wanted a war "that was its problem."

[174] According to R. Reeves's account, based on an interview and personal correspondence with Dean Rusk, the President said: "Then there will be war; it is going to be a very cold winter" (1994, 687). Rusk goes on to say that Khrushchev was the first to use the word war. He laid out what his plan in Berlin was, and said if there was any interference by the West there would be war; President Kennedy's statement was simply affirming it. Nevertheless, that these two leaders spoke so frankly about the likelihood of war illustrates how high tensions ran during this conflict and the real sense that war was imminent.

was the end of the year, "no one took that at face value" (Ausland 1996, 17). The consensus in Washington was that the Soviets would call a German Peace Conference following the October Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.[175] Thus, Kennedy needed to decide quickly how the United States would respond.

The stress brought on by time pressures was compounded by the President's inability to see a way out of the situation that would maintain the prestige of both the Soviets and the West, while avoiding nuclear war. In a private meeting with *New York Times* reporter James Reston following the summit, Kennedy remarked, "he just beat the hell out of me… I've got a terrible problem. If he thinks I'm inexperienced and have no guts, until we remove those ideas we won't get anywhere with him. So we have to act" (Beschloss 1991, 225). Clearly the President felt pressure to take action to confirm the U.S.'s resolve. Additionally, in the days following the conference he made several comments related to his need to *prove himself* to Khrushchev and the American people. He told a group of advisors, "There are limits to the number of defeats I can defend in one twelve month period… I've had the Bay of Pigs, and pulling out of Laos, and I can't accept a third" (R. Reeves 1994, 176).

On the other hand, however, Kennedy was concerned that the crisis would escalate to nuclear war. Among his first questions after he returned from Vienna were: how many Americans would die in an all out nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union? How many would die if just one nuclear missile hit a city (R. Reeves 1994, 174)? The President estimated that there was a one in five chance of a nuclear exchange, which

[175] While the Soviets never actually signed a peace treaty the ultimatum threat at the time was credible. Secretary of State, Dean Rusk recalled thinking "if the Soviets went public with their demands, they were deadly serious, and on June 10 my worst fears were confirmed: The Soviets published the aide-memoire" (Rusk 1990, 221).

distressed him greatly. He vented to Ken O'Donnell, his Appointments Secretary and confidant:

> We're stuck in a ridiculous situation. It seems silly for us to be facing an atomic war over a treaty preserving Berlin as the future capital of a reunited Germany when all of us know that Germany will probably never be reunited…God knows I'm not an isolationist, but it seems particularly stupid to risk killing a million Americans over an argument about access rights on an Autobahn… or because the Germans want Germany reunified. If I'm going to threaten Russia with a nuclear war, it will have to be for a much bigger and more important reasons than that. Before I back Khrushchev against the wall and put him to a final test, the freedom of all Western Europe will have to be at stake. (Beschloss 1991, 225)[176]

Upon returning from Vienna the President took complete charge of handling the crisis, to the extent that he was nicknamed the "Berlin Desk Officer" (Trivers 1972, 29). Unlike President Harry Truman in the Berlin Blockade Crisis, Kennedy was very active in the search for alternatives. He "reviewed and revised the military contingency plans, the conventional force build-up, the diplomatic and propaganda initiatives, the budget changes and the plans for economic warfare" (Sorensen 1965, 586). Moreover, he "considered the effect each move would have on Berlin morale, Allied unity, Soviet intransigence and his own legislative and foreign aid program" (Ibid).

NATO and the Joint Chiefs' contingency plans for Berlin called for sending a series of military "probes" down the Autobahn in the event that access were to be blocked. Cuts in conventional forces under Eisenhower's New Look program left the U.S. unable to counter communist forces with a non-nuclear response. Should Communist troops block western access routes upon the signing of a treaty, Kennedy had few alternatives other than nuclear war or retreat, or as he called it - "holocaust or

[176] Kennedy may have felt this way in private, but in public he made it clear that "the preservation of Western rights in West Berlin was an objective for which the United States was required to incur at any cost, including the risk of nuclear war" (Sorensen 1965, 586).

humiliation."[177] The President saw this as a weak and dangerous position for the Allies to be in, as no one was likely to believe the U.S. would start a war over traffic controls on the Autobahn. Kennedy worried, "if Mr. Khrushchev believes that all we have is the atomic bomb he is going to feel that we are… somewhat unlikely to use it" (Ibid., 588).[178]

Moreover, the probes as outlined in the existing plans were "too small to indicate a serious intent" (Sorensen 1965, 587-8). A build up of troops in Central Europe would be required to convince Khrushchev that the U.S.'s interests were so deeply involved that it would be willing to use any means necessary to prevent the defeat or capture of those forces. Moreover these forces would be large enough "to prevent any cheap and easy seizure of the city by East German guards alone, which would weaken our bargaining power- and large enough to permit a true 'pause,' a month instead of an hour before choosing nuclear war or retreat" (Sorensen 1965, 588). "If we can't remove the fuse from the bomb of global catastrophe," the President's thinking went, "at least we can lengthen it" (Ibid.).

While there was consensus among Kennedy's advisors that a military build up should be part of the U.S.'s response to the Soviet ultimatum, the administration was divided over two issues.[179] The first was whether the President should declare a national

[177] Alternatively these same options were referred to as "suicide or surrender."

[178] While the use of nuclear weapons were never considered in response to the ultimatum, contingency plans were developed at this time in the case the Soviets were to seize West Berlin, which included a nuclear first-strike war plan (Bird 1998, 206-8; Beschloss 1991, 255-6).

[179] In a meeting of the Berlin Steering Group, after the NSC meeting on July 13, four military response options were discussed: (1) Proceed at once with a substantial reinforcement of U.S. ground, air and naval forces which would require declaration of national emergency and immediate request for legislation giving stand-by control over the economy; (2) Proceed at once with all measures not requiring declaration of a national emergency (3) Proceed with a declaration of national emergency and with all

emergency, and the second was whether a prompt offer to negotiate should accompany a military build-up.

One side of the debate was led by Dean Acheson, whose plan found support with the JCS, head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, as well as some State and Defense Department officials. His proposal was the first to reach the President's desk at the end of June and thereby set the tone of the debate. Acheson recommended that the President immediately increase ground forces in Germany by an additional two or three divisions, declare a national emergency, ask Congress for an additional five billion dollars for increased military preparedness and expansion, and forgo any attempts at a political solution (Catudal 1980 145-7; *FRUS* 1993, 119). He argued that Berlin was not the real issue for the Soviets; "Berlin was not a problem but a pretext" (Schlesinger 1965, 381). Rather, the impending crisis was a test of America's will and an attempt to shatter the United States' world image. Acheson wrote to the President, "Until this conflict of wills is resolved, an attempt to solve the Berlin issue by negotiation is worse than a waste of time and energy. It is dangerous" (Acheson, June 28, 1961, Memorandum for the President). "Any negotiation, in his adamant opinion, would be a self-defeating sign of weakness - tantamount to surrender" (McMahon 2008, 193).[180]

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preparations except a large-scale call up of Reserves or Guard units; (4)Avoid any significant military build-up at this time (Bundy, July 13, 1961, Military Choices in Berlin Planning). The first option was closest to the Acheson plan and was supported by the Vice President; the Secretaries of State and Defense supported option 2; General Taylor, Special Assistant to the President for Military Affairs, supported option 3; no one supported the idea of avoiding a military build up. As for the President, he did not state a preference, nor did the meeting reach any "clear consensus on the 'political scenario'" (Bundy, July 24, 1961, Memorandum of discussion in the NSC).

[180] The President pushed Acheson on the issue of a political solution at the June 29 NSC meeting. He asked the former Secretary of State, what should he do if Khrushchev proposes a summit later in the summer. Standing by his conviction that the U.S. should refrain from negotiations, Acheson proposed that the President suggest that conversations take place first at a lower level. "There were plenty of 'elderly unemployed' people like himself who could be sent to interminable meetings… we could converse

Rather than negotiation, Acheson's plan called for escalatory military actions that would increase the credibility of the United States' nuclear deterrent. In his view, a national emergency should be declared, as it would be the only way to credibly signal to Khrushchev that the US was serious about defending Berlin, even to the point of nuclear war. A conventional forces buildup alone might suggest to Khrushchev that the U.S. was limiting itself to a conventional war. Whereas, a declaration of emergency would allow the President to call up one million reserves, extend terms of service, bring back dependents from Europe, and impress her allies, citizens, and most importantly Khrushchev, with the gravity with which the US regarded the situation. If the Soviets should cut off access to West Berlin, Acheson's plan largely skipped over the possibilities of an economic or diplomatic response and directly focused on military countermeasures, including sending a division down the Autobahn to "make clear that western interest in preserving access was greater than Russian interest in blocking access" (Schlesinger 1965, 380).[181] Acheson admitted that his plan was "a very risky course" but it was the most credible way to signal that the U.S. was not bluffing in its commitment to use nuclear weapons if necessary to defend Berlin (*FRUS* 1993, 121).

Those on the other side of the debate included Secretary of State Rusk and Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles, Ambassadors Thompson, Stevenson, and Harriman, as well as Arthur Schlesinger and Theodore Sorensen. They argued for a more flexible, mixed response that would use diplomacy alongside a military buildup to seek a political

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indefinitely without negotiating at all, and he asserted that he could readily do this himself for three months on end" (*FRUS* 1993, 162).

[181] Acheson also proposed an airlift to supply the garrison in the case of a Soviet blockade, in conjunction with the probe. Admiral Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, voiced opposition to the size of the probe Acheson proposed. Acheson's response "emphasized his belief that [the] force must be large enough to carry out the clear conviction to the enemy that if the fighting continues, nuclear weapons will be used" (*FRUS* 1993, 161).

solution. Unlike the Achesonians, this group did not have a single paper or policy to stand behind. Instead they more or less identified themselves by their aversion to Acheson's militancy. As Schlesinger recalled, "Those of us who talked about supplementing the build-up with negotiation had hold, however dimly, of one truth: that insistence on a military showdown, accompanied by the rejection of diplomacy and, in early July, by talk of war mobilization under a proclamation of national emergency, contained the risk of pushing the crisis beyond the point of no return" (1965, 385).

While the agenda was set by Acheson's plan, Kennedy was open to hearing critiques and other options. He entertained as many sides of the issue as possible and openly encouraged dissent among his advisors. On the morning of July 7 Schlesinger wrote a memo to the President based on a recent discussion he had had with several other White House staffers about the restrictiveness and dangers of Acheson's plans. The memo drew parallels to the planning before the Bay of Pigs fiasco such as: "excessive concentration [in our advance planning] on military and operational problems and the wholly inadequate consideration of political issues" and the plan's focus on the least likely eventuality – an immediate blockade of West Berlin (Schlesinger 1965, 386). Impressed by Schlesinger's arguments, the President directed him to prepare a memo about the unexplored issues in the Berlin problem that he could use at his meeting in Hyannis Port that weekend. Together with Kissinger and Chayes, Schlesinger outlined the deficiencies in Acheson's plan and presented a list of questions that ought to be asked before the President decided on a response strategy. In addition to the issues raised in the earlier one, the new memo pointed out that by not being open to negotiations, the U.S. was allowing Khrushchev to set the framework for discussion, thereby putting the U.S.

on the political defensive. Furthermore, while Acheson's plan "define[d] an immediate casus belli" it did not state "any political objective other than present access procedures for which we are prepared to incinerate the world" (Schlesinger, July 7, 1961, Memorandum for the President). The question that the President needed to ask himself was: "where do we want to come out if we win the test of wills?" (Ibid.).[182] With these points in mind the focus of the Hyannis Port meeting became what options the President would have beyond the Acheson plan that would not spell out holocaust or humiliation. He requested that Rusk provide him a plan for negotiations on Berlin and McNamara a plan for non-nuclear resistance within the next ten days.

Schlesinger was not alone in his criticism. At the July 13 meeting of the NSC Secretary of State Rusk voiced his concern that a declaration of national emergency would have a "dangerous sound of mobilization." He cautioned that the U.S. needed to keep early steps low-key and proposed instead a Congressional resolution to authorize a military build-up (Bundy, July 24, 1961, Memorandum of discussion in the NSC). Counter to the premise of the Acheson plan, Ambassador Thompson argued that the intent of the USSR was to improve the communist position in Eastern Europe, not political humiliation of the United States. The U.S., he argued, should therefore begin a quiet military buildup along with a diplomatic offensive. He cautioned, "the Soviet mind was more likely to be impressed by substantial but quiet moves that did not panic our allies" (Sorensen 1965, 589). Henry Kissinger also warned that a declaration of national

[182] In another memo to the President, Schlesinger criticized the rigidity of the Acheson plan, stating that it "calls for shooting off everything we have in one shot, and it is so constructed as to make any more flexible course very difficult." He cautioned the President that it "may leave you very little choice as to how you face the moment of thermonuclear truth" (Covering note on Henry Kissinger's memo, July 7, 1961).

emergency would make the US appear "unnecessarily bellicose, perhaps even hysterical" (Schlesinger 1965, 390).

7.2.1. Relative Riskiness of Alternative Strategies

President Kennedy had two alternatives to choose from in response to Khrushchev's peace treaty ultimatum. Recall from the previous chapters that risk in this dissertation is analyzed in terms of the relative variance in outcomes. The most risky strategy would be that with the highest variance in outcomes. Given President Kennedy's inherent risk propensity it is expected that he would select the highest-risk alternative.[183] There were two alternatives put before the President. The first option was a high-risk military-only option laid out by former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, while the second was a related but less risky alternative, which included pursuing diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

In theory it is possible to argue that Kennedy had a third option – to pursue diplomacy with no accompanying military action – however nothing in the historical record indicates that this was ever considered by the President or his advisors.[184] Such a plan would have had the lowest risk of an immediate armed conflict and thus escalation to war. On the other hand, there would be few benefits to this plan other than buying time. The success of such a plan would rest on either a break-through in negotiations, or a Soviet decision to once again postpone the ultimatum deadline, which given the pressures

[183] This assumes that the strategies have a similar expected utility. If all possible outcomes of one strategy are better than the outcomes of the alternative strategy, that is, if one strategy has a greater expected value, then there is a clear "rational" choice (McDermott 2004c, 39-40). As the debate within the Kennedy administration indicates, neither of the two strategies was considered superior.

[184] The option to leave Berlin was not considered either. The President's brother and closet confidant, Robert Kennedy, was later asked "was there anybody who held the view that we should abandon Berlin?" He replied "No." Pressed further, if this option was even discussed or "considered a possibility" he replied "No. No." (R. Kennedy 1988, 278).

on Khrushchev seemed unlikely. In the worst case this strategy could leave the U.S., and President Kennedy more specifically, vulnerable to accusations of weakness; the President was already facing a crisis of confidence from the American people, the Allies, and even those within his administration. This option was never on the table, probably in part because of Kennedy's desire to protect his image, but also because Acheson's April report set the tone of discussion, and there was a strong consensus in the White House on the need to increase troop strength in Central Europe. Thus, the only two actual options available to the President were to follow Acheson's plan or its less risky alternative.

The first option, the Acheson strategy, was a high-risk military-only response. This "mobilization," as Secretary of State Rusk called the policy, involved: a declaration of national emergency, calling up the reserves and the National Guard, extending the terms of service of those on active duty, returning dependents from Europe, and requesting an additional $4.3 billion for defense spending from Congress (Catudal 1980, 173).[185] The plan decidedly avoided any type of negotiation because of fears that it would signal American weakness and increase the potential for exploitation by the Soviets. Negotiation with the Soviets, Acheson cautioned, was not only impossible but could be fatal.

When making the case for this strategy to the President, Acheson asserted that there was a substantial chance that the necessary military preparations would by themselves cause Khrushchev to alter his purpose; however, he also acknowledged that there was a substantial possibility that nuclear war might result (Schlesinger 1965,

[185] While these were the recommendations of the Pentagon presented by Secretary of Defense McNamara at the July 13 NSC meeting, they were strongly supported by Acheson and came about largely in response to his policy paper to the President on June 28, hence it was accepted as the Acheson strategy.

382).[186] Acheson's plan heightened the risk of war with the Soviets by escalating the crisis and inviting retaliatory mobilization. By omitting efforts for diplomatic resolution this strategy presented the highest risk of war, but also had the greatest chance of deterring the Soviets from tampering with Western access rights to Berlin.[187] The desire to avoid nuclear war was reciprocal and by adopting this plan, especially through a declaration of a national emergency, the West would send the loudest and clearest possible signal of the seriousness with which it viewed the Soviet ultimatum and its intent to protect its rights in Berlin. In addition to deterring the Soviets this plan would also signal the U.S.'s resolve to its allies, particularly the West Germans. Relative to the alternative major strategy, Acheson's plan had a wider variance in possible outcomes; it possessed a greater likelihood of war with the Soviets, but also sent a much stronger signal of the U.S.'s resolve.

The alternative to the Acheson plan was a less risky, "mixed options" strategy.[188] While there were several variants for how military preparations and negotiations could be mixed, the essence of all of them was that both diplomacy *and* military actions would be

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[186] In defending what he himself called a "a very risky course," Acheson argued that it was "not foolhardy if the US Government were really prepared to use nuclear weapons for the protection of Berlin on which we had staked our entire prestige. If we were not prepared to go all the way, we should not start… If we were not prepared to take all the risks, then we had better begin by attempting to mitigate the eventual disastrous results of our failure to fulfill our commitments" (*FRUS* 1993, 121).

[187] In a report by the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Berlin and Germany that laid out the arguments in favor of early large-scale mobilization pointed to the strong deterrent effect such action might have, as well as the possibility that it might engage the Soviet's prestige, thus making it more difficult for them to abandon their threats to block the Allies' access (Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin, July 12, 1961, A study regarding Berlin). Despite the arguments against mobilization laid out in the paper there was consensus in the administration that a military buildup was necessary.

[188] The decision to refer to this alternative as the "mixed options" is based upon the statements of a "critical authority" within the White House who recalled that the President "mixed options" – meaning that he combined increased military readiness and diplomacy - in his response to the Russians (Catudal 1980, 193). It is not related to the similar sounding, yet altogether different term "mixed strategy," which is used in the context of game theory.

pursued. It would be unlikely that a national emergency would be declared as part of this strategy, since the primary argument in favor of such a declaration would be to signal the gravity of a military response to the crisis. Since the "mixed options" involved a large military build-up it still constituted an escalation of the crisis and therefore had some risks of war, albeit less than Acheson's strategy given the channels of diplomacy that would be simultaneously pursued. The military readiness elements of a mixed options strategy could have the positive effects of the Acheson plan in that it would still signal the U.S.'s resolve and commitment to Berlin. However, the positive payoff for the U.S.'s reputation would be at best markedly less relative to the Acheson plan, and at worse damaging; if Acheson were right, then a willingness to negotiate would be understood as a sign of weakness. This could humiliate the President as well as undermine the strength of the signal sent by the military build-up. Moreover it could still be seen as an escalatory step by the Soviets and potentially lead to war.[189] Despite these potential negative outcomes, the variance in outcomes was much more extreme in the case of Acheson's plan, making the latter the riskier strategy.

7.2.2. Kennedy's Decision

On July 19, at what National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy called "the most important NSC meeting that we have had," Kennedy presented his response to the ultimatum Khrushchev had issued six weeks earlier (Bundy, July 19, 1961, Memorandum for the President). Contrary to what his inherent risk propensity would suggest, the

[189] The possibility of war even with the "mixed options" strategy was still relevant. Those within the administration in support of this alternative acknowledged that, "[o]ur own plans emphasize that we must face the risk of war" (Trachtenberg 1991, 218), yet this risk was considerably lower relative to the Acheson plan given that the build up was smaller, a declaration of national emergency would not be made, and diplomatic channels would be used to find a peaceful resolution.

President chose to pursue a "mixed options" strategy that would allow for a rapid build-up of combat troops in Central Europe, while opening up the door for negotiations with the Soviets. Six divisions would be in place by the time of Khrushchev's December peace-treaty deadline, and would provide the U.S. with alternatives beyond humiliation or holocaust should the Soviets escalate the crisis. The military build up increased the "investment of men and honor" to a point that would necessitate action to defend them, and created "a chain of plausible U.S. response in which each stage would believably lead to the next higher chain of force" (Bundy, July 25, 1961, Memorandum of minutes NSC). Overall the buildup would send a credible signal to the Soviets that the U.S. "meant business" (Sorensen quoted in Catudal 1980, 179n 51).

Kennedy disagreed with Acheson's view that the Soviets would interpret any bargaining offer as weakness, and resolved to "lean forward" on negotiations because he did not want Khrushchev to be the one to set the framework for discussion (Beschloss 1991, 257). Schlesinger recalled that the President "did not wish to drive the crisis beyond the point of no return; and therefore while reiterating our refusal to retreat, he rejected the program of national mobilization and sought the beginnings of careful negotiation" (1965, 391). Nevertheless, he clearly worried that the strategy he chose would signal to Khrushchev a reluctance to wage nuclear war, and thus America's loss of nerve. He told his advisors, "Some day… the time might come when he would have to run the supreme risk to convince Khrushchev that conciliation did not mean humiliation" (Ibid.). But for the time being he chose a policy that signaled the U.S.'s resolve while also indicating that the U.S. was not "war-mad."

President Kennedy announced his policy decision to those outside of his administration in a televised address on July 25, 1961. He explained that the government would take measures to build-up America's conventional military power, improve civilian defense, and strengthen her nuclear force. He asked Congress to provide stand-by authority to call up the Reserves, rather than seeking an immediate mobilization as Acheson had recommended, and asked them to approve an additional $3.2 billion to finance these efforts, bringing the total increase in military spending since his inauguration to $6 billion (Beschloss 1991, 257-8; J. Kennedy 1962).[190] Draft calls would be more than tripled, West Berlin would be readied, and Allied agreement on economic sanctions would be sought; however no national emergency was declared.

Kennedy's pragmatism played a role in his decision. According to Sorensen, the President said that in order to rebuild Allied confidence in his leadership after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, he could not afford to overreact. A national emergency was "an ultimate weapon of national alarm and commitment," and could not be frequently declared or easily rescinded. Furthermore, he believed that the U.S. needed to be prepared for a long-haul global effort against Communism involving air, space, and domestic measures, which would be endangered by the extensive new budget and tax requests envisioned in the national emergency declaration.

While largely a message to signal to the Soviets and allies that the U.S. was taking military preparations to defend West Berlin, the President's speech also indicated his desire for a peaceful solution. The U.S. would be readying itself to talk if the Soviets were willing to talk, or use force if necessary. Either preparing for the use of force or

[190] His funding request was less than the $4.3 billion the Acheson plan called for, but clearly more than an alternative option to ask Congress to appropriate an additional $1.5 billion and adopt a "wait and see" approach for additional funds (Memorandum, Subject: Berlin, July 17, 1961).

showing a willingness to negotiate alone, he stated, "would fail," but "together, they can serve the cause of freedom and peace" (J. Kennedy 1962, 534). Contrary to the policy advocated by Acheson, Kennedy spoke of a willingness to pursue a political solution to the Berlin crisis through diplomatic means. "In short," he stated, "while we are ready to defend our interests, we shall also be ready to search for peace--in quiet exploratory talks--in formal or informal meetings. We do not want military considerations to dominate the thinking of either East or West" (Ibid., 538).

7.3. Discussion of Case

President Kennedy's response to Nikita Khrushchev's ultimatum on Berlin sent a powerful signal to the American people as well as its allies and adversaries – the U.S. was willing to accept the risks of war to defend its rights to Berlin. Yet, it was not the riskiest strategy available to him. The option he chose left the door open for negotiations with the Soviets so as to provide both sides with a face saving alternative to nuclear war. His response was formalized when Congress passed a joint resolution on August 1 authorizing the call-up of 250,000 reserves. With the military build-up underway Kennedy then began his diplomatic offensive. Although there were various meetings between Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and President Kennedy, Secretary of State Rusk, and Ambassador Thompson throughout the following months, "no real progress was made" (Sorensen 1965, 598).[191]

[191] Given that the talks between the Soviets and the US were largely inconclusive, some scholars have inferred that the cessation in refugees following the building of the Berlin Wall gave Khrushchev the space to retract his ultimatum. Others have argued that the Cuban missile affair should be interpreted as the final phase of the Berlin Crisis: "it was only after that episode that Berlin appears to have faded away as an issue" (Trachtenberg 1991, 231).

Nevertheless, the confrontation that seemed imminent in June and July never happened. Khrushchev was not pleased by Kennedy's response to his ultimatum, however he did not escalate the crisis. In his immediate anger he declared to John McCloy, a Kennedy advisor that had been visiting with Khrushchev at his dacha on the Black Sea when the President gave his televised address, that the "United States had declared preliminary war on the Soviet Union. It had presented an ultimatum and clearly intended hostilities" (Schlesinger 1965, 392). Yet by the time of his speech to the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party on October 17 his view that the crisis was escalating had clearly changed. Khrushchev announced that based on the western powers' seeming willingness to discuss and settle the German problem he would not absolutely insist on signing the peace treaty before December 31, 1961 (Ausland 1996, 34; Schlesinger 1965, 400). The December 1961 deadline passed without any treaty between the Soviets and the GDR, and without any military conflict between the Soviets and the U.S. Thus it seemed that "slow, imperceptibly, the tides of crisis receded" (Sorensen 1964, 595).[192]

This case study of John F. Kennedy's foreign policy decision making in response to the Berlin Crisis raises the question: why didn't this quintessential risk-taker choose the riskiest policy available? Before approaching an answer it is important to establish that the personality-led theory of risk-taking is not deterministic. From an individual's personality traits it is possible to get a sense of their inherent risk propensity, that is, their *tendency* towards taking risks. Because tendencies are not absolute determinants of behavior there will often be circumstantial factors that affect decision making. Such

[192] Schlesinger's recollection is that immediately following Khrushchev's October speech, "The crisis was suddenly over" (1965, 400).

factors could include the influence of advisors, institutional constraints, and environmental constraints. Contrary to expectations, there was little evidence of risk-seeking in Kennedy's decision-making process during the Berlin Crisis. If anything he was cautious to avoid taking high risks that he feared would make the US look "war mad" and escalate the crisis to nuclear war.

It is important to note that the outcome of this case not only poses a challenge to the personality-led theory espoused in this dissertation, but also runs counter to the expectations of prospect theory, the leading theory for risk-taking in international relations. Recall from the discussion of prospect theory in Chapter 2 that individuals are more likely to take risks when they perceive themselves to be in a domain of losses, while they are less likely to take risks when they perceived themselves to be in a domain of gains. President Kennedy was most certainly in a domain of losses given the string of foreign policy failures he suffered throughout his first six months in office. Thus prospect theory would predict that in response to Khrushchev's ultimatum the President would have been willing to take the higher risk. Kennedy does not, however, choose the riskier strategy.

There are several potential explanations, all of which may explain in some part this unexpected outcome. One reason why the President may not have preferred the Acheson plan, or any plan that was too rigid, was because he was concerned that it would actually be the less credible response. If he took the Achesonian hard-line by declaring a national emergency and the Soviets balked he might again be left to choose between "holocaust or humiliation." His choice fit the President's keen pragmatism and desire to not back himself or Khrushchev up against a wall. By his own admission Kennedy had to

act – he needed to prove himself to Khrushchev. But rather than take the drastic steps Acheson called for, those present at the time recalled that he favored Ambassador Thompson's view that the Soviets would be impressed by substantial but low key build up rather than bold moves (Catudal 1980, 178). This very much fit with Kennedy's own philosophy: "a decision to go all the way can afford to be low-key because it is genuine, while those who loudly flail about are less likely to frighten anyone" (Sorensen 1965, 589).

It is also possible that Kennedy did not value the Acheson policy as much as the "mixed options" strategy because he preferred negotiation much more than the record of those present at the time suggest, or because he was much more concerned with the costs of nuclear war than the political costs of looking weak to the Soviets. In these cases the expected utility of the Acheson plan for the President would have been less than the "mixed options" strategy. Put simply the costs of the Acheson plan would have outweighed the benefits to a point that even the worst case outcome of the "mixed options" alternative would be preferable. While there is evidence that the President preferred a political settlement and that he was very concerned about a miscalculation that could lead to nuclear war, neither of the two strategies put before him was entirely preferable to the other as evidenced by the disagreement among his advisors over the best policy option, thus making this an unlikely explanation. It was clearly understood by the President and those around him that Acheson's plan, if successful, had the best possible outcome for deterring the Soviets and shoring up the President's image. The Bay of Pigs fiasco, the crisis in Laos, Soviet advancements in the "space race," and his humiliation in Vienna had weakened the President's image and confidence; he was thus looking for a

strategy that would help remedy the damage and the best alternative would have been Acheson's.

On the one hand these earlier events had the effect of putting Kennedy on the defensive and required him to act, while on the other hand the historical evidence indicates that that these early foreign policy failures, most notably the Bay of Pigs fiasco, were in some part responsible for Kennedy's caution. The President was explicit in his desire to avoid a third "defeat" in a twelve-month period and to overcome Khrushchev's perceptions of his inexperience and resolve. He attributed much of the mismanagement that lead to his first "defeat" with the Bay of Pigs to allowing others, especially the CIA, to dominate the planning. Thus when the Berlin Crisis arose he immediately corrected for this mistake by creating a special ad hoc group of advisers, the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Berlin Contingency Planning, to develop and analyze alternative courses of action to respond to the ultimatum. He remained open to the dissenting opinions of those outside the group and pushed his Secretaries of State and Defense to scrutinize all alternatives. It is not certain to what extent these changes in the decision-making process were due to the lessons he learned from the Bay of Pigs, or if they were indicative of Kennedy's preferred leadership style, which he seemed to have forgone in an effort to conciliate and build consensus among his new administration in the weeks before the Cuban invasion (George 1980, 130-2; Janis 1982, 14-47).[193]

[193] George (1980, 130-2) and Janis (1982, 140-2) note the changes in advisory roles and norms structuring the deliberation of policy alternatives that were the result of lessons learned from the Bay of Pigs, and were illustrated during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The President's brother and closest confidant, Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, recalled that the "relationships" and "degree of questioning" among Kennedy's advisors had changed as a result of the Bay of Pigs; "It was just a tougher, harder, meaner period than that which had gone before" (R. Kennedy 1988, 278). There is a rich literature on the influence of learning on foreign policy decision making, particularly the role of historical analogies (see Khong 1992). Jervis (1976) proposes that there are four variables that influence the degree to which an event affects how a leader perceives later events: whether the leader experienced the event first hand; whether it

The Bay of Pigs not only had the effect of making Kennedy cautious about making rash moves that would signal inexperience, but it also "shook his confidence – almost beyond repair – in the CIA and in the Joint Chiefs of Staff" (Bradlee 1975, 42). This may have increased the president's skepticism of the Acheson plan, which was largely supported by Allen Dulles, head of the CIA and the JSC. Additionally, this case illustrates how those opposed to Acheson's plan, including Schlesinger whose memorandum against the policy seems to have influenced the President's search for alternatives, capitalized on the President's concerns and couched their arguments against Acheson's policy by drawing parallels with the planning of the Bay of Pigs and arguing that this policy would be likely to repeat the same errors.

A second factor that seems to have shaped the President's decisions making was the perceived risk of nuclear war. Throughout the crisis Kennedy repeatedly expressed his concern that tensions could escalate to "the point of no return" (Schlesinger 1965, 391). The specter of nuclear war was so real that he asked congress for $207 million for civil defense spending to build additional bunkers and fall out shelters (Beschloss 1991, 258). Understanding the limits that the perceived threat of nuclear war put on foreign policy decision making is important for developing the personality-led theory of risk-taking beyond the simplistic arguments that inherent risk dispositions matter, to understanding when they have the most or least influence. This development is in line with recent work by political scientists Mondak et al. (2010) who have argued for moving

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was early in their life or career; if it has important consequences for the leader or the nation; whether the leader is familiar with a range of international events that facilitate alternative perceptions (239; see also, Reiter (1996) for more on which lessons are learned from the past). The impact of the first three variables, as well as the "availability" of the Bay of Pigs in Kennedy's mind given how recently it occurred before the Berlin Crisis, indicate the salience of the earlier event and the likely influence it had on shaping the president's decision making (for a discussion of the "availability heuristic" see Tversky and Kahneman (1982)). For an overview of the analytical challenges to incorporating learning theory in to studies of foreign policy see Levy (1994).

beyond underspecified one-sided environmental-only or personality-only explanations of political behavior, to developing theories that consider the conditionalities and interactions of situational and dispositional factors.[194] This study suggests that when it comes to escalation the gravity of nuclear war seems to place boundaries on the risks that decision makers, even the riskiest ones, are willing to accept.

Finally, it should be noted that while the potential outcomes of the Acheson alternative were more divergent and extreme than those of the option the President chose, making it the higher risk option, the policy chosen by the President was still quite risky.[195] A "critical authority" within the Kennedy administration pointed out that in his July 25 speech, the President "mixed options to raise risks without allowing them to get out of control and hopefully to give the Soviets pause to consider the risks themselves" (Catudal 1980, 193).[196] By "mixing options," the informant argued, Kennedy actually brought on certain risks. For one, it was known, according to the source, that Kennedy preferred negotiations, thus the mixed strategy could have backfired if Khrushchev would

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[194] This argument is consistent with and provides important insights for interpreting the empirical results in earlier chapters of this dissertation. The quantitative analysis in Chapter 5 found that the Excitement Seeking and Deliberation are significant predictors of risk-taking when it comes to crisis escalation operationalized as the use of a violent or militarized response to a crisis trigger, however these personality traits are not significant when it comes to escalation operationalized as war. There is not enough variation on the dependent variable to quantitatively assess the interactive effects of a nuclear adversary on risk- taking, however the findings that risk-related traits significantly influence initiation and lower grade escalations, but have no significant effect on escalation to war, indicate that inherent dispositions may matter for some decisions more than others.

[195] Bundy (1988) claims that with the exception of the declaration of a national emergency, Kennedy's chosen policy was "Achesonian" (373). This has largely to do with the fact that Bundy is examining Acheson's policy and the alternative that Kennedy's chose relative to Eisenhower's New Look strategy. Nevertheless, his view indicates that to some the two options before Kennedy were not seen as being vastly different from one another.

[196] Catudal's (1980) *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall Crisis: A Case Study in U.S. Decision Making* is an invaluable resource on the Berlin Crisis. He secured interviews and/or written correspondences with dozens of key players in Kennedy's administration at the time of the crisis including Dean Rusk, General Maxwell Taylor, Foy Kohler, Walt Rostow and McGeorge Bundy. There are only a few occasions where the anonymity of his source is protected; this statement about "mixing options" is one of them.

have played on Kennedy's desire for talks.[197] Also Kennedy's decision to use a mixed strategy and not the "loud and clear" message Acheson was urging ran the risk of undermining the strength of the signal he was trying to send. Kennedy nonetheless chose the "mixed options" alternative because he was purposely trying not to back the Soviets against the wall.

Overall this point suggests that the expectations of the personality-led theory may have been better met than appears at first glance. Kennedy does in fact choose a risky option, albeit not the riskiest. A second and related point is that this case suggests that the rigidity of expectations of the theory as laid out in Chapter 2 may need to be relaxed. It seems possible for decision makers to have a variety of high-risk, as well as a variety of low-risk, alternatives to choose from. More leverage may be gained from the theory by predicting whether leaders are more likely to select from a category of risk alternatives rather than a specific option.

The primary objectives of the two previous case studies was to serve as plausibility probes to develop the personality-led theory of risk-taking beyond the basic hypotheses laid out in Chapter 2, by focusing not on the outcomes of the crises they detail, but on how the President's risk-related traits affected the decision-making process. While the case study of Truman's decision making during the 1948 Berlin Blockade lent support to the hypotheses of the personality-led theory, two variables – the fear of nuclear war and the impact of previous decisions - emerged through the examination of the latter case, the 1961 Berlin Crisis, as having important influences on Kennedy's decision-making process. The fear of nuclear war and the impact of previous decisions in some

[197] This notion that Kennedy preferred negotiations is not something that is easily discernable from the written record at that time, nor Schlesinger and Sorensen's first-hand accounts.

part help to explain why John F. Kennedy, despite being the quintessential risk-taker, did not choose the more risky alternative in response to the Soviet ultimatum. Moreover the findings suggest that the conditional effects of these variables need to be taken into consideration when making predictions about how personality traits influence policy making. The implications of these results for the theory espoused in this dissertation and the potential avenues for future research they open up will be discussed at greater length in the next and final chapter.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This dissertation sits squarely at the intersection of three burgeoning research programs, examining the heterogeneity of individuals' risk preferences, the Big Five factor model of personality, and first-image explanations of international relations. Limited connections have been made between these literatures; for instance, scholars have begun to examine the political consequences of differences in risk-taking preferences (e.g., Erlich and Maestas 2008; Kam and Simas 2010), the connections between Big Five personality traits and political behavior (e.g., Gerber et al. 2010; Mondak 2010), and the consequences of variance in leaders' characteristics and experiences for interstate conflict (e.g., Horowitz, McDermott, and Stam 2005; Horowitz and Stam 2010). This dissertation, however, is the first to link all three of these veins of literature to one another. The objective of doing so has been to develop the foundation for a personality-led theory of risk-taking that would focus attention in international relations to the inherent risk propensities of leaders.

Through empirical evidence, which shows that differences in leaders' personalities have significant, systematic effects on foreign policy outcomes, this dissertation seeks to demonstrate that *who leads matters*. Until recently, studies of leaders' personalities in political science were often disregarded as "inherently subjective" (Song and Simonton 2007, 309). Their reliance on psychoanalytic methods invited criticisms of subjective interpretation and the absence of scientific rigor. These studies largely focused on the idiosyncrasies of different leaders and did little to build

theories to explain general patterns of behavior across leaders. More recent studies have tried to examine the influence of leaders' personalities in a more systematic nature using "at-a-distance" measures, but have been criticized for their reliance on written or spoken words of presidents that may be biased (Schafer 2000). Moreover, these studies have tended to focus on various different elements of personality, without contributing to one another, or linking to a more comprehensive structure and theory of personality in psychology.

This latter point was in some part related to the absence of a coherent structure of personality traits within psychology. In the past two decades, however, empirical evidence has provided outstanding support for a model of personality traits clustered around five broad factors: Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism. This model, known as the Big Five, is the dominant paradigm of personality psychology (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008). Studies have confirmed that these factors are consistent across time, gender, and culture. Moreover, personality traits have, in large part, a biological basis, which leads them to be stable throughout an individual's adulthood (McCrae and Costa 2003).

Political scientists have begun to employ the Big Five to examine the "persistent tendencies in political behavior" (Mondak 2010, 5) that result from the stability of traits. Their studies have shown that personality traits predict political attitudes and behavior, in terms of ideology, campaign participation, voter participation, and candidate preferences (e.g., Barbaranelli et al. 2007; Carney et al. 2008; Caprara et al. 2006; Gerber et al. 2010; Mondak 2010; Mondak and Halperin 2008). Countless studies in psychology have examined the effect of these stable traits on other behaviors, such as health related

activities (Markey et al. 2006), mortality (Roberts et al. 2007), academic achievement (Wagerman and Funder 2007) and job performance (Dudley et al. 2006). If personality traits are largely stable, and are able to predict the behavior of individuals in terms of political participation and job performance, then there is ample reason to suggest that they can be successfully employed to predict the behavior of leaders.

More specifically, this dissertation is concerned with the traits that are most relevant to an individual's propensity to take risks. Scholars have long recognized the importance of leaders' inherent risk propensities (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita 1981; Morrow 1985); it is key to leaders' resolve, and therefore plays a role in their willingness to initiate, escalate, and terminate conflict. And while it is obvious that people differ in their risk-propensities (for example, some people are day traders, sky divers or dare devils), political scientists nonetheless tend to assume risk neutrality or attribute risk orientation to factors exogenous to the decision maker in their research. If, however, people have inherent risk propensities, as studies have indicated, then political scientists should be most interested in applying that knowledge to world leaders, whose decisions not only affect the actions of their own state, but also shape the reactions of other states (Byman and Pollack 2001).

While few studies in international relations have treated attributes of the individual leader as the key causal factors for conflict, that individual leaders matter is certainly evident to the public, the media, and foreign policy makers. Moreover, the importance of leader variance has not escaped scholars, since it is common to control for each presidential administration through presidential fixed effects (e.g., Fordham 1998a; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). The significance of these variables, however, is rarely

questioned. Rather, they are included to account for what are considered the idiosyncrasies of each president. Thus, the consistency *within* a presidential administration, which creates variance *across* administrations, is relegated to the error term. The results of this study help to fill the theoretical gap that exists to explain this variance, and informs the leadership, risk-taking, and conflict literatures.

The key contribution of this dissertation is a new explanatory variable for why states engage in risky foreign policy - the leaders' inherent risk propensity. It thus calls on international relations theorists to be more mindful of the systematic influences of individual leaders and to consider how who leads matters. This project is unique in that it relies on an objective measure of personality traits based on presidents' Big Five personality traits. While political scientists have begun to realize the utility of the Big Five in explaining political phenomenon, its application has been limited to the study of mass political behavior. This dissertation demonstrates its potential in explaining the behavior of leaders in international relations.

8.1. Summary & Discussion of Results

People have largely stable traits that can be used to predict behavior (McCrae and Costa 2003). In addition, there is ample evidence that individuals have underlying risk propensities that remain consistent regardless of how information is framed (e.g., Kam and Simas 2010; Kowert and Hermann 1997; Li and Liu 2008), and research has linked personality traits to risk propensity (e.g., Carducci and Wong 1998; Lauriola and Levin 2001; Kam n.d.; Kowert and Hermann 1997; Nicholson et al. 2005; Soane, Dewberry, and Narendran 2010). These previous findings form the foundation of the personality-led

theory of risk-taking. As a starting point for the theory, hypotheses were generated about four personality traits that are empirically and theoretically related to risk-taking: Excitement Seeking, Openness to Action, Deliberation, and Altruism. Statistical analyses were conducted to assess these hypotheses, first examining risk-taking understood as the use of force, and then as the escalation of crisis. These tests were followed by two case study investigations of decision making during crisis, Harry Truman and the 1948 Berlin Blockade, and John F. Kennedy and the 1961 Soviet ultimatum on Berlin, in order to develop the theory beyond the initial hypotheses.

Overall the results of the four empirical chapters indicate that leaders do vary in their risk propensities, measured by their risk-related traits, and that these traits influence foreign policy outcomes, in particular the use of force abroad. Excitement Seeking is the most consistent predictor of foreign policy risk-taking; leaders with high Excitement Seeking scores are more likely to use force to carry out their foreign policy objectives and initiate militarized disputes. They are also more likely to take immediate escalatory steps in response to a foreign policy crisis. On the other hand, those who are more Altruistic are less likely to use force to carry out their foreign policies. Surprisingly, leaders' who contemplate the consequences of their actions, that is, they have higher Deliberation trait scores, are more likely to be risk-acceptant when it comes to using force and initiating disputes. These results are encouraging, but in combination with the results of the analysis of crisis escalation, they indicate that some of the hypotheses need to be modified, and further development of the theory is necessary.

To begin with, Openness to Action was minimally related to foreign policy risk-taking throughout the chapters, and in the opposite direction than predicted. While

previous studies of personality and risk-taking have indicated that those who had higher Openness to Action scores were more likely to take risks, the results of this dissertation pose a clear challenge to those findings. Keeping in mind that Openness to Action means a willingness to try new things, rather than keeping with tradition or what is common, the results suggest that those leaders who are willing to consider alternatives are less likely to choose to use force to carry out foreign policies. Support for this finding comes from studies that link high scores on the Openness to Experience factor to liberal ideology and opposition to war (e.g., Carney et al. 2008; Mondak 2010; Schoen 2007).

While in retrospect this seems like a plausible explanation for the results that were obtained, it nevertheless runs counter to the expectations drawn from the previous studies of personality and risk-taking. The theory must therefore be updated to expect leader with high Openness to Action scores not to constantly accept risky alternatives, but rather to remain open to pursuing a variety of alternatives. In developing the link between Openness to Action and decision making, future studies should explore this updated hypothesis empirically by modeling the variance of leaders foreign policies.

The results of the dissertation provide some evidence that Deliberation is significantly related to presidents' decisions to use force and to escalate crises. However, in the case of the use of force, the relationship is in the opposite direction as predicted. That is, presidents with high Deliberation scores use force more often to carry out their foreign policies. This could be indicative of those presidents with low Deliberation scores being unable to act in haste and ignore the risks before them. Previous studies have proposed that individuals with low Deliberation scores do not necessarily seek out risks, as much as they ignore the risks associated with their actions (e.g. Kowert and Hermann

1997). It could be argued that acting in haste, or without full consideration of the alternatives, is not possible when it comes to foreign policy because of institutional factors (e.g. the National Security Council) that force the president to consider the alternatives and the consequential outcomes of their policies. This argument, however, does not stand up to the decision-making process illustrated in the case study of Harry Truman during the 1948 Berlin Blockade Crisis. Truman, whose Deliberation score was very low, was explicit in his intentions to follow his "spot decision," and was reluctant to consider the alternative responses to the blockade. Despite the attempts by his advisors in private and during meetings of the National Security Council to get him to consider the other options available, he repeatedly made it clear that his decision has been made "period." The case illustrates how Truman's low Deliberation tendency manifested in his policy making; even with deliberative institutional bodies in place.

Alternatively, leaders' Deliberation trait scores may be positively related to the use of force, not because these leaders seek some thrill or enjoy risk-taking, but because they consider it to be the most effective policy available. Highly deliberative people are attuned to the consequences of their actions, thus it is reasonable to conclude that they would see the use of force as an effective way to carry out their policies. In line with this idea is research that has shown that individuals with high Conscientiousness scores, the factor that Deliberation belongs to, find weapons to be less risky (Chauvin, Hermand, and Mullet 2007) and are supportive of the use of military force (Schoen 2007).

Contrary to the Truman case, John F. Kennedy's decision making, in response to the Soviet ultimatum on Berlin in the summer of 1961, illustrates the president engaging in very intense deliberation and weighing his options with care. This is not what would be

expected from someone who had a Deliberation trait score as low as Kennedy's, but two external factors played an important role in his decision making, which are not accounted for in the basic hypotheses; namely, the recent failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the fear of nuclear war with the Soviets.

The results of the Kennedy case study shed light on the factors that moderate the influence of leaders' risk propensities when it comes to foreign policy, and also offer some insight into the weak relationship between risk orientation and escalation, gathered from the empirical results of Chapter 5. These results demonstrate that while leaders' risk propensities are a significant determinant of the likelihood that leaders initiate disputes and of their initial response to a crisis trigger, it is not as relevant to the escalation to war. One potential explanation is that the dynamics of escalation are different than of initiation, such that other factors matter more than personality. In the case of Kennedy, his personality traits suggested that he would have been the quintessential risk-taker; however, as the case study illustrates, his primary objectives in crafting a response to the Soviets were avoiding another embarrassment after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and most importantly, avoiding nuclear holocaust. In order to avoid these two situations, he was engaged in extensive evaluation of the available choices. Thus, the case study highlights the need to incorporate the influence of a perceived nuclear threat and recent experiences of a leader into a more developed theory of personality and risk-taking.

The remaining two risk-related traits, Altruism and Excitement Seeking, provided the strongest support for the personality-led theory of risk-taking. As expected, Altruism was inversely related to risk-taking in the analysis of leaders' decision to use force. Kowert and Hermann (1997) speculated that individuals with high a high Altruism trait

score may have been reluctant to take risks because of concern for the effects their risk-taking would have on the well-being of others. The results in Chapter 4 demonstrate that leaders who are more altruistic use force less; however, whether they choose not to use force because of concern for the lives of soldiers or civilians is a question better answered through case study analysis, which can assess the motives behind decision making.[198]

There is also an argument to be made that those who are altruists should actually take risks more readily in order to protect other people (Monroe 1996). For presidents, this tendency might manifest in their foreign policy through decisions like sending troops on humanitarian missions. While a leader's personality traits may indeed play a role in such decisions, this disposition is better captured by examining their Tender-Mindedness trait, not Altruism. High scorers on the former are moved by others' needs and are focused on the human side of social policies (Costa and McCrae 1992, 18). Tender-Mindedness has not been strongly related to risk-taking in previous studies, but that may be due in part to the instruments used to measure risk-propensity, which focus largely on gambling, finance, and personal risks (e.g., health, career), not risks involving the well-being of others.

Excitement Seeking was found to be the most consistent predictor of risk propensity, in line with the empirical result of previous studies (e.g. Nicholson et al. 2005; Zuckerman 2007; Zuckerman and Kuhlman 2000). Leaders who have high Excitement Seeking trait scores are more likely to use force abroad and initiate conflicts. This result is robust across different datasets and operationalizations of the dependent

[198] This claim would be best assessed in a case study of a leader with a high Altruism trait score, such as Gerald Ford. Kennedy's Altruism trait score was low and Truman's was average, and thus neither lent themselves to strong predictions.

variable. In terms of escalation, however, the relationship is not as straightforward and needs to be further explored.

The analysis in Chapter 5 found that leaders with higher Excitement Seeking scores were more likely to use violence or the military in response to the triggering event of a crisis, thereby escalating the crisis. They were less likely, however, to be involved in conflict that escalated to war. A selection model was used to estimate the initiation and escalation of a militarized interstate dispute simultaneously, which indicated that the dynamics affecting the two decisions were different. While the inherent risk propensity of the president leads him to initiate more disputes, its relevance is not significant for the escalation of these conflicts to war. One possible explanation for this finding, mentioned above, is that situational factors such as the threat of nuclear war limit the options available to a president, thereby hampering the influence of their risk propensity.

These results also point to the effect of the strategic interaction of other states during conflicts. Risk propensity, as noted, is fundamental to an actor's resolve, and during crisis bargaining actors go back and forth demonstrating their resolve (Schelling 1960; Snyder and Diesing 1977). Leaders who escalate a crisis are accepting a heightened risk of war, and thus potential losses of resources, reputation, and office. If the essence of crisis bargaining is revealing information (see for example, Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow and Zorick 1997; Fearon 1994), then Excitement Seekers may more easily reveal information about their resolve, which could explain why their crises do not go to war. Leaders who are risk-takers may be better at signaling their resolve, thus ending their crises short of war.[199] Future studies should test the implications of this argument through

[199] It is also possible that these leaders build reputations as risk-takers. Schelling (1966) proposes that reputations are built on previous behavior, however there has been little empirical evidence in support

empirical analyses of whether leaders with high Excitement Seeking scores are threatened less often, whether they are better able to deter action after a threat is made, and if they are more reluctant to back down in the face of a deterrent threat.

8.2. Avenues for Future Development

International relations theorists should not overlook the significance of individuals' personality traits in their research. Traits are stable tendencies that can be used to predict behavior, and by employing the Big Five framework scholars can use objective measures of personality traits that fit within a well-established framework of personality. While several possible connections between other traits and decision making were suggested above (e.g., the link between Tender Mindedness and the use of force for humanitarian interventions), there is still much work to be done on the personality-led theory of risk-taking.

As the results of the Kennedy case study indicate, future development of the personality-led theory of risk-taking should take the interaction between traits and situational factors into account. Although traits are have a biological basis and are thus prior to behavior and attitudes, they do not automatically determine them.[200] In other words, a personality-led theory of risk-taking is not deterministic. Traits are tendencies that dispose individuals toward certain behaviors, but the actions that they take are a product of the *interaction* between these inherent dispositions and external situational

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of this argument (see Huth 1999). On the other hand, Sartori's (2003) research demonstrating that states can acquire reputations for honesty and bluffing does indicate that reputations matter.

[200] Scholars interested in the biological basis of behavior have begun investigate whether political behavior has its basis in genetics and neuroscience (e.g., Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005; Fowler and Dawes 2008; Hatemi et al. 2009, 2010; Rosen 2005). Future work may establish personality traits as the link between genes and political behavior (see Mondak 2010, 45-6).

factors that modify their expression. Environmental factors play an important role because they create opportunities or set constraints for individuals to express their dispositions. This type of theory development is in line with the work of other scholars who have applied the Big Five to political behavior (e.g., Gerber et al 2010; Mondak 2010).

Research examining the interaction between traits and environmental factors has tried to establish when traits have a direct influence on behavior, and when their influence is indirect and modified by environmental factors. This has been tested, for instance, in studies on the interaction between inherent risk propensities and framing effects (Kam and Simas 2010; Kowert and Hermann 1997).[201] The results of these studies demonstrate that peoples' traits influence how sensitive they are to framing effects.

In a sense, personality traits act as heuristic filters, which help to signal which information in the complex environment is relevant to an individual. Thus, individuals' risk orientations direct their attention towards and away from risks in the information and decisions they are presented with (Erlich and Maestas 2008; Soane, Dewberry, and Narendran 2010). This indicates a need to move away from theories that focus solely on inherent traits or situational factors as having causal priority, and towards theories that are perhaps less parsimonious, but more reflective of the reality of the interaction between traits and external factors.

This dissertation was the first step in developing the relationship between leaders' personality traits and foreign policy risk-taking. Future work ought to consider the implications of stable risk preferences as an explanation of where preferences and

[201] In a similar manner, Highhouse and Yuce (1996) demonstrate that individual differences in perceptions of what constitutes a threat or an opportunity can also lead to outcomes that contradict the expectations of prospect theory. See also Li and Liu (2008).

reference points come from, which can enlighten rational choice and prospect theory explanations of decision making. For instance, leaders' personality traits may offer an alternative explanation for why leaders "gamble for resurrection," or take extreme risks when faced with near certain loss in a conflict. While it has been proposed that leaders will take such risks to avoid losing office (Downs and Rocke 2004) or to avoid losing their lives (Goemans 2000), it may also be the case that their risk orientation disposes them towards risks. Goemans, for instance, makes the argument that regime type determines the severity of the punishment a leader will face, and thus her willingness to take such gambles. The theory assumes that all leaders of mixed regimes will behave in the same manner when faced with such losses. Future work should examine whether this effect is conditional on the risk propensities of those leaders.

In terms of prospect theory, which has been widely employed in international relations, the incorporation of personality traits may explain why, contrary to its predictions, some people take risks when faced with gains, or refuse to gamble when faced with losses. Up until this point few scholars of international relations have considered leaders' aspiration levels as their reference points, and have instead focused on the status quo.[202] However, stable personality traits, particularly risk propensity, can be used to estimate where individuals set their aspiration levels. Individuals whose risk preferences are high may set their aspiration level, in other words, their reference point, higher than most other people. This would mean that even when the status quo indicates that they are making a decision among gains, they still feel that it is a loss, and are thus

[202] For exceptions see Boettcher 2005 and Taliaferro 2004a.

willing to take a risk. These points were made by Kowert and Hermann (1997) more than a decade ago, but few others have worked on answering their call.[203]

A less theoretical avenue for future research, but no less important, is the collection of personality trait data for world leaders outside of the United States. Although data constraints limit the empirical analysis of this dissertation to U.S. Presidents, the personality-led theory of risk-taking proposed is germane to all leaders. The Big Five are cross-cultural, therefore it is possible for future work to collect trait data on world leaders outside the United States. Having such data will enable scholars to investigate bargaining between leaders during international crises. Moreover, future research will be able to analyze past and current policy decisions through this new theoretical framework.

[203] Although see Boettcher 2005, and Kam and Simas 2010.

Appendix A

Sample Items from NEO-PI-R

Factor	Facet	Item
Neuroticism	Anxiety	He often worries about things that might go wrong.
Extraversion	Excitement Seeking	He often craves excitement.
Openness to Experience	Openness to Action	He's pretty set in his ways.
Agreeableness	Altruism	Some people think of him as cold and calculating (inverse).
Conscientiousness	Deliberation	He always considers the consequences before he takes action.

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