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Citation for published version:

Kaarbo, J 2018, 'Personality and International Politics: Insights from Existing Research and Directions for the Future' *European Review of International Studies*, vol 4, no. 2-3. DOI: 10.3224/eris.v4i2-3.02

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.3224/eris.v4i2-3.02](https://doi.org/10.3224/eris.v4i2-3.02)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

European Review of International Studies

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Personality and International Politics: Insights from Existing Research and Directions for the Future

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Accepted for publication in 2018 in *European Review of International Studies*

ABSTRACT: This article focuses on personalities, or individual differences, of world political leaders. After arguing that international relations theory has experienced a turn toward decision makers, I briefly overview one of the dominant approaches to the study of leader personality in foreign policy: Leadership Trait Analysis. While this research includes a number of important studies that directly challenge traditional understandings of international relations and engage with international relations theory, I argue that the subfield of personality studies in foreign policy is ripe for new theoretical and methodological developments. In the final section of this article, I outline several specific areas for future research, including a connection between foreign policy-personality approaches and the growing body of work on political leadership.

KEY WORDS: PERSONALITY, LEADERSHIP TRAIT ANALYSIS,
INTERNATIONAL RELATION THEORY, FOREIGN POLICY

Introduction¹

Who leads matters in the foreign policy of states. This statement is supported by numerous studies, as well as by observations by leaders themselves. In an interview, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once stated: “as a professor, I tended to think of history as run by imperial forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the differences personalities make.”²

Leaders can significantly affect foreign policy, in both democracies and authoritarian states. As Hermann and Hagan have argued: “state leaders play a pivotal role in balancing international imperatives with those arising from, or embedded in, domestic politics.”³ Leaders influence the motives, strategies, and policies of their own states and are therefore a critical component of their countries diplomatic capabilities.⁴ According to Hermann and Hagan:

¹ This paper was originally presented at the Foreign Policy Analysis: Why Psychology and Neurosciences Do Matter conference, Centre des Recherches International-Sciences, Paris, 12 February 2016. The parts of this article on the importance of personality and on Leadership Trait Analysis draw directly from my research with Çuhadar, Kesgin, and Özkeçeci-Taner (see, for example, Esra Çuhadar, Juliet Kaarbo, Baris Kesgin and Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner, ‘Examining Interactions Between Agents and Structures: Turkey’s 1991 and 2003 Iraqi War Decisions,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 20(1) (2017b) 29-54) and from my research on prime ministers (e.g., Juliet Kaarbo, ‘Prime Minister Leadership Style and the Role of Parliament in Security Policy,’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (forthcoming)). The section on the agent in international relations is a more specifically-focused argument derived from my article Juliet Kaarbo, ‘A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR,’ *International Studies Review* 17 (2015), pp. 189-216.

² Walter Isaacson *Kissinger: A biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p.13

³ Margaret G. Hermann and Joe D. Hagan, ‘International Decision Making: Leadership Matters,’ *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998), pp124-136, p.126.

⁴ Byman, Daniel L. and Kenneth M. Pollack ‘Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing Statesman Back In,’ *International Security* 25 (2001), pp. 107-146.

“Leaders define state’s international and domestic constraints. Based on their perceptions and interpretations, they build expectations, plan strategies, and urge actions on their governments that confirm with their judgments about what is possible and likely to maintain them in their positions. Such perceptions help frame governments’ orientations to international affairs. Leaders’ interpretations arise out of their experiences, goals, beliefs about the world, and sensitivity to the political context.”⁵

Leaders and their characteristics may be more important for states’ foreign policies under certain conditions, such as when bureaucratic, domestic or systemic, contexts are ambiguous, complex, uncertain or dynamic, when trade-offs are part of countries’ foreign policies, when foreign policy choices involve symbolism, and when decision making authority is concentrated and restricted to the top leader.⁶ The importance of leaders and leaders’ personalities is not limited to presidents and authoritarian rulers. Leaders in parliamentary systems, particularly prime ministers are also influential. Prime ministers, for example, can shape decision making processes by agenda setting, by choosing advisors, and through their appointments of cabinet ministers..⁷

⁵ Hermann and Hagan, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

⁶ Byman and Pollack *op. cit.*; Fred I. Greenstein, ‘Can Personality and Politics be Studied Systematically?’, *Political Psychology*, 13(1) (1992), pp. 105-128.

⁷ Juliet Kaarbo, ‘Prime Minister Leadership Styles in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Framework for Research,’ *Political Psychology* 18 (1997), pp. 553-581; Juliet Kaarbo and Margaret G. Hermann, ‘Leadership Styles of Prime Ministers: How Individual Differences Affect the Foreign Policymaking Process,’ *Leadership Quarterly*, 9 (1998), pp.131-152; Keith Dowding, ‘Prime-Ministerial Power: Institutional and Personal Factors,’ in Strangio, ‘t Hart, and Walter (Eds.) *Understanding Prime-Ministerial Performance: Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 57-78; Paul Strangio, Paul ‘t Hart, and James Walter, ‘Prime Ministers and the Performance of Public Leadership,’ in Strangio, ‘t Hart, and Walter *op. cit.*, pp. 1-28.

As others have noted, to continue to debate whether or not leaders matter is unproductive and it is best to focus research on *how* leadership and the characteristics of leaders influence foreign policies.⁸ There are a number of ways to address this question, including a focus leaders' representations of ill-defined problems, their beliefs about politics and images of other countries, their risk-orientations, their pathologies and illnesses and leaders' cognitive shortcuts, misperceptions, and motivated reasoning.⁹

The focus in this article is on personalities, or individual differences, of leaders. After arguing that international relations theory has experienced a turn toward decision makers, I briefly overview one of the dominant approaches to the study of leader personality in foreign policy: Leadership Trait Analysis. While this research

⁸ Hermann and Hagan *op. cit.*; Byman and Pollack *op. cit.*; Stephen Benedict Dyson, *The Blair Identity: Leadership and Foreign Policy*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009a); Vaughn P. Shannon and Jonathan W. Keller, 'Leadership Style and International Norm Violation: The Case of the Iraq War,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3 (2007), pp.79-104. Stephen Benedict Dyson, 'Gordon Brown, Alistair Darling, and the Great Financial Crisis: Leadership Traits and Policy Responses. *British Politics*. (Epub ahead of print 13 September 2016. DOI: 10.1057/s41293-016-0027-3).

⁹ See, for example, Mark Schafer and Stephen G. Walker, 'Operational Code Analysis at a Distance: The Verbs in Context System of Content Analysis,' in Mark Schafer and Stephen G. Walker (Eds.) *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 25-51; Richard Herrmann, and Michael Fischerkeller, 'Beyond the Enemy Image Spiral Model: Cognitive-Strategic Research after the Cold War,' *International Organization* 49 (1995), pp. 415-450; Martha Cottam, *Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Influence of Cognition*, (Boulder, CO, 1986): Westview Press; Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Jack S. Levy, 'Loss Aversion, Framing Effects, and International Conflict,' in Manus Midlarsky (ed.) *Handbook of War Studies II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 193-221; Yaacov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); Donald Sylvan, and James Voss (eds.), *Problem Representation and Political Decision Making*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

includes a number of important studies that directly challenge traditional understandings of international relations and engage with international relations theory, I argue that the subfield of personality studies in foreign policy is particularly ripe for new theoretical and methodological developments. In the final section of this article, I outline several specific areas for future research, including a connection between foreign policy-personality approaches and the growing body of work on political leadership.

The Agent in International Relations: A Turn in IR Theory and The Political Psychology Perspective

Agents, particularly individuals, have historically not been at the center of our understanding of international relations. Instead, structural explanations of international relations and foreign policies, at both the international-systemic and the internal-domestic levels, have dominated research and theory on international politics, despite a long line of research in foreign policy analysis emphasizing the importance of the psychology of human decision making. From neo-realism's focus on anarchy and distribution of power to liberalism's expectations on the constraining factors of economic interdependent structures and international regimes, foreign policy is typically seen as a product of international forces faced by states and their leaders.¹⁰ System-level constructivism also focuses on normative structures to explain state behavior, while state-level constructivists and liberal democratic peace scholars point to cultural values and norms, operating as structures of constraint on leaders and

¹⁰ e.g., Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); John Mearsheimer, John. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Powers Politics* (London, New York: Norton, 2001); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

foreign policy.¹¹ The institutional explanation of the democratic peace focuses on the constraining effects of institutional structures.¹² And rational choice theories of domestic costs and neo-classical realism's conception of the executive who must bargain with domestic political actors to extract resources in order to respond to international pressures also see political-domestic structures as limits on foreign policy.¹³ All of these approaches have minimized the role of agency in international politics. Yet various IR theories have experienced a turn in recent years, a turn toward incorporating agents and particularly decision-making approaches.¹⁴ While this cross-theory development is promising, it is quite underdeveloped.

Some democratic peace theorists, for example, have incorporated perceptions in their explanations. Owen, for example, argues that "history shows many cases where perceptions tripped up democratic peace....To determine which states belong to the pacific union, we must do more than simply examine their constitutions. We must

¹¹ e.g., Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) 'Norm Dynamics International and Political Change,' *International Organization* 52 (4) (1998), pp. 887–917; Peter Katzenstein, Peter (Ed.) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policy, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); John M. Owen, John M., 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,' *International Security*, vol.19, no.2 (1994), pp. 87-125.

¹² e.g., Bruce M. Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Alexandre Debs and H.E. Goemans (2010) 'Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War,' *American Political Science Review* 104 (2010), pp. 430-45.

¹³ e.g., Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Brian Lai and Dan Slater, 'Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950-1992,' *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2006), pp. 113–126; Jessica L. Weeks, 'Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict,' *American Political Science Review* 106 (2012), pp. 326–347.

¹⁴ For a similar argument, see Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, Stephan Haggard, David A. Lake, and David G. Victor, 'The Behavioral Revolution and International Relations,' *International Organization* 71 (Supplement) (2017), pp. S1-S-31.

examine how the liberals themselves define democracy.”¹⁵ This perceptual approach opens the door for an analysis of agents, but, as Hayes notes, “scholarly understanding of the mechanisms of the democratic peace remains uncertain” and “much work...remains to be done relating the psychological processes of leaders to the foreign and security policies of democracies.”¹⁶

Many have noted the theoretical importance of agents in constructivist IR theory. As Smith argues, “social construction starts from the assumption that actors make their worlds.”¹⁷ Checkel agrees that constructivists have “a strong focus on agency.”¹⁸ Yet most constructivist research privileges social structures over agency. According to Flanik, “constructivists endorse co-constitution in principle, but in practice, much constructivist works favors structure.”¹⁹ Barnett agrees that “constructivism has tended to operate with an oversocialized view of actors, treating them as near bearers of structures and, at the extreme, as cultural dupes. The real danger here is the failure to recognize that actors have agency, can be strategic, are aware of the cultural and social rules that presumably limit their practices, and as

¹⁵ Owen, *op.cit.*, pp. 96-97

¹⁶ Jarrod Hayes, ‘The Democratic Peace and the New Evolution of an Old Idea,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 18 (2011), pp. 767-791, pp. 782-83.

¹⁷ Steve Smith, ‘Foreign Policy Is What States Make of It: Social Construction and International Relations Theory,’ in V. Kubáľková (ed.), *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), pp. 38-55.

Smith, 2001:38; see also Marijke Breuning, ‘Role Theory Research in International Relations: State of the Art and Blind Spot’ in S. Harnisch, C. Frank, and H. W. Maull (eds.), *Role Theory In International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.16-35; David Patrick Houghton, ‘Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Toward a Constructivist Approach,’ *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3 (1) (2007), Vaughn P. Shannon, ‘Introduction,’ in V.P. Shannon and P.A. Kowert (Eds.) *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 24-45.

¹⁸ Jeffrey T. Checkel, ‘Constructivism and Foreign Policy,’ in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Eds.) *Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁹ William Flanik, “‘Bringing FPA Back Home:’ Cognition, Constructivism, and Conceptual Metaphor,’ *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7 (2011), pp. 1-24, p.9.

knowledgeable actors are capable of appropriating those cultural taproots for various ends.”²⁰ Constructivism also tends to black-box processes of social construction and ignores ideational factors that operate within individuals’ belief systems.²¹

Neoclassical realism has also turned the realist approach toward decision-making factors and agents. Neoclassical realists have aimed to develop a realist perspective on foreign policy, rejecting arguments that unit-level characteristics are unimportant and that IR theory must be separate from foreign policy theory.²² Neoclassical realism sees the international system and relative material capabilities as filtered through the state. State responses to systemic imperatives are influenced by a variety of domestic political and decision-making factors, including perceptions and perceived lessons of the past. As Wivel notes, “neoclassic realist foreign policy analysis stresses that foreign policy decisions are made by human beings, political leaders and elites.”²³

²⁰ Michael Barnett, ‘Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel’s Road to Oslo,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 5 (1999), pp. 5-36, p. 7; see also Breuning, *op.cit.*

²¹ Asli Ilgit and Özkeçeci-Taner, Binnur, ‘Identity and Decision Making: Toward a Collaborative Approach to State Action,’ in Shannon and Kowert, *op. cit.*

²² For overviews, see Samuel Barkin, ‘Realism, Prediction, and Foreign Policy,’ *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2009), pp. 233-246; Stephen G. Brooks, ‘Dueling Realisms,’ *International Organization* 51 (1997), pp. 445-477; Steve E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Anders Wivel, ‘Explaining Why State X Made a Certain Move Last Tuesday: The Promise and Limitations of Realist Foreign Policy Analysis,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 8 (2005), pp. 355-380.

²³ Wivel, *op. cit.*, p. 361; see also Gideon Rose, ‘Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,’ *World Politics* 51 (1998), pp.144-72; examples include Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); David M. Edelstein, ‘Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers,’ *Security Studies* 12 (2002), pp. 1-40; Steven E. Lobell, ‘Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model,’ in Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro *op. cit.*, pp. 42-74.

Neoclassical realism attention to perceptions and beliefs, however, is critically underdeveloped. As Goldgeier argues, Walt's research, for example, "argues for the importance of perceptions, beliefs, motivation, and bias while leaving the origins of these factors to case-by-case empirical study rather than systematic theoretical investigation."²⁴ Wivel agrees that neoclassical realism ignores how objective material forces are interpreted and perceived and interpreted by leaders. He argues: "if we acknowledge that foreign policy is made by real people interpreting their environment, including the structure of the international system, then we need to engage in a discussion of how we understand the interplay between materialist and idealist variables."²⁵

While the cross-theoretical turn in IR to incorporate decision-making is a positive development to address the agent-structure 'problem,'²⁶ the agent remains under-theorized and some of the assumptions in IR theory are easily challenged by decades of research on the political psychology of foreign policy. A political psychological perspective can provide an approach, or "frame of reference", as Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin proposed as early as 1954.²⁷ A psychologically-oriented and agent-based perspective offers a distinct standpoint from which to look at the world

²⁴ James M. Goldgeier, 'Psychology and Security,' *Security Studies* 4 (1997), pp. 137-66, p.14.

²⁵ Wivel, *op. cit.*: 367-8. See also Goldgeier *op. cit.*; Freyberg-Inan, Harrison, and James (Eds.) *Rethinking Realism in International Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

²⁶ In Dessler's (p.443) words, the "agent-structure problem" is a philosophical issue which "emerges from two un-contentious truths about social life: first, that human agency is the only moving force behind actions, events, and outcomes of the social world; and second, that human agency can be realized only in concrete historical circumstances that condition the possibilities for action and influence its course." (David Dessler, 'What is at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?' *International Organization* 43 (1989), pp. 441-473.

²⁷ R.C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and B. Sapin, *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics*, Foreign Policy Analysis Project Series No. 3 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954).

and international relations. A psychological perspective foregrounds decision makers and the subjective understandings of leaders as filters for other international and domestic opportunities and constraints.²⁸ How decision makers interpret and respond to their domestic and international environments is subject to a number of factors – psychological, societal, ideational, political, institutional, and material. A psychological approach thus offers integration of a variety of IR theories, and their theoretical turns, through this psychological experience of agents.

Personality Differences and their Effects on Foreign Policy and International

Relations: LTA Research

As noted earlier, there are a number of ways to examine the psychology of agents in international relations and foreign policy. The focus in this article is on personalities of leaders. Personality can be defined as a *patterned relationship* among cognition, affect, motivations and orientations toward interpersonal relationships.²⁹ There is considerable variance in leaders' personalities, even with the same political system and political cultures. Personalities, or individual differences, are a critical sources of 'the heterogeneity of preferences, beliefs and decision-making processes' that are significant in international politics.³⁰ Personality characteristics condition how leaders respond to both international and domestic constraints and opportunities.

²⁸ Valerie Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1 (2005), pp.1-30.

²⁹ Jerrold M. Post, *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p.77; for a recent review of psychological approaches to leaders, see Margaret G. Hermann, 'Political Psychology' in R.A.W. Rhodes and P. 't Hart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁰ Hafner-Burton et al, *op. cit.* p. S4. It is interesting to note that the special issue of *International Organization* edited and introduced by Hafner-Burton et al (*op. cit.*) pays no attention to personalities of leaders, despite its focus on the heterogeneity of

Within the study of leader's personality, I choose here to focus specifically on the Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) approach for a number of reasons. First, as a robust area of research, LTA work has demonstrated the importance of personality in international relations in a number of different contexts. Second, it is a composite, or multi-factor approach, incorporating beliefs, traits, and style and thus a broader picture of leadership differences than single trait or beliefs-oriented approaches. Third, LTA provides specific expectations regarding which characteristics of leaders matter and how. Leaders with different traits are expected to relate to their context, institutional setting, costs and benefits of various policy options, and other agents in theoretically meaningful and predictable ways. Fourth, LTA is particularly useful for investigating agent-structure relations, with its focus on constraint challengers vs. constraint respecters (discussed below). Finally, the LTA approach provides a reliable, systematic, and comparative *method* for assessing agent characteristics.

LTA Conceptual Framework and Findings

The Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) framework is one of the best known and well research perspective on political leaders' personalities. Developed by Margaret Hermann.³¹ LTA scholarship has explored how seven personality traits – *belief in ability to control events, conceptual complexity, need for power, distrust of others, in-group bias, self-confidence, and task orientation* (see Table 1)– explain leaders' tendencies to respect or constraints, their openness to advice and information, the nature of their advisory systems, the quality and effectiveness of decision making

preferences, beliefs, and decision-making processes in what they term 'the behavioral revolution in international relations.'

³¹ Margaret G. Hermann, 'Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders,' *International Studies Quarterly* 24 (1980), pp. 7-46.

processes, and the policies leaders ultimately choose.³² LTA is a composite approach to personality, combining elements of leaders' beliefs, motives, traits, and style. Leaders who have a high belief in their ability to control events and a high need for power, for example, are expected to challenge constraints. Conceptual complexity and self-confidence are related to and predict leaders' openness to information from and about their environments. LTA is also a more process- and behaviourally-oriented than other approaches to leaders' personalities, rather than capturing the general content and structure of leaders' beliefs.³³

LTA has captured the personalities of many leaders, including Soviet politburo members, U.S. presidents and their presidential advisors, European Prime Ministers, sub-Saharan African, Iranian, Israeli and Turkish leaders, , and heads of international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union.³⁴ This

³² e.g., Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow, *Groupthink vs. High-Quality Decision Making in International Relations* (Columbia University Press, 2010); Stephen Benedict Dyson, 'Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair's Iraq Decisions,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3 (2006), 289-306; Margaret G. Hermann, 'Assessing Leadership Style: A Traits Analysis', in Jerrold M. Post (Ed.), *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 178-215; Kent J. Kille and Roger M. Scully, 'Executive Heads and the Role of Intergovernmental Organizations: Expansionist Leadership in the United Nations and the European Union,' *Political Psychology* 24 (2003), pp. 175-198.

³³ See Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*, p. 83, footnote 5.

³⁴ Scott Crichlow, 'Idealism or Pragmatism? An Operational Code Analysis of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres,' *Political Psychology* 19(4) (1998): 683-706. Dyson, 2006 *op. cit.*; Stephen Benedict Dyson, "'Stuff Happens": Donald Rumsfeld and the Iraq War,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5 (2009), pp. 327-347; Margaret G. Hermann, 'Personality and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Study of 53 Heads of Government,' in D. A. Sylvan and S. Chan (Eds.) *Foreign Policy Decisionmaking: Perceptions, Cognition, and Artificial Intelligence* (New York: Praeger, 1984); Margaret G. Hermann, 'Assessing the Foreign Policy Role Orientations of Sub-Saharan African Leaders,' in S. G. Walker (Ed.) *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); Kille and Scully *op. cit.*; Elena Mastors, 'Gerry Adams and the Northern Ireland Peace Process,' *Political Psychology* 21 (2000), pp. 839-846; Thomas Preston, *The President and his Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Affairs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Tanyel Taysi and Thomas Preston, 'The Personality and

vast body of research demonstrates variation in leaders' personality traits. Schafer and Crichlow's study of nine leaders, for example, found considerable variation in their LTA scores, as did Shannon and Keller in their study of six U.S. policymakers and Van Esch and Swinkels investigation of six European leaders during the Euro Crisis.³⁵ Hermann's 1980 landmark study demonstrated significant differences in the leadership traits of 80 heads of government across 38 countries.³⁶

Table 1
Personality Characteristics in Leadership Trait Analysis

LTA Trait	Description
Belief in Ability to Control Events	perception of own degree of control over political world
Need for Power	interest in developing, preserving, or reinstituting own power
Conceptual Complexity	ability to distinguish complexities of political life
Self-Confidence	notion of self-importance, and of capacity to take on political environment
In-group Bias	belief that own group constitutes center of political world
Distrust of Others	suspicious, skepticism, worry of others outwith own group
Task Focus	focus on problem solving vs. building relationships

Source: Çuhadar et al (2017b), drawing on Hermann, 2003 *op. cit.*

Leadership Style of President Khatami: Implications for the Future of Iranian Political Reform,' in O. Feldman and L. O. Valenty (Eds.), *Profiling Political Leaders: A Cross-Cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior* (Westport: Praeger, 2001); Schafer and Crichlow 2010, *op. cit.*; Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*; Baris Kesgin, 'Leadership Traits of Turkey's "Islamist" and "Secular" Prime Ministers,' *Turkish Studies*, 14(1) (2013), pp. 136-57; Femke Van Esch and Marij Swinkels, 'How Europe's Political Leaders Made Sense of the Euro Crisis: The Influence of Pressure and Personality,' *West European Politics* 38(6) (2015), pp. 1203-1225; Klaus Brummer, "'Fiasco Prime Ministers": Leaders' Beliefs and Personality Traits as Possible Causes for Policy Fiascos,' *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(5) (2016), pp. 702-717; Dyson 2016 *op. cit.*

³⁵ Schafer and Crichlow 2010, *op. cit.*; Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*; Van Esch and Swinkels, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Hermann 1980, *op. cit.*

What does LTA explain? LTA research has demonstrated that its seven personality traits systematically link to policies leaders choose for their country or organization.³⁷ Hermann's 1980 study systematically correlated the personality characteristics of 80 leaders (using manual content analysis) with over 12,000 events of foreign policy behavior. She found statistically significant relationships between several individual traits and foreign policy. Leaders who were high in their need for power, for example, were less likely to engage in multilateral or interdependent behaviors. Leaders who were high in nationalism and distrust were more likely to act negatively towards others. Building on Hermann's earlier work, Keller's study (of 39 leaders in 154 foreign policy crises), found leaders' traits statistically significantly correlated with the centrality and severity of violence in states' crises behaviors.

Additional studies have also linked LTA personality profiles to foreign policy outcomes. In their analysis of nine leaders across several cases, Schafer and Crichlow found leaders' distrust was significantly, and positively related to more aggressive foreign policy outcomes.³⁸ In their quantitative analyses of leaders' traits and U.S. military policies from 1953 to 2000, Keller and Foster found that conceptual complexity, distrust, belief in the ability to control events, and self-confidence were correlated with diversionary use of force.³⁹ Çuhadar et al's study of Turkish foreign policy traces the different decisions that Turkey made in 1991 vs. 2003 vis-à-vis Iraq to differences in President Ozal and Prime Minister Erdogan's decision making

³⁷ e.g., Hermann 2003 *op. cit.*, 2006; Kille and Scully *op. cit.*; Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*

³⁸ Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*

³⁹ Jonathan W. Keller, and Dennis W. Foster, 'Presidential Leadership Style and the Political Use of Force,' *Political Psychology* 33(5) (2012), pp. 581-598; Dennis M. Foster and Jonathan W. Keller, 'Leaders' Cognitive Complexity, Distrust, and the Diversionary Use of Force,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10(3) (2014), pp. 205-223.

styles.⁴⁰ Dyson's detailed research of British Prime Minister Tony Blair used LTA to trace the effects of Blair's personality in British foreign policy decision making in the Iraq war.⁴¹ After careful consideration of alternative explanations, Dyson concludes: "Blair's personality is a crucial factor in understanding why the British went to war."

Blair's influence on this foreign policy *outcome* came through his imprint on the *process*. Dyson argues that Blair's low complexity, high need for power, and high belief in his ability to control events affected Blair's "proactive policy orientation, internal locus of control in terms of shaping events, a binary information processing and framing style, and a preference to work through tightly held processes in policy making."⁴² In their creative study of groupthink, Schafer and Crichlow, for example, examine the relationships between LTA traits of nine leaders and the quality of decision making in cases of foreign policy in which the individual was an important actor.⁴³ Their findings highlighted the importance of distrust. Leaders with high levels of distrust were statistically significantly correlated with group structural faults (such as biased leadership, group homogeneity) and decision-processing faults (such as poor information search and biased information processing) in their cases. Brummer (2016), on the other hand, found that British PMs with high self-confidence and how need for power were associated with foreign policy fiascos.

As noted earlier, one advantage of using the LTA framework for investigating agent-structure relations is that it provides specific expectations regarding which characteristics of agents matter, and how, in their orientations toward structures. Leaders with different traits and trait combinations are expected to relate to their institutional settings and political environments, and to those around them in

⁴⁰ Çuhadar et al., (2017b) *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Dyson 2006 *op. cit.*; 2009 *op. cit.*

⁴² Dyson 2006 *op. cit.*, p. 303.

⁴³ Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*

predictable ways. Keller makes a strong argument based on a distinction between direct and potential constraints. Direct constraints, such as shared power, do exist as objective obstacles to leaders in pursuit of their preferred policies, “but direct constraints are the exception. Most constraints are open to multiple interpretations or can be overcome in the short term (though the longer-term political or personal consequences may be very serious).”⁴⁴ “Contrary to prevailing structure-based theories, *potential* constraints in any political environment must be *activated* by leaders’ responsiveness to them before they can influence policy behavior.”⁴⁵

Indeed, LTA research has demonstrated that a key personality characteristic that varies across political leaders is their sensitivity to their environment and their orientation to constraints. Some leaders confront constraints, challenge costs and benefits, ignore institutional incentives, while others respect these pressures and limits.⁴⁶ Some leaders are crusaders, ideologues, or ideologically driven, while others are pragmatists, opportunists, or context sensitive.⁴⁷ LTA researchers expect that for leaders’ orientations to constraints act as an intervening variable for other personality traits; leaders’ other belief and basic personality characteristics, for example, are more likely to affect policymaking and outcomes for leaders who challenge their political

⁴⁴ Jonathan W. Keller, ‘Constraint Respecters, Constraint Challengers, and Crisis Decision Making in Democracies: A Case Study Analysis of Kennedy versus Reagan,’ *Political Psychology* 26(6) (2005b): 835-867, p. 838; see also Jonathan W. Keller, ‘Leadership Style, Regime Type, and Foreign Policy Crisis Behavior: A Contingent Monadic Peace?’ *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005a), pp. 205-231.

⁴⁵ Keller 2005b *op. cit.*, pp. 836-7 (italics in original).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Hermann 1987 *op. cit.*, Margaret G. Hermann, ‘Leaders and Foreign Policy Decision-making,’ in D. Caldwell and T. J. McKeown (Eds.) *Diplomacy, Force, and Leadership* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Margaret G. Hermann and Charles W. Kegley, Jr., ‘Rethinking Democracy and International Peace: Perspectives from Political Psychology,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 39(4) (1995), pp. 511-34; Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*; Keller 2005a *op. cit.*; Keller 2005 *op. cit.*; Dyson 2007; Çuhadar et al 2015b.

⁴⁷ Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*; Hermann and Kegley *op. cit.* For a connection to literature on management science, see Keller 2005b *op. cit.*

environments. LTA research indicates, however, that this binary view of constraint challenger *or* constraint respecter is misleading. Rather, as Keller argues, “constraint challengers and respecters...represent ideal types. Some leaders resemble these vivid portraits, but most leaders fall in between these two poles. Nevertheless, leaders generally exhibit a tendency toward one or the other profile.”⁴⁸

Hermann first proposed the notion that leaders’ sensitivity to the environment can be derived from combinations of LTA traits.⁴⁹ She argued that leaders who have a high need for power and a high belief in their ability to control events will challenge constraints (see Table 2). Some studies support this proposition.. Schafer and Crichlow found, for example, that “...leaders having a high *Control* orientation are unlikely to have effective decision-making processes without the mediating effect of high *Need for Power*.”⁵⁰ Dyson’s comparison of Wilson and Blair also supports this general pattern of different personalities’ orientations to constraints stemming from a combination of the power and control traits.⁵¹

Others, however, have proposed alternative combinations of LTA traits to capture leaders’ orientations to constraints. Keller, for example, combined need for power with leaders’ task emphasis, distrust, and nationalism traits. In addition to a statistical study relating the traits of 39 leaders to foreign policy outcomes, Keller traced the decision making process of constraint challengers and respecters and found considerable plausibility for his hypotheses. Although Keller justified his use of four specific traits to distinguish constraint challengers from respecters, he acknowledges that other traits, such as the belief in the ability to control events and complexity may

⁴⁸ Keller 2005b *op. cit.*, p. 840. See also Keller 2005a *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Hermann 2003 *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*, p. 200 (italics in original).

⁵¹ Stephen Benedict Dyson, ‘Alliances, Domestic Politics, and Leader Psychology: Why Did Britain Stay Out of Vietnam and Go into Iraq?’ *Political Psychology* 28(6) (2007), pp. 647-666.

also be valid indicators, concluding that “additional research must examine the relative importance of each of these characteristics in shaping leaders’ responses to constraints.”⁵² Shannon and Keller argue that distrust is particularly important for leaders’ orientations toward international norms. In their study of six U.S. policymakers’ positions on the Iraq war (and the violation of international community norms against the use of force in this case), they argue that “leaders who are sensitive to the political context and view the world as a benign international society structured by effective rules and institutions are less likely to violate norms than leaders who are relatively insensitive to the political context and view world politics as a threatening, anarchic domain....”⁵³

Table 2
Leader’s Reaction to Constraints

Need for power	Belief in One’s Own Ability to Control Events	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Low</i>	Respect constraints ; work within such parameters toward goals; compromise and consensus building important.	Challenge constraints but less successful in doing so because too direct and open in use of power; less able to read how to manipulate people and setting behind the scenes to have desired influence.
<i>High</i>	Challenge constraints but more comfortable doing so in an indirect fashion—behind the scenes; good at being "power behind the throne" where they can pull strings but are less accountable for result.	Challenge constraints ; are skillful in both direct and indirect influence; know what they want and take charge to see it happens.

Source: Çuhadar et al (2017b), drawing on Hermann, 2003.

⁵² Keller 2005b *op. cit.*, p. 863.

⁵³ Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*, p. 97.

Hermann argues that individual traits combine in certain ways to produce a leader's overall orientation, or leadership style, in foreign policy. "By knowing a head of government's orientation to foreign affairs, one knows his predispositions when faced with a foreign policymaking task – how he will define the situation and the style of behaviour he will be likely to emphasize."⁵⁴ In her 1980 study, Hermann combined traits to produce two types of orientations: independent and participatory. She found that these combinations correlated with state's commitment, direction and intensity of affect, and the nature of reciprocity in its foreign policy behaviors. Hermann later suggested specific combinations of four LTA traits (belief in ability to control events, need for power, complexity and self-confidence) produce eight types of leader orientations. Kille and Scully's study on leaders of international organizations is one example of the use of Hermann's combination of traits into composite orientations.⁵⁵

Keller and Foster combine two LTA traits -- the belief in the ability to control events and self-confidence – in a leader's locus of control measure. They argue that leaders high in both traits will have a strong *internal* locus of control (LOC) and "...when faced with difficult politic and economic conditions, will be much more confident in their ability to take the reins and manipulate the environment to protect their political position. While this confident action may involve bold domestic policy actions..., such leaders' internal LOC...means they will not regard military diversion as inherently unworkable and...they may in fact view forceful diversionary moves as preferable to the alternatives."⁵⁶ Leaders with an *external* LOC, on the other hand, are expected to respect constraints and "will have little confidence in their ability to

⁵⁴ Hermann 1980 *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Kille and Scully *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Keller and Foster, *op. cit.*, pp. 587-8.

reverse these conditions.”⁵⁷ Keller and Foster’s study of U.S. presidents experiencing poor presidential approval ratings and economic downturns generally support these expectations.

LTA At-A-Distance Methodology

Since social scientists do not typically have direct access to leaders, personalities must be captured ‘at-a-distance’.⁵⁸ LTA research infers its seven personality traits from leaders’ verbal behavior. Through the development of a standard coding scheme and computer programs for processing leaders’ text, this method has become very reliable, has demonstrated strong validity.

For LTA coding, it is assumed that when leaders frequently use certain phrases and words, this reflects their underlying personality traits (Hermann 2003). Frequency counts take a word or phrase as the unit of analysis and produce a quantitative score. LTA profiles are now generated by automated machine-coding using ProfilerPlus, a language parsing software program developed by Social Science Automation.⁵⁹ The program determines the percentage of particular words and phrases used by the leaders based on the length of the text.⁶⁰ The percentages for any leader can be compared to those of more than 250 world political leaders and subsets of leaders from particular countries and regions. Through such comparisons to these norming groups, it becomes possible to determine whether a trait is high, low, or average for the particular leader (Hermann 2003).

⁵⁷ Keller and Foster, *op. cit.*, 587.

⁵⁸ For an excellent recent review of at-a-distance analysis, see Mark Schafer, ‘At-A-Distance Analysis,’ in Rhodes and Hart *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ SSA is headed by Michael R. Young; Margaret Hermann was co-founder in 1997. In ProfilerPlus, SSA converted Hermann’s Leadership Traits Analysis and Steven Walker’s Operational Code Analysis hand-coding practices to automated coding (see www.socialscience.net).

⁶⁰ See Hermann (2003 *op. cit.*) on how scores are calculated on each personality trait.

Although machine coding has made LTA personality profiling very and other reliable, the issue of validity continues to surface in LTA research: do the words of leaders really reflect the underlying characteristics of their personality characteristics? Do leaders even write their own speeches or interview responses? Do they not tailor their verbal behaviour to specific audiences and across time? Do they not deceive or merely speak what their institutional role demands? Is LTA able to capture personality characteristics with its standard coding across variation in language? Many researchers have addressed these questions by using only interviews and other spontaneous material than than prepared speeches. Scholars also argue that leaders do have some control over their speech acts and that LTA captures leaders' *public* personalities (rather than their private ones) and that public personalities are more important for explaining policymaking processes and foreign policy choices.⁶¹

Some have also assessed the validity of LTA profiles by using them in tandem with case studies to see if the personality traits play out in decision-making processes

⁶¹ For discussions and examinations of these issues, see Brian Dille and Michael D. Young, 'The Conceptual Complexity of Presidents Carter and Clinton: An Automated Content Analysis of Temporal Stability and Source Bias,' *Political Psychology* 21 (2000), pp. 587-595; Gregory B. Marfleet, 'The Operational Code of John F. Kennedy During the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Comparison of Public and Private Rhetoric,' *Political Psychology* 21 (2000), pp. 545-558; Mark Schafer, 'Issues In Assessing Psychological Characteristics At a Distance,' *Political Psychology* 21 (2000), pp. 511-527; Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow, 'Bill Clinton's Operational Code: Assessing Source Material Bias,' *Political Psychology* 21 (2000), pp. 559-571. Schafer and Walker, *op. cit.*; Jonathan Renshon, 'Stability and Change in Belief Systems: The Operational Code of George W. Bush from Governor to Second-term President,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52 (2008), pp. 820-849; Jonathan Renshon, Jonathan (2009) 'When Public Statements Reveal Private Beliefs: Assessing Operational Codes at a Distance,' *Political Psychology* 30 (2009), pp. 649-661; Shannon and Keller *op. cit.*; Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*; David G. Winter, 'Leader Appeal, Leader Performance, and the Motive Profiles of Leaders and Followers: A Study of American Presidents and Elections', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52 (1987), pp. 196-202; David G. Winter, 'Personality Profiles of Political Elites,' in Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Schafer 2015 *op. cit.*

in ways we would theoretically expect them to⁶² – if they do, we can have greater confidence in LTA’s validity. Finally, at-a-distance analysts argue that some of these validity questions are indeed empirical questions and can, and have, been examined. As a result of all these efforts, Schafer argues, we now have “plenty of evidence that supports the effectiveness of using prepared speech acts as psychological indicators.”⁶³

Current Challenges and Future Research Avenues For the Study of Leaders in International Relations

While the research programme on leaders’ personalities (including Leadership Trait Analysis but also Operational Code Analysis, Motive Analysis, and leader biographies) offers significant insights, there are numerous important directions in which future work in this area should concentrate to further our understanding of how leaders influence world politics.

Unpacking Constraints

As discussed above, LTA research has shown that one of the most significant and consequential differences distinguishing one leader from another, is the degree to which the leader challenges or respects constraints, including structural constraints. Despite the consistent finding, the concept of ‘constraints’ is under-developed. Constraint is a catchall term that has included a range of international and domestic obstacles in leaders’ environments. We know little about how different leaders respond to similar constraints and how leaders respond to different types of constraints, despite the recognition in psychological research that different situations

⁶² E.g., Dyson 2009 *op. cit.*; Çuhadar et al. 2017b, *op. cit.*

⁶³ Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*

strengthen or weaken the importance of different personality traits.⁶⁴ This is partly because some LTA research only examines single leaders. Other work that compares leaders, such as Dyson's comparisons of UK Prime Ministers Wilson and Blair and Rumsfeld and G.W. Bush, Shannon and Keller's study of six U.S. policymakers, and Çuhadar et al's work on Turkish leaders, serves as a foundation on which to build, but this work is limited in its focus on a few leaders facing the same constraints or in its lack of tracing the underlying process of how different personality traits respond to constraints.⁶⁵

Moreover, there has been no systematic effort to distinguish the types of constraints leaders face and the interaction of their personalities with the constraints in their environments – the interaction of agents with structures. Indeed Dyson argues that “classifying a leader as a constraint challenger or constraint respecter would beg the question *which constraints* are to be challenged or respected?.....”⁶⁶ Dyson problematizes the type of constraints leaders respond to, in his comparison of Wilson and Blair's varying orientations to domestic and international constraints.⁶⁷ Dyson's study and Çuhadar et al's work on personality stability across institutional role positions are good starts to answer the question: *Which constraints?* All international constraints, for example, are not the same – they may be material or normative, and come from different types of sources, such as enemies or allies. Do some leaders

⁶⁴ Walter Mischel and Yuichi Shoda, ‘A Cognitive-Affective System Theory of Personality: Reconceptualizing Situations, Dispositions, Dynamics, and Invariance in Personality Structure,’ *Psychological Review* 102 (1995), pp. 246-68; Richard K. Hermann, Philip E. Tetlock, and Penny S. Visser, ‘Mass Public Decisions to Go to War: A Cognitive-Interactionist Framework,’ *American Political Science Review* 93 (1999), pp. 553-573.

⁶⁵ Schafer and Crichlow 2010 *op. cit.*; Dyson 2007 *op. cit.*; Dyson 2009 *op. cit.*; Shannon and Keller *op. cit.* Keller and Foster (*op. cit.* and Foster and Keller, *op. cit.*) also examine several post-World War II use presidents but do not really compare them (just their comparative effects in statistical analyses).

⁶⁶ Dyson 2007 *op. cit.*, p. 656 (italics in original).

⁶⁷ Dyson 2007 *op. cit.*, p. 657.

privilege one international constraint over the other, while others respect all constraints and still others challenge all types of external constraints?

Leaders are, of course, also constrained by their internal political situations, institutions, and prevailing ideational contexts. This has been the subject of some LTA research. Foster and Keller's study, for example, focuses on internal constraints (in the form of domestic economic problems) and U.S. presidents' use of diversionary force as partly a function of their leadership traits, but they do not trace the process and underlying mechanisms of their statistical results. They note that "the empirical study of how leadership style moderates the relationship between domestic tenure threats and the political use of force should be extended beyond American Presidents to other world leaders...."⁶⁸ Keller does trace the process by which Kennedy, a 'constraint respecter' and Reagan, a 'constraint challenger' responded to domestic constraints.⁶⁹ As with international constraints, there are many different types of domestic constraints and leaders may respond to different structures in varied ways, depending on their personalities. Keller acknowledges this: "although constraint are often treated as a constant within a specific type of system (e.g., democracies), they may vary greatly over time and across issues" and calls for this focus in future research.⁷⁰ Future research should compare a number of leaders who faced different types of domestic constraint and opposition and examine how different leaders respond to different types of domestic pressures, including ideational pressures and normative expectations.

⁶⁸ Foster and Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 16; see also Keller and Foster, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ Keller 2005b *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ Keller 2005b *op. cit.*, p. 861.

Similar to Putnam's notion of 'chief-negotiator' sitting at the intersection of international negotiations and domestic opposition,⁷¹ we can conceive of political leaders as frequently dealing with both internal and external constraints. While previous research on political personalities has included both types of pressures,⁷² the distinction is rarely problematized. It is often assumed that if leaders are "constraint-challengers" in one domain, they will behave similarly in another, but this expectation may not hold.⁷³

Leadership Across Time

Most research on the effects of leaders' characteristics on foreign policy is static, taking a snapshot of a leader's personality and explaining a single choice point or limited time of policy development. Leaders, however, can and do change across time. Modern personality theory does not expect individuals to remain static.⁷⁴ Wood and Roberts and Roberts and Mroczek argue that personality traits may change even into adulthood and in old age, following a role learning process.⁷⁵ Hermann

⁷¹ Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: the Logic of Two-Level Games,' *International Organization* 42 (1988), pp. 427-460.

⁷² E.g., Dyson 2007 *op. cit.*

⁷³ Hermann 1980 *op. cit.*; Keller 2005b *op. cit.* Dyson's (2009 *op. cit.*) personality study of Donald Rumsfeld does point out the contrast in the Secretary of Defense's external worldview (with a belief that macro political forces were largely beyond control) with Rumsfeld's internal style (as a highly controlling bureaucratic fighter). Dyson, however, only uses LTA to indicate the external aspect and does not relate Rumsfeld's personality characteristics to his internal leadership style.

⁷⁴ See David C. Funder, 'Personality,' *Annual Review of Psychology* 52 (2001), pp. 197-221; Post *op. cit.*; Caspi, Avshalom, Brent W. Roberts, and Rebecca L. Shiner, 'Personality Development: Stability and Change,' *Annual Review of Psychology* 56 (2005), pp. 453-84.

⁷⁵ Dustin Wood and Brent Roberts, 'Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Tests of the Personality and Role Identity Structural Model (PRISM),' *Journal of Personality* 74 (3) (2006), pp. 779-810; Brent Roberts and Daniel Mroczek, 'Personality Trait Change in Adulthood,' *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17 (1) (2008), pp. 31-35.

argues that the permanence of a trait across situations and time is itself a personality characteristic and varies across leaders.⁷⁶

Although there is some good research on political leaders' belief change (or stability) across time⁷⁷, there is very little research on how other aspects of leaders' personalities develop and how they interact with changing constraints. Exceptions include Dille and Young's work on the temporal stability of cognitive complexity in their study of Carter and Clinton. Finding that Carter's complexity trait remained stable (and high) across his term, while Clinton's scores for complexity change (becoming simpler), the authors conclude that their results "indicate that conceptual complexity is stable for some people, but not for others."⁷⁸ Çuhadar et al.'s study on Turkish leaders does examine changes in leaders traits but their focus is more on how

⁷⁶ Hermann 1980 *op. cit.*

⁷⁷ Renshon 2008, *op. cit.*; Stephen G. Walker and Mark Schafer, 'The Political University of Lyndon B. Johnson and His Advisors: Diagnostic and Strategic Propensities in Their Operational Codes,' *Political Psychology* 21(3) (2000), pp. 529-543; Huiyun Feng, Huiyun, 'The Operational Codes Of Mao Zedong: Offensive or Defensive Realists?', *Security Studies* 14(4) (2005), pp. 637-662; Samuel B. Robison, 'Experiential Learning by U.S. Presidents: Domestic and International Influences in the Post-Cold War World,' in S.G. Walker, A. Malici, and M. Schafer (Eds) *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Crichlow *op. cit.*; Akan Malici and Johnna Malici, 'The Operational Codes of Fidel Castro and Kim-Il Sung: The Last Cold Warriors?', *Political Psychology* 26(3) (2005), pp. 387-412; Stephen G. Walker, Mark Schafer, and Michael D. Young, 'Presidential Operational Codes and Foreign Policy Conflicts in the Post-Cold War World,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44 (1999), pp. 610-625; Femke Van Esch, 'A Matter of Personality? Stability and Change in EU Leaders' Beliefs During the Euro Crisis,' in D. Alexander and J.M. Lewis (Eds.), *Making Public Policy Decisions: Expertise, Skills, and Experience* (Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁸ Dille and Young *op. cit.*, p. 594; see also Peter Suedfeld and M. Wallace, 'President Clinton as a Cognitive Manager,' in S. A. Renshon (Ed.) *The Clinton Presidency: Campaigning, Governing, and the Psychology of Leadership* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 215-233.

leaders adapt to new roles rather than developing the temporal aspect of personality development and leader learning.⁷⁹

How leaders change over time is a particularly important direction for future research, given the long tenure of many political leaders. Research on leader age is one step forward⁸⁰, but more research on the dynamics of personality evolution is needed. Psychological research on individual development should inform this type of future research.⁸¹

Connecting Across Approaches

Most work on leader personalities in politics adopts one framework (and sometimes even a single trait or belief). There are very few efforts to compare or combine different approaches.⁸² Leadership Trait Analysis and Operational Code Analysis are the two main frameworks in contemporary research on leader personality and foreign policy but these research programmes have developed along parallel, unconnected tracks. Leader characteristics in these two approaches are likely to be related (both, for example, tap into leaders' beliefs in the predictability and control of political events), but one analysis found that they are quite independent of each

⁷⁹Esra Çuhadar, Juliet Kaarbo, Baris Kesgin, and Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner, 'Personality or Role? Comparisons of Turkish leaders across Different Institutional Positions,' *Political Psychology* 38(1) (2017a): 39-54.

⁸⁰ E.g., Michael C. Horowitz, Rose McDermott, and Allan C Stam, 'Leader Age, Regime Type, and Violent International Relations,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(5) (2005), pp. 661–685.

⁸¹ For a review of this area of research, see Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner, *op. cit.*

⁸² E.g., David G. Winter, Margaret G. Hermann, Walter Weintraub, and Stephen G. Walker, 'The Personalities of Bush and Gorbachev Measured at a Distance: Procedures, Portraits, and Policy,' *Political Psychology* 12 (1991), pp. 457-64; Post, *op. cit.*

other.⁸³ A synthesis and comparison of these techniques can tell us how general beliefs (measured in Operational Code Analysis) relate to specific traits (measured in Leadership Trait Analysis) and provide a more powerful tool for explaining and predicting leaders' behaviours and choices.

Building Data with 'New' Individual Differences

In addition to making connections across existing approaches, future research on leader personality could build new empirical data on additional individual differences,⁸⁴ including leader motives and the 'Big Five' personality traits. The use of machine coding at-a-distance computer programmes to capture these leaders characteristics would make for systematic and rigorous investigations, comparable to existing work on Leadership Trait Analysis and Operational Code Analysis.

Although LTA does include motives (power and task focus), 'motive theory' based on work by McClelland is a more comprehensive motive-based approach. Motive theory suggests three motives -- power, achievement, and affiliation -- drive individuals' behaviours and affect how they influence others and their environment. David Winter has pioneered the study of motives in political leaders and has analysed the motives of, for example, Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, George W Bush, and

⁸³ Michael D. Young, and Victoria Shafer, 'Correlations among Leadership Trait Analysis and Operational Code Indicators,' paper presented at the 46th annual convention of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, March 2005.

⁸⁴ Schafer recently argued that in current at-a-distance research, "the most significant limitation is the dearth of data" (Schafer 2015 *op. cit.*, p. 305). He also noted that ProfilerPlus has the capacity to examine many other leader characteristics such as optimism and helplessness and other software programs such as Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count.

Barack Obama⁸⁵. Winter summarizes the findings from motive analyses of political leaders:

“overall, these studies suggest that leaders scoring high in power motivation are inclined toward strong, forceful actions; as a result they may be charismatic to their followers...., but aggressive and warlike to opponents....Affiliation-motivated leaders, in contrast are more peaceable and cooperative—so long as they are surrounded by like-minded others, and do not feel threatened. Achievement motivation, which is usually associated with entrepreneurial success, does not appear to make for success in politics....Achievement-motivated leaders tend to become frustrated by some many inherent features of political life....”⁸⁶

To date, published work on leaders’ motives have been assessed through hand-coded content analysis, but since motive profiles are based on word-count coding schemes, it is possible to standardise them with machine-based coding. Social Science Automation has produced a programme for capturing motives from text, this is not much research that has used this.⁸⁷ The use of computerized programs for leaders’ motives would expand the universe of leaders, allow for timely analyses of current leaders, and generally give a boost to the study of leaders’ motives in the same way that ProfilerPlus catalysed research on operational codes and LTA.

Almost entirely missing from existing research on leader personalities are the ‘Big Five’ personality traits: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness,

⁸⁵ See, for example David G. Winter, ‘A Motivational Analysis of the Clinton First Term and the 1996 Presidential Campaign,’ *Leadership Quarterly* 9 (1998), pp. 253–62; David Winter, ‘Things I’ve Learned about Personality from Studying Political Leaders at a Distance,’ *Journal of Personality*, 73 (3) (2005), pp. 557-584.

⁸⁶ Winter 2013 *op cit*.

⁸⁷ See <http://socialscience.net/tech/Languages.aspx>

neuroticism, and openness to experience.⁸⁸ Although some of these traits may connect to characteristics captured in LTA, there is very little research on them directly. This is puzzling and unfortunate in two respects. First, the Big Five have emerged out of a long history of research in psychology that demonstrates how fundamental and comprehensive they are at capturing individual differences and how generalizable they are across cultures, time, gender and ethnicity.⁸⁹ According to Caprara and Vecchione, “at present the Big Five represent the most widely accepted model to address major individual differences in behavioral tendencies in manifold contexts.”⁹⁰ Second, the Big Five have been successfully integrated into the study of politics, but at the mass level, except in rare instances. Research on self-placement on ideological left-right political dimensions, political party affiliation, candidate preference, vote choice, and public policy attitudes and preferences has demonstrated considerable explanatory power of the Big Five.⁹¹ Extension of ‘Big Five’ analyses to the study of political leaders seems to be a natural next step for future research. Gallagher and Allen’s study of U.S. presidents’ use of force is the rare study that examined the Big Five personality traits at the leader level, finding that some components of extraversion are associated with the use of force.

⁸⁸ For an overview, see R.R. McCrae and J. Allik, *The Five-Factor Model of Personality Across Cultures*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2002).

⁸⁹ Maryann E. Gallagher and Susan H. Allen, ‘Presidential Personality: Not Just a Nuisance,’ *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10 (2014), pp. 1-21; McCrae and Allik *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ Gian Vittorio Caprara and Michele Vecchione, ‘Personality Approaches to Political Behavior,’ in Huddy, Sears, and Levy, *op. cit.*, p.6.

⁹¹ See, for example, John T. Jost, ‘The End of the End of Ideology,’ *American Psychologist* 61 (2006), pp. 651-670; H. Schoen and S. Schumann, ‘Personality Traits, Partisan Attitudes, and Voting Behavior: Evidence from Germany,’ *Political Psychology* 28 (2007), pp. 471-498; Claudio Barbaranelli, Gian V. Caprara, Michele Vecchione and Chris R. Fraley, ‘Voters’ Personality Traits in Presidential Elections,’ *Personality and Individual Differences* 42(7) (2007), pp. 1199-1208; R. Riemann, C. Grubich, S. Hempel, S. Mergl, and M. Richter, ‘Personality and Attitudes Towards Current Political Topics,’ *Personality and Individual Differences* 15 (1993), pp. 313-321.

In work at the mass level, Big Five individual differences are assessed through surveys with questions derived from personality ‘tests’ used in psychology. These types of questions could be translated into a coding scheme for content analysis of leaders’ speeches, in the same way Margaret Hermann designed the first codebook for LTA. If a Big Five content analytic scheme could be computerised, this would give this potential area of research the same significant advantages of computer-generated data for LTA and operational code analysis. Another option for assessing leaders Big Five traits is to use expert judgments. This is the method in Gallagher and Allen’s study, which used data collected by Rubenzer and Faschingbauer from presidential biographers’ ratings of U.S. presidents.⁹²

Linking to Leadership Studies

Finally, future research on personality and foreign policy should import from and contribute to the vast and growing area of research on political leadership that does not take a psychological, personality approach.⁹³ Instead, this work “understands leadership as an interactive process between leaders and followers; institutions and their rules of the game, and the broader historical context.”⁹⁴ The non-psychological approach to leadership crosses several disciplines and has much to offer the psychological approach to leaders.

Research on political leadership, for example often includes assessment of the quality and effectiveness of leadership – how well and how should leaders manage

⁹² Steven J. Rubenzer and Thomas R. Faschingbauer, *Personality, Character & Leadership in the White House* (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 2004).

⁹³ E.g., Paul ‘t Hart, *Understanding Public Leadership* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Rhodes and Hart *op. cit.*; Robert Elgie, *Studying Political Leadership: Foundations and Contending Accounts* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015).

⁹⁴ Paul ‘t Hart, Paul and R.A.W. Rhodes, ‘Puzzles of Political Leadership,’ in Rhodes and Hart, *op. cit.*, p.3.

crises.⁹⁵ Although there is some work on the impact of personality characteristics on effective policy making,⁹⁶ there is great potential for more theoretical development and empirical study in this area. Leadership studies have also moved beyond the focus on leaders at the apex of the national government executive. Work on dispersed democratic leadership, for example, examines and compares other types of leaders such as local government, party, international organizational, business and celebrity leaders.⁹⁷

While work on leaders has much to learn from work on leadership, this connection can be mutually beneficial as well. According to ‘t Hart, “a key challenge for future studies of the leadership-context nexus is...to examine much more rigorously than it has done to date the constructed nature of this nexus.”⁹⁸ He suggests that this “should be at the forefront of any serious effort to remove the contextual analysis of leadership from the outdated shackles of contingency theory, avoid the false clarity of deductive typological reasoning, and provide us with more firmly empirically grounded insight into how political leaders notice, interpret, use and leave their mark upon the various contexts in which they operate.”⁹⁹ ‘t Hart and colleagues have made a similar observation with regard to the study of prime minister leadership:

⁹⁵ E.g., A. Boin, A., et al., ‘Political Leadership in Times of Crisis: Comparing Leader Responses to Financial Turbulence,’ in Ludgar Helms (Ed.) *Comparative Political Leadership* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); A. Boin, E. Stern, and B. Sundelius, *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership Under Pressure*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁹⁶ E.g., Winter’s work on motives, Schafer and Crichlow’s (2010 *op. cit.*) work on groupthink, and Rohrer’s analysis of LTA and the perceived effectiveness of British prime ministers (Samuel R. Rohrer, ‘What Makes a Prime Minister Great?: A Leadership Trait Analysis of the Effectiveness of British Prime Ministers from 1902 to 2004,’ *Research and Politics* (2014), pp. 1-8.

⁹⁷ John Kane, Haig Patapan, and Paul ‘t Hart, *Dispersed Democratic Leadership: Origins, Dynamics, and Implications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); see also Rhodes and ‘t Hart *op cit.*

⁹⁸ Paul ‘t Hart, ‘Contextual Analysis,” in Rhodes and Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁹⁹ ‘t Hart *op. cit.*, p. 215.

“there is a need for more systematic knowledge about prime-ministerial beliefs, motives, information processing propensities, management of advisers and cabinets, and decision-making proclivities. Students of prime ministers’ cabinet government and core executive leadership in parliamentary settings have rarely employed the various personality assessment techniques that rely on content analysis of speeches and interviews—a highly productive and competitive US cottage industry in both academic and applied research....”¹⁰⁰

Linking the interdisciplinary study of leadership to work on leaders’ personalities thus seems an especially important opportunity for future research. Non-psychological approaches to leadership can offer much more attention to the importance of historical, cultural, situational, and contextual factors, while psychological approaches highlight the importance of leaders’ interpretations of those factors.

Conclusion

This article has advanced the argument that individuals are important in international relations by pointing to a cross-theoretical turn in IR theory to include agents and decision-making factors. This turn, however, is not particularly well-developed -- theoretically, conceptually, or methodologically. Extant research from political psychology and foreign policy provides important tools to capture and assess characteristics of agents and their effects on international politics. This paper reviewed work on the Leadership Trait Analysis approach to leaders’ personalities, as one example of a programme of research that is particularly suited to address agent-structure questions. LTA research offers IR scholars specific leader characteristics

¹⁰⁰ Strangio, ‘t Hart, and Walter *op. cit.*, p. 5; for an exception, see; Dyson 2006 *op. cit.*; Dyson 2007 *op. cit.*; Dyson 2009 *op. cit.*

and expectations about how they affect foreign policy choices and policymaking processes, as well as tried and tested methods of assessment. This body of work, however, can benefit from a number of different advances in future research. In particular, this article argued that unpacking the types of structural constraints leaders interact with, examining leaders across time, bridging different approaches to personality, adding new approaches with new data, and linking the study of leaders to work on leadership are important avenues along which scholarship can develop.