High Rolling Leaders:
The “Big Five” Model of Personality and Risk-Taking during War

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Working Paper to be presented at the
International Studies Association-South Conference
November 5, 2005

Version: October 25, 2005

Abstract

Why do leaders take risks during war? What role does personality play in the foreign policy decisions that world leaders make? Do some individuals tend to be more risky than others? Experimental evidence has shown that people often make decisions under conditions of risk according to the predictions of Prospect Theory, rather than to maximize their expected utility. Nevertheless research by Kowert and Hermann (1997) and Nicholson et al (2004; 2005) suggests that individuals have an underlying risk propensity as part of their personalities. The argument presented below draws attention to the importance of decision makers' personality traits on international relations, and offers a novel approach to understanding risk-taking during war by employing the Big-Five factor model of personality. A unique gauge of risk-propensity is constructed from personality profile scores on facets of the Big Five Factors: Neuroticism, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness. This "risky" factor will be the focus of future quantitative studies. Two more general hypotheses based on aggregated factor scores are examined with a case study of Richard Nixon's decision in 1969 to secretly bomb neutral Cambodia.

Introduction

The desire to explain an individual's behavior, whether it be for the sake of understanding the origin of their actions, to learn from their successes and failures, or perhaps even to rehabilitate them, has motivated a multitude of personality theories. Application of such theories to the personalities of world leaders has generated valuable insights towards understanding international relations. Much of the previous research on the behavior of historical figures has employed psychoanalytic analysis, describing such individuals' personalities as "abnormal." Although such profiling continues to be popularly received, a focus on the individual's "unconscious" has led psychoanalysis's academic utility to be dwarfed by recent advances in other sub-fields of personality theory. The research presented in this paper distinguishes itself from much of the previous literature by offering an explanation of world leaders' behavior from the perspective of a trait theory of personality. By employing the "Big Five" model of personality traits, this research program proposes a tool for scientifically rigorous empirical analysis of leaders' personalities to explain risk taking during war.

Personality is not the only factor that determines risk-taking; situational contexts and historical environments in which decisions are made necessarily place constraints on the decision making process. Political analyses of decision making during conflict however, have largely disregarded the personality of individual leaders as a causal variable of actions taken during war, in favor of more systemic or state-led rational choice explanations. Similarly, the most accepted cognitive theory of risk-taking, prospect theory, discounts the personality of decision makers and focuses on the situational factors which shape risk perception. The intention of this present research is not dispute the importance of systemic and environmental factors, but rather to show how a leader's personality mediates between these variables and policy during war.

Before approaching the theoretical argument linking personality and risk these two essential terms need to be defined. Personality, as understood by Gordon Allport, a pioneer of personality psychology, is "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought" (1961, 28). The Big Five is not a theory of personality per se, but rather is a model of personality based on some fifty years of research analyzing the words individual use to describe themselves and others. After factor analysis these "personality traits" align along five dimensions, hence the model's name. Although it is not a theory in itself the model has generated several trait theories, most importantly for this research is the "Five Factor Theory".

The term "risk" can be conceptualized in several different manners.[1] Although studies in international relations tend to treat risk in the classical sense as a probability-centered phenomenon, Vertzberger (1998) explains that probability is of lesser importance to risk; rather it has more to do with uncertainty. He reserves the term *risk* "for a situation where not only the probabilities of outcomes are uncertain but the situation itself is ambiguous, that is, poses a plausible possibility that at least some outcomes are unknown and will have *adverse* consequences for the decision makers" (1998, 20). Therefore, all risky situations entail uncertainty but not all uncertain situations involve risk. Importantly, “adverse outcomes” does not necessarily mean a loss but should be evaluated in a comparative sense to a decision maker's aspiration level; a gain could be had but still seem as an adverse outcome if it does not meet the decision maker's aspiration level. Risk for the purpose of this research is defined as “the likelihood that validly predictable direct and indirect consequences with potentially adverse values will materialize, arising from particular events, self-behavior, environmental constraints, or the reaction of an opponent or third party" (Vertzberger 1998, 22).

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[1] Vertzberger (1998) explains that there are three types of risk: real, perceived, and acceptable. Real risk could be understood as the actual risk resulting from a situation or behavior, but this is often not a known value. Rather, we most often conceptualize risk in its socially constructed, subjective form of perceived risk, which often is not equivalent to the real risk. The acceptable risk is the level of risk a decision maker is willing to bear in pursuit of his/her goals. "Once decision makers have formed a risk assessment, accurate or not, the decision on how to proceed is shaped by measuring perceived risks against what are presumed to be acceptable risks" (Vertzberger 1998, 18).

Vertzberger attributes a significant level of risk-taking causality in foreign policy to personality. He contends that "risk takers are persistent, confident, outgoing, aggressive, domineering, manipulative, opportunistic in dealing with others, and needful of achievement" (1998, 77). Finally the author emphasizes the role that personality attributes play in disposing individuals to "adopt beliefs, values, and motivations that provide cognitive and affective justifications for personality-based drives and allow them to take situational variability into account every time personality attributes are triggered by a problem" (1998, 79). Thus, there is reason to support an explanation of risk behavior focused on the personality of leaders.

The research program presented below will proceed as follows. The first section will examine alternative theories of risk-taking. An essential element of this discussion is the usefulness of analyzing international relations from an individual level of analysis. The two prominent theories presented, rational choice and prospect theory, are neither mutually exclusive from each other nor from a trait based theory of risk. In fact, the latter informs both rational choice and prospect theory by providing insights to some of their criticisms. The second section will provide a theoretical background of trait theory with a focus on the “Big Five” model of personality. The research methods employed in personality trait profiling, with a focus on the Revised NEO-Personality Indicator, will be discussed as well. The hypotheses relating personality traits to risk-taking will be explicated in the third section. A plausibility probe of these hypotheses will be carried out through a case study of President Nixon’s decision to “widen” the Vietnam war with the 1969 and 1970 Cambodian bombing campaigns. While Nixon publicly seemed to be addressing the war through the policy of Vietnamization and pursuit of negotiations in Paris, he secretly "allowed a major escalation of the air war in neutral Cambodia and authorized a stepping-up of the bombing of Laos to such a magnitude that it eventually became the most heavily bombed country in history" (Schurmann 1987, 96). The potential domestic political consequences the President faced should his plan be exposed deems such behavior risky. The final section will conclude with intended future directions to further explore the link between personality traits and risk taking in international conflict.

Alternative Theories of Risk Taking

The lack of attention focused on the study of political leadership by political scientists is surprising given the enormous effects individual leaders have on world events. “Explaining international relations while ignoring Hitler, Bismark, Napoleon, and other monumental figures is like trying to understand art or music without Michaelangelo or Mozart” (Byman and Pollack 2001, 145). Betty Glad (2002) notes that in nearly one hundred years of publication, some 4,856 articles, the *American Political Science Review* has published only 42 articles on the subject. “The neglect of leadership in much of mainstream political science is due, in part, to the desire…to find general laws of political behavior that are not time bound" (Glad 2002, 10). Comparatively, institutions and systemic factors are perceived to be more durable than the policies of an individual and thus warrant more attention from the discipline. Scholars often place a premium on parsimony and generalizablity of deductive theory at the sake of empirical validity (Achen and Snidal 1989; Green and Shapiro 1994). Nevertheless various scholars have been unwilling to sacrifice empirical evidence for parsimony, and have proven it is possible to generate elegant theories focused on an individual level of analysis (Byman and Pollack 2001).

Herein lays a major contribution of this current research program. Analysis of individuals' personality using the "Big Five" model, with its law-like factors and valid measures, generates falsifiable hypotheses that can be empirically tested.[2] Five basic factors to all humans' personalities is "an empirical fact, like the fact that there are seven continents on earth or eight American presidents from Virginia" (McCrae and John 1992, 194). Measures of these five factors, most especially the NEO- Personality Inventory, have been proven valid across space and time. Personality profiles have been employed in clinical settings, business environments, and in historical analysis. In these settings personality has been useful for understanding the motivation behind actions in the past, as well as to make predictions regarding dispositions that will influence future behavior. Furthermore aggregations of profiles have led to more generalizable findings. For instance, cross cultural studies have shown that universally, women tend to have overall higher scores on the Neuroticism and Agreeableness factors of personality, while men typically score higher on Assertiveness and Openness to Ideas scales.

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[2] The names "Big Five" model and "Five Factor" model (FFM) will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

When does and individual's personality affect political behavior? Scholars who support the argument that leaders do matter have proposed overlapping theories of when the individual plays a significant role in international relations. Greenstein (1969) proposes four conditions under which a leader's personality may be especially important. The first is when the actor occupies a strategic location. Such leaders would include the heads of government, high ranking military commanders, and perhaps extremely influential civilian leaders. The second is when the situation within which decision-making takes place is ambiguous or unstable, as in conflict and crises. In regards to crisis, Post (2004) concurs that it is the "preeminent occasion for leader personality to come to the fore; how a leader acts in a crisis will often be the measure of his leadership" (21). Greenstein's third condition is when there are no clear precedents, routines, or standard role requirements. Finally, a leader's personality is most likely to play a role in decision making when spontaneous or especially effortful behavior is required (Greenstein 1969; Winter 1992). Many of these conditions are inherent to war; thus the personalities of leaders should matter!

Similar to Greenstein, Hermann et al's (2001) analysis of "predominant leaders" and their leadership styles contends that individuals can have significant influence over foreign policy decisions. The authors classify a "predominant leader" as a decision making unit where "one person has the ability to commit the resources of the society, and with respect to the specific problem being confronted, the power to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed" (2001, 84). They construct a typology based on the individual leader's responsiveness to constraints, openness to information, and motivation for action that elucidates the intimate relationship between personality and leadership style. Their analysis shows that regardless of the regime type, certain situations lead to a contraction of authority, placing an individual in the primary decision-making position. Such situations include: when the leader has an active interest and involvement in defense and foreign policy; when the immediate foreign policy problem is perceived to be a crisis; when the situation involves high level diplomacy; when the issue at hand is of special concern to the leader (Herman et al 2001).

According to Byman and Pollack (2001) the personalities of leaders are extremely important to international relations because they help shape states' intentions. Similar to Greenstein (1969) and Herman et al (2001) they note that, "[i]ndividual personalities take on added significance when power is concentrated in the hands of leader, when institutions are in conflict or in times of great change" (109). Additionally leaders have the ability to shape state and systemic level factors that are of importance to international relations such as balance of power, domestic opinion, and bureaucratic politics (Byman and Pollack 2001). Of the thirteen hypotheses proposed by the authors to assess the role of individuals in international relations, their fifth, that "states led by risk-tolerant leader are more likely to cause wars", relates significantly to this present research program. They explain that "[s]ome leaders are more willing than others to tolerate high levels of risk, and this willingness to accept risk often determines how aggressive a state is" (137). Although this current paper seeks to explain how personality affects behavior during conflict, rather than the onset of conflict, future work building upon the Big Five will explore this notion. In sum their argument suggests that the personality of the leader shapes the policy decisions which the state engages in, and is mirrored in actions of the state in the international arena.

The predominant paradigm of international relations, realism, focuses on the power-maximizing preferences of states in the international system (Voss and Dorsey 1992). States function as the main actor within an anarchic system under which the relative capabilities of states determine their actions towards one another. Realism and the related neo-realist school have fostered an abundant corpus of scholarship examining states' interactions on a systemic level of analysis. Although these structural explanations exhibit great parsimony due to their emphasis on power and capabilities, they have neglected factors essential to understanding conflict issues.

> "If structure and only structure is assumed to produce the action of a state, then there can be no place fore decision making, perception, personality, bureaucracy, or any other factor as a determiner. If on the other hand, structure is one of the many determinants, then the issue becomes one of how each of the factors shaping a state's action is weighted" (Voss and Dorsey 1992, 4).

By moving to a level of analysis focused on the individual, decision-making processes can be examined to explain interstate interactions.

There are several benefits to examining risk from the individual level of analysis. First, international conflict itself is a rare event, thus high-risk decisions during conflict are of a limited number. Associated with each is a unique set of situational factors which impede the ability of traditional approaches to produce generalizable explanations. Rather than working against the unique and rare character of gambles during war, an examination of leaders' personality can more readily account for their occurrence. A psychological approach takes into account the idiosyncratic cognitive processes involved in leaders' decision making.

Second, the explanatory power of more traditional theories has been weak when it comes to understanding risk. State-centric models neglect the role of leaders and hence related dimensions of their personalities such as perception, beliefs, and motivation. This often disables these theories from elucidating why losing sides choose to engage in risky behavior. The additional insights which can be provided by research focused on the individual can supplement inadequate second and third image explanations.

Rational Choice

A rational choice theory of decision making assumes that individuals calculate the costs and benefits of possible decisional outcomes and chose that which will maximize their utility. In its most simple form one can predict an individual's choice once it is known what an individual wants (their preferences) and the information that they have about viable alternatives.

> "Thus the promise of rational choice theory is to permit explanations and prediction of behavior in a variety of contexts on the basis of relatively little information about the actors themselves, and certainly without having to know their life histories or reconstructing the phenomenology of choice" (Stein and Welch 1997, 52).

Experimental evidence however has shown that people do not usually behave as expected utility would predict. Given the additional "noise" that exists outside of the laboratory setting, it is expected that leaders making foreign policy decisions will be unable to gather all possible information needed to carry out the necessary calculations. Scholars who prescribe to the rational choice school acknowledge the problem that leaders face in making decisions without complete information and all possible alternatives.[3] Moreover, political scientists from diverging backgrounds have recognized that decision making involves the perception, estimation, and introspection of the individuals involved.

Stein and Gross (1997) question: "[m]ust someone have the *best* reasons possible, including the information necessary to make a true expected utility calculation, to make a "rational" choice, or is it sufficient that she merely have clear goals and reasons for believing that her actions will lead her to attain them?" (52). If a strong rational choice theory holds then it is impossible to calculate the expected outcomes under such uncertainty as explained above. If a weak understanding of rationality is employed then such an analysis yields indeterminate predictions since any action can be considered "rational" if the decision maker believes they are acting in such a way. The anomaly of rational choice in explaining why leaders make certain decisions has led Stein and Gross (1997) to conclude that "[p]sychology helps us to see how people cope with complexity and uncertainty" (53). Empirical examinations of decision making lend support to theories that take into account the cognitive processes of individuals.

Prospect Theory

The leading explanation of risk behavior in political science, prospect theory, examines the effect of exogenous situational circumstances on decision makers' cognitive processes. Experiments over the past three decades have proven Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory model to be a viable alternative to rational choice.

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[3] For instance, in his explanation of the bargaining model of war James Fearon (1995) explains that "rational leaders may be unable to locate a mutually preferable negotiated settlement due to *private information* about relative capabilities or resolve and *incentives to misrepresent* such information" (381). Rational choice theorists have been able to circumvent the criticism that individuals cannot realistically make the calculations proposed by expected utility by supposing "as if" behavior – that is, the "substantive rationality" not "procedural rationality" is what matters. Thus regardless of the process, an outcome reached "as if" it was done so by maximizing ones utility according to their preferences can be considered rational (Levy 1997).

Scholars sometimes mistakenly relate prospect theory as an extension of rational choice because both involve calculation to attain specific outcomes, however, the two schools have fundamental differences. First, prospect theory holds that “individuals assess the desirability of prospects against a reference point, rather than against their net asset position. Second, actors do not treat choices between gains and losses identically" (Berejikian 2004, 6).

These differences highlight the key tenets of prospect theory. In response to the uncertain nature of the external environment individuals develop a “framing” process to decision making. “Packets of incoming information pass through various cognitive, affective, and/or social filters to produce a ‘perception’ of the outside world” (Boettcher 2004, 333). Part of the framing process involves the analysis of outcomes of decision alternatives. Individuals evaluate outcomes as either a “gain” or “loss” in relation to a “reference point” that can be either the status quo or an “aspiration level” (Boettcher 2004). The framing process also involves an assessment of the probabilities associated with each alternative outcome. Unlike expected utility, preferences are not stable according to prospect theory. A preference reversal can occur if a question is framed in such a way that the reference point changes. Prospect theory has been successful in explaining anomalies of expected utility, that “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).

McDermott (2004) advocates the utility of the prospect theory model over rational choice models of decision making. She contends that the latter may offer more predictive value, however prospect theory's explanations are better at providing "characterizations of decision making that are richer and more descriptively accurate" (292). Risk-acceptant behavior in international politics and foreign policy, according to prospect theory, occurs when the policy option chosen by a decision maker has the following three characteristics: "(1) [t]he preferred option must have more numerous and more divergent outcomes than the other available options; (2) in selecting that option, central decision makers must perceive that negative outcomes are at least possible (and often highly probably); (3) central decision-makers must recognize that their subjective probability estimates may be flawed or completely incorrect" (Taliaferro 2004, 183). Conversely, risk-averse behavior is characterized by selection of an option that has fewer and less divergent outcomes. Despite its popularity there are several drawbacks to the prospect theory model.

Although individuals are the primary subjects of this type of analysis, the prospect theory model requires little knowledge of the person 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 2004, 293). Accordingly all individuals, irrespective of their personality, will react in the same predictable manner. Such a deterministic point of view does not account for idiosyncrasies or past history of the decision maker. Further it removes the possibility that certain individuals can be predisposed to be risk takers or risk averse by nature; actions rather than individuals are endowed with risk attributes.

The proposition that individuals can be risk-seeking or risk-averse is fundamental to the hypotheses of this current research design. As will be discussed in future sections, there is empirical evidence to support such an argument. Kowert and Hermann's (1997) analysis of personality and risk taking is especially relevant to the hypotheses proposed in latter sections of this paper. They find both rational choice and prospect theory explanations of risk-behavior problematic. Rational choice they argue treats individual differences like preferences: exogenous and rarely examined in detail. They call into question the validity of prospect theory's central insight (that individual's risk propensity depends on the framing process and the point of reference used to evaluate alternatives) because of "the sizable number of subjects (roughly one third) in experimental research who did *not* exhibit the predicted framing effect" (Kowert and Hermann 1997, 613). The authors propose that individuals' personalities should be examined as a model of risk-propensity.

They support their argument with evidence from tests examining the relationship between risk and personality type in undergraduate students. Correlations between NEO-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) scores and Personal Risk Inventory (PRI) scores show that individuals with low ratings on the conscientiousness factor of personality, particularly in regards to deliberation, are more risk inclined. The authors determined that these individuals can be characterized as being hasty, impulsive and careless; they ignore risks rather than take calculated risks. They also find a strong relationship between individuals who score high on the openness trait, particularly openness to fantasy and action, and risk taking. Due to their propensity to take risks that entail physical harm rather than economic loss it is determined that they are adventure seekers who actively seek out risks. Similarly, individuals who scored high on the excitement seeking facet of extraversion were characterized as intentional risk takers. The overall results of the study suggest that based on personality, not gains, losses, or rationality, individuals can be classified as either those who ignore risk, those who embrace it, or those who avoid it.

They further tested the effect of personality on framing processes and reference points and concluded that individuals responded in one of four ways. Some followed the logic of prospect theory, some were risk invariant, while "more agreeable, altruistic, feeling individuals prefer to avoid risk, but especially when facing a loss" (Kowert and Hermann 1997, 625). Contrary to predictions of prospect theory they find that "open and intuitive sensation seekers [were] willing to take risks primarily when they ha[d] something to gain" (625). Their model demonstrates that "risk taking varies not only according to how problems are framed but also according to awareness of risk (personality traits related to conscientiousness and anxiety) and according to personal style (personality traits related to altruism and sensation seeking)" (Kowert and Hermann 1997, 628).

Other authors have also found evidence contrary to the tenets of prospect theory. Weber and Milliman's (1997) finding that individuals are more risk-averse about time when in the domain of losses raises questions about the generalizablity of prospect theory's predictions across domains of risk. The purpose of their research was to test whether an individual's inherent risk attitude, or preference for uncertainty, could remain unchanged ("and thus may be a candidate for a stable personality trait" (126)) while their perception of risky decision alternatives could vary. According to the authors, "[d]efining risk preference as the tendency to be attracted or repelled by alternatives that are perceived as risky, we found support for our hypothesis that risk preference may be a stable personality trait, and that the effect of situational variables on choice may be the result of changes in risk perception" (1997, 142).

Finally, scholars have critiqued prospect theory, as well as rational choice, for discounting the importance of learning and past history on decision making. Additionally, both models have failed to address the role of emotions in decision making. Both models primarily concern themselves with the final outcomes of decisions and thus take little account for the process of decision making.[4] Finally, the theory suffers from serious internal inadequacies. The absence of a theory of framing, with "clear and consistent criteria for simply *identifying* the frame used by a particular decision-maker" (Boettcher 2004, 332) is an impediment to further empirical analysis.

Although rational choice and prospect theory have been successful at explaining risk behavior under certain situations, evidence contrary to the predictions of both these theories suggests that that there is ample reason to consider alternative hypotheses for risky behavior. I propose that an alternative theory for risk propensity focused on individuals' personalities can inform several of the critiques of rational choice and prospect theory that have been noted above. Rather than opposing either of these theories, the probabilistic nature personality traits allows utility estimates and situational factors to outweigh personality traits at times, since they are considered "tendencies" and not definite predictions of behavior. Evidence from Kowert and Hermann's (1997) study suggests that some other factor is responsible for the nearly one-third of subjects who did not behave as prospect theory would predict. In effect, a personality explanation of risk seeks to compliment previous theories and to explain the cases that are anomalies to both.

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[4] In this sense prospect theory is often characterized as a rational choice theory rather than a cognitive psychological model. Once an individuals sets their reference point the "evaluation" phase, where alternatives are weighed and decisions made, is a calculated process.

Trait Theory and the Big Five

Scholars seeking to understand the behavior of individuals have devised a multitude of personality theories. The research program proposed draws inferences about world leaders personalities from the most widely accepted of these theories, the Five Factor Model (FFM). “The five-factor model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions”: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Conscientiousness (C), Agreeableness (A), and Openness to Experience (O) (McCrae and John 1992, 175). The model is useful as an integrative, comprehensive, and efficient tool for organizing many other existing theories of personality. The FFM has been related to psychoanalysis and abnormal psychology, evolutionary psychology, and various trait theories, most importantly the Five Factor Theory (FFT). According to McCrae and John (1992), the model 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 that should be of value to educational, industrial/organizational and clinical psychologists” (177).

The FFM is the framework which underlies the FFT. "In contrast to the Five-Factor Model, which is an empirical generalization about the covariation of personality traits, Five-Factor Theory is an attempt to conceptualize recent findings about personality traits in the context of the development and operation of the whole personality system" (McCrae and Allik 2002, 303). McCrae and Costa characterize their FFT as a “personality system” rather than just a theory since it takes into account the dynamic interactions that occur between the three core components of an individual's personality and three exogenous factors that form interfaces (McCrae and Costa 1999).

Basic tendencies "refer to the universal raw material of personality – capacities and dispositions that are generally inferred rather than observed" (McCrae and Costa 1996, 66). Among these tendencies are the Big Five personality traits that are inherent to all individuals. *Characteristic adaptations* "are acquired skills, habits, attitudes, and relationships that result from the interaction of individual and environment; they are concrete manifestations of basic tendencies" (McCrae and Costa 1996, 69). The last core component of personality, the *self-concept* consists of "knowledge, views, and evaluations of the self, ranging from miscellaneous facts of personal history to the identity that gives a sense of purpose and coherence to life" (McCrea and Costa 1996, 70).

There are three interfaces with systems exogenous to the individual's personality: *biological bases*, *external influences*, and the *objective biography*. Biological bases form the foundation of an individual's basic tendencies and are composed of genes, brain structure, and psychophysiological and psychopharmacological elements within each individual. External influences can easily be interpreted as the situation or environment in which a personality manifests itself. Finally the objective biography can best be understood as an individual's specific behaviors, thoughts, and feelings.

The FFT is significant to the research agenda presented in this paper because it the theoretical foundation to the NEO-PI questionnaire. This scale has "been more extensively tested for reliability and validity than any other Big Five measure" (Nicholson et al 2004, 11). Each of the five factors identified in the FFM is characterized by six facet behaviors tested by the NEO-PI. Neuroticism (N) is a scale of emotional instability; it "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). Facets of N include: anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability (Risk Psychology.net 2004)

Extraversion (E) and Agreeableness (A) make up what is considered the interpersonal complex. A person characterized as highly extroverted will be "sociable, enthusiastic, energetic, adventurous, talkative, assertive, and outspoken" (Rubenzer and Fashingbauer 2004, 9). Comparatively, an individual with a high score on the Agreeableness factor can be said to be "sympathetic, kind, forgiving, appreciative, trusting, softhearted, modest, and considerate" (Rubenzer and Fashingbauer 2004, 10). Those who are found to be more disagreeable are described as being stubborn, ruthless and uncooperative; "if they are also extraverted, they are likely to be bold, assertive, and domineering" (Rubenzer and Fashingbauer 2004, 11).

The A factor along with Conscientiousness (C), describe dimensions of character with moral overtones (McCrae and John 1992). Conscientiousness is evaluated on the following facets of personality: competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation. An individual whose scores high on the C factor is usually characterized as being hard working, organized, precise, and dependable (Rubenzer and Fashingbauer 2004).

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 Fashingbauer 2004, 9). The facets of O include and openness to fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values. [5]

The issue of "how many" factors has somewhat been put to rest since the Big Five have received so much empirical support. There is general consensus that models such as Cattell's 16 factor model, which dominated the field of personality structure for a number of years after its inception in the late 1950's is no longer a viable model (Zuckerman et al 1993). In fact not even a sixth factor has been able to withstand replication tests (McCrae and John 1992). Several theories also posit fewer than five factors. For instance, Digman proposed that there were two overarching dimensions to personality: socialization (combines A with C and low N) and self-Actualization (combining E and O with low N) or α and β, respectively (McCrae and John 1992; McCrae and Costa 1999). Theories that propose fewer than 5 factors face a problem of mutual inconsistency. That is, their factors are not easily relatable to factors of other theories.

One reason for the robustness of the FFM is that several personality theories can often be interpreted in terms of it. Importantly, two other trait theories related to the FFM provide insights as to what factors and facets may be indicative of risk propensity. Hans Eysenck posited one of the first trait theories and later devised a questionnaire, the Eysenck Personality Inventory, to measure personality traits. Originally he hypothesized that there were only two factors to personality, extroversion versus introversion, and neuroticism versus emotional stability; he later supplemented these with a third factor known as psychoticism. His description of extroversion and neuroticism are very similar to the corresponding N and E Big Five factors. It has often been suggested that the latter factor, psychoticism, is a combination of the FFM factors Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Thus high psychoticism is characterized by high aggression and a lack of concern for others, while a person with low psychoticism is characterized as being peaceful and empathetic (Risk Psychology.net 2004).

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[5] This final factor, O, is the most controversial because of the difficulty in finding lexical terms to characterized what questionnaires seek to evaluate as "openness". Although the explanation of the O factor as "openness to experience" is now accepted it should be noted that this factor has alternatively been labeled intellect, intelligence and culture (McCrae and John 1992; Zuckerman et al 1993).

Marvin Zuckerman's (1993) "Alternative Five Factor" model identifies five factors, Impulsive Sensation Seeking, Aggression-Hostility, Activity, Sociability, and Neuroticism-Anxiety, all of which bear similarities to Eysenck's and the Big Five factors. 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 factors and risk propensity. Impulsivity is combined with sensation seeking to form the Alternative Five model's Impulsive Sensation Seeking super-trait.

Zuckerman and Kuhlman (2000) test whether sensation seeking and impulsivity are implicit to an individual's risk taking 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). According to the Alternative Five, Neuroticism-

Anxiety is associated with emotional upset, worry, obsessive indecision and sensitivity to criticism, or behaviors that express inhibition of emotion rather than expression of emotion as included in the Big Five. An analysis of the association between the Alternative Five and risk-taking propensity finds 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-Anxiety and Activity factors showed little or no relationship to the composite risk taking score or any of the specific areas of risk taking.

According to McCrae and Costa (2003), "[t]rait psychology, often considered passé in the 1970s, has come back with a vengeance and is now the dominant paradigm in personality psychology" (3). This is not to say that the emergence of trait psychology to this position has been without protest. Much of the discussion in opposition to trait psychology stems from the inability to use a particular trait to predict a single behavior. *Traits rather are considered to be more of a tendency or disposition towards certain behavior, not an absolute determinant of it.* "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, work or emotional reaction" (McCrae and Costa 2003, 26). Nevertheless, the ability of traits to predict long-term patterns of behavior is "extraordinary". That is, by averaging behavior across many instances we can predict on average how someone will behave on a given occasion.

The most controversial aspect of the FFT is the origin of traits. "The FFT distinguishes itself form all other personality theories by its claim that traits are strictly endogenous, changing only in response to intrinsic maturation or other biological inputs (McCrae and Allik 2002, 305). Traits, according to McCrae and Costa's model are biologically determined and unaltered by environmental factors.[6] Support for the biological basis of personality can be found in several areas of research. Additionally, robustness checks of the FFM have been extended to primatology where scholars have tested for the presence of the Big Five among chimpanzees. King and Figueredo (1997) conduct one such test and conclude 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" (267).

As a model of personality, the FFM is based on a "commitment to rigorous quantitative science and an assumption of human rationality" (McCrae and Costa 1996, 59). The FFT, as well as all other personality profiles which depend on self and observer ratings, inherently assume human *rationality*. "Most personality questionnaires are rational in the sense that they ask respondents directly to describe themselves, and interpret the responses more or less literally" (McCrae and Costa 1996, 59). The administering of such tests implies that humans understand their own behavior and the behavior of those in their environment. Individuals' actions and those of others are expected to be consistent with their conscious beliefs and desires. McCrae and Costa's FFT further assumes *knowability* meaning that the personality is a proper subject of scientific study, and *variability,* such that people are different from each other in psychologically significant ways. Variability makes trait theory different from other personality theories that seek a single answer to what human nature is like (McCrae and Costa 1999). Finally the FFT assumes *proactivity*; that the causation and origin of human behavior is within the traits of the individual.

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[6] 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). Evidence of the biological origins of personality has been found through trait heritability studies of twins (Loehlin et al 1998; McCrae and Costa 2003; Reiman et al 1997).

The FFM is the product of factor analyses of personality descriptions based on self-reports and observer ratings. Its origins trace to research using both natural language adjectives and theory based personality questionnaires. Although two separate systems originally developed for naming the factors, one following the lexical tradition and the other the questionnaire tradition, scholars have resolved the issue by "comparing instruments specifically designed to measure the psychological constructs of personality theories with measures of the five lexical factors" (McCrae and John 1992, 187). The significance of psychometrics and its application to trait psychology is evidenced in scholars' commitment to "replicability of factor structure, retest reliability and stability, and convergent and discriminant validity" (McCrae and Costa 1996, 59). High levels of inter-rater reliability among observers, and the convergence of scores between self-reports and observer ratings have lent substantial evidence in support of the FFM.

The power of the model is also supported by cross cultural studies which consistently have found the presence of these five personality factors. Such evidence undermines the claims of critics who may argue that the factors are merely cognitive artifacts and laden with biases. As McCrae and John (1992) argue, "It is surely more parsimonious to believe that human languages have evolved to reflect human nature than to suppose that the same fiction has been recreated independently in many different cultures" (193). Several methods have been employed to test the cross cultural validity of the FFM. The NEO-PI questionnaire has been translated into a number of languages and administered to native speakers with results showing that traits are both transcultural and transhistorical (McCrae and Allik 2002). Although much of the evidence for the existence of the five factors across cultures stems from the administration of personality questionnaires, alternative type tests have also been successful. For instance, Hofstee et al (1997) found support for the universality of the five factors though their examination of the reoccurrence of the Big Five in personality adjectives across languages. Thus, the central dogma of the FFT, "that there is no 'transfer' from culture and life experience to basic personality traits" is bore out by cross cultural studies (McCrae and Allik 2002, 305).

Personality in Political Science

There are several examples of research by political scientists where personality was tested as the causal variable in explaining individuals' decision making patterns and leadership style. For instance, Etheredge (1978) examined the effects of dominance and introversion/extroversion personality characteristics on the foreign policy decisions of U.S. elites, while Shepard (1988) replicated this study analyzing a later temporal period. Both authors coded U.S. elites based on their interpersonal style to test the hypotheses that high dominance individuals would more readily advocate the use of force and more extroverted 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 intraelite variation in personality characteristics corresponded with variation in policy preferences. They were able to predict the use of force merely based on personality dominance in approximately seventy-seven percent of the cases.

Similarly, Shafer's (1997) analysis of individual-level factors that cause policy makers to pursue more cooperative policies during international conflict lends support to Shepard and Etheredge's findings. His experiment controlled for a conflict situation, while allowing for variation in individual-differences and policy preferences. Results 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).

More recent research has begun to address the importance of the FFM as useful tool for empirical analysis and improves upon subjective personality typologies of the past. Studies by Rubenzer and Faushingbauer (2004) and Rubenzer, Fashingbauer, and Ones (2002) utilize the FFM to construct personality profiles of the American Presidents. The authors use three independent measures of personality to reduce the impact of rater bias in their study. The primary instrument used was the Revised NEO-PI. As previously discussed, this is the most widely used and accepted measure of the Big Five factors. Additionally, the authors administered the California Q-sort and Goldberg's 100 Adjective clusters to yield scores on the Big Five personality factors. The California Q-sort is a collection of one hundred personality descriptions where raters indicate their level of agreement with each item on a scale of 1 to 9 (from very uncharacteristic to very characteristic of the person being rated). The third measure, Goldberg's 100 adjective synonym clusters, is directly related to the FFM. Each cluster is composed of several adjectives that are most commonly used in conjunction to describe people. They too are rated on a 9 point scale.

Interestingly the authors also construct a composite measure of "character". Correlations between this composite index and the facets of the NEO-PI yield a sixth personality factor, character, which they measure among the presidents as well. This sixth factor is constructed from 12 facet traits of the NEO-PI and suggests that it is possible to construct and test a dimension of personality other than those explicitly offered by the FFM. Following their model, the next section proposes a measure of risk propensity based on the factors that previous research has found to be associated with such tendencies.

The authors respond to the question, "[c]an researchers validly apply a modern personality test to historical figures" (2002, 110) with an emphatic "yes". The similar research methods employed in these works offer templates for future study of historical figures. According to the authors, the Revised NEO-PI they use "is designed to be completed by a family member, friend, acquaintance - or anyone who knows the person well. The rater does not need to have personal contact with the person rated, just have an adequate information base about the person's behavior and characteristics" (2004, 5). Therefore personality assessments were administered to presidential biographers, or "specialist" raters, who are considered experts on the individual[7].

A detailed discussion of the adequate number of raters and the level of interrater reliability in Rubenzer and Fashingbauer's work illustrates the scientific rigor which can be applied to research when using the FFM. Their studies average 4.1 expert raters per president (2004). The authors note that "in the NEO PI-R manual, Costa and McCrae state (1992:48), ‘Four raters appear to be about the optimal number; there are diminishing returns from aggregating more raters’” (2002, 107). Furthermore, a minimum of three raters is necessary to be sure that the raters’ score in relation to the true score is reliably above average. Use of the NEO-PI allows these authors to compare the personality traits of each president to the other presidents on average. Additionally, they compare each individual president and the aggregated sample of presidents to the average modern-day American population.

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[7] 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.

They then group the presidents according to similarities in the personality factors in order to provide in depth case study analysis of how particular personality traits were exhibited in these presidents’ behaviors. The eight groups they identify are: Dominators, Introverts, Good Guys, Innocents, Actors, Maintainers, Philosophies, and Extroverts. Importantly they note, "[i]nstead 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 included in the 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 than to those not in the group. This method of typology therefore depends on the individuals in the sample and the rules set out by the researcher for group inclusion and is replicable.

Rubenzer, Faushingbauer and Ones (2002) find that assertiveness, which is a facet of E, was the single most powerful personality predictor in their study. Thus as compared to the American public Presidents scored extremely high on this facet. The authors equate assertiveness with dominance or “general capacity for leadership” (2002, 45), yet as their later research shows there is still much variation on this trait within the sample. Conclusively, the results of their studies show that with changes in each administration come major changes in personality, which can affect policy decisions.

Predictions for Individuals’ Risk Propensities

What makes this present research program unique is the application of the five factor model of personality to specifically studying world leaders’ risk propensity. As previously discussed, Kowert and Herman’s (1997) experiment indicates that nearly a third of experimental outcomes failed to meet Prospect Theory’s predictions. Their results suggest that individuals have an inherent risk attitude as part of their personalities. Additionally, studies by Nicholson et al (2004; 2005) provide evidence that the FFM can be used to predict risk propensity, and more importantly that there is evidence to an underlying risk-taking trait among individuals.

The Risk Taking Index employed by Nicholson et al (2004; 2005) allowed the authors to test whether individuals have a generalized risk propensity and/or whether their risk perception is related to specific situations by encompassing measures of both domain-specific risk-taking and overall risk-taking. Participants in the study were administered the NEO PI-R to assess their personality profile, 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 (E) scale would predict risk behavior, most importantly because of facet E5, “sensation seeking”. This proposition was motivated by Eysenck’s theory of extroversion as a generalized need for stimulation. They also expected that Openness to Experience (O) would act as "a cognitive stimulus for risk seeking – acceptance of experimentation, tolerance of uncertainty, change and innovation" (2005, 161). Conscientiousness (C), Neuroticism (N), and Agreeableness (A) were all expected to be inversely related to overall risk propensity.

In addition to finding support for their proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships of the Big Five to risk behavior, the authors also found evidence that men are more generally greater risk takers then women and that risk taking decreases with age. Facet-level tests concluded that E5, sensation seeking, was the overall greatest predictor of four out of six domain specific risk-taking 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: O4, openness to action; O6, openness to values or tolerance of multiple perspectives; A4, competitiveness; E4, a preference for a fast-paced life; N1, low levels of anxiety; A2, a lack of straightforwardness; C5, a lack of self discipline; and C6, spontaneous decision making. Interestingly, N5, the facet for impulsiveness, was only found to be significantly associated with risk taking in two of the six domains. While it was positively related to health, it was negatively associated with finance. One may have expected, based on Zuckerman's assertion that impulsiveness is an indicator of risk-taking, that this factor would be highly correlated with risk-taking. The evidence to the contrary however only reinforces this research program's use of the NEO PI rather than the ZKPQ as a valid measure of risk propensity.

Substantively these results show that "high extraversion (especially sensation seeking) 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). *The authors' overall conclusion that "personality profiles can be used to predict risk-taking in each of the six domains measure, and overall risk-taking" (2004, 18) motivates my theory to utilize the FFM to gain insights towards understanding leaders potential to gamble for resurrection.*

In their earlier research, Nicholson et al (2004) identify three risk-type groups: those who are risk acceptant, those who are risk averse, and those who have domain-specific patterns of risk behavior.[8] A later study, Nicholson et al (2005) modify this conclusion and suggest that most people are "risk bearing" and thus those individuals who are often classified as the consistent risk takers (as opposed to those who are consistently risk averse) can be further categorized as truly risky "stimulation seekers"; those risk takers who are motivated to either achieve a goal or avoid a loss; and "risk adaptors" who are willing to take risks in particular domains.

Hypotheses

Previous research suggests that several predictions can be made regarding correlations between scores on an individual's personality inventory and their relative risk propensity. The term "relative" is important because one's personality can only be classified as "more risky" if being compared to a population where some members' personalities are classified as "less risky". In this sense it is interesting to compare the decisions made by leaders during conflict. In the future this research program will be extended to consider leaders' decisions to take gambles during conflict as a factor of their personalities compared to the other actors involved in the same conflict.

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[8] Such results are similar to conclusions derived from Kowert and Hermann's (1997) study of personality and risk perception.

The case of President Richard Milhous Nixon's decision to escalate the Vietnam War into neutral Cambodia will serve as a plausibility probe and a first stage attempt to gauge the usefulness of the Big Five as a predictor of a leader's behavior. A majority of the information regarding the President's personality profile was obtained from Rubenzer and Faschingbauer' (2004) analysis of U.S. Presidents. In this study Nixon's characteristics are described in relation to the population of other U.S. presidents and an average sample of Americans. The authors do not provide exact scores on each facet of the individual Presidents' or Americans' personality profiles.[9] Thus, it is impossible to say conclusively while relying solely on the research they have published whether or not particular trait facets are related to the behavior examined. Nevertheless predictions regarding which facets should be most highly correlated with risk-taking, and those that should be correlated with risk-aversion can be made.

Below is a summary of the results of previous studies in regards to those traits that are correlated with risk behavior. It is from these past studies that the hypotheses of this research program are derived.

Table 1: Trait Facets Correlated with Risk-Taking

	Overall Factors associated with risk-taking	**NEO-PI Facets**
Kowert and Hermann (1997)	Lower Conscienceousness	C6: Deliberation
	Higher Openness to Experience	O1: Openness to Fantasy O4: Openness to Action
Zuckerman-Kuhlman	Impulsive-Sensation	N5: Impulsiveness

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[9] Although facet scores are not publicly available I have recently obtained a copy of these ratings as will be discussed in the concluding section in regards to the future of this research.

(2000)	Seeking	E5: Sensation Seeking
Nicholson et al (2004)	Higher Extraversion	E5: Sensation Seeking E4: Activity (preference for a fast paced life)
	Higher Openness to Experience	O4: Openness to action O6: Openness to values
	Lower Agreeableness	A2: Straightforwardness A4: compliance (higher competitiveness)
	Low Neuroticism	N1: Anxiety
	Low Conscienceousness	C5: Discipline

From this summary it is expected that:

H1: Leaders with high-risk propensity will have high scores on the Extraversion and Openness to Experience trait dimensions. They will be characterized as sensation seekers and individuals who are open to action.

H2: Leaders with high-risk propensity will have low scores on the Agreeableness and Conscientiousness trait dimensions. The magnitude of the Neuroticism trait is uncertain due to an expected high score on the Impulsiveness facet, but a low score on the Anxiety facet. Leader with high-risk propensity will therefore be characterized as competitive, ambiguous, not anxious, impulsive individuals with little discipline.

These predictions are based on the aggregated factor scores and are unfalsifiable as such. As they stand, an individual may have a high Extraverion score as well as high Agreeablenss and Conscientiousness scores and be considered "risky" just as much as an individual with a high Openness to Experience and low Agreeablness score. The challenge for future extensions of this theory is to test the validity of a falsifiable "risky" factor, constructed from the facets from past studies most clearly associated with risk propensity in a manner similar to the construction of Rubenzer and Fashingbauer’s “character” factor.

Nixon’s “widening” of the Vietnam War

Much of the scholarship in political science that examines the personality of leaders follows the psychobiographical tradition. Such an approach allows the analyst to employ “psychoanalytic techniques to draw additional inferences about the personality, psychological makeup, and style of the subject and to link these influence to the subject’s behavior” (Starr 1980, 470). Simonton (1990) notes that many of those who pursue such an approach "lack formal training in contemporary personality theory and research methodology" (671). This seems to be the case in Renshon’s (2001) critique of trait theory.

Renshon (2001) contends that the comparative psychoanalytic technique is a more useful tool in the study of personalities, as compared to trait theories. He finds it problematic that different traits matter to different theories. Also, according to the Big Five, extraversion is defined in terms of assertiveness and warmth, while the latter seems to fit better under the factor of agreeableness. He argues that "no clinician and no theory with which I am familiar define neurotic psychology in terms of impulsiveness and depression. Obsessive personalities, for example, are ordinarily squarely placed in the "neurotic" continuum of psychological functioning, but they are hardly impulsive" (2001, 236).

These arguments however bring light to Simonton’s observation. First, Renshon obviously dismisses the significance of the trait’s facets. These are of individual importance, hence their discrete measurement, and only aggregate together under factor analysis to form these dimensions. The Big Five traits are empirically derived; regardless of what you call them - whether numbers or names - the facets cluster under these five dimensions. His association of neurotic in the psychoanalytic sense and neuroticism in the sense of a personality factor is entirely misguided. The two are not equivalent, and no research I have come across has equated a high score of neuroticism with being neurotic in the psychotic sense. Interestingly he critiques trait theories for the assumption that the affect of a trait is equally important across situations and disregard the importance of circumstances. A read of the FFT explicitly notes that traits are merely dispositions and that there are factors which mediate behaviors, situational circumstances being one of these factors. An individual's personality traits can not predict how they will act in every situation, and no trait theorist I have read makes any sort of assertion of this nature. Rather they suggest that an individual will be more disposed to act a certain way, but with no certainty. Thus his arguments are inappropriate.

Renshon goes on to further critique Rubenzer et al’s (2002) use of the FFM in their study of presidential personalities. His argument that raters’ lack of training in psychology deems them unfit to place individuals in psychological categories too reveals the author’s lack of knowledge about the process involved in Big Five personality profiling. First, the NEO-PI R has a lexical history and has been modified continuously to allow for lay persons to effectively rate individuals. It was invented for those who are best acquainted with the individuals, themselves and peers, not for scientists. It is the psychologists responsibility to be able to “speak the language of their informants” (McCrae and John 1992, 184) not vise versa. Second, the raters in Rubenzer et al’s study do not place individuals into categories. Rather the authors are explicit in noting that the categories were created by the authors and determined based on similarities in the ratings. They are entirely malleable; as additional presidents are added the categories and their criteria will change.

Numerous psychobiographical studies of President Richard M. Nixon have been published, many of which discuss the impact his personality had on the decision to widen the Vietnam War into neutral Cambodia (Abrahamsen 1976; Mazlish 1972). Abrahamsen characterizes Nixon as "a constructive, hard-working man… secretive, withdrawn, suspicious… serious, seldom humorous… What many people didn't realize was that Nixon's behavior reflected diametrically opposing traits – passivity and aggression. These characteristics were so strong that they made Nixon a contradictory person" (1976, 171). These ideas are reiterated by various other authors (Neustadt 1980), many drawing upon Barber's (1972) classification of Nixon as "active-negative." In this sense the individual imposes expectations and demands on themselves that they cannot live up to. Neustadt quotes Barber's description of this personality type as a contradiction "between relatively intense effort and relatively low emotional reward… Active-negative types pour energy into the political system, but it is energy distorted from within" (1980, 206). Nuestadt's relation of Nixon's reaction to frustration is similar to many other authors'. He notes the pattern of "striking out succeeded by a closing in, angry suspicion leading to sulky isolation" (1980, 205).

Rubenzer and Fashingbauer (2004) assigned Nixon to the presidential personality category "dominator" based on his rating on the Big Five personality traits. They found his overall scores on Agreeableness and Character to be extremely low, while his scores on Conscientiousness and Neuroticism factors were very high compared to other Americans[10]. Based on his low score on the Extraversion scale, as compared to other presidents, they classify Nixon as an introvert. In regards to several of the NEO facets Nixon's scores were consistently much higher or lower than the average American. These facets characterize Nixon as "a devious (low Straightforwardness), suspicious (low Trust), heart-hearted (low Tender-Mindedness), and surly (Angry Hostility) man. Very Prone to embarrassment (Self-Consciousness), he was anxious and aloof around people (low Warmth). He liked to be in charge (high Assertiveness) and was uncooperative with others (low Compliance)" (2004, 108). In comparison to the other presidents Nixon scored the second highest on Anxiety and Self-Consciousness; his scores were among the lowest of all presidents on most measures of Agreeableness, Character, Tender-Mindedness, Trust, Warmth, and Altruism.

Rubenzer and Fashingbauer offer a detailed description of Nixon's personality based on the assessments of their expert and generalist raters. The inclusion of an adjective list profile allowed them to evaluate his personality traits with an instrument other than the NEO. They describe him as "assertive, dominant, and forceful" with an overall ambiguous personality "*not at all* well defined and consistent" (2004, 110). He is described as being deceitful and dishonest all the while worrying incessantly and blaming others for his problems. "He was unmistakably hostile toward others and would much rather compete than cooperate" (2004, 110). Nixon is described as not adventurous; "he overcontrolled his needs and impulses" (2004, 111).

According to the hypotheses stated earlier it is expected that President Nixon would not be prone to high risk taking simply because of his personality. According to the hypotheses previously proposed, individuals with high scores on the Extraversion and Openness scales and low scores on the Agreeableness, Conscientiousness scales will be high risk takers, while the overall score for the Neuroticism factor suggests no clear prediction. Nixon's personality profile only matches one of these criteria: low Agreeableness. The remaining three traits are scored opposite to the direction of expected risk-takers.

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[10] The Character factor was created by the authors and is not considered as one of the Big Five traits.

The matter of predicting how risky-acceptant an individual may be based on their personality traits becomes more complicated when considering facet traits. As is most evident for Neuroticism where there are two facets signed in opposing directions that are likely to predispose an individual toward risk-taking. Predicting risk behavior by these five aggregate traits is likely to have precise results because there are multiple tendencies being taken into account. As will be discussed in the concluding section, more precise tests of the argument presented in this paper will be conducted using the scores of individual facets. In regards to this current program, it likely that that individuals who are described as sensation seekers, open to action, ambiguous, competitive, undisciplined and not anxious will be high risk takers.

Biographical accounts of Nixon suggest he was ambiguous and competitive, while also being extremely anxious. Conversely to predictions that openness to ideas should be associated with risk taking, Nixon was characterized by a belief in omnipotence as evident by his refusal to meet with certain members of his staff to discuss foreign policy decisions (Neustadt 1980). It seems certain that he was not a sensation seeker due to his lack of adventure seeking. It is unclear whether one could describe Nixon as being disciplined; he sought control but was deceitful and willing to break rules to achieve his goals. Thus, Nixon could be considered an individual with a high-risk propensity if low Agreeableness, high competitiveness, and ambiguity are all necessary conditions for such a personality. However, it is more likely that these traits predisposed him to take risks only under certain circumstances and that his other tendencies will offset a high-risk attitude.

On July 29, 1969 President Nixon announced the "Nixon Doctrine," a policy prescription for American military involvement in South East Asia which Schurmann (1987) describes as "let Asians do the ground fighting with America providing only air, naval and logistical support" (95). It was established to please both the public/ anti war movement, because it would reduce American combat casualties, and appease the hawks who wanted to continue the war to ensure victory for the US. Nixon had great confidence in his ability to bring the Vietnam War to a quick conclusion on satisfactory terms. In comparison to his predecessor's administration, "the White House was now occupied by men who were prepared to take risks that Johnson had rejected and to ignore limits that he recognized" (Shawcross 1979, 73). Nixon's plan however encompassed two contradictory goals: to reduce domestic opposition by reducing American involvement in the war and yet to convince Hanoi that the administration was willing to sustain he war and even widen it in order to bring them to a more conciliatory bargaining position. The strategy employed was known as "Vietnamization." Under this strategy a transfer of combat responsibilities would pass from American soldiers to the South Vietnamese army, while the US would expand its bombing support to increase the threat. Through this latter strategy Nixon hoped to establish a reputation for irrationality and unpredictability - he called it the "Madman Theory". Despite contentions that the official invasion of Cambodia, announced in 1970, would be counter to the Nixon Doctrine, the intention of the action was to raise fears in the Soviets and Hanoi that the President would be willing to take any action necessary to end the war.

On March 18, 1969 for the first time in the Vietnam War bombs were dropped upon neutral Cambodia by the express order of the President (Shawcross 1979, 24). This first operation, known as "Breakfast," was aimed at one of 15 Communist sanctuaries that had been identified by Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) as being part of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN). The military argued that destruction of COSVN was imperative for winning the war since the US military believed the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were directing their war effort from bases in the neutral area. "Nixon and Kissinger… were adamant that if it were done, it had to be done in total secrecy" (Shawcross 1979, 21) - so much so that normal "Top Secret" clearance was not enough.

In Sideshow: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Destruction of Cambodia William Shawcross (1979) details the secrecy behind the bombing missions which collectively became known as Operation Menu. For instance, even those members of the US military responsible for dropping the bombs were not given notice until they were ready to depart. It was only then that they were told their coordinates had been changed and they would be guided to the new targets by ground controllers. Most importantly, these raids were an unauthorized and illegal extension of the War purposely hidden from the Foreign Relations Committee and remained covert until 1973.

Some of those aware of the missions, and there were very few, recognized the breach of law they were involved in. According to Shawcross, Major Hal Knight, supervisor of the radar crews for the region of Vietnam that lay between Saigon and the Cambodian border, was concerned that he was violating Article 107 of the Military code of Justice, “which provides that any one 'who, with intent to deceive, signs any false record, return, regulation, order or other official document, knowing the same to be false... shall be punished as a court martial may direct" (1979, 31). Knight was given the duty of incinerating all bombing orders after they had been carried out and was aware that the normal South Vietnamese target coordinates were recorded rather than the actual ones in Cambodia. "The bombing was not merely concealed; the official, *secret*, records showed that it had never happened" (Shawcross 1979, 31).

After the raids had been made public Nixon and National Security Advisor Kissinger argued that the bombings were kept secret to protect Prince Sihanouk, leader of Cambodia during the secret bombings, who they proposed was aware of the raids but acceded to them as long as they were kept in secrecy because of the long seeded rivalry between the Vietnamese and Cambodians. Nixon and Kissinger also further contended that the reason for the secrecy was to avoid a public out-lash by anti-war protestors, especially in light of the infancy of his administration at the time.

Even if one were to disregard the US's breach of international law and the aggression on a neutral sovereign nation, it is important to recognize that the administration violated American constitutional law which gives the power to declare war, to make appropriations and to raise and support armies to Congress. Shawcross contends that "the secrecy, the wiretaps, the burning and falsification of reports, were principally intended to conceal the administration’s widening of the war from the American People" (1979, 94). Those involved consistently denied rumors of American bombing in Cambodia prior to 1970, and later denied falsifying information once the truth about the raids had been revealed, despite the fact that they were explicitly ordered by the White House.

When in May 1970 Nixon publicly announced the plan to attack neutral Cambodia he was careful to refer to it as an "incursion" not an "invasion" in order to hamper public opposition. Although Nixon publicly spoke of the situation in Cambodia as a crisis, Shawcross identifies it rather as "a test, a trial through which Nixon was putting the American people... so that if a real crisis did come one day, the world would beware" (1979, 148). The administration justified usurping Congress's power and not informing them earlier of the decision to commit forces on the need to protect the American soldiers who were serving at the time, and referenced Kennedy's decision to disregard Congress during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Additionally they claimed he had the constitutional authority as Commander in Chief.

In reaction to Nixon's announcement the Senate passed the Cooper-Church amendment which "outlawed the introduction of any troops into Cambodia after June 30, forbade the provision of American advisers to Cambodian forces and prohibited all air operation in direct support of Cambodian forces" (Shawcross 1979, 164). This was the first time in the history of the Vietnam War that legislation was passed to restrict the powers of the President.

Once the incursion began the impact of Nixon's personality was vividly strong. He refused to recognize the reality of the situation - when told that the sanctuaries could not be cleaned up within a month because of the monsoons that would soon occur he completely disregarded the information and continued to rant about “blowing the hell out of them" (Shawcross 1979, 152). His “impulsive rages” became customary and he disregarded the resignation of three top officials in protest to the invasion. The immediate response of the American public was protest and opposition. Nearly a third of American colleges and universities closed or had normal operations disrupted, ROTC buildings on campuses were attacked, leading in the case of Kent State to the shooting of fifteen students by National Guard. This was followed by a protest of nearly 100,000 participants on the Capital. Nixon recognized the need for concessions at this point and declared that penetration into Cambodia would be limited to 21 miles and troops would be withdrawn by June 30, 1970. Although Henry Kissinger played an instrumental role in the foreign policy decisions made during the Nixon administration, the invasion of Cambodia was "the President's battlefield". Although he did not discourage the President from invading, Kissinger "did not share Nixon's enthusiasm for this new theater of war" (Shawcross 1979, 157).

Despite claims by Nixon that the invasion of Cambodia in 1970 was a great success the reality is that it was detrimental to the future of Cambodia, the process of Vietnamization, and eventually the Nixon administration. Rather than increase American credibility abroad, which was a stated aim of Nixon's plan, the world reaction was quite the opposite and undermined America's prestige. Further, the process of Vietnamization was undermined as RVNAF forces were spread throughout Cambodia. This limited their ability to effectively replace the American soldiers in South Vietnam. "The way in which it was conducted broke rules of good policymaking, ignored vital intelligence, and disregarded political realities" (Shawcross 1979, 134).

The decision to widen the Vietnam War into Cambodia was a risk in terms of the domestic and international political consequences the administration would face should their covert actions be found out. By breaking both constitutional law and international norms President Nixon acted in a very risk-accepting manner. Whether or not this decision can be attributed to his personality is questionable. As explained above, the hypotheses of this research program would suggest that Nixon was not likely to make such a decision; he exhibits few traits of a risk taker. Nonetheless, his ambiguous qualities allowed him to pursue a policy that at once seemed to lessen American involvement in the war while widening the scope of the war. Although the case does not neatly fit the expectations of the hypotheses explicated earlier, it does open the door for future research to consider the importance of personality traits when examining decision making involving high risk.

Conclusion

This paper proposes a novel approach to understanding risk taking during war. Although previous research has expressed the importance of leaders' personalities in foreign policy decision making, most studies have relied on descriptive typologies of personality types. This study, however, utilizes the Big Five model, the dominant paradigm in personality psychology, as a means to understanding personality. The Big Five factors of personality, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience are universal across gender, culture, and time. Additionally, scores on each of these factors can be determined through profiles such as the NEO-PI which facilitates quantitative empirical analysis and relieves criticisms of subjective description.

The only previous study to use the Big Five to assess world leaders was conducted by Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004).[11] Although these authors do not consider whether individuals have an inherent risk propensity, research by other scholars has suggested that one does exist (Kowert and Hermann 1997; Nicholson et al. 2004; Nicholson et al. 2005). Recently acquired data on the factor and facet scores of the U.S. Presidents will make it possible to extend this research agenda by hypothesizing a "risky" factor in a manner similar to the "character" factor constructed by Rubenzer and Faschingbauer. Previous research examining associations between the Big Five factors and risk taking will determine what specific facets should be included in the risky factor.

Recently, there have been a number of studies using the FFM to understand behavior of individuals in certain social interactions, including risk-taking. The literature review provided above suggests that the facets most likely to make up a "risky" factor would be: N5 (Impulsiveness), E5 (Sensation Seeking), and O4 (Openness to Action). It is likely that individuals with high scores on these three facets will be more risk-inclined compared to individuals who have lower scores on these facets. I anticipate however that the dimensions of the "risky" factor will change with the addition of newly published experimental findings as well as further fleshing-out the theoretical inclusion of such variables. [12] Thus, the immediate future focus of this research program will be to construct a falsifiable “risky” factor which will be used to predict the risk behavior of world leaders.

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[11] The authors also have published a related chapter with Deniz Ones (2002)

[12] For instance, if O4 is really a measure of adventure seeking then one should consider the appropriateness of this variable as it applies to behavior during war. Are policy makers natural adventure seekers and this makes gambling more likely, or is it that they are impulsive, N5, and do not consider all the information before making a decision.

The inability to falsify the hypotheses proposed earlier warrants both a clearly defined operationalization of risk and an appreciation of the differences in the model’s predictions and empirical evidence. Traits are tendencies; no certain predictions can be made from simply knowing an individual’s trait scores. Environmental factors, self-schemas, past history, culturally conditioned norms, and personal attitudes all influence the expressed behavior that stems from an individual’s basic tendencies (McCrae and Costa 1999). Nevertheless, no one theory has yet been able to entirely predict risk behavior, and never before has the Big Five been used to analyze the risks taken by world leaders under conditions of interstate conflict. The importance of foreign policy decisions on international relations warrants that all avenues of promising study be pursued to gain a more complete explanation of such phenomena. The addition of personality traits to theories of rational choice and prospect theory presents a more complete explanation of such situations.

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