Fractured German-American relations:
The effects of presidential personality

by Alexandra S. Esser
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Supervisor: Jennifer Kibbe

Department of Government
Franklin & Marshall College

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Introduction

During the 2002 German elections, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder announced that he would not support US military action in Iraq. This was the first time that US foreign policy had played a role in the German elections and even though there had been a growing anti-war movement in Europe, his announcement came as a surprise to many, especially the Bush administration. The United States and Germany had shared a friendship throughout the Cold War and it seemed as though they would always be close allies. Germany relied on US protection and had, therefore, generally supported US policies and acted as a liaison between France and the United States. But Iraq seemed to have created a serious rift between the transatlantic partners and many argue that it will be difficult to restore the once-amenable relations.

But is the Iraq war the sole cause of this rift? Analysis of German-American affairs over the last sixty years show that there have been multiple ups and downs that led to the present situation. After World War II, Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower actively stressed the integration of West Germany into NATO and promised US protection against the Soviets. Truman practically saved the West Berliners with the Berlin Airlift and the German-American relationship was characterized by trust and commitment. Germans found in the United States a strong partner who would protect them against the Soviet Union and eventually help them reunite their divided country. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer felt a strong tie to Eisenhower and the two leaders had much in common, including the goal of an integrated Western Europe and the reunification of East and West Germany. John F. Kennedy’s presidency marked the first downswing in German-American relations. He did not view Germany as an equal ally.
and therefore thought it unnecessary to fight for reunification. The Germans, for the first time, realized that they could not depend on the United States. Their fear was further emphasized under Carter. He made human rights his priority and his strong morals led him to cancel the production of the neutron bomb. The pendulum swung back the other was as Chancellor Helmut Kohl enjoyed a positive rapport with George H.W. Bush and appreciated his efforts in German reunification.¹ Thus, Schröder’s objection to supporting the war on Iraq was not solely a response to the Bush administration but rather another instance of the Germans’ ongoing frustration with US foreign policy.

Historians generally have identified three cases of crisis in German-American relations: Kennedy and the Berlin crisis, Carter and the SALT II-neutron bomb episode, and George W. Bush and the present war on Iraq. While the first two cases have been studied at length in the context of US-Soviet relations, scholars have not yet analyzed their influence on German-American affairs, and considering the three together yields interesting information about the factors that have most influenced the US-German relationship. In each of these cases, the US president and his administration made important foreign policy decisions that carried great implications for Germany. All three cases show that Germany was not one of the US’s priorities and that the end result triggered a crisis in German-American affairs.

Synopsis of Findings

These three case studies have shown that presidential personality is the most important factor in German-American affairs. As outlined by Alexander L. George, presidential personality encompasses all areas of the decision making process: a

president’s values and beliefs, his ability to deal with stress and decision making (cognitive psychology), and his management style. The Cold War and the war on terror steered the policy maker into a foreign policy direction but it was up to the president to create his priorities. Kennedy wanted to reach an agreement with the Soviets and so was reluctant to raise the issue of German reunification. Kennedy’s close ties with Britain led German Chancellor Adenauer to distrust US commitment and to strengthen Franco-German relations in response. Carter inherited the SALT II negotiations and it was clear that they would be a primary foreign policy focus of his administration. But because of his strong values and interest in human rights, he could not go through with the neutron bomb, thus leaving West Germany with the impression that he was sacrificing its concerns about the imbalance of short-range weapons to his own desire for a SALT II treaty. Bush’s religious faith led him to create a distinction between good and evil and to characterize the war on terror in those terms. His belief that he was helping the world by providing US leadership in the war on terror signified a unilateral approach to Germany.

A president’s cognitive psychology affects his ability to deal with information and stress. None of these three presidents possessed any significant foreign policy background and thus they relied heavily on cognitive aids to deal with stressful issues. Kennedy downplayed the importance of reunification by making the success of a limited test ban treaty more appealing to him. Carter heavily relied on his morals for guidance and therefore could not go through with the production of the neutron bomb. Bush decided early on that he wanted to attack Iraq and therefore relied on bolstering to find information that supported his beliefs.
Another result of all three presidents having little foreign policy experience was that they all chose a staff with a lot of international experience. They relied heavily on their close advisers to make important foreign policy decisions. Kennedy delegated almost all Soviet negotiations to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Carter made great use of his National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, receiving daily briefings and consultation from him on all foreign policy issues. Bush allowed Vice President Dick Cheney to take a prominent role in the foreign policy decision making process, which is very uncommon for a Vice President. Cheney sat in on all meetings and in addition would have private chats with the president, which allowed him extraordinary influence over the decision making process.

The three cases show that presidential personality was the biggest factor in these crises in German-American affairs. All three presidents were uninterested in their transatlantic partner and focused on other aspects of US foreign policy, leading Germany to consistently feel it was a victim of US foreign policy. Schröder’s resistance to regime change in Iraq was, therefore, not a unique but rather a reaction to an ongoing problem of a lack of trust and commitment.
Presidential Decision Making

Presidential decision making has a great impact on US foreign policy. As a decision maker, the president is responsible for structuring and guiding the decision making process. Many scholars have argued about the different factors that can influence the policy making process. Alexander L. George, one of the most renowned scholars in the field, has analyzed the cognitive and structural management style of various presidents and its effect on their decision making, which has served as the springboard for other political scientists' research.

In his book *Presidential Decision Making in Foreign Policy: The Effective use of Information and Advice*, George identifies two factors, cognitive psychology and presidential management that influence presidential decision making. Cognitive psychology encompasses the president's personality traits, his behavior in a group, and his rapport with his advisers. Structure refers to the president's management style and organization of his staff. Many scholars have weighted these factors differently. Deborah Larson, for example, views cognitive style and information processing as the two primary factors, whereas Stanley Renshon argues that personality traits and cognitive style create frameworks that guide the decision making process.

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3 Ibid., 139-145.
Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive psychology has proven to be one of the most researched characteristics of the presidential decision making process. Cognitive shortcuts help the decision maker deal with the stress of a new situation and the processing of all the information that comes with it. Because the president is responsible for both processing information and deciding on a policy, it is often difficult for him to acknowledge a value conflict and decide what to do about it.6

Once the president has acknowledged that there is an existing conflict, he is faced with making a decision. He has to think of possible solutions, which requires him to gather information, analyze possible outcomes, and apply his values to the problem.7 He is constrained by both "value-complexity" and "uncertainty" that can cause a great amount of stress, anxiety, and fear, which can complicate or even impair the decision making process. "Value-complexity refers to the presence of multiple, competing values and interests that are imbedded in a single issue."8 For example, he might face a foreign policy decision that requires domestic support. It is extremely challenging for the decision maker to find a solution that can meet or satisfy all the competing values. He is faced by a value trade-off and needs to decide which outcome comes the closest to satisfying all the values involved. Uncertainty refers to the lack of sufficient information which can make calculating the costs and benefits of the available options difficult for the

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6 George, 145.
7 Ibid., 25.
8 Ibid., 26.
decision maker. Together, value-complexity and uncertainty can affect a decision maker’s judgment, which can in turn have great effect on US foreign policy.10

Value-complexity forces the decision maker to go through an internal debate in order to evaluate competing values and come up with a solution. However, presidents are often unable to handle the situation: “In sum, the decision maker may deal with value-complexity analytically and strategically; or he may resort to defensive psychological models of coping with the emotional stress of being faced by difficult value trade-offs.”11

George distinguishes three methods by which a president can cope with value-complexity. He can decide to resolve the value conflict by creating some kind of plan. But often it is really an attempt to comfort himself psychologically and relieve stress, which can lead to poor or infeasible decision making. For example, he might choose to create a single policy that only satisfies one of the values involved in the conflict, or he can choose to handle the problem by scheduling a series of actions over a longer period of time, which gives him the illusion of solving some of the value trade-offs.12 Another possibility for the decision maker is to accept the value-complexity as unavoidable and face the value trade-offs. He needs to realize that he cannot solve all issues at the same time and has to give priority to some. George argues that this is an important component of leadership. A leader has to realize that he cannot always solve an issue and that sometimes it is more beneficial to compare competing values in order to come to a conclusion.

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9 Ibid., 27.
10 Ibid., 26-28.
11 Ibid., 29.
12 Ibid., 30.
The last option for the decision maker is to avoid the value-complexity and deny its existence or play down its importance. He does that by "cognitive restructuring" or "devaluation". Cognitive restructuring refers to the way in which the policymaker turns aside information that intensifies a value conflict. He may unintentionally ignore or misinterpret information. Devaluation refers to the downgrading of one of the values, which simplifies the value conflict for the decision maker. Both provide the policymaker with fewer choices and possibilities, which then decreases his psychological stress and allows him to make an easier decision.\(^\text{13}\)

Uncertainty, which as previously explained, refers to a lack of sufficient information about available options, which can also lead to an increase in stress. George lists several ways a decision maker might react to uncertainty. He first mentions "calculated procrastination" and explains that many leaders often do not know how to deal with uncertainty and feel that there is nothing they can do to solve the problem in a short period of time. They therefore decide that the best strategy is to do nothing and hope that the problem might eventually resolve itself. A second reaction to uncertainty is "defensive procrastination". Here the decision maker feels that there is no immediate need to solve the value conflict and turns his attention to other problems.\(^\text{14}\) Often stress can also lead a decision maker to resort to bolstering: "the psychological tendency under certain conditions of decisional stress to increase the attractiveness of a preferred option and doing the opposite for options which one is inclined to reject."\(^\text{15}\) The decision maker is trying to reach a level of comfort by reassuring himself that the course of action he has chosen will result in a successful outcome.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 31-33.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 35-36.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 38.
George gives a few other possibilities besides bolstering of how a decision maker might try to achieve reassurance: he may, for example, make spurious decisions, exaggerate possibilities in his own mind, or even convince himself that if his policy fails, he will not be held accountable.\textsuperscript{16} He also adds that stress affects the ability to process new information. The president's attention and perception might be impaired or narrowed causing him to overlook information and give less attention to side effects. Stress can lead to "cognitive rigidity", meaning that he might not be able to absorb new information, which might lead him to avoid it. In some cases, the president believes that he only has limited options and decides to wait for the opponent to act first.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to bolstering and cognitive rigidity, the president can rely on "cognitive aids", an acquired framework that helps him act in situations of uncertainty.\textsuperscript{18} George lists seven different kinds of cognitive aids. First, a decision maker has to choose between a "satisficing" and "optimizing" decision. Presidents are more inclined to choose a course of action that satisfies them for the moment and is less complicated. Second, policy makers often tend to use a "strategy of incrementalism". Here the policy maker chooses several smaller steps that lead to some kind of gradual improvement. Third, a decision maker might attempt to use a "strategy of sequential decision making" where he tries to create a decision making framework by either breaking up a policy into smaller issues or by dealing with different issues at optimal points. He basically has to decide which issues to deal with now and which ones to deal with later. The fourth cognitive aid mentioned is "consensus politics". The decision maker here makes his decision based upon which policy is likely to receive the most support. A fifth option is the use of

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 39-40.
historical analogies where the policy maker attempts to resolve the uncertainty by comparing the current situation with a past one, for example, the Munich analogy. Often presidents use their own morals and values to guide them through the decision making process which is the sixth cognitive aid mentioned by George. The last cognitive aid refers to the decision maker’s own beliefs about the correct strategy to use. Here he may rely on his own fundamental beliefs about foreign policy and the strategies that he thinks are best to deal with other actors. All of these cognitive aids can help the decision maker negotiate uncertain situations but he can also rely too heavily upon them, which might hinder his ability to absorb new information and consider other potential solutions.\(^{19}\)

**Presidential Management Structure and Style**

Besides cognitive psychology, researchers have identified presidential management structure and style as important factors in the decision making process. The president tends to rely heavily on his advisers. Most decisions are made in group settings, which gives the president the chance to interact with his advisers and hear their opinions.\(^{20}\) He usually meets with his advisers for four reasons: First, he is highly dependent on their advice and the information they have gathered. Second, a president is often in need of emotional support. Third, consulting with his advisers may help him understand information better and he might even gain support for a decision he has made. The last reason why a president meets with his advisers is that he feels he is obligated to do so. He wants to make sure that he reaches a certain level of political legitimacy in front of Congress and the public and feels that it is his duty to consult with his advisers.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 41-47.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 81.
Often, presidents prefer small groups that consist of two to seven members. The smaller the group, the less structured and formal the meetings are. Because of the small size, there is a stronger focus on the problem but usually fewer options are considered, especially because small groups tend to emphasize cohesion. Group cohesion provides members of the group with self-esteem and solidarity, but the sense of security can hold them back from expressing their true feelings. George emphasizes that a group with high cohesion is not necessarily a high performance group. Especially during crisis situations, a small group is likely to disregard information in order to reach consensus and strengthen solidarity. The stress caused by the crisis may lead to an "erosion of their intellectual capabilities." They fear that other members of the group might exclude them if they do not agree with the majority. Small groups therefore tend to suffer from "groupthink" which can cause shared stereotypes, poor information processing, and belief in the inherent morality of the group. Irving Janis, the primary groupthink theorist, defines it as: "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action."

Even though small groups affect the decision making process, it is up to the president to structure and manage his advisory group. Different management styles can have different effects on the group itself, the processing of information, and ultimately the decision or policy outcome. George identifies three different management styles. The

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21 Ibid., 88.
22 Ibid., 87.
23 Ibid., 91.
24 Ibid., 93.
formalistic model is characterized by a formal structure with defined procedures. There is a hierarchy among the staff with the president at the top, meaning that there are subgroups with heads who report to the president. The president receives information from the heads of the different areas. Therefore, the president tends to define each staff role and dislikes any communication between staff members. He hardly ever communicates with staff members below the heads. The goal for this model is to benefit from the consideration of multiple options. Eisenhower adapted the formalistic model. He created the chief of staff position and avoided contact with the lower members of the bureaucracy.

The competitive model encourages more open discussion. Here the president encourages diverse communication, analysis, and advice. He is comfortable with conflict and encourages it by assigning overlapping tasks. In a way, he manipulates the structure and intends for his advisers to compete. He also reaches down and establishes contact with subgroups to benefit from even more varied information. So far, only Franklin D. Roosevelt has been capable of using this structure because of his ability to handle conflict. Harry Truman, for example, initially patterned his system after Roosevelt but was unable to delegate jobs because he could not provide clear direction and often felt uncomfortable as a leader.26

The collegial model encourages group solving efforts. The president is at the center, connecting all the advisers. Advisers view themselves as a team and attempt to take a group approach. They are similar to a debate team, because of the informal structure, which provides the president with information through open discussion. Sometimes the president may assign overlapping tasks to gain more information. This

26 George, 152-154.
model seems to encourage advisers to think more generally because they are more concerned with the problem as a whole. They are not only encouraged to talk to the president but also among each other. John F. Kennedy used the collegial model by promoting direct communication among his advisers and encouraging debate among them.27

Judgment

Deborah Larson builds a lot of her research on George’s analysis of the presidential decision making process but she emphasizes that a lot of the decision making depends on the president’s judgment. Often he relies too heavily on his cognitive aids. But she also realizes that many decisions are made in the spur of the moment and that time is a crucial element in the decision making process.28 She adds that spending too much time on a decision can overwhelm a president and might even make him more indecisive whereas spending too little time on a decision might hinder the president from considering enough information. President Clinton, for example, had a tendency to discuss issues too long. In April 1993, he was unable to reach a conclusion about the violence in Bosnia because of opposing views among his staff even though he had previously promised firm action.29 Larson also mentions value trade-offs. A president must decide what values he wishes to pursue and estimate the costs of doing so. At the same time, he must also calculate which decision is going to receive the most support.30 Like George, she argues that a president is pressured by a lot of stress and he must decide

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27 George, 157-159.
28 Larson, 8.
29 Ibid., 9-10.
30 Ibid., 13.
if he wants a merely satisfactory outcome or wants to work harder for an optimal outcome.\textsuperscript{31}

Stanley A. Renshon also puts great emphasis on judgment, which he refers to as the quality of analysis, reflection and insight that help make a good decision.\textsuperscript{32} He adds that the president's cognitive style can contribute to good judgment. To Renshon, judgment embodies the decision maker's intelligence, experience, and understanding of the problem. He needs to be able to understand the existence of a problem and have the ability to connect to others in order to process information.\textsuperscript{33} Like George, Renshon emphasizes that a president must make decisions during high pressure situations. He must be able to put aside his personal values in order to carry out effective policies.

Other scholars, such as Fred I. Greenstein and Richard Neustadt, also view George's research as fundamental and use it as a basis for their own work. Greenstein, for example, identifies six elements that influence presidential decision making: public communication, organizational capacity, political skill, vision of public policy, cognitive style, and emotional intelligence.\textsuperscript{34} These are all similar to the factors identified by George. Neustadt emphasizes persuasion and management style since he views them as the essence of the presidency. He believes that a crucial element of a president's power stems from his being able to persuade and convince people of his abilities in order to have power.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 16.  
\textsuperscript{32} Renshon, 25.  
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 36.  
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 86.
Ernest May and Yuen Foong Khong focus on the importance of historical analogies and explain that statesmen have always turned to them for guidance. Khong defines historical analogies as "[…] inference that if two or more events separated in time agree in one respect, they may also agree in another." He makes reference to May who has documented the use of many historical analogies and has come to the conclusion that historical analogies often misguide decision makers, even though they are supposed to learn from previous mistakes. Khong attempts to identify the link between historical analogies and policymaking and comes up with the following: "Analogies (1) help define the nature of a situation confronting policymaker, (2) help assess the stakes, and (3) provide prescriptions. They help evaluate alternative options by (4) predicting their chances of success, (5) evaluating their moral rightness, and (6) warning about dangers associated with the options." May makes three similar points: He first states that policy makers are often influenced by history. They envision the future with help from the past. Second, May emphasizes that decision makers tend to use history poorly. Once they acknowledge a similarity between present and past, they stop all other consideration of policies and simply stick to the analogy. Third, he illustrates that policy makers could use historical analogies if they were to find appropriate parallels instead of simply following a trend.

These examples show that many political scientists have done an extensive amount of research on presidential decision making. George has created a framework that recognizes three important elements: presidential character, cognitive psychology, and

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37 Khong, 6-7.
38 Ibid., 10.
39 Janis, 7-9.
presidential management structure and style. These elements have been recognized by most scholars in this field and have served as an outline for their analysis.
John F. Kennedy: From Berlin Crisis to Limited Test Ban Treaty

Introduction

The victory of John F. Kennedy's administration in 1960 marked a significant change in German-American affairs. Prior to Kennedy, Eisenhower had emphasized the importance of a partnership and promised the Germans loyalty. But as the first president born in the 20th century, it seemed as though Kennedy had other plans for Europe. Unlike previous presidents, Kennedy represented a new generation of Americans who had been exposed to different circumstances. Konrad Adenauer, elected Chancellor of West Germany in 1949, also had specific ideas about his country's future position in the West. He wanted to create a solid position for Germany while continuously fighting for its reunification. 40

Postwar German-American relations went through their first crisis during the Kennedy era. Prior common goals were transformed and the German question was redefined. While West Germany still hoped for reunification, the new administration had long cast away that idea and was now working towards the prevention of a nuclear war and a possible coexistence with the USSR. It was obvious from the beginning that Kennedy had no real connection with Germany and that it was not one of his main concerns, for example, he did not mention Germany in his inaugural address of 1961. 41 Eisenhower, on the other hand, had expressed his commitment and willingness to cooperate with Germany and guarantee its safety. Kennedy was eager to prove himself as a strong leader and demonstrate US power. He therefore announced in March 1961 that

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41 Ibid., 129.
all previous negotiations over Berlin had to start over and that his administration would not be committed to any earlier agreements.\textsuperscript{42} For Adenauer this marked the beginning of constant pleading with the US and an unclear idea of its future plans regarding Europe, especially West and East Germany. As a realist he thought that negotiations with the Soviets were impossible and that instead the US needed to take a stronger stance on Berlin and support a unified Europe.\textsuperscript{43} The Kennedy years led Adenauer to develop a strong relationship with France, which threatened US hegemony in Europe.

**Vienna meeting**

Kennedy inherited many problems during his presidency, Berlin being foremost among them. He initially decided to take a low-key position on Berlin with the hope of strengthening US-Soviet relations.\textsuperscript{44} He practiced détente during the Berlin crisis because his administration kept reassuring him that it was unlikely that the Soviets would close the borders or start a nuclear war. But after months of speculation and tension, Kennedy decided to meet with Khrushchev himself in order to prevent any miscalculations. Before his June meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna 1961, Kennedy stopped in Paris to discuss the French position with President Charles De Gaulle. Tellingly, however, there was no similar visit to Germany or a meeting with Adenauer to consider West Germany’s concerns about the upcoming Vienna conference. He met with Khrushchev June 4, 1961. Before his arrival, Kennedy had studied the Soviet leader’s personality consciously with

\textsuperscript{43} Granieri, 18.
\textsuperscript{44} Mayer, 23.
the hope of reaching an agreement and putting an end to the Berlin crisis. Khrushchev explained at the beginning of their conversation that the unification of Germany was out of the question. He wanted to sign a peace treaty and if the allies were unwilling to agree to his proposal, Khrushchev was willing to sign a peace treaty with the GDR alone. As Khrushchev explained: “However, if the US rejects this proposal- and the USSR will regard such an action as having been made under the pressure of Adenauer- the USSR will sign a peace treaty unilaterally and all rights of access to Berlin will expire because the state of war will cease to exist.”

When Kennedy tried to explain the US position and its occupational rights, the Chairman interjected and emphasized that nothing could prevent him from signing a peace treaty with the GDR and establishing its sovereignty. Moreover, any violation of the peace treaty would be regarded as a form of aggression against the USSR. Kennedy tried to stress the magnitude of Berlin; it was not only a symbol for Germany but for the entire Western World: “West Berlin is not important as a springboard. However, the US is committed to that area and it is so regarded by all the world. If we accepted Mr. Khrushchev’s suggestion the world would lose confidence in the US and would not regard it as a serious country. It is an important strategic matter that the world believe the US is a serious country.” Khrushchev concluded the conversation by hinting that the US’s “I do what I want” policy was ineffective this time and that East Germany was a sovereign state. After this conversation, it was clear that German reunification was

47 Ibid., 91.
48 Ibid., 94, 95.
impossible unless Kennedy was willing to exert considerable pressure on Moscow. But the next couple of weeks would soon show that the new administration was preoccupied in reaching an agreement with the Soviets rather than pushing for German reunification. Berlin became a tool Kennedy would use to manipulate his international reputation.

**Berlin Crisis**

On June 10, 1961, the USSR released a statement regarding its intent to sign a peace treaty with the GDR. In the following weeks, more and more East Germans fled to West Germany but Kennedy still did not take any clear action. It seemed as though Kennedy believed that a war over Berlin was avoidable and saw it more as a political problem. He delegated most Berlin issues to his staff, including Vice President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. In addition, he gave a national television address on July 25, 1961 in which he made several references to West Berlin. To Germans this signaled that Berlin was now recognized as two cities and many argue it was a sign to the Soviets to proceed with their planning. Finally, on August 13th, the Communists sealed off East Berlin with wire. Instead of going to Germany himself as his advisers suggested, Kennedy sent Vice President Johnson and General Lucius Clay to calm the Germans down.

Johnson met with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Mayor Willy Brandt in Germany to discuss Berlin. The American representatives reassured the Germans of their

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49 Reeves, 178.
50 Ibid., 185, 188.
51 Ibid., 189, 194.
52 Granieri, 135.
53 Reeves, 210.
54 Ibid., 219.
commitment. Willy Brandt emphasized that West Germany was still hoping for reunification and that the people of West Berlin were willing to do whatever they could to help the situation. After his return, Johnson emphasized to the President that a lot was expected from the United States and recommended Kennedy seek help from the Western allies. After receiving reports on the current situation in Germany, Kennedy wrote to Rusk explaining that he wanted to appear to be taking a stronger position on Berlin since he realized the greater implications it carried for Western Europe. Kennedy understood that he needed to prove himself a strong leader of the West, even though his main goal was an agreement with the Soviets. Kennedy did not feel the need to further address reunification. He not only did not feel committed to Germany but also was under the impression that the only way he could reach an agreement with Khrushchev was without the reunification of East and West Berlin.

Kennedy seemed committed to defending the Allied presence in West Berlin but he also wanted support from the British and French to negotiate further with the USSR. The British agreed to support the United States while the French saw further negotiations as a retreat from Berlin and surrender. Kennedy, on the other hand, hoped that negotiations would conclude a "modus vivendi", allowing the United States and USSR to coexist. At this point it appeared that Kennedy was becoming more flexible about Berlin and was willing to sign two peace treaties if it secured some sort of peaceful coexistence, even though that would imply East Germany was a sovereign state. His

56 Ibid., 357.
57 Ibid., 359.
58 Granieri, 140.
60 Mayer, 47-48.
actions surprised the allies, especially the French and Germans who were starting to form their own kind of bond. Kennedy started to realize that in order to win over De Gaulle, he had to work with Adenauer. He tried to reassure Adenauer of the US commitment:

I wish to reiterate to you our intention to maintain our solidarity with the Federal Republic of Germany. I believe our actions as well as our words, already bear witness to this. We are prepared to do whatever is necessary to meet this challenge, rather than capitulate, or make damaging concessions, which would violate our solemn commitments. This is a moment in which the future of the North Atlantic Alliance is at stake, and our collective response may in turn determine whether the world as we know it is to survive.

On November 20, 1961, Adenauer traveled to Washington to meet with President Kennedy and discuss the Soviet negotiations. Kennedy was strongly reminded, in a memorandum written by his Special Assistant of National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, of the importance of winning over Adenauer and getting him to convince the French to support negotiations. During the discussions, Kennedy made it clear that he thought it was necessary to negotiate with the Soviets and to have a unified Western Europe behind him. Adenauer understood and promised to try to convince De Gaulle. Prior to and during the Kennedy-Adenauer meeting and correspondence, Kennedy never informed or hinted to the German chancellor that he saw reunification as impossible.

Adenauer on the other hand still thought it possible and thought that the US was still

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61 Ibid., 48.
committed to it. Kennedy then personally called De Gaulle in order to ask for his support on the following text:

The NATO Council would approve a proposal that diplomatic contact with the Soviet Union be undertaken on the basis of the agreed positions of the Western Powers in order to ascertain on what basis it might be possible to undertake formal negotiations at Foreign Minister level with the Soviet Government.

De Gaulle was strongly opposed to any document that stated France's willingness to engage in talks and refused to sign the proposed communiqué. Kennedy and Khrushchev continued to correspond via mail but discussions seemed to go nowhere because neither party was willing to give in. Both leaders understood the necessity of creating an agreement but they could not reach a consensus on the Berlin issue, specifically about the questions of neutral troops and access right to East Berlin.

Geneva talks 1962

The United States and United Kingdom decided to continue the negotiations with the USSR on their own. Representatives from both countries and the USSR were scheduled to meet in March 1962 at Geneva. The Kennedy administration created a proposal for a modus vivendi for the Soviets that allowed all states access to Berlin but

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65 Mayer, 56-58.
67 Mayer, 63.
68 Ibid., 67.
that did not include unification. But around the same time, Khrushchev directly approached Kennedy with a letter expressing his dissatisfaction with the previous negotiations: "I regret that after so many meetings of our representatives and in spite of our confidential communication, the negotiations on the questions relating to the German peaceful settlement, do not make any progress, to put it mildly." He further expressed that the United States and USSR were no longer allies and that their objectives since the war had been redefined. Khrushchev emphasized the need to recognize the existence of two German states. He proposed the creation of some kind of international organ that would be allowed access to Berlin without having any administrative powers. Khrushchev's implication was that neutral UN troops should be substituted for US troops. After receiving this letter, Kennedy immediately wrote to Rusk and advised him to end all discussions of a modus vivendi and pursue Khrushchev's proposal because it seemed to be the first and maybe only hope for progress on the Berlin situation.

After the Geneva talks, the State Department created a document often referred to as the “New Frontiers Paper” reflecting the conclusions of the talks, which focused on Berlin, Germany, nuclear diffusion, and non-aggression policies. Washington and Moscow had agreed to keep West Berlin free and permit open contact between West Berlin and West Germany. In addition, both parties agreed that neither would seek to

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70 Ibid., 7.
71 Ibid., 8.
72 Ibid., 11.
73 Ibid., 12.
74 Ibid., 15.
change any existing European frontiers.\textsuperscript{75} Adenauer was appalled and shocked by the outcomes of the Geneva talks. It shattered all his hopes of reunification and seemed like a betrayal by Kennedy.\textsuperscript{76} He immediately contacted the president with a letter on April 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1962:

Up to now the repeated attempts to open negotiations with the Soviet Union on Berlin have failed. The latest proposals of the Department of State compromise decisive elements concerning not only Berlin but also the German question, which exceed all previous offers made to the Soviet Union. I have considerable objections against some of the proposals and I would urgently request you, my dear Mr. President, to consider interrupting, for the time being, the negotiations and using the time to reexamine all problems concerning Berlin in common with the three powers.\textsuperscript{77}

In a not too subtle indication of his sentiments, Kennedy did not respond to Adenauer's letter until two weeks later. It was now evident that German-American relations had reached a crisis. Adenauer found himself in a frustrating position. He understood Kennedy's intentions but could not afford to lose US support. In addition, another incident happened that severely damaged German-American relations. An unknown source contacted a Bonn newspaper with information about the New Frontiers Paper.\textsuperscript{78} Kennedy was outraged and saw this as a breach of trust by the Germans.\textsuperscript{79} The German-American friendship was truly facing a crisis. Adenauer slowly started to favor the French view of an independent Europe but found himself in personal turmoil. The

\textsuperscript{76} Mayer, 70, 71.
\textsuperscript{78} Mayer, 72.
German Chancellor knew very well that the United States was still an essential part of the West but he also saw the need to consider other possibilities to protect Germany.\textsuperscript{80}

Meanwhile, US-Soviet talks continued on May 30, 1962, led by Secretary of State Rusk and Anatoli Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador to the US. Rusk suggested that there could be an agreement based upon the Soviets’ proposal, which would keep the allies in West Berlin and forbid German reunification. Dobrynin replied that upon the President’s request the Soviets were willing to negotiate access rights to East and West Berlin but in their opinion the most important question was the occupation of West Berlin. They wanted neutral UN forces stationed there instead of US troops because they feared possible aggression and conflict. He further stressed that the USSR did not insist on formal recognition of the GDR but did require an acknowledgement of its sovereignty. The Soviets requested that the GDR be granted all the international rights of a sovereign state and announced once again that they would be signing a peace treaty with the GDR. Both Rusk and Dobrynin saw the necessity of reaching an agreement allowing their countries to peacefully co-exist. It was agreed at the end that both sides would establish an all-Berlin technical commission in order to discuss “facilitation of the movement of persons, transport, and goods between West and East Berlin and the regulations of public utilities and sewage.”\textsuperscript{81} But even after these talks, Berlin was an unsettled issue. On June 7, 1962, there were reports of the East Berlin police shooting refugees. On June 18, Rusk and Dobrynin

\textsuperscript{80} Granieri, 161.
met again in Washington to pick up where they had left off. Dobrynin started out by reading a formal statement:

The most urgent situation requiring normalizing is that of West Berlin. This cannot be on the basis of the preservation of occupation rights that is on the basis of the continuing presence of the occupation forces of the United States, Great Britain, and France. It is impossible to continue a useful discussion of the German problem by attempting to lay aside the basic question of West Berlin and the liquidation of the occupation regime therein. To do this would be to preserve a dangerous hot-bed which could blow up the entire world.... The Soviet Union cannot accept any agreement perpetuating the occupation regime which is now constituted by NATO troops.... The Soviet Union had a right to expect that the United States would approach the Soviet proposals objectively, but the US has shown no willingness to compromise or to take account of the interests of both sides.... When the United States insists on the maintenance of the occupation, it is difficult not to get the impression that it cares less for the rights of the population of West Berlin than it does for NATO military interests."

Rusk responded that he did not understand the Soviet objections to troops. The German people counted on allied, meaning US, protection. But still Dobrynin could not understand the necessity of stationing US troops in West Berlin, especially because the Soviets were willing to allow the West Berliners to continue their way of life. Again the conversations ended without a final decision since neither side was willing to give in.

**European Economic Council**

Around the same time as the Geneva talks, Britain, the US’s closest ally, began seeking admittance into the European Economic Council (EEC) in August 1962.

Kennedy found it essential to involve Britain more in Western Europe. British

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82 Ibid., 176
83 Ibid., 177-187.
membership in the EEC would have ensured a unified Europe led by the United States because of their excellent Anglo-Saxon relations. In addition British membership would have resulted in a decline of French influence in Europe.\textsuperscript{84}

Adenauer was stunned because Britain had previously rejected the European Coal and Steel Community and formed a competing trade bloc, the European Free Trade Association. Adenauer initially thought that the expansion of the EEC should wait until a solid European community was created.\textsuperscript{85} Because of the strong US-British ties, the German chancellor feared an increase of American exports to Europe, which would eventually harm an export-driven Germany.\textsuperscript{86} Adenauer also shared De Gaulle's desire of a strong unified Europe which forced him to slowly acknowledge the growing ideological differences between the United States and Germany: "We Europeans have an ideology of Christian humanism, which forms the foundation for the freedom of the individual and the state as a whole.... But the Anglo-Saxons.... they have no ideology, no supporting idea driving resistance and the struggle against the totalitarian atheism of Russia." Both De Gaulle and Adenauer shared the view that British entrance to the EEC would weaken the European community.\textsuperscript{87}

For its part, the United States saw British membership as the only way to withstand Franco-German dominance. Kennedy had his own plans for Europe. British entry was a test of European commitment and, as he mentioned in his "Grand Design Speech" on July 4, 1962, essential. He understood the necessity of a unified Europe but

\textsuperscript{84} Granieri, 161, 162.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 153.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 154.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 154-155.
would only allow it under US control. De Gaulle responded by presenting his idea of a unified Europe in a press conference September 5, 1962, in which he did not include Britain as a member of the EEC. Adenauer was completely torn between France and the United States. He shared De Gaulle’s view of a unified Europe but knew that he was in no position to reject British membership. The German Chancellor understood well how much he still needed US support and therefore decided to encourage British entry.

The Nassau meeting and Elysée treaty

Western Europe was splitting in two, with the Anglo-Saxons on one side and the Franco-Germans on the other. This division is often referred to as the Atlanticist-Gaullist difference. Britain saw its strengthened friendship with the United States as an opportunity to underline their nuclear partnership. They had previously ordered Skybolt missiles from the United States, which had been approved by Eisenhower but after numerous failed tests, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara cancelled the Skybolt’s production. Kennedy decided to meet with Prime Minister Macmillan in Nassau in December 1962, in order to assure him that the cancellation of the Skybolt missile would have no effect on their relationship. Before the scheduled Nassau meeting December 17, Kennedy met with his advisers to discuss the US position. It was clear that the United States needed Britain and its EEC membership in order to control Western Europe. Some of his advisers therefore suggested that the United States help the British while others felt that Kennedy needed to be cautious of insulting the other Western powers. The Kennedy

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88 Granieri, 161.
89 Mayer, 81.
90 Ibid., 81.
91 Granieri, 125.
92 Reeves, 438.
administration decided to offer Macmillan Polaris missile technology as a substitute for the Skybolt project. They wanted to prove that the United States remained committed to their partnership and that the cancellation of the Skybolt missile would have no effect on future policies. In a hasty decision to appear evenhanded to the French, Kennedy then said he would offer De Gaulle the same missiles. He insisted only that Britain integrate its nuclear forces into a Multilateral Force (MLF) under NATO control, which effectively meant US control. What Kennedy forgot to consider, however, was that the British had the right warheads for the missiles whereas the French did not, nor did they possess the capability to create such warheads. Thus, the offer he hastily made, sincerely devised to placate the French, only ended up alienating them. Adenauer, meanwhile was frightened by the Nassau meeting, thinking it was the beginning of Anglo-Saxon-Franco dominance in Europe. He understood that reunification was not one of Kennedy’s objectives and that he needed to reevaluate his ties with both France and the United States.

Kennedy’s decisions at the Nassau meeting had wide-ranging ramifications. On January 14, 1963, De Gaulle vetoed British entry into the EEC. In addition, he rejected the MLF proposal and announced that France would develop its own nuclear weapons independent of NATO. Thus, Kennedy’s hope of controlling nuclear force in Europe was destroyed. Adenauer and De Gaulle also wished to signal their strong Franco-German ties and decided to sign a peace treaty, known as the Elysée Treaty on January 22, 1963.

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53 Ibid., 439.  
94 Granieri, 162.  
55 Reeves, 439.  
96 Ibid., 162.  
97 Mayer, 89.  
98 Reeves, 451.
This officially showed the Franco-German commitment and a possible end of dependence on the US.  

On January 22, 1963, eight days after De Gaulle’s announcement, the Kennedy administration held a National Security Council meeting to discuss France and further actions to be taken by the United States. Kennedy stated that it was in the US’s interest to strengthen Europe and NATO but also to increase their dependence on the United States. He realized that the US was losing its influence and stated: “We have pursued a very generous policy. We have lost our economic power over these countries….Do not think that the Europeans will do anything for us even though we have done a lot for them. We must be sure our economic house is in order and use our military, political power to protect our own interests.” Kennedy started to feel threatened by the new relationship between De Gaulle and Adenauer. It was important to reach an agreement with the Soviets soon before the United States lost all its power in Europe. Kennedy already had enough issues with De Gaulle and Adenauer and feared that their idea of a unified Europe would win over the other Western leaders.

**Limited Test Ban Treaty**

By January 1963, Khrushchev had also written a letter to Kennedy agreeing that it was time to eliminate the chances of a nuclear war. He agreed that it was time to improve cooperation, which allowed negotiations for a test ban treaty. In a significant break from previous Soviet refusal to allow any on-site inspections, he was now willing to agree to

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99 Granieri, 166.
100 Reeves, 455.
three on-site inspections. Kennedy on the other hand, who had not mentioned any numbers previously insisted on 8-10 inspections. Khrushchev replied that he was not willing to increase the number of inspections to 8 or 10. He felt that he had already humiliated himself and could not afford to look like a weak leader, especially since his scientists were pushing him for nuclear tests. The Russian leader expressed the need and willingness to create a nuclear test ban treaty but it had to be under his conditions. As was the case over Berlin, negotiations kept on repeating themselves. The United States tried to push for more inspections, while Khrushchev accused Washington of using the inspections as a tool for espionage. The Russian leader finally agreed to welcome British and American representatives to Moscow to further discuss the test ban treaty in July 1963.

Before the meeting, President Kennedy gave a speech at American University on June 10, 1963, addressing future relations with the Soviets and the possible test ban treaty:

I have chosen this time and place to discuss a topic on which too often ignorance abounds and the truth is rarely perceived- yet it is the most important topic on earth: world peace....I speak of peace because of the new face of war....in an age when a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all of the allied air forces in the Second World War....Let us reexamine our attitude toward the Soviet Union.... As Americans we find communism profoundly repugnant as a negation of personal freedom and dignity. But we can still hail the Russian people for their many achievements- in science and space, in economic and industrial growth- in culture and in acts of courage...no nation in the history of battle suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered

101 Ibid., 456.
103 Reeves, 513.
in the course of the Second World War... In the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air.... Our problems are man-made, therefore, they can be solved by man.”

The president ended his speech by announcing that the United States would no longer hold any atmospheric tests and that Khrushchev was going to meet with US and British representatives once again. This implied that both parties were now committed, more than ever, to reaching an agreement. Kennedy was slowly approaching Khrushchev and was willing to sacrifice some of his plans in order to reach a co-existence.

Kennedy also had a very important trip scheduled. He left for Germany June 22, 1963, to meet with Adenauer. It had now been two years since the construction of the Berlin Wall but this was Kennedy’s only visit since then. The President feared rising French nationalism and the growing bond between France and Germany. Before his trip, he received a briefing titled “The Mess in Europe and The Meaning of Your Trip” and was advised that it was important to remind Germany of its ties with the United States. Europe was facing an upsurge of nationalism and it was important for the United States to reestablish its position in Western Europe. Nonetheless, Kennedy only had a short meeting with Adenauer and ignored most of his suggestions. He prepared very well for his public appearances though and was warmly welcomed by the German people.

After his Germany visit, Kennedy proceeded to meet with Macmillan in England. They agreed to continue pursuing the test ban and discussed possible options
if it proved to be unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{110} The United States and Britain wanted to keep Germany as close as possible to Western Europe without allowing it to have its own nuclear arms. On July 3, 1963, Kennedy returned to Washington. There was still no response from the Soviets but many radio analysts were speculating that the Soviets were willing to “conclude an agreement banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water.” They further explained that if the Western powers agreed to the Soviet’s limited test ban, no inspections would be needed, since the treaty would exclude land tests.\textsuperscript{111}

On July 14\textsuperscript{th}, Averell Harriman arrived in Moscow with equipment to set up a hotline between the United States and the USSR and a letter from the president stating again the importance of reaching an agreement. It was evident from the first day of his arrival that the Soviets would not agree to a comprehensive test ban treaty because they were so opposed to on-site inspections. Negotiations were therefore focused on creating a limited test ban treaty. On July 25, 1962, a document was finally created:

> Each of the parties tied to this treaty undertakes to prohibit, to prevent, and not to carry out any nuclear weapons text explosions, or any other nuclear explosions... in the atmosphere, beyond its limits, including outer or under water, including territorial waters or high seas."\textsuperscript{112}

The limited test ban treaty was a victory for both the United States and USSR and was officially signed August 5, 1963. The United States had finally reached an agreement and was able to peacefully coexist with the USSR while proving its strong leadership. Kennedy proved his leadership during this crisis and came out of the limited test ban


\textsuperscript{111} Reeves, 540.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 549.
treaty as a strong decision maker. He requested that all allies sign the treaty. De Gaulle remained firm, however, and was going to continue developing his own nuclear weapons. The conclusion of the limited test ban treaty also meant the recognition of two separate Germanys and confirmed all of Adenauer's worst fears. Germany had become a victim of US détente policy. Kennedy and Adenauer's divergent priorities had completely disconnected the two countries, which caused the first significant break in German-American relations. It signified that the strong partnership that was predicted after Truman and Eisenhower was not guaranteed and could go in a different direction.

Analysis

For German-American relations, it seems that US presidential personality had a great effect on its outcome. Presidential character, cognitive psychology, and management structure and style all influenced the decision making process during the Kennedy era. As mentioned in the beginning, John F. Kennedy was the first president born in the 20th century. He represented a new breed of president. Had Eisenhower still been president, events would have probably taken a different turn. The young Kennedy was unable to relate to Adenauer on so many levels that German-American relations faced its first postwar crisis. With the Kennedy administration came a breath of fresh air, which had both positive and negative effects on US foreign policy. Kennedy not only brought new ideas with him but also chose to completely modify the previously formal procedures of the presidency. His continuous desire to prove himself as a cold warrior

113 Granieri, 180.
114 Granieri, 181.
and strong leader resulted in the loss of Adenauer’s trust and set the tone for future German-American relations.

1) Presidential Character

John F. Kennedy’s upbringing and background are an essential component of his character. He was born May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts, the second son of nine children. His family had a strong political background. His grandfather was the mayor of Boston and his father, Joe Kennedy, was named chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1934 and ambassador to Great Britain in 1937. Because of the family’s strong political interest, politics was a common subject in the Kennedy house. Moreover Joe Kennedy intended to groom his sons for public service. His goal was to make his first son, Joe Jr., president of the United States. John, on the other hand, suffered from a long sequence of illnesses and was always tied to his bed either suffering from a current illness or recuperating from one. His near-constant ill health led his father to neglect him and give all his attention to his older brother. Young John therefore started to read a lot, especially history books which would later influence him. Attending private school in 1931, John suffered from an inability to concentrate in school and instead gave all his attention to the events in Europe, including reading everything Winston Churchill wrote or said.

After high school, Joe Kennedy decided to send his son to England to spend a year with Professor Laski at the London School of Economics\textsuperscript{117}, but after falling sick with jaundice John had to return to the United States.\textsuperscript{118} He returned to England in 1939 to visit his family, which was now living there as his father was the US Ambassador to the Court of St. James. He found a completely changed country that was nothing like the one he knew before. Due to the war, British society was completely divided. Kennedy thought that his connections through his father were a great opportunity to personally experience the war. His father sent him to the US embassy in Paris to replace his brother, who had traveled to Spain to observe the Civil War. The eager Kennedy asked many questions and enjoyed all the access he had to documents. He returned to London in June where he discovered that Britain was considering entering the war. To Kennedy this was a shock, as he did not believe that England should go to war in order to save the rest of Europe.

He returned to Harvard in the fall of 1939 and graduated in 1940.\textsuperscript{119} His undergraduate honors thesis entitled " Appeasement in Munich" discussed British appeasement policy and its development during the Munich conference. His father's friend, Arthur Krock, suggested publishing the piece after a revision. Kennedy revised his thesis and it was published as "Why England Slept".\textsuperscript{120} After serving as a Naval Officer and a brief career as a journalist, Kennedy was elected to the House of Representatives in 1946 and to the Senate in 1952. During his career as a Representative and Senator, it was unclear what Kennedy's views were. He seldom took a stance on issues, preferring to

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{118} Greenstein, 61.
\textsuperscript{119} Learning, 74-84.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 103, 107.
remain in the background. In 1960, he became the Democratic candidate for his party and defeated Nixon in the presidential election.

Kennedy’s father had a great influence on his personality. The fact that Kennedy’s father showed a strong preference for his older brother had an enormous effect on John Kennedy. He always strived to present himself as a powerful leader and to prove himself to his father. After the death of Joe Kennedy during the war, it seemed as though it was now Kennedy’s duty to fulfill his father’s wishes. Some argue that Kennedy never really had any desire to become President and that it was his father who pushed him. His close family relationships led Kennedy to rely heavily on their advice even during his presidency. Upon his father’s request, he even appointed his brother Robert to be Attorney General. Throughout his presidency, Kennedy had the constant desire to prove himself, not only to his father but also to the public. From the beginning of his administration, he wanted to make history as a “cold warrior” by competing with the Soviets. He saw getting the Soviets to agree to the limited test ban treaty, particularly after his humiliation at Vienna, as his biggest success. He interminably longed to beat the Soviets, just as during his adolescence he had always tried to compete with his older brother:

I have heard all the excuses, but I believe not in an America that is first ‘but’, first, ‘if’, first, ‘when’, but first period... The first vehicle in space was called Sputnik, not Vanguard. The first passengers to return safely from outer space were named Strelka and Belka, not Rover or Fido....

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121 Greenstein, 62.
want to be known as the President at the end of four years, as one who not only held back the Communist tide, but who also advanced the cause of freedom and rebuilt American prestige.\footnote{Reeves, 53, 54.}

His early exposure to Great Britain also had a great impact on Kennedy. Not only had he visited and lived in England but he also religiously read anything written by former Prime Minister Churchill and seemed to incorporate Churchillian thought into some of his policies and speeches. His inaugural address of 1961 had many elements of Churchill’s “The Sinews of Peace” speech. For example, both speeches discussed new developments in the world, such as nuclear weapons and continued to stress the importance of peace under a limited area of negotiations.\footnote{Learning, 260, 261.} As mentioned earlier, he had also shared Churchill’s hesitance about British entry into the war. Kennedy also felt a general close tie to England. His sister, Kathleen, to whom he was closest, had lived there and he had seen the struggles of the British during the war. As a result of his previous experiences in England, he also shared a very close relationship with Prime Minister Macmillan. He served as close confidant and adviser to Kennedy. For example, after the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev in 1961, Kennedy met with Macmillan who noticed how upset the young President was. Macmillan took him to a private room without advisers where the two first had a drink rather than discussing politics right away. Kennedy felt that Macmillan was the only leader facing similar struggles and thus related to him well.\footnote{Ibid., 315, 316.}

His close ties to Britain strongly influenced Kennedy’s decisions on many foreign policy issues, including ones concerning Germany. For example, Macmillan’s support for
negotiations with the Soviets was an important factor in Kennedy’s decision to pursue test ban treaty discussions. France and Germany were against any form of discussion from the very beginning. Had Britain not supported Kennedy, he might have not been so eager to negotiate. His close ties with Macmillan led the French and the Germans to grow suspicious of Anglo-Saxon relations and to reevaluate their own relationship. The Germans and French did not understand why Britain was suddenly pushing for entry in the EEC and receiving missiles from the United States at the same time. They realized the necessity of redefining their relationship and did so by signing the Elysée friendship treaty only a few weeks following the Nassau meeting.

Kennedy viewed his relations with Macmillan as a ticket to controlling Western Europe. Because he enjoyed such a close bond with the British, he did not feel the need to build a rapport with German chancellor Konrad Adenauer. He often even insulted Adenauer with his rude behavior. For example, when speaking of Adenauer in front of reporters he referred to the chancellor as a wife who constantly asked her husband whether he loved her or not.\textsuperscript{127} Also, when Adenauer wrote Kennedy a personal letter in April 1962, expressing his concerns about the Soviet negotiations, Kennedy did not respond until one month later, claiming that he had been out of town and had not had the time to respond.\textsuperscript{128} Another example of Kennedy’s behavior was his reaction to the wall. He learned of it just twelve hours after the Soviets had constructed it but after making sure that no war or shooting had broken out, he decided to go sailing.\textsuperscript{129} Moreover, instead of traveling to Germany himself to deal with the crisis, he sent General Lucius

\textsuperscript{128} Mayer, 72.
\textsuperscript{129} Mannin, 312.
Clay and Vice President Johnson instead. In fact, even though Germany was the most sensitive issue in the Cold War during his presidency, he did not visit it until 1963 when the Franco-German relationship was growing closer. Kennedy’s exposure and friendship to England fundamentally influenced his behavior and decision making on German-American relations. He regarded England as his partner and due to its support was confident enough to engage in the limited test ban treaty talks.

2) Cognitive Psychology

The second factor that influenced Kennedy’s decision making process was his cognitive psychology. As was discussed earlier, a decision maker is constrained by both “value-complexity” and “uncertainty”. Value-complexity forces the decision maker to find a solution that can satisfy as many values as possible. There are three ways the decision maker can deal with value-complexity: He can either decide to resolve the value conflict by creating some kind of plan, accept the value-complexity as unavoidable and face the value trade-offs, or avoid the value-complexity by denying its existence or playing down its importance. Kennedy faced several value trade-offs during the crisis in German-American relations. He initially wanted to uphold American prestige and status in Europe, fight for the reunification of Germany, and prevent a nuclear war. It seemed as though Kennedy used the second possibility outlined by George, accepting the existence of a value conflict and understanding the necessity of a value trade-off. He recognized early on that the reunification of Germany was impossible and instead

decided to pursue test ban treaty talks in the hope of achieving a peaceful coexistence with the USSR.

Kennedy was also constrained by "uncertainty", which refers to the lack of sufficient information about his possible courses of action, which can lead to an increase in stress.\(^{131}\) It seems that Kennedy used the "defensive procrastination" and "bolstering" techniques to deal with his uncertainty. Defensive procrastination takes place when the decision maker feels that there is no immediate need to solve the value-conflict posed by different options and decides to give other issues his attention. Bolstering occurs when a decision maker increases the appeal of his preferred option while simultaneously doing the opposite for his least preferred option. Kennedy saw no pressing need to solve the problem of reunification and instead focused on the test ban treaty. He did not believe that German reunification was an urgent issue and therefore downplayed its importance. At the same time, his competitiveness increased the importance of a limited test ban treaty. Its completion outweighed German reunification, which made the treaty a more preferable course of action.

George further explains that as a result of value-complexity and uncertainty, the decision maker faces a great amount of stress, which leads him to search for a level of comfort and reassurance. During his search for stability, a leader can often make spurious decisions.\(^{132}\) During the Nassau meeting, Kennedy's advisers suggested that by offering the British Polaris missiles, he might raise the suspicion of the French. He therefore decided on the spot to offer the French the same missiles, which made no sense at all because they did not possess the appropriate warhead and such a seemingly inappropriate

\(^{131}\) Ibid., 27.
\(^{132}\) Ibid., 38-39.
offer only risked further alienating Paris. The French obviously rejected the offer and announced that they would be developing their own nuclear weapons.

A decision maker can also deal with uncertainty by using one of George’s seven cognitive aids. Kennedy used two types: The strategy of incrementalism and the guidance of his own morals and values. When using the strategy of incrementalism, the decision maker takes small steps that show some gradual improvement towards his goal. Kennedy kept on engaging in talks with the Soviets. Even though the talks often seemed to repeat themselves or show only little improvement, he continued them. Kennedy’s personal values and morals definitely influenced his decision making process. He relied on his beliefs and strategies to solve issues. He personally did not feel that Germany was important to Europe and was unable to see the necessity of balance in Europe. To him, the United States and its relationship with the Soviets was most important which led him to prefer a test ban treaty over fighting for reunification.

3) Presidential Management Structure and Style

The last factor that shaped Kennedy’s decision making process was his management structure and style. Kennedy relied heavily on his advisers. He often seemed unprepared or did not grasp the importance of a situation. For example, he did not fully understand the magnitude of the construction of the Berlin Wall or what kind of symbol Berlin was to Western Europe until his Vice President wrote him a memo explaining the expectations and dangers. Also, Kennedy suffered from various illnesses throughout his life and was often unable to operate from the White House. He relied heavily on his advisers during his illnesses. During the Vienna negotiations, he even had his private

133 George, 41-47.
doctor with him the entire time to receive cortisone shots. After the Vienna conference, he operated from the bed of his Palm Beach House. It was up to his advisers to write him memos, bring him information, and hold meetings.

George explains that usually leaders prefer a small group setting of two to seven members, which can lead to groupthink. This was certainly the case with the Kennedy administration as in foreign policy, he relied mostly on two of his advisers, McNamara and Rusk. Therefore, often only their ideas were considered and Rusk was very persistent in pushing for a test ban treaty. Had Kennedy included a bigger group in the deliberations, more options could have been evaluated.

George also identifies three types of presidential management models: formalistic, collegial, and competitive model. Kennedy’s administration is the classic example of the collegial model, which encourages group-solving efforts with the president at the center of the “wheel”, connecting his advisers. Advisers act more like a team because of the informal structure and they present the president with information in a more relaxed atmosphere. This is an exact description of Kennedy’s management structure. He wanted a less bureaucratic staff with fewer formal meetings than Eisenhower had. Kennedy eliminated regular office meetings and instead preferred ad hoc meetings when he thought them necessary. He also refused to attend Cabinet and National Security Council meetings because he thought they were a waste of time. By refusing to attend meetings and relying mostly on his close advisers, Kennedy was unable to receive information from different areas. In addition, in another move that would affect his later

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134 Leaming, 319.
135 Reeves, 181.
136 George, 148-153.
137 Greenstein, 67.
138 Reeves, 88.
decisions on Germany, he promoted General LeMay from commander of the Strategic
Air Command to Joint Chief of Staff as commander of the Air Force in order to avoid
him after they argued during several meetings. In retrospect, this was probably a
foolish decision because LeMay had the most experience with Germany, especially
having been present during the Berlin Airlift under Truman. Once he promoted LeMay,
therefore, Kennedy was exposed only to advisers who shared similar views as he did. He
had no adviser who felt that reunification was important, which also led Kennedy to
neglect it as an option.

Conclusion

This case shows that presidential personality is the most important factor in
foreign policy decision making, especially German-American relations. Kennedy’s
personality, which was formed during his adolescence, influenced his ideas and in result
affected his relationships with his European partners. His tendency to favor the British
practically drove Germany away to seek protection from other countries, namely France.
His relaxed management structure might have led to cohesive decisions but probably not
the best ones. It allowed discussion between his advisers, who he would heavily rely on
for information. Kennedy’s decisions not only affected the US-Soviet relationship but
also German-American relations, which saw their first downward slide during his
administration.

There are some other factors that might have influenced the decision making
process, but after closer analysis it becomes evident that presidential personality was the
most significant factor. Strategically it made sense for Kennedy to seek an agreement

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Reeves, 182-183.
with the Soviet Union but it was up to him to lay out US priorities, reunification not being one of them. It is clear that he was uninterested in the question of German reunification at the very start of the discussions. He tried to appear decisive and concerned about Berlin in front his Western allies but took no real interest in it. His decision to ignore reunification was therefore not a result of Soviet pressure but a conscious and early decision. For Kennedy, reunification was out of the question as early as the Vienna conference with Khrushchev. He could have pressured the Soviet leader for further discussion but his ambivalence led him to ignore the problem.

Kennedy’s preference for Britain was a very important factor in this case. He was never really concerned with Germany and its people, which becomes evident when reviewing his response to the Berlin Wall. Instead of dealing with the situation right away, he decided to go sailing that day. Because of his personal ties with Britain, he neglected relations with other countries, such as Germany. Another president would have reacted completely different in this situation. Truman and Eisenhower, for example, were extremely conscious of the importance of the German relationship and promised Germany commitment and loyalty. Kennedy felt that Britain was a strong ally he could rely on. As long as he had its support, there was no pressing need to seek German or French aid. Kennedy’s decision to promote LeMay shows that he consciously decided to get rid of the one person who knew the most about Germany. The two would often disagree on issues and instead of facing the confrontation, Kennedy decided it was best to avoid it by promoting him.

In conclusion, presidential personality was the biggest factor in this case and created the first damage to German-American relations. Before Kennedy, many predicted
a lasting friendship between the two countries but due to his personality, relations were altered for the first time in the postwar era. The Cold War forced US foreign policy to focus on the Soviet Union but it was up to Kennedy to guide the decision making process. He was reluctant to push for reunification due to the fact that the completion of a limited test ban treaty was able to fulfill his desire of becoming a cold warrior. His personality altered relations and created the first rift between the two transatlantic partners. Another president with a different background and values would have handled this situation differently, which could well have pointed the relationship in a different direction.
Jimmy Carter: The SALT II treaty and neutron bomb

Introduction

Jimmy Carter’s presidential victory was an unexpected one. He brought little experience to the presidency, especially in the realm of foreign policy. Little did everyone know how ambitious and hard working Carter would prove to be. Although his only previous foreign policy experience had been with the Trilateral Commission he entered office with specific foreign policy goals for his presidency, which he outlined May 22, 1977, in a speech at Notre Dame commencement. He firmly believed in the necessity of arms control, especially in the nuclear arena, close relations with the Allies, and the protection of human rights in the Third World.\(^\text{140}\) All these goals were so important to Carter that he was willing to compromise in other areas, such as German-American relations, to achieve them. The SALT II treaty discussions and the neutron bomb were a test of commitment and loyalty on both sides and truly harmed German-American relations once again. The Germans felt that they were repeatedly becoming a victim of American détente, whereas the U.S.’s goal, much as it had been under Kennedy, was to ensure a sense of stability with the Soviet Union.\(^\text{141}\)

Origin of the Problem

The Ford administration had consistently discussed with the Soviets replacing the part of the SALT I agreements that dealt with offensive missiles with a SALT II treaty.


President Ford and Leonid Brezhnev met in November 1974 at Vladivostok to negotiate the matter. The new SALT II treaty would establish an “equal aggregate ceiling of 2,400 for all launchers of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs) and a subceiling of 1,320 for launchers of MIRVed missiles (rockets carrying a cluster of warheads, each capable of attacking a separate target).” Unfortunately, the Ford administration was unable to finalize the agreement because the Soviets had developed a medium-range bomber, called the Backfire bomber, that many believed had the capacity to attack the United States and was therefore be included in the SALT II treaty. The Soviets argued that the treaty, as negotiated, did not incorporate the Backfire bomber and refused to agree to include it.

SALT I was due to expire in October of 1977 which left Carter with two options: He could either sign a SALT II treaty based on the Vladivostok agreement or decide to start new negotiations including the Backfire bomber.

SALT II

Carter inherited the SALT II treaty negotiations when he came into office. He had to deal with the situation quickly but it was up to him to choose an approach. As outlined in his speech, mentioned earlier, arms reduction was one of his top priorities. He wanted to pursue arms control at all costs and firmly believed that it would benefit both the United States and the USSR. Carter, who was an idealist, truly believed in the creation of a peaceful world and therefore found arms reduction necessary. His advisers initially agreed on the necessity of a SALT II treaty but they were divided on what kind of

143 Ibid., 47-48.
approach to pursue. Carter had three primary foreign policy advisers: Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. Predictably, Secretary of State Vance wanted a more diplomatic approach. He believed that signing a SALT II agreement quickly was essential in reducing tensions between the United States and the USSR. Vance was very optimistic and described as almost naïve when it came to the SALT II negotiations. Brzezinski, on the other hand, wanted Carter to consider the wider implications of SALT II. He saw this as the opportunity to push for further negotiations and the inclusion of the Backfire bomber. Harold Brown sided with Brzezinski and sometimes took an even stronger position because of his military background.

These competing interests influenced Carter heavily during the entire process but he tried rigorously to comply with his values and the promises he had made to the American people during his campaign. The SALT II discussions raised many questions for the administration, including not just those of security and nuclear strategy, but also that of the Allies' response. The Allies still had a negative picture of the United States in the aftermath of Henry Kissinger, Watergate, and the Vietnam War but it was unclear how they would respond to further SALT II negotiations. The Carter administration wanted to improve its relations with West Europe and Japan.

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146 Ibid., 47.
148 Brzezinski, 44.
149 Ibid., 146.
150 Ibid., 157.
At first, it seemed as though the entire administration agreed that SALT II would prove to be beneficial. Vance hoped that it would create a basis for further Soviet relations, while Brzezinski and Brown saw it as a chance to stop the Soviet military buildup. President Carter viewed it as a détente strategy that would promise equality for both nations and steps towards peace. He wanted to take a different approach than the Nixon-Kissinger duo. They saw arms control as reward for the Soviet Union while Carter saw it as a basis for building further relations. Only a few days after his inauguration, Carter started writing letters to Brezhnev asking for a quick signing of the SALT II treaty. Carter also mentioned his main priority, however, asking for Soviet cooperation on human rights.

In addition, Carter sent Vice President Walter Mondale to Europe to discuss U.S. foreign policy with European leaders. During his trip, Mondale emphasized the U.S. commitment to Europe’s security and NATO’s defense. But many leaders, especially German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, were nervous about the US president’s new approach. Carter had started to publicly criticize the Soviets because of their human rights violations and had voiced disapproval of Germany’s nuclear technology sales to Brazil. The European leaders felt that the new administration was taking a more unilateral approach in the Soviet discussions.

In the meantime, Carter received a response from Brezhnev indicating that he wanted to discuss a SALT II treaty, but only if it was based on the Vladivostok

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151 Ibid., 146-147.
152 Brallieaux, 221.
153 Brzezinski, 151-156.
154 Brzezinski, 292.
agreements. He also ridiculed Carter’s emphasis on human rights. Carter was disappointed with the Russian response as he had expected a friendlier tone. He immediately asked Brzezinski and Vance to create drafts of a response letter. Brzezinksi created a letter, which Vance approved. In his response, Carter hoped to emphasize again the need for a SALT II treaty but also added a compassionate paragraph: “I know of your personal role in the war, and of the sacrifices that were imposed on the Soviet family. That is why I believe we are both sincere when we state our dedication to peace and this gives me hope for the future.” Brezhnev responded February 25, demanding that a SALT II treaty had to be based on the Vladivostok agreements and that the Backfire bomber was to be excluded. He again commented on Carter’s human rights focus and implied that he would not “allow interference in our internal affairs, whatever pseudo-humanitarian slogans are used to present it.” These letters heavily influenced Carter who then became preoccupied with the SALT II treaty. Brzezinski, who chaired the Special Coordination Committee (SCC), requested that it study various approaches that incorporated reductions on both sides and the Backfire bomber. The final U.S. proposal was decided upon during two meetings, March 19 and 21, 1977. Brzezinski had previously prepared three proposals: 1) deep cuts on both sides; 2) a SALT II treaty without the inclusion of the Backfire bomber; 3) small reductions in force. The administration decided to offer only the first two option at first saving the third option as a last resort. Vance, the primary negotiator during the SALT II discussions, was

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155 Ibid., 152.
156 Ibid., 154.
157 Ibid., 155.
158 Ibid., 158.
scheduled to meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromkyo in Moscow after these meetings. Carter also included a hand-written note to Brezhnev, stressing again the importance of reaching an agreement.\textsuperscript{160} Brezhnev immediately rejected the proposal of deep cuts without offering a counter proposal. As soon as the allies discovered this, they started to become uneasy, fearing that détente was coming to an end. The Allies, especially German Chancellor Schmidt, felt that Carter was being too forceful during his talks and should stop pressuring the Soviets too much before the momentum for SALT II was completely lost.\textsuperscript{161}

SS-20 Missile

At the same time as the SALT II crisis, the Soviets were expanding their testing of the SS-20 missile planning its deployment Europe. Once deployed, this missile would have the capability to hit any target in Europe from the Soviet Union. The Europeans did not have a counter weapon and relied on the protection of the United States. So far, however, NATO only possessed theater nuclear forces (TNF), which were American short and medium-range missiles. Although they were medium-range missiles, they had less range than the Soviet SS-20, which would challenge NATO's nuclear capabilities.\textsuperscript{162} They feared the SS-20 missile could lead to possible pressure and blackmail from the Soviets and called for US protection.\textsuperscript{163} Carter and his administration understood the implication of the SS-20 missile and the importance of maintaining a nuclear balance in Europe. A NATO summit was therefore arranged for early May 1977 in London. During

\textsuperscript{160} Brzezinski, 160-161.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 166.
\textsuperscript{162} Vance, 64-65.
\textsuperscript{163} Brzezinski, 290.
this summit, the United States briefed the other NATO members on the SALT II discussions. The members were unhappy with US progress because the treaty failed to include short-range missiles. They could not understand, especially with the testing of the SS-20 missile, why the United States did not include these missiles in the SALT II discussions. It seemed to them as if Carter was more interested in reaching an agreement with the Soviets than with allied protection.164

Neutron Bomb (ERW)

In addition to the SS-20 dilemma, another incident happened that threatened to ruin transatlantic relations in June 1977. The House Appropriations Committee released classified documents regarding the production of the enhanced radiation warhead (ERW), which had been arranged under Ford.165 This was a short-range missile designed for deployment in Europe. In June 1977, the Washington Post released an article discussing the ERW, calling it the “neutron bomb”: “It was called a weapon that killed people by increasing radiation while protecting property through suppression of blast and heat.”166 After the release of the Washington Post article, the European press began to report about the ERW, which created a strong anti-ERW movement in some parts of Europe. Europeans were furious with the United States. They feared that if the Soviets were to attack with their SS-20 missile, the United States would use the ERW in return. This would create a nuclear war on European ground, destroying everything. During the London Economic Summit, held in October 1977, Schmidt strongly criticized US foreign policy: “the deployment of Soviet intermediate-range ballistic missiles, targeted at

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165 Brzezinski, 301.
166 Vance, 68.
Europe, was creating a one-sided threat to Europe at a time when the American-Soviet strategic relationship was moving toward greater stability.” He further added:

SALT codifies the nuclear strategic balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. To put it another way: SALT neutralizes their strategic nuclear capabilities. In Europe this magnifies the significance of the disparities between East and West in nuclear tactical and conventional weapons....Strategic arms limitations confined to the United States and the Soviet Union will inevitably impair the security of the West European members of the Alliance vis à vis Soviet military superiority in Europe if we do not succeed in removing the disparities of military power in Europe parallel to the SALT negotiations.167

After further investigation, it became clear that Germany was the only possible place for deployment. But Schmidt was under great domestic pressure because the left wing was completely against the ERW deployment. He proposed to Carter connecting the ERW to the SS-20 by including them both in the SALT II negotiations. Schmidt also suggested that Carter make a unilateral decision on the ERW deployment because the chancellor was unwilling to be the only European leader accepting ERW deployment. He feared that if West Germany was the only country to agree to deployment, the Soviet Union would blame Bonn instead of Washington. Because of the separation of East and West Germany, Schmidt had to be very careful not to create any tension with the Soviets. He could not afford pressure or blackmailing from their side.168 The problem was that no other European country was willing to accept ERW deployment. Britain did not count because it already had its own nuclear weapons. Belgium and Holland refused to agree because of strong anti-ERW movements in both countries. Italy’s Communist Party was

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167 Brzezinski, 290.
168 Brzezinski, 302.
strongly opposed to deployment and Turkey, Greece, and Portugal were facing their own internal problems. Norway and Denmark prohibited deployment on their soil.

Carter responded to Schmidt with a three-step proposal: 1) The United States would produce the ERW; 2) they would offer to forgo ERW deployment if the Soviets agreed not to deploy the SS-20; 3) NATO had to announce its agreement to deploy the ERW in two years if negotiations with the Soviets failed. By March 8, 1978, after intensive lobbying and discussion with other European nations, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian nations agreed to support a statement for both arms control and ERW deployment. NATO was supposed to make a public announcement March 23 but right beforehand, Carter decided to cancel all NATO meetings and the agreement. He had returned from a vacation and after giving it thought, decided to cancel it. During his vacation at St. Simon, the president had stayed in contact with his advisers but was not subjected to Brzezinski’s constant pressure over the ERW. Carter had felt uneasy about the situation the entire time and did not want to carry the burden of having produced and deployed the ERW. Even though strongly advised to stick with the agreement, he refused to do so unless the Germans would publicly commit to deployment on their soil. On April 8, 1978, the Carter administration announced through a White House statement that they would defer production of the ERW.

Schmidt was disappointed by the outcome and German-American relations reached another crisis. In addition, the two leaders started to develop a strong dislike for each other and felt that they could no longer work together. In his memoirs Brzezinski specifically mentions that Carter enjoyed positive relationships with all leaders from

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169 Ibid., 303.
170 Brzezinski, 303.
171 Vance, 64-94.
other countries, except Chancellor Schmidt. Brzezinski himself shared Carter’s dislike for Schmidt and believed that that he was difficult to work with.\textsuperscript{172} Even during meetings, Schmidt and Carter were unable to reach agreement. In his memoir *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a president*, Carter remarks several times that he was unable to deal with Schmidt and he characterizes him as aggressive, recalling how: “Schmidt got personally abusive towards me.”\textsuperscript{173} Another example is a later meeting in June 1980, where Schmidt felt that Carter was questioning German commitment, when in fact Carter was unable to sustain US commitment. Carter kept on reminding Schmidt of the necessity of unified allied relations. To Schmidt, the constant reminder seemed as though Carter was doubting Germany’s commitment to the relationship. Schmidt expressed frustration that Carter expected West Germany’s support on all US foreign policy decisions but offered them nothing in return. Schmidt referred to his disappointment about the neutron bomb and Carter’s inability to offer strong leadership and US protection.\textsuperscript{174}

During the ERW, or so-called neutron bomb crisis, Vance continued the SALT II negotiations with the Soviets. He met with Gromyko multiple times but discussions yielded little improvement. Gromyko finally agreed to meet with the President in Washington in June 1978, but the talks were rather unproductive.\textsuperscript{175} On June 7, 1978, Carter gave an important speech at the Naval Academy commencement in which he offered the Soviets either “confrontation or cooperation”.\textsuperscript{176} By July 1978, the Soviets were starting to realize the necessity of an agreement and slowly began to cooperate

\textsuperscript{172} Brzezinski, 25.
\textsuperscript{175} Bralieaux, 171.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 320.
more. In September, Carter and Vance met again with Gromyko and small steps were taken towards a SALT II agreement. Meanwhile, Schmidt again complained about the SALT II treaty discussions. He felt insecure that the United States never met with France, Britain, and Germany to discuss these issues. On January 5-6, 1979, the four met in Guadeloupe for informal discussions. No formal notes were kept at this meeting, although Schmidt expressed his concern about the Soviet nuclear threat. He could still not comprehend why the SALT II discussions dealt solely with long-range missiles and disregarded the threat posed by short-range missiles. By June 1979, there had been several more meetings between Vance and Gromyko that finally led to an agreement. The final agreement did not include deep cuts, as Carter had desired. Carter and Brezhnev signed the SALT II treaty during the Vienna summit in June 1979. Although the treaty avoided the issue of short-range missiles, the US did get the Soviets to agree to limit production of the Backfire bomber. The SALT II treaty, however, was never ratified by the Senate, which marked a great failure for the Carter administration. In addition to the eventual failure of SALT II, German-American relations were once again damaged. Schmidt felt that the United States was no longer interested in protecting Germany and was more concerned with Soviet containment. It was evident that Germany was not one of Carter’s priorities. He not only was more interested in other areas of foreign policy but had also developed a strong dislike for Schmidt and disliked working with the German leader, which would make future negotiations and discussions difficult.

177 Ibid., 326.
178 Ibid., 294.
179 Junker, 5.
180 Brallieaux, 214.
Analysis

Carter entered his presidency with clearly defined goals. He had promised the American people a more humane foreign policy. Carter envisioned changing the presidency and making history as a peace-maker. His experiences and values, as well as his cognitive psychology and the management structure he chose, heavily influenced the decision making process. His decisions had a profound effect on German-American relations, testing commitment and trust between the partners and damaging the future of their friendship.

1) Presidential Character

Jimmy Carter, as mentioned, was not expected to win the presidential race. He was a southern Baptist from Georgia with little political experience. But Americans felt that they could relate to Carter and it seemed he would be able to bring a breath of fresh air and positive change into the White House after the Watergate affair and the Vietnam War. Carter’s upbringing and experiences shaped him immensely, impressing upon him the importance of human rights. His education at Annapolis instilled in him a sense of commitment and loyalty, which affected how he would later structure his own administration. In addition, his years served on the Trilateral Commission allowed him some insight into, and acquaintances in, foreign policy, which he explicitly used during his presidency.

Jimmy Carter was born October 1, 1924 to Earl and Lillian Carter in Plains, Georgia. His father owned a grocery store and farmland in Plains. Like other families, the Carter family had black servants. Young Jimmy Carter was exposed to their poverty,
sickness, and inequality at an early age, which would later impact many of his policies. His mother was very active in the community and despite criticism helped the black families. His father would assign Carter the same duties as his black employees, in order to teach his son discipline and hard work. From an early age, Carter was also exposed to religion. His family was southern Baptist and sent him to Sunday school.\textsuperscript{182} Carter attended the local schools but was often embarrassed by his small size and accent.\textsuperscript{183} Starting from age six, he was determined to enter the Naval Academy.\textsuperscript{184} He even requested a catalog during his middle school years, without revealing his age, in order to study their requirements. As a child and teenager he had a growing fear that he would not be able to meet the Annapolis physical requirements.\textsuperscript{185} Nonetheless, in 1942, he was accepted to the Naval Academy under the condition that prior to his enrollment, he take some science courses at Georgia Tech. He finally left for Annapolis in 1943. His time at Annapolis was probably one of the most influential periods of his life. The organizational structure and values he acquired there never left him, even during his presidency.\textsuperscript{186} It was at Annapolis where he learned his definition of satisfaction: “Pleasure was derived not from relaxation and well-earned lethargy but from a sense of constant accomplishment, whether it involved self-improvement or contributing to the welfare of others.”\textsuperscript{187}

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\textsuperscript{182} Bourke, 21-34.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{185} Bourke, 46.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 47-48.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 65.
\end{footnotesize}
Carter completed his education as a submarine engineer at the Naval Academy in 1946.\textsuperscript{188} In 1953, his father was diagnosed with cancer and he decided to move back to Plains with his wife Rosalyn and children to take over the family business.\textsuperscript{189} Back in Plains, there was a lot of racial tension. He was pressured to join the White Citizens Council but refused, a significant statement coming from a white male in Plains.\textsuperscript{190} This initially hurt his business but because of his mother's influence, he was unwilling to accept racial discrimination.

He sat on the local school board and slowly started to gain recognition in the area, which allowed him to run for governor in 1963. During his time as governor, David Rockefeller created the Trilateral Commission, designed to foster communication between Western Europe, Japan, and the United States. The commission met twice a year to discuss problems and projects. Its director, Zbigniew Brzezinski, wanted to have some government members involved and asked Carter to join. Carter accepted the offer and his involvement with the commission proved to be one of the most influential factors in creating his later foreign policy objectives.\textsuperscript{191}

Entering the presidency, he wanted to create a more humane and moral White House that focused on human rights and suffering. He continuously stressed the importance of creating a world with peace in the future. Carter felt that he could truly shape the world and make it a better place.\textsuperscript{192} He saw the SALT II negotiations as his

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{191} Bourke, 240.
chance to stabilize US-Soviet affairs and reduce the threat to human survival.\textsuperscript{193} Carter drew heavily upon his religion, which taught him to identify with people. He understood the sufferings of others and wanted to eliminate them as much as possible.\textsuperscript{194} He embodied the Wilsonian worldview of peace and human rights and believed that idealism was more practical than realism.\textsuperscript{195} To him, the SALT II negotiations were his opportunity to prove himself as a peace-maker. He was determined to reduce nuclear arms and improve Soviet-American relations.

In addition, he felt obligated to change the presidency after his predecessors' debacles. During his campaign, he had promised the American people openness. Because of his religious background, he thought it necessary as President to stick to his promises. As a result, he was very public about arms reduction and would often address the issue in speeches, such as the Notre Dame or Annapolis speeches mentioned earlier.\textsuperscript{196} He also thought it necessary to be involved in every single procedure and decision in the White House in order to avoid one of his advisers taking control, as had happened in the Nixon-Kissinger administration.\textsuperscript{197}

His time at the Naval Academy shaped his approach to work. Carter learned the importance of organization, hard work and punctuality. For example, because he entered the presidency with little knowledge of foreign policy, he saw it as his obligation to read and collect as much information about foreign policy as possible.\textsuperscript{198} He also insisted on a weekly breakfast between himself, Vance, Brzezinski, and Mondale to keep updated and

\textsuperscript{193} Brzezinski, 50-51.
\textsuperscript{194} Zubok, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{196} Hargrove, 146.
\textsuperscript{197} Bourke, 380.
\textsuperscript{198} Brzezinski, 18.
encourage discussions to inform him of foreign affairs.\textsuperscript{199} His time at Annapolis and occupation as an engineer had also taught him the importance of detail. Throughout his presidency, Carter insisted on knowing every single detail. He would read all briefs from all departments and insisted on full briefs, rather than a summary. Carter was such a perfectionist that he would even correct grammatical mistakes in briefs and send them back to each department with comments for further improvement.\textsuperscript{200} In his autobiography, Carter even said that he modeled his administration after what he learned from Admiral Hyman G. Rickover at Annapolis: “He always insisted that we know our jobs in the most detail, which is a really necessary characteristic of good submariners. He was often appalled at the incompetence of leaders who knew the theory of management but knew little about what actually occurred.” Carter added that his training as an engineer created his desire for detail.\textsuperscript{201}

In addition to his background and time at Annapolis, his duty on the Trilateral Commission also shaped his foreign policy decisions. Due to the fact that he had little foreign policy knowledge, Carter understood the importance of choosing his advisers wisely. He heavily relied on the friendships he made during his time at the Trilateral Commission. Brzezinski and Vance had both worked for the Commission and were offered the most influential positions in the new administration: National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, respectively.\textsuperscript{202} Besides influencing his choice of advisers, the effect of Carter’s experience on the Trilateral Commission could also be seen in some of the objectives he laid out for his foreign policy. The Commission was

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{201} Hargrove, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{202} Bourke, 580.
designed to enhance cooperation between Western Europe, Japan, and the United States and also emphasized arms control and the importance of helping other countries.\textsuperscript{203} Carter used two of these objectives as his priorities in foreign policy.

2) Cognitive Psychology

Like most decision makers, Carter faced a situation characterized by value-complexity. The SALT I treaty was going to expire soon, so it was clear that he needed to take some kind of action. The SALT II discussions raised many questions. It was not only an issue of US foreign policy but also affected the balance in Europe and German protection. In addition, it was unclear how the Western allies would respond to further negotiations. Carter chose the first approach out of the three George mentions for dealing with value-complexity: he realized the existence of the problem and wanted to solve it. But as George explains, decision makers often tend to create a plan or smaller steps of action in order to relieve the stress of the value-complexity.\textsuperscript{204} This is exactly what Carter did. He first started writing letters to Brezhnev and after they proved to be unsuccessful, he asked Brzezinski and his SCC committee to come up with several proposals. Also, the SALT II negotiations took over two years and, as mentioned, each meeting between Vance and Gromyko would show only small improvements. To Carter, these improvements were little steps towards a SALT II agreement.

A leader is also faced with uncertainty during the decision making process and as George explains, often relies on bolstering. Bolstering refers to the tendency to increase

\textsuperscript{203} Brzezinski, 49.
the awareness of one problem by ignoring another.\textsuperscript{205} Carter used this throughout his presidency. George specifically mentions that Carter was unable to delegate and would try to cover all areas of the presidency, including foreign policy. His involvement in too many areas, however, led him to focus on his priorities, SALT II treaty discussions and human rights, while ignoring other issues, including US-German relations.\textsuperscript{206} In addition, another way presidents cope with uncertainty is to make spurious decisions or convince themselves they will not be held accountable. For example, at the last minute, he decided to defer the production of the ERW because he could not cope with the responsibility and pressure. He did not want to be held accountable for its production.

George adds that a decision maker may also rely heavily upon his cognitive aids. Carter seems to have used three of the seven that George mentions. He relied on the “strategy of incrementalism”. George explains that here, the decision maker tries to create a framework and either breaks up his policy into smaller issues or decides to deal with issues when he feels that he has obtained enough information to make a feasible decision. Carter delayed discussions of the Backfire bomber because he knew that he and Brezhnev would not be able to reach an agreement. It was important for him to complete a SALT II treaty first and then address other issues, such as the Backfire bomber. The second cognitive aid Carter used was his own values and morals. As discussed, Carter had very strong morals, including protecting human rights. Also, his religious faith taught him the importance of consistency and honesty, which he tried to practice throughout his presidency. For example, he tried to keep all the promises he made during his campaign and therefore operated a very open White House. Also, the decision on the ERW

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 159-162.
production was guided by his moral compass. Carter could not stand the thought of being responsible for the production of a weapon that destructive. He believed that nuclear weapons were wrong and a hindrance to peace.

The last cognitive aid Carter relied on was the decision to use the strategy, which he believed was correct. Vance and Brzezinski, his two principal advisors, debated constantly during the SALT II discussions. As the more optimistic of the two, Vance saw the discussions as diplomatic negotiations that would provide the basis for a future relationship. Brzezinski, on the other hand, saw the SALT II treaty as a chance to stop the Soviet military build-up. Carter would listen to both sides and then choose the strategy he believed was best. The EWR decision is also an example of this cognitive aid. Despite the advice he received from his advisers, Carter still decided to defer production because he believed he was choosing the right strategy.

3) Presidential Management Structure and Style

Carter was very cautious when choosing his administration. He picked each member himself and gave each decision a lot of thought. For example, he thought the choice of his vice presidential running mate was a very important decision. He asked his campaign staff to submit recommendations for a candidate. Because he lacked political experience, he was determined to find a Vice President who embodied the typical Washington politician. Carter received 300 suggestions for a possible Vice President. He personally read and studied all the proposals until the list was reduced to a dozen candidates and then interviewed those twelve until he was able to make a decision, finally
choosing Mondale.\footnote{Bourke, 333-334.} This is yet another example of how detail-oriented Carter was, as well as of his level of involvement. He wanted to make sure he controlled all aspects of the decision making process. As mentioned, he chose prior acquaintances from his Trilateral Commission service as his close advisors. He chose Cyrus Vance as Secretary of State, envisioning him as the primary spokesman and principal negotiator in foreign affairs.\footnote{Brzezinski, 13.} Carter also appreciated Vance’s attention to detail and found that to be an essential quality.\footnote{Clifford, 7.} He chose Zbiginiew Brzezinski, the former director of the Trilateral Commission, as his National Security Advisor. Brzezinski was also a former professor, which gave him the ability to explain things easily to Carter, which the new president highly valued, especially in the realm of foreign policy.\footnote{Ibid., 8.} Carter also knew that Vance and Brzezinski had worked together in the past, which led him to expect a high level of cooperation. But during his administration, Vance and Brzezinski were divided on many issues and gave Carter different opinions, which was difficult for him to handle.\footnote{Brzezinski, 36.}

Carter was determined not to make the same mistake as Nixon. He refused to delegate decisions and allow one of his advisers to gain control of the decision making process. He also refused to have a chief of staff in his administration: “I never have wanted to have a major chief of staff between me and the people who worked for me. I have always wanted to have a multiple like seven or eight, or maybe as many as ten people who had direct access to me all of the time without having to go through an interim boss. And I appreciate working that way. I don’t even mind if those ten or twelve
people are incompatible with each other.\textsuperscript{212} This implied that Carter would rely solely on his main advisers and depend on them to receive information. Carter tried to incorporate the Collegial Model and the "spokes of a wheel" construction with the president at the center and his advisors around him. He distrusted a formal structure and liked the idea of a team approach. He would often just sit in on debates and take in all the information being discussed.\textsuperscript{213} He only trusted his administration with small tasks and believed that it was up to him to create a policy. Carter made sure that all decisions went through him first, which eventually proved to be a problem.\textsuperscript{214} Carter became overwhelmed with decisions and issues in the White House because of his constant desire to control. This would lead to exhaustion and an inability to absorb new information, which increased his reliance on his advisers. He also disliked group cabinet meetings and preferred small group settings. His cabinet convened once a week, where each department would give reports. Advisers, such as Brzezinski, described these meetings as unproductive.

Besides refusing to having a chief of staff, Carter also changed some other procedures in the White House. He desired a simple organizational structure with advisers responding directly to him, in order to give him full control.\textsuperscript{215} After explaining his ideas to his National Security Adviser, Brzezinski proposed the following structure, which was later adopted despite the disapproval of other advisors, including Vance. Brzezinksi recommended separating the NSC into two committees: The Policy Review Committee (PRC), and the Special Coordination Committee (SCC). The PRC was designed to deal with foreign policy, defense policy, and economic issues. It was mostly

\textsuperscript{212} Bourke, 360.
\textsuperscript{213} Vance, 35.
\textsuperscript{214} Bourke, 360-366.
\textsuperscript{215} Brzezinski, 57.
chaired by Vance. The SCC dealt with arms control and crisis management and was
chaired by Brzezinski. The SALT II treaty was assigned to the SCC, rather than the PRC,
which allowed Brzezinski enormous influence.\footnote{Brzezinski, 58-61.} Brzezinski would give the President his
daily briefings. Usually he would arrive a half an hour before briefings, in order to add
his personal comments, clippings etc. He would also attach a weekly NSC report.\footnote{Ibid., 68.}
These briefings allowed Brzezinski to maintain close contact with the president. They
developed a close relationship and bond that might even have influenced the foreign
policy decision making process. He almost gained the power to persuade the president on
issues.\footnote{Ibid., 17.} For example, it was Brzezinski who encouraged the President to open
communications with Brezhnev. Also, both of them shared a common dislike for
chancellor Schmidt and would often discuss him and refer to him as a disappointment in
German-American Affairs.\footnote{Ibid., 25.} Brzezinski was responsible for submitting the presidential
directives to the president and he would give them to Carter without submitting them to
other members of the NSC. He therefore had complete control to all the information
Carter would receive. Vance did not have this opportunity, which led Carter to only have
Brzezinski’s opinion and views.

Carter’s management style had two obvious flaws. He tried to practice the
collegial model but he was unable to handle the pressure it created between Vance and
Brzezinski. Instead of creating more sources of information he created an almost
destructive drive for competition among his staff. He was often faced with opposing
views and did not know how to make a decision. His other problem was the role of his

\footnote{Brzezinski, 58-61.}
\footnote{Ibid., 68.}
\footnote{Ibid., 17.}
\footnote{Ibid., 25.}
National Security Advisor. Carter announced that he did not want another Kissinger but Brzezinski still exuded an immense amount of influence and power. He had direct contact with the president and was able to persuade and guide him on many foreign policy issues.

Conclusion

The Carter case shows again that presidential personality is the most important factor during foreign policy decision making, especially German-American affairs. Carter inherited many problems during his presidency: the SALT II discussions and the ERW problem. His high morals and idealist thinking heavily influenced his decision making process. He truly believed in the necessity of defending human rights and thought that arms reductions would create a safer world. Therefore, this became his top priority making him disregard other issues, such as German-American affairs. It was important to him to reduce weapons as a whole. His high morals also caused him to defer the ERW production. He was a man of consistency and felt that he could not order the production of one weapon when he was fighting for cuts of others. Carter's high morals led him to become almost obsessed with human rights and arms reduction, which impaired his ability to see the larger implications, such as German-American relations. As mentioned, he was challenged with value-complexity and clearly favored other issues over German-American relations.

His constant desire to be the primary decision maker also had negative effects on the decision making process. As mentioned, he tried to operate the Collegial Model, in order to create debate and open more sources of information. But unlike Kennedy, he was unable to handle the pressure of the Collegial Model. His two primary advisers differed
on the SALT II negotiations, Vance favoring a diplomatic approach while Brzezinski was seeking to halt Soviet arms production, which left Carter with two opposing views. His inability to handle disagreement, led him to make spurious decisions. He often could not decide between his adviser’s suggestions and would go back and forth without a clear policy. For example, he agreed to the ERW production but pulled out at the last minute.

The role of his advisers was also very influential in this case. Even though Carter stressed that he refused to have another Kissinger, he did allow Brzezinski to amass a significant amount of power. He not only chaired the NSC and SCC meetings but also arranged Carter’s briefings. In addition, the two of them would discuss matters privately where the National Security Advisor would again have the chance to influence the president. In his memoirs, Brzezinski writes that they shared a close bond and he was able to change Carter’s opinions on various matters. He was the one who urged him to start communication with Brezhnev. They two also shared common opinions, i.e. over Chancellor Schmidt. Both disliked him a great deal. Vance, who favored a more diplomatic approach, was unable to enjoy this kind of relationship with the president and was incapable of exuding the same amount of influence as Brzezinski.

In conclusion, this case shows again that presidential personality is the biggest factor of German-American relations. There are other factors that play a small role in this case but presidential personality outweighs them. For example, one could argue that at the international level the SALT II negotiations were the dominant factor of the Carter presidency. The SALT II treaty initially forced the administration to engage in talks with the Soviets but it was Carter’s morals and values that guided him through the decision making process. Had he been solely interested in SALT II, he would have not raised the
issues of human rights during the discussions, which caused confrontation between the Soviets and the United States. Another president would have had different interests. For example, Dwight Eisenhower, who was more of a strategist would have not mentioned human rights. In addition, Carter’s morals and beliefs distracted him from the strategic basis of the SALT II. He not only chose to defer production of the ERW, which caused an imbalance of short-range missiles but also did not push to include the SS-20 in the SALT II treaty. Had he been truly interested in creating a balance and limitation of nuclear strategic missiles, he would have included short-range missiles in the SALT II discussions.

Here, presidential personality was able to create a framework for the SALT II discussions. Carter’s own preferences were able to influence the decision making process. It shows that Carter’s morals and beliefs predominated over strategic interests at the international level. Carter’s concerns over the ERW were more important to him than a power balance in Europe. His last minute change of attitude made him seem indecisive to other foreign leaders, especially Germans. His personality guided the SALT II negotiations and created another damage to German-American relations. Had he decided on the production of the ERW, German-American relations would have taken a completely different path but instead suffered another crisis. This case proves that different presidential interests that are created through his upbringing and experiences can impact the decision making process.
George W. Bush: The Iraq War and its effect on German-American relations

Introduction

During the Cold War, the United States had a clear idea of its foreign policy. It practiced containment against the Soviet Union in order to prevent the spread of communism. After the Cold War, the United States was still bound and committed to many countries through NATO and other treaties but was left with no clear guidelines as to how to continue its foreign policy. The United States tried to slowly withdraw its global presence, in order to focus more on its own domestic affairs but episodes such as Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia demanded US help and guidance. The United States took on the role of leadership with the help of coalitions and UN approval in a crisis. President Clinton even referred to the United States as an “indispensable nation” and his National Security Adviser, Samuel Berger, explained “The United States has a unique opportunity to shape the world we’ll face in the twenty-first century... we have to be prepared to lead, hopefully in coalitions with our allies, but sometimes unilaterally.”

George W. Bush was elected the 43rd president of the United States in 2000. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder had been in power for two years and as always the Germans were anxious to see how German-American relations would develop under the new administration. Bush brought little knowledge of, or interest, in foreign policy with him to the White House. His focus was domestic policy, primarily tax cuts. During his inaugural address he barely mentioned foreign policy and his only concerns with foreign

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affairs were missile defense and military transformation. For the first 180 days of the Bush presidency, the administration completely neglected foreign policy. Secretary of State Colin Powell was pre-occupied with restructuring the Department of State, while Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was busy with the Quadrennial Defense Review, which led European leaders to feel ignored and unsure what to expect from this new administration.

In early 2001 Schröder visited Bush in Washington but his first encounter with the president would mark a rough start and indicate future problems for the transatlantic partners. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice announced just thirty minutes before their meeting that the United States was pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol discussions. Schröder tried to express his concerns during this meeting, especially because the United States was the biggest emitter of the heat-trapping gases responsible for global warming. Bush responded that the Kyoto Protocol would strain the US economy and therefore was not a good treaty for the United States. In addition, the Bush administration withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and rejected the Biological Weapons Treaty and the International Criminal Court, which raised even more suspicion in Europe.

European leaders were furious with the United States and did not understand its sudden change of foreign policy. Schröder, who had enjoyed a positive relationship with

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225 Kitfield, 11.
Bill Clinton, was worried about the negative start with the new president and nervous about Germany’s future relationship with the United States. In addition, the German people began to develop a dislike for Bush and a growing anti-American movement in Europe soon became apparent.226

9/11 and its effects on US foreign policy

As mentioned earlier, President Bush paid little attention to foreign policy in the first months of his presidency but the attacks of September 11, 2001, changed his priorities and defined the future of US foreign policy. Even though there had been speculation about potential terrorist attacks, 9/11 was largely unexpected and triggered sympathy from around the world. NATO invoked its common defense security clause for the first time, obligating other members to come to the defense of the United States.227 Schröder supported the United States by offering Germany’s “unlimited solidarity” and by sending troops to Afghanistan. This was probably the only positive point in German-American relations for the next few years. Schröder believed that through his support, he had earned Germany the position of an equal ally but little did he know how Bush envisioned the future.228

September 11 created a new foreign policy for the United States. Bush now believed that the United States lived in a dangerous world and that it was up to Washington to lead the fight against threats such as terrorism.229 Bush declared that the United States was at war and within hours of the attacks he proceeded to create a war

226 Moens, 11.
227 Ibid., 145.
228 Moens, 186.
229 Daalder and Lindsay, 79-80.
council consisting of himself, Powell, Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld, CIA Director George Tenet, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Chief of Staff Andrew Card, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton. This council was originally designed to discuss a plan of attack against Afghanistan but (as will be discussed later), it would soon prove to be one of the most influential factors in decisions about the Iraq war.230 During the first few hours after the attacks, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz raised the issue of Iraq because he believed that 9/11 was an opportunity to complete the regime change he had thought necessary since Bush’s father declined to march on Baghdad in 1991.231 But other officials, including Powell, believed that expanding the “war on terror” would raise suspicion among the allies. President Bush was not concerned about the allies but understood that the American people were awaiting action against Afghanistan. He therefore decided to discuss Iraq at a later point.232 The United States, with the support of 20 countries, began attacking Afghanistan in early October 2001 and the war ended up being a big success. European leaders thought that this would lead President Bush to shift his focus from military action to stabilizing Afghanistan and the wider Middle East. But their expectations were shattered when Bush hinted at his future plans during the State of the Union address on January 20, 2002, and later confirmed them in the National Security Strategy in September.

His 2002 State of the Union signaled that Afghanistan was just the beginning of his “war on terror”. Bush neglected to specifically mention the United States’ allies and it was clear that he preferred a unilateral approach:

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230 Daalder and Lindsay, 99.
231 Ibid., 104.
232 Ibid., 105.
My hope is that all nations will heed our call and eliminate the terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own. And make no mistake about it: If they do not act, America will. Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. States like these and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. I will not wait while danger gathers. America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere.233

European leaders were shocked by the State of the Union and were appalled by Bush’s term “axis of evil”. They had understood the necessity of taking action against Afghanistan but did not see the connection between terrorism and other states, such as Iraq. They feared that the United States would abuse its hegemonic power and once again act unilaterally without consulting European leaders.234 A few months later, with the publication of the National Security Strategy (NSS) in September 2002, also known as the Bush Doctrine, it became evident that the United States had decided on a strategy of preemptive war. The NSS summed up the administration’s approach and in addition identified three threats: Terrorist organizations, the weak states that assisted them, and rogue states. As if confirming the Europeans’ worst fears, the NSS stated that the

234 Moens, 146.
administration envisioned support from other nations but would strike unilaterally if necessary.²³⁵

Iraq and the 2002 elections in Germany

The debate about Iraq transformed German-American relations. Germany was shocked by Bush's unilateral approach and relations veered towards another crisis. After the State of the Union and publication of the NSS, it was clear that the United States was planning a preemptive war on other countries, notably Iraq. This triggered many anti-American movements throughout Europe, which led the Bush administration to slowly distrust its transatlantic partners. Germany was insulted that it learned about the US's plan through the media and not directly from Bush. To Germany it seemed as though Washington failed to see it as an equal partner and disregarded its opinions even though its economy had risen dramatically over the past 50 years and Berlin was a prominent voice in the creation of the European Union. Germany had experienced two wars and believed it could provide significant input on Iraq.

The administration's push toward war in Iraq and the growing anti-American movement in Europe led Minister of Justice Herta Däbler Glemin to compare Bush to Hitler. Rice responded: "An atmosphere has been created in Germany that is in that sense poisoned."²³⁶ Schröder, in return, tried to repair the damage by writing Bush a personal letter apologizing for his minister's comment and informing him that she would no longer be in his government after the 2002 German elections. President Bush, who places a great

emphasis on loyalty, already felt betrayed by the German government, however, which would affect his future decisions. It was now clear that the two leaders would have difficulty working together. They not only had a bad start but their conflicting views on Iraq were sure to clash.

As mentioned, the Bush administration started holding NSC meetings immediately after the attacks of 9/11. The President was sure after the first meeting that he wanted to “punish whoever harbor[s] terrorists, not just the perpetrators.” Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, raised the issue of invading Iraq in the very first meeting. Wolfowitz and other neo-conservatives, such as Cheney’s assistant for National Security Affairs Lewis “Scooter” Libby, firmly believed that it was necessary to use military force to replace autocratic regimes with democratic ones. They believed that the first Bush administration had failed by leaving Saddam Hussein in power after the Gulf War. In 1992-1993, Wolfowitz and Libby had worked together with Dick Cheney, a more traditional conservative, on the Defense Planning Guidance of 1992-1993, which “envisioned several scenarios in which the United States might have to fight two large regional wars at one time—for example, against Iraq again, against North Korea, or in Europe against a resurgent, expansionist Russia.” It further suggested that the United States prevent potential threats from emerging. Even though Iraq and al Qaeda had no obvious ties, Wolfowitz feared that their common hatred for the United States was reason enough for regime change. Wolfowitz pushed others to consider rogue states that

239 Moens, 165.
241 Ibid., 423.
harbored terrorists as just as dangerous as the terrorist themselves. President Bush decided to first focus his attention on Afghanistan but also ordered the NSC to start looking to see if there were any linkages between the terrorists and Iraq.242

The NSC met every day in order to discuss plans for Afghanistan. Wolfowitz kept pressuring the intelligence community for information about a link between Iraq and al Qaeda even though they could not find anything proving a connection. During these meetings officials such as Cheney and Wolfowitz “reacted strongly, negatively, and aggressively when presented with information or analysis that contradicted what they already believed about Iraq.”243 Analysts were forced to answer a number of questions and senior officials would criticize information they presented, especially their sources. Officials would continue to ask for more information, constantly pressuring intelligence officers to find information that supported their beliefs:

On many occasions administration officials’ requests for additional information struck the analysts as being made merely to distract them from their primary mission. Some officials asked for extensive historical analyses— a hugely time-consuming undertaking, for which most intelligence analysts are not trained. Requests were constantly made for detailed analyses of newspaper articles that conformed to the views of Administration officials.244

Although President Bush attended most NSC meetings, where doubts about a link between al Qaeda and Iraq was often expressed, he preferred to rely on his close advisers, Tenet, Rumsfeld, and Cheney, who reassured him of a connection. By November 2001, he already ordered Rumsfeld to create plans to attack Iraq, even though there still had not

244 Ibid., 13.
been any evidence found that connected it to al Qaeda. Rumsfeld established a new department at the Pentagon, the Office of Special Plans (OSP), ostensibly to review the raw intelligence. In reality, this intelligence unit “cherry-picked” that information which supported their beliefs and passed it on to senior officials. They only presented information that proved their case for Iraq, ignoring the counterevidence presented by the intelligence agencies. In addition to the OSP, Wolfowitz established the Counter-Terrorism Evaluation Group, to search for information connecting Iraq and al Qaeda. His information mainly relied on Israeli intelligence whose intelligence officials would come to Washington and brief Wolfowitz. CIA analysts argued that this was an illegitimate source of information because of the Israelis’ general bias against the Arabs. Another source of unreliable information was collected from Iraqis in exile who claimed to have witnessed WMD production but whose information could not be corroborated.

According to information collected by the OSP and the Counter-Terrorism Group, Saddam Hussein posed one of the biggest threats to the United States. Some advisors, like Cheney, feared that the next attack could be one with a weapon of mass destruction. In July of 2002, there were several secret meetings between President Bush and his top advisers to discuss Iraq. Bush and his advisers agreed on regime change but there were different views on the value of UN involvement. Powell urged Bush to get UN approval before attacking Iraq, in order to legitimize the decision, whereas Cheney

246 Pollack, 14.
248 Ibid., 115.
249 Moens, 165
feared that a UN resolution would only hinder the US’s power. In a speech for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Cheney stated that:

Saddam Hussein could then be expected to seek domination of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion of the world’s energy supplies…. Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction….A person would be right to question any suggestion that we should just get inspectors back into Iraq, and then our worries will be over. Saddam has perfected the game of cheat and retreat, and is very skilled in the art of denial and deception.  

It was clear that the Bush administration had made up its mind without consulting its allies. Schröder had to hear about Iraq through the media and started to doubt the United States’ commitment to international organizations. Die Welt, a prominent German newspaper, reported that Schröder was furious with the Bush administration. He felt that they were not consulting any of the allies but instead informing them of their plans. He further added that under these circumstances cooperation was impossible. At the same time, Schröder was also facing the challenges of re-election in August 2002. A month earlier, statistics showed that his party, the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party, SPD), would lose the election. He realized that the key issue for voters was the Iraq war. More and more Germans were against regime change and did not see a connection between the terrorist attack of 9/11 and Iraq. For example, in a survey asking Germans who they believed was the biggest threat to world peace, 73% answered George Bush, while only 20% responded Saddam Hussein. It was clear that

250 Moens, 138.
in order to get reelected Schröder would have to campaign against regime change in Iraq.253 Schröder stated numerous times that he was against any military action in Iraq, while his competitor, Edmund Stoiber of the Christlich Demokratsichen Union Deutschlands (Christian Democratic Union of Germany, CDU), supported military action in Iraq with a UN resolution.254 The Iraq issue was the turning point in the German elections and Schröder managed to get reelected. Bush felt that Schröder was being unreasonable, especially after all that the United States had done for Germany. He refused to congratulate the reelected Chancellor Schröder and it was again clear that the two leaders would have more disagreement in the future.

The European response to Iraq had an impact upon the Bush administration. American policymakers decided to go through the UN after all, in order to ensure international legitimacy for regime change. In early September 2002, president Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly, laying out his case and asking for a resolution. He summed up that Iraq had violated Resolutions 686 and 687, which were created after the Gulf War in 1991. These resolutions demanded that Iraq return all prisoners from Kuwait and other countries, that Iraq renounce all ties to terrorism and forbid terrorist planning on its territory, destroy and stop the development of nuclear weapons and comply with inspections. Bush argued that Iraq had broken all of these agreements but most importantly had kicked out the weapon inspectors in 1998. President Bush asked Iraq to end all of its terrorist connections, end all illegal trade, and allow renewed UN inspections. He finished his address by announcing: “We will work with the

U.N. Security Council for the necessary resolutions. But the purposes of the United States should not be doubted. The Security Council resolutions will be enforced, the just demands of peace and security will be met, or action will be unavoidable.255

After weeks of discussion, the United Nations finally reached an agreement in November 2002 and adopted U.N. resolution 1441. This resolution demanded that Iraq comply with all the older resolutions and warned of UN action if it did not comply. This resolution, however, failed to define Iraqi compliance or to specify what further action was threatened. One month later, Iraq submitted a list of weapons it possessed, which was clearly incomplete. To the United States this signaled that Iraq was unwilling to cooperate and that this was its opportunity for regime change. Washington was unsure how to get international support. France had a Security Council veto and was opposed to military action in Iraq. The Europeans demanded a second U.N. resolution specifically authorizing military action.

A second resolution was introduced by the US, the UK, and Spain but was soon withdrawn because there were not enough countries to support it because the Bush administration had not felt the need to lobby for it. The administration essentially believed that Resolution 1441 already gave them the right to attack Iraq. They also did not believe that European support was crucial as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld implied in an interview with a Dutch reporter in 2003. He classified France and Germany, the main countries that did not support the United States, as “old Europe”:

You’re thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I think that’s old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the center of gravity is shifting to the east. And there are a lot of new members... But you look at vast numbers of other countries in Europe. They’re not with France and Germany on this. They’re with the United States.²⁵⁶

He even compared France and Germany to countries such as Cuba and Libya.²⁵⁷

The United States, thus, went to war with Iraq on March 19, 2003, without a second UN resolution or German approval.²⁵⁸ Again, Germany and other European countries felt that they had become victims of US foreign policy. Bush’s unilateral approach caused an uproar in Europe, especially Germany, which was reminded once again that it was still not considered an equal partner by the US.

Analysis

Once again, the elements of Presidential personality proved to be a crucial factor in German-American relations. President Bush’s character, cognitive psychology, and relationship with his advisers shaped the decision making process regarding regime change in Iraq, which would have a profound effect on German-American relations. The once-close partners suffered yet another crisis, and possibly the worst damage to their relationship.

1) Presidential Character

There are two key aspects of Bush’s character that affected German-American relations: Bush’s reliance on his father and his religious faith. His entire life, George W.

²⁵⁷ von Rimscha, 17.
²⁵⁸ Daalder and Lindsay, 143-150.
Bush had depended on his father for advice and contacts. He was born July 6, 1946, in Texas where he would spend most of his life. He came from a very political and conservative family and was exposed to politics at an early age. His family emphasized the need for Bush to follow in the family footsteps. He attended the Phillips Academy and proceeded to go to Yale, just as his father and grandfather had done before him. At Yale, however, Bush was never really interested in politics and thought it more important to extend his social network. He graduated from Yale in 1968 and in order to avoid the draft, joined the Texas Air National Guard with his father's help. After the Air National Guard, Bush worked as a trainee in a business for one of his father's friends. He then took the position of political director for Winton M. Blount's Senate campaign in Alabama.

In his early years, Bush lacked any clear direction about his future and relied on his father to get him contacts and jobs. When his father ran for the presidential race in 1988, Bush decided to help him and moved to Washington for a short period of time. It seemed as though Bush was finally trying to follow his father's footsteps. Bush continued to work on political campaigns and eventually decided to run for Governor of Texas in 1994.259

During his own presidency, he would often ask his father for advice. A majority of the staff he selected had served under his father and had personally experienced the Gulf War in 1991. But the two had different views on Iraq. George H.W. Bush was disappointed with the way his son was running his administration. He felt that his son was allowing his advisers too much influence. His father also emphasized that neo-cons

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259 Moens, 6-24.
and strong traditional conservative, such as Cheney and Rumsfeld, were taking over the administration, while excluding the more moderate Powell.²⁶⁰

Bush suffered from a heavy drinking problem, which eventually led him to re-discover his religious faith and give up drinking. His new-found religious beliefs evoked many new sentiments in Bush, which he fully incorporated in his life. He placed a great emphasis on loyalty and commitment, which would have an effect on future German-American relations. To him, loyalty and commitment were fundamental qualities. His religion served as the basis his strong distinction between right and wrong, leading him to categorize states after 9/11 using the term good vs. evil.²⁶¹ He believed that “there was something unique if not divine about a catastrophe like 9/11 happening when he was president. That somehow that was meant to be his mission to deal with the war on terror.”²⁶² Bush felt that German Chancellor Schröder had betrayed him during his campaign and felt that the Germans were not committed to the transatlantic relationship. This led him to ignore their efforts and proceed with his Iraq planning. Because of his disappointment with Schröder, the German-American relationship became forced and business-like, rather than friendly and personal as it had been under Clinton.

2) Cognitive Psychology

The second factor that shaped the decision making process was cognitive psychology. President Bush was faced with value-complexity during the decision making process. There were many conflicting interests: domestic security and regime change versus positive relations with other leaders. As discussed previously, there are three ways

²⁶⁰ Risen, l.
²⁶² Ibid., 437.
a decision maker can cope with value-complexity: He can decide to resolve the issue by creating some kind of plan, he can avoid the issue completely, or accept the value trade-off and find a solution for part of the problem. President Bush utilized the last option. He understood that there was a value trade-off and in his mind domestic security was more important than allied relations, which led him to proceed with regime change in Iraq.

President Bush also faced George's "uncertainty", the lack of sufficient information on the basis of which to assess his options. He used what George referred to as bolstering, which is the decision maker's tendency to make his preferred option more attractive by doing the complete opposite with his least preferred option.264 Bush and his advisers used this technique throughout the entire decision making process on Iraq. To them, it was the best opportunity for regime change. They pressured intelligence officials to find the information they needed to support regime change in Iraq. Because of their beliefs, they felt that a diplomatic approach was useless and therefore made that approach seem less appealing. George explains that by increasing the attractiveness of one problem, the decision maker is trying to reach a level of comfort with the existing uncertainty. The special intelligence units created at the Pentagon processed and presented Bush with raw and often unreliable information to support regime change, which reassured him that there was no other option left to consider.

In addition, George explains that a decision maker might make spurious decisions or convince himself that he will not be held accountable if his policy fails as ways of

264 Ibid., 38.
coping with uncertainty.\textsuperscript{265} Iraq was clearly a spurious decision as it was made in early November 2001, without having enough evidence. In addition, after finding “supporting information”, Bush was convinced that he could not be held accountable because he had found proof. He also believed that he could not be held accountable at the international level because he was complying with the first UN resolution.

In addition, Bush seems to have used four of the seven different cognitive aids a decision maker can use to cope with a problem. First, he chose between a “satisficing and optimizing” option. As George explains, a decision maker is more likely to choose a policy that satisfies him for the moment and is less complicated. Iraq seemed to be the most satisfying option after Afghanistan. The administration wanted to continue its war on terror. After the huge success of Afghanistan it seemed reasonable to continue with the war on terror. Second, Bush relied on what George calls “consensus politics”. Here the decision maker chooses the option that “enough people want and will support”.\textsuperscript{266} By doing this he avoids dealing with the problem and having to find a more complicated solution. Bush’s advisers all encouraged Iraq and he knew that it would gain the most support. Third, a decision maker might compare his current situation to a past one. Bush definitely used historical analogies to make his decision. The Gulf War’s failure to remove Saddam Hussein seemed to encourage the Bush administration to correct the mistake, especially because it believed that he still posed a threat to world peace. In addition, the world’s vast underestimation of Hussein’s nuclear progress in 1991 only convinced them more that he had WMD in 2003; they were not about to be fooled

\textsuperscript{265} George, 39.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 42.
again. Lastly, Bush relied on his own beliefs and values in the decision making process. As mentioned, he is deeply religious and places an immense importance on loyalty and commitment. He felt that Germany was not committed to the United States and felt betrayed that they did not support their ally.

3) Presidential Management Structure and Style

The final but probably most influential factor in Bush’s decision making process was his rapport with his advisers and the structure of his administration. The most notable characteristic of Bush’s administration is the prominent role Vice President Cheney plays in the foreign policy decision making process. Because of Rice’s reluctance to voice her opinion, Cheney effectively took over the role of National Security Adviser. In addition, Bush chose advisers with similar goals: regime change in Iraq, which influenced the decision making process a great deal. Lastly, the use of the collegial model as a management style affected his rapport with his advisers and the information he received.

Bush was initially interested in Colin Powell as his running mate but Powell rejected the offer because he was not interested in a presidential race. Upon his father’s recommendation, Bush then offered Dick Cheney the position, who accepted. Not only did they have a lot in common but Cheney had a lot of Washington experience, which was what attracted Bush. Like Bush, Cheney came from a rural area and had also attended Yale. Prior to serving as Secretary of Defense under Bush’s father, Cheney had

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267 Pollack, 5, 7.
268 Moens, 30.
worked as Chief of Staff to President Ford and as a Congressman from Wyoming.\textsuperscript{269} Cheney proceeded to help Bush with the rest of his cabinet nominations. For his National Security Adviser, Bush and Cheney selected Condoleezza Rice. She had worked on the NSC staff during the first Bush administration and was currently the Provost of Stanford University. Even though Rice was very young and did not have nearly as much experience as some of his appointments, Bush was attracted by Rice’s ability to take complex issues and explain them in simple terms, especially because he had no foreign policy background.\textsuperscript{270} Bush selected Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense. This was the second time Rumsfeld would serve in this position, having also headed the Pentagon under President Ford, where he met Cheney for the first time. Bush decided to offer Powell the position of Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{271} Another key actor in his cabinet was Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, who had also served during the first Bush administration and the Gulf War.

Bush allowed the Vice President an unusual role of an active adviser during the foreign policy decision making process. Cheney’s close relationship with the president allowed him to exert the most influence. He attended all staff meetings, principal meetings, and spent time with Bush alone. After each meeting, Cheney would talk to the President in private and through the time spent together and their similar backgrounds, he became more than just an adviser for Bush.\textsuperscript{272} In addition, Bush himself was a traditional

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{270}] Moens, 31-33.
\item[\textsuperscript{271}] Ibid., 60-63.
\item[\textsuperscript{272}] David J. Rothkopf, \textit{Running the World}. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 423.
\end{itemize}
hard-line conservative that believed in the necessity of using military force to overthrow threats.\textsuperscript{273}

Even though there were different shades of conservative beliefs in this administration, all of Bush's principle advisers except Powell shared the goal of regime change in Iraq and were highly influential in the Iraq decision. On one side, there were the traditional conservatives Rumsfeld and Cheney, who believed that regime change was necessary to make a forceful statement about the US's commitment to fighting terrorist aggression.\textsuperscript{274} On the other side, there were the neo-conservatives, such as Wolfowitz and Libby, who believed in the necessity of using military power to transform autocratic regimes into democratic ones. Bush himself seemed to combine the two. Even though these two groups in the administration had different views, the one objective that met everybody's goals was regime change in Iraq. As mentioned, they would pressure intelligence officials to find information linking Iraq and al Qaeda and even went so far as to create their own intelligence unit to re-interpret raw intelligence.

It is unclear what Rice's position was throughout these discussions but because of her lack of experience, she was in no position to oppose some of the more hawkish advisers, such as Rumsfeld and Cheney. Powell was one of the more moderate advisers. He constantly reminded Bush of the international consequences of acting unilaterally against Iraq and the need for a UN resolution. But unfortunately he was the only one with more moderate beliefs, which made him an outcast in the administration. In addition,

\textsuperscript{273} Daalder and Lindsay, 16.
Powell’s high poll ratings made him very suspicious to other members of the administration and he was unable to connect with them.\textsuperscript{275}

Like Kennedy and Carter before him, President Bush also made use of the collegial model. He liked listening to his advisers debate and absorbed the information they presented. He would then go by his instinct and make a decision on the spot.\textsuperscript{276} Bush relied completely on his advisers to bring up issues and almost seemed oblivious to other issues. For example, he himself did not see the need to obtain a UN resolution until Powell brought it to his attention. Also, he initially did not consider regime change in Iraq; it was originally raised by his advisers. In addition, his advisers were subject to groupthink. Because they had the same goal for the most part, and had previously worked together, there was a lot of pressure to agree to the same policy. As mentioned, it was unclear what Rice’s view on the Iraq war was. She seemed to have agreed to the majority opinion. In addition, senior advisers pressured CIA director George Tenet for information affirming their preferred strategy on Iraq. Tenet felt such pressure to please other officials that he failed to oppose them. Instead, he did his best to find any kind of evidence that supported a connection between Iraq and al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{277}

**Conclusion**

Presidential personality was the most influential factor in German-American relations for this case. September 11 may have created the basis of US foreign policy but it was presidential personality that set the US’s foreign policy priorities. Bush’s values and beliefs put a huge strain on his relationship with Chancellor Schröder, who was

\textsuperscript{275} David J. Rothkopf, *Inside the Committee that runs the world* (Foreign Policy, March/April 2005), 4.
\textsuperscript{276} Moens, 60.
\textsuperscript{277} Risen, 110.
hoping that Germany would be finally integrated into the decision making process at the international level. Bush believed in commitment and loyalty and felt that his transatlantic partner could not provide these qualities. In addition, his reliance on his father led him to appoint a staff with similar beliefs about Iraq who for the most part favored regime change. His administration suffered from groupthink and the experienced advisers were able to cast out the moderate and inexperienced ones, such as Rice and Powell. Because his advisers had the same goal and Bush made use of the collegial model, he did not receive enough information, which led him to ignore his transatlantic partners and decide to act unilaterally.

There are some other factors that might have influenced the decision making process but after further analysis it becomes clear that presidential personality is the most important one. At the international level, it was reasonable for Bush to respond to 9/11 by attacking Afghanistan, especially since many countries offered their support and Americans were asking for a strong position after the attacks. It could be argued that by going into Iraq, President Bush was trying to take the lead in the war on terror, but if that was truly his goal, he would have waited for a second UN resolution. He made it clear, early on, that he was willing to strike unilaterally and in addition, he did not see the need to lobby for the second UN resolution.

Another factor behind Bush’s decision could have been domestic politics and the support for finding WMDs in Iraq, but this case shows that the president had decided to attack Iraq as early as November 2001, which shows that it was the president’s instinct and his own values that made the early decision. He made the decision to attack Iraq before enough evidence was found based on his instinct and religious views that led him
make the distinction between good and evil. This proves that no matter what happened at the international or domestic level, Bush had already made up his mind. He allowed his advisers to create a special intelligence unit at the Pentagon, searching for information to support his beliefs.

In conclusion, this case shows that presidential personality had the biggest influence on German-American relations. Bush’s beliefs about terrorism combined with the makeup of his cabinet led him to decide early on to attack Iraq, which indicates that domestic and international affairs did not have the chance to affect him. Had someone else been president the decision making process would have been completely different. For example, Colin Powell would have favored a more diplomatic approach and not gone into Iraq without a second UN resolution. German-American relations suffered a great deal from the Iraq war. Germany was still longing to be seen as an equal partner and had believed that through its support of Afghanistan and its prominent position in Europe, it had achieved that status with the United States. Bush, on the other hand, ignored the transatlantic partner. He wanted their unconditional support and not their advice on US foreign policy.
Conclusion

After extensive study of the three cases, it is evident that presidential personality was the biggest factor in these crises in German-American relations. Presidential personality encompasses the president’s character, his cognitive psychology, and his management structure and style. In addition, these cases have shown that the Iraq war was not solely responsible for the recent damage in German-American relations and that the rift between the transatlantic partners has been an ongoing problem over the last sixty years.

Presidential character is a result of the president’s education, his background, and his beliefs and values. All of these factors help produce his character and ultimately his ability to handle the stress of foreign policy decision making. Political background allows the president to gain experience but in all of the three cases studied, the president had little or almost no foreign policy experience, which forced him to choose advisers with strong foreign policy backgrounds. In addition, all decision makers fell back on their own values to make decisions, especially under stress.

Kennedy relied heavily on Secretary of State Dean Rusk and delegated most of the Soviet discussions to him because of his own lack of interest and knowledge in foreign policy. Because of his strong personal tie to England, he favored the British over France and Germany, which led Adenauer to become wary of German-American relations. Kennedy would almost always consult his close ally Macmillan, while ignoring De Gaulle and Adenauer. Kennedy believed it completely necessary to compete with the Soviets in all aspects, including technology and weapons. His constant desire to compete
with the Soviets led him to ignore other issues, such as German-American relations. Completing a test ban treaty would restore his reputation after the humiliation he had suffered at the Vienna Conference in 1961.

Carter felt completely incompetent in the foreign policy realm and would rely on his National Security Adviser, Brzezinski, to explain complex issues to him. In addition, Carter’s personal interest in human rights and his strong morals and values led him to focus on specific issues, German-American relations not being among them. The German side started to doubt American commitment again, which re-aggravated the relationship between the partners. Carter’s upbringing had instilled in him strong idealist beliefs, and he was truly trying to make the world a better place. As a result of his strong beliefs, he was unable to order the deployment of the ERW, thus damaging German-American relations.

George W. Bush relies heavily on his religious beliefs, which affected the decision on regime change in Iraq and ultimately German-American relations. His conservative religious worldview emphasized the distinction between good and evil after the terrorist attacks. He believed that he had to take a strong US position to protect the United States from terrorists. Bush also places a great importance on loyalty and commitment. He believed that Gerhard Schröder had betrayed him during the 2002 German elections, which led him to devalue the transatlantic partnership.

The second factor in presidential personality is cognitive psychology. When dealing with stress, there are different approaches a decision maker can choose to take in order to deal with value-complexity and uncertainty. Kennedy chose to initially completely ignore the competing values of a test ban treaty and German reunification. He
did not visit Germany until three years after the Berlin Wall went up and did not realize that a pressing issue existed until the signing of the Elysée treaty between West Germany and France in January 1963. Carter relied heavily on his cognitive aids, especially his morals and values. As mentioned above, he could not go through with the ERW production and deployment because it would pose a threat to world peace. Bush dealt with uncertainty by bolstering: he made preferred options, such as the war on Iraq, more attractive by downplaying the importance of other issues and allowing his advisers to create special intelligence units to “find” information connecting Iraq and al Qaeda.

The last component of presidential personality is a president’s choice of advisers and management structure. As mentioned above, all three presidents in these cases had little experience, which led them to choose advisers with a lot of foreign policy experience. These principle advisers were able to influence the decision making process by selecting the information presented to the president and personally outlining their own opinions to the decision maker. Also, all three presidents use the collegial model to organize their cabinets, which had profound effects. First of all, it encourages groupthink because group members are likely to agree with each other in order to achieve high solidarity amongst the group. It hinders the proper exchange of ideas and information processing. Second, it encourages a more relaxed environment that allows advisers to debate, leaving the president at the center of the wheel with more decision making pressure.

Kennedy relied heavily on his advisers to bring up issues. He did not understand the greater implications Berlin carried until Johnson wrote a report after his Berlin visit. Because Kennedy refused to attend cabinet meetings, his only source of information was
his advisers. In addition, his illnesses throughout the presidency often forced him to operate from bed relying on reports and memos from his advisers. Carter utilized the collegial model but was unable to handle the stress of it. Vance and Brzezinski would constantly debate over the SALT II discussions, adding stress to Carter's decision making process and leading him to rely more heavily on his cognitive aids. George W. Bush also did not bring much foreign policy experience to the presidency, which led him to select advisers with strong foreign policy backgrounds. His choice of advisers heavily influenced the decision on Iraq. Even though his advisers had different ideological beliefs, they had the common goal of regime change, which influenced the president. In addition, Bush encouraged the role of a stronger Vice President. Cheney was a prominent figure in the foreign policy decision making process and because of his close relationship to the president was able to influence him.

In conclusion, presidential personality was the biggest factor in German-American relations because it affects all areas of the decision making process. At the international level, it is obvious that the Cold War and the war on terror dictated the general direction of US foreign policy but it was up to each president to set his own priorities. Kennedy and Carter's goal of reaching an agreement with the Soviets was reasonable but their approach damaged German-American relations. Kennedy had no interest in German reunification because he did not see the necessity of it. His constant reliance on Britain led him to devalue Germany's importance and led Bonn to strengthen Franco-German relations. Carter's emphasis on human rights and morals led him to defer production of the ERW, which led Germany to believe that it could no longer rely on US protection. September 11 guided US foreign policy and demanded a strong response but
it was Bush’s religious beliefs that led him to characterize terrorists as evil and decide to attack Iraq.

These cases show that the current US-German disagreement over Iraq is not the only reason for the current poor relationship between the two countries. Over the years, there seems to have been a growing rift between Germany and America, which has now seemed to reach its peak. Schröder’s response to Iraq was a result of ongoing problems of trust and commitment in German-American affairs. Germany felt it had consistently been a victim of US foreign policy and by 2002 was unwilling to endure the same experience. Over the years, presidential personality has put a strain on German-American relations. These presidents’ neglect of German-American relations created a hostile relationship between the two countries, and great suspicion in Germany of US foreign policy, which the Germans were willing to voice for the first time in 2002.

Recommendations

Both transatlantic partners need to realize that even though it seems as though they have grown apart, ideologically and politically, they still have some common goals: weapons of mass destruction, human rights, trade, and environmental protection. It is important for both to prevent the further development of WMDs. The United States needs to start looking at Germany differently by realizing that it is no longer a split country and has economically and politically prospered. It is a key actor in the European Union and no longer has to follow US policy. Bush’s “You are either with us or against us” approach creates an uproar in Germany. They want to be seen as an equal partner and be consulted on foreign policy issues. If they both realize that there is a need to work
together and build a strong partnership, they can solidify a Western alliance with a framework to prevent further development of WMDs, better environmental policies, and cooperation on human rights.  

Future  

The last German elections not only marked the victory of Angela Merkel but also a new starting point in German-American relations. Merkel, from the CDU, is expected to enjoy better relations with President Bush because of the CDU’s more conservative platform. Merkel visited Bush in January 2006 and was overwhelmed by American hospitality. She and President Bush both avoided the topic of the Iraq war during this meeting but they seemed to connect over other issues, such as the importance of strengthening transatlantic relations. With Schröder being gone, Bush has no reason to doubt the Germans anymore and Merkel claimed that reestablishing US ties was one of her top foreign policy priorities. She is scheduled to meet with the president again in early May of 2006. These events seem to show an improvement in German-American relations. While the original close relationship will probably never be restored to its original form, but Germany is hoping a new and more equal relationship can be forged. Nonetheless, this study has shown how sensitive German-US relations are to the presidential personality.

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