

Leader Narcissism, Inflated Self-Image Maintenance, and War Duration

John P. Harden

Abstract

How do leaders matter? What do leaders want? Grandiose narcissism provides a pathway to understanding how personality can impact a leader's preference formation and foreign policy behavior. More narcissistic leaders will focus their efforts on maintaining their inflated self-image during war by searching desperately for 'wins' and outcomes that look like 'wins'. While most leaders will sacrifice their historical image for the good of their country, more narcissistic leaders will only exit wars if they win, see a greater opportunity for their image elsewhere, or can reassure their re-election prospects. This paper introduces a new measure of United States' presidential narcissism, and finds support for the argument that more narcissistic United States presidents extend war duration using data from the 1897-2008 period. Finally, I compare Eisenhower's handling of the Korean War and Nixon's handling of the Vietnam War to illustrate and probe the theory's causal mechanisms.

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The past two decades has seen renewed interest in the role leaders play in International Relations (IR) (Saunders, 2009; Gallagher and Allen, 2014; Croco, 2011; Colgan, 2013; Horowitz et al., 2015; Fuhrmann and Horowitz, 2015; Dafoe and Caughey, 2016; Kertzer, 2016; Rathbun et al., 2017; Yarhi-Milo, 2018; McManus, 2019). Proving leaders matter is difficult (Jervis, 2013). Yet scholars have demonstrated many ways leaders impact IR. This paper adds to growing interest in how leaders impact international security by connecting a leader attribute to a personal preference and that preference to wartime decision-making across space and time.

I argue that leaders high in trait narcissism, specifically grandiose narcissism, differ in how they approach interstate war. I question the assumption that every leader's foremost interest is in state security or even political survival. More narcissistic leaders, specifically more narcissistic United States' (US) presidents, place greater emphasis on their personal interests - namely whether policies maintain their inflated self-image. State security will always come second in their mind. Furthermore, re-election should only enter their mind leading up to a campaign. While they are overconfident that their re-election prospects are safe, they can become concerned about losing power as this would negatively impact their image. Inflated self-image maintenance causes narcissistic leaders to approach wars as opportunities to promote their inflated self-image. Their goals will center on what works for them, even if it comes at the expense of the state. Furthermore, their strategic decision-making will be blinded by arrogance and entitlement. I evaluate this claim by measuring narcissism in US presidents at-a-distance, and by analyzing whether narcissism is related to war duration.

First, I define grandiose narcissism by reviewing the psychological literature on trait narcissism. Second, I review the puzzle guiding this project. Third, I present my theory of narcissism and war duration. Fourth, I present my research design. Fifth, I discuss my

empirical results. Sixth, I compare Dwight Eisenhower's handling of the Korean War and Richard Nixon's handling of the Vietnam War as a plausibility probe with the intent of illustrating causal mechanisms. Finally, I conclude by discussing limitations and noting avenues for future research.

The Complexities of Narcissism

Defining Narcissism

Narcissism is a complex concept studied from various perspectives. It is a stable individual difference associated with self-absorption, a lack of empathy, entitlement, and inflated self-views. The two major approaches to understanding and studying narcissism come from clinical psychology and social psychology. Clinical psychologists approach narcissism as a disorder: Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) (APA, 2013). Examples of IR research on NPD include Post (1993), Steinberg (1996), and Glad (2002). NPD is categorical and rare. Individuals either have it or don't. Research focusing on this conceptualization of narcissism can miss more common manifestations of narcissism found at the sub-clinical level (Campbell et al., 2011).

This project tables the question of whether an individual has NPD and instead focuses on narcissism the way social psychologists do. Social psychologists conceptualize narcissism as a personality trait that exists on a normal continuum within the general population (Foster et al., 2003). Trait narcissism is dimensional. There are many 'flavors' of trait narcissism. The two main sub-types of trait narcissism are grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism.¹ This study focuses specifically on grandiose narcissism. When I

¹Vulnerable narcissists share a core of entitlement with grandiose narcissists (Krizan and Herlache, 2018). However, vulnerable narcissists are socially withdrawn, brooding, and lack grandiose narcissistic bombast. Vulnerable narcissism could be related to foreign policy, but this possibility is best left to another study.

refer to a “narcissist”, I am referring to an individual high in grandiose narcissism. This paper relies on the Narcissism Spectrum Model (Krizan and Herlache, 2018) to understand grandiose narcissism’s place within the larger narcissism spectrum. In this spectrum, grandiose narcissism is a personality trait with components of entitlement and grandiosity.

Grandiose narcissism is defined and understood through various models and approaches. These include but are not limited to: Big-5 trait models (Miller and Maples, 2011), self-regulatory models (Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001), and evolutionary models (Holtzman and Strube, 2011). Grandiose narcissism is studied in various domains, including but not limited to: business leadership (Campbell et al., 2011), political leadership (Deluga, 1997; Watts et al., 2013), romantic relationships (Brunell and Campbell, 2011), social relationships (Leckelt et al., 2015), sports performance (Roberts et al., 2018), and mass politics (Hatemi and Fazekas, 2018). Both positive and negative behaviors are connected to grandiose narcissism. These include but are not limited to: quickly depleting the commons (Campbell et al., 2005), an attraction to and quick ascent to leadership positions (Brunell et al., 2008), aggression in response to perceived insults or achievement blocks (Besser and Priel, 2010; Twenge and Campbell, 2003), and a disregard for relationship status when pursuing mates for intimate relationships (Brunell et al., 2018).

This paper defines grandiose narcissism through the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) (Back et al., 2013). The NARC is used to understand the puzzling tendencies of narcissists. For example, narcissists are charismatic but fail to navigate social disagreements. In initial settings, narcissists are well-liked. As relationships deepen, there is room for disagreement. This is when narcissists become less popular due to aggressive behaviors and unsympathetic statements (Leckelt et al., 2015). The NARC theorizes that narcissists are driven by a fundamental need to maintain their inflated self-image. Narcissists can do so through two pathways which are conceptualized as two components

of narcissism: Narcissistic Admiration and Narcissistic Rivalry.

Narcissistic Admiration refers to narcissists' assertive self-enhancement. It captures striving for uniqueness and grandiose fantasies, which produce charming approach-oriented behavior. Narcissistic Rivalry refers to narcissists' antagonistic self-image protection. It is associated with striving for supremacy and devaluing others, which produce aggressiveness. Taken together, a narcissist is defined as an individual with an inflated self-image that they desire to promote and protect.

The NARC is well suited to understanding how narcissism can influence foreign policy decision-making because its associated measurement scheme, the NARQ, is excellent for capturing entitlement. This is important because this paper's theory is ultimately about a leader putting their personal needs first. Therefore, it provides an avenue to understanding how narcissism is related to personal goals in a generalizable way. Additionally, unlike popular measurement schemes like the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), the NARQ doesn't capture concepts endogenous to political leadership such as the NPI's Leadership/Authority facet.

Narcissism and IR

There is growing interest in narcissism in Political Science (Hatemi and Fazekas, 2018; Nai, 2019). Watts et al. (2013) found that presidents high in grandiose narcissism were rated by historians as significantly more likely to 'be willing to take risks'. However, there was no significant relationship between presidential narcissism and 'foreign policy accomplishments'. Deluga (1997) also studied grandiose narcissism in US presidents, but did not focus on foreign policy or IR.

While there exists a thorough examination of narcissistic business leaders (Campbell et al., 2011), and NPD's relationship to political leadership (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006),

less than a handful of studies have examined how grandiose narcissism affects political leaders in IR across space and time. Johnson et al. (2006) found in an experiment with a non-elite population that males high in grandiose narcissism were more likely to make unprovoked initiations.

What do Leaders want?

IR research focusing on the impact of institutional or structural variables often assumes that leaders and states are rational utility-maximizing actors that seek survival or economic gain (Waltz, 1979; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; De Mesquita et al., 2005; Glaser, 2010). Psychological perspectives have pointed to considerations like moral justification or legacy (Herrmann et al., 1997; Horowitz et al., 2005; Rosen, 2009). This paper joins psychological perspectives, and the new wave of research on leaders and IR, by arguing that narcissistic leaders are more likely to heavily emphasize their personal interests. This is partly because a narcissist's inflated self-image, and their desire to maintain their it, can influence how they think about state interests or their re-election prospects. Taken together, narcissists will emphasize their inflated self-image more than state interests or political survival. Furthermore, narcissists will prefer political survival to the good of the country. In other words, narcissists value their own outcomes even at the expense of others'.

The assumption that a leader wouldn't chase after something if it endangered political survival or state interests is often valid. However, glossing over whether leaders have preferences beyond or in spite of survival and security leaves a dangerous blind spot in both explanatory and predictive power. Similar to Sagan's (1995) reasoning regarding nuclear safety, if we assume that all leaders will behave in a way that maximizes either state security or political survival, we may fail to adequately explain or predict instances in which a leader endangers the state. These dangerous occurrences, while likely rare, are

important to understand and predict.

War is, by most definitions, the most deadly inter-state phenomena. For most, especially those who experience combat firsthand, the carnage and blood sacrificed during war are not always worth the potential gains (Horowitz et al., 2015). Democratic leaders who value the things typically associated with rational choice models of conflict ought to aim towards spending less time at war (Bennett and Stam, 1996, 2000; de Mesquita, 1983; De Mesquita et al., 2005; Goemans, 2000). In fact, democracies experience increasing disadvantages as wars drag on because of difficulty maintaining morale (Bennett and Stam, 1998).

The literature on war duration gained traction in the 1990s. This literature explicitly assumed that wars are fought by rational states. Here the word 'rational' referred to individuals or states selecting policies that will maximize their gains and minimize their losses. Implicit in this assumption is the idea that wars are only fought for some tangible policy-related objective. Authors like Bennett and Stam (1996, 1998) paved the way for this research agenda by tracking the relative importance of variables endogenous to war itself. These variables included the strategies employed by warring parties, the difficulty of the terrain where battles are fought, and the number of actors involved. The authors also took note of important exogenous factors, such as whether states fighting were democratic. It is not clear all leaders have approached war the same way. History is replete with variation in the degree to which leaders pursue policies that secure their state or re-election prospects during war. While some leaders act as most IR theorists would suspect, some leaders seem to be aiming for something else entirely. Towards the end of this paper, I will explore Eisenhower and Nixon's wartime decision-making in attempt to demonstrate this variation.

Presidential Narcissism and US War Duration

There are five mutually reinforcing and related causal mechanisms that lead narcissistic leaders to extend war duration. First, narcissists emphasize their personal interests, even if those conflict with state interests. For a narcissist, the most important thing is that they look tough and competent, with re-election becoming important only if it is perceived at-risk. Second, narcissists believe they can shift the tide of war through their own toughness and persuasiveness. Third, narcissists fail to update their strategies despite data suggesting that their personal touch is not bearing fruit. Fourth, narcissists take negotiations and the bargaining process personally, lengthening the amount of time and information needed to shift their ideal bargaining range. Fifth, narcissists become absorbed in protecting their image when they feel it is threatened. I elaborate on each of these mechanisms below.

First, narcissists focus on their personal interests rather than the states'. When state interests conflict with their interests, they disregard the state for their own needs and wants. Narcissistic leaders are primarily interested in using war to maintain their inflated self-image. They focus on re-election only if they believe it is at-risk. Regardless, they never opt for strategies or decisions that benefit the state if they are personally or politically costly. Narcissists may frequently refer to the state's reputation. However, I argue that this is likely semantics, as the narcissistic leader will believe that what is good for them is good for their country. Unlike self-monitors or southerners who care about a state's reputation for resolve because they believe reputations matter, a narcissist, by definition, only cares about their own image and reputation (Dafoe and Caughey, 2016; Yarhi-Milo, 2018). To a certain extent, narcissists are the country in their minds. Evidence for this assumption is found in the business literature, where narcissistic business leaders are found to make decisions which benefit themselves at a company's expense (Campbell et al., 2011).

Second, narcissists are arrogant and subsequently believe they can personally shift the tide of the war through their persuasive ability and toughness. This creates a powerful push towards projecting an image of strength while relying on personal persuasiveness. While all leaders may emphasize military and diplomatic tools to varying degrees, narcissistic preferences will be notable by their emphasis on their own competency, toughness, and persuasiveness when making decisions to escalate military force and diplomatic pressure.

Relatedly and third, narcissistic leaders' arrogance, entitlement, and risk-acceptance, cause narcissists to fail to update their preferred strategies. Narcissistic leaders will be relatively unmoved by negative information from the front such as battle losses, troop deaths, and prisoner of war situations. Furthermore, they will actively discount the impact of the war on their state's economy or people. Instead of updating their strategies in light of new information, narcissists will double-down on their preferred strategy. Failure to update priors suggests longer wars.

Fourth, narcissistic entitlement means they will take the bargaining process and negotiations personally. Their personal touch will often rub against the reality that their opponent's wartime decisions are often made in light of strong structural incentives and constraints. In other words, charm and persuasion should be incredibly unlikely to shift the outcome of negotiations. Regardless, the narcissist will take the rejection of their efforts personally, further lengthening wars by refusing to update their ideal bargaining range out of spite.

Finally, narcissists will become absorbed in protecting their image when they feel it is threatened. Narcissists can protect their image through shows of strength that reconfirm their own belief in their toughness and competency. This means that threats to their image emerging from sources un-related to the front, can cause them to lash out at domestic opponents or even their war enemy. Notably, narcissists may divert attention towards attacking their domestic critics and opponents, or public relations to shore up their own ego.

Altogether, this suggests fleeting attention and poorly planned behavior which should both further extend war duration. These five causal mechanisms unite to suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 *As leader narcissism increases, the duration of involvement in wars increases.*

Research Design

Given data limitations, I focus on United States involvement in wars. I use the 4th version of the Correlates of War (COW) Inter-State War Data (Singer, 1972; Sarkees and Wayman, 2010) to define wars and to determine what wars the United States was involved in from the time period of 1897-2008. Theoretically, my theory and results should extend to Great Power involvement in wars across time. I use this time period to hold constant the United States' status as a Great Power.² The COW defines wars as sustained combat between two states where there is at least 1,000 battle deaths within a 12 month time period.³

My first analysis uses Weibull models to study the degree to which presidential narcissism relates to war duration. At first glance, Cox Proportional Hazard models seem like a perfect choice given their semi-parametric nature. They are useful in that they do not force a distribution on the data, but instead let the data 'speak' (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2004). However, this is arguably unacceptable when the number of events is so small. Additionally, it is impossible to extrapolate the findings of a Cox model to future events because there is no distribution fit to the data.

Weibull models are commonly used in medical trial studies when sample sizes are

²The only interstate war dropped using this procedure is the Mexican-American War.

³It is common practice to split World War II into a Western and Pacific front, and to combine United States' involvement in the Laotian Civil War and Cambodian Civil War under the Vietnam War (Bennett and Stam, 1996). I follow this procedure.

small (Stanley et al., 2016). Because I am working with 11 wars, it is useful to assume a theoretical distribution for the data. Following Bennett and Stam (1996) and Shirkey (2012) I select a Weibull model.⁴

Furthermore, given the small number of wars in my data, I have to be discerning in selecting which control variables to include in my models. I structure my data by the War-Month-Year to closely track changes in dispositional leader level variables.⁵ I rely on the classic empirical literature on war duration to select most of my control variables.

I borrow coding and procedures from Bennett and Stam (1996) to determine whether the United States used a punishment strategy and their opponent used an attrition strategy (OPDA). I include this binary variable as a control because it is the combination of strategies found to most severely increase the length of wars. this control variable essentially acts as a dummy for the Vietnam War. I also create a binary variable signifying whether the terrain where most battles were fought was difficult. Difficult terrain includes mountains, rivers, and jungles as opposed to wide-open spaces. The Vietnam War and Afghanistan War meet this criteria. Finally, from a rational choice perspective, the number of actors involved in a war ought to increase its length as more participants increases the difficulty in solidifying a peace treaty. When re-modeling, this variable (Number of Actors) is dropped to make room for other controls given its weak association to war duration.

I control for the balance-of-power between the United States and its most powerful opponent in a war using the COW CINC index.⁶ Finally, I add a control variable for whether

⁴I do run Cox proportional hazard models as a robustness check. The proportional hazards assumption is violated in a few cases either because of the Number of Actors, Terrain, or Southern variable. In most cases the models break (i.e. no variable achieves conventional levels of statistical significance). Narcissism is often the only variable with p-values ranging between .05 and .1 in most models. In cases where the model does not break, narcissism achieves statistical significance. Across all models, Narcissism has negative coefficients. Finally, models where only Narcissism is the independent variable retain statistical significance. These results are found in the Appendix.

⁵It is theoretically significant that FDR (high in narcissism) leaves office at an irregular time due to death.

⁶The formula takes the power of the United States and divides it by the combined power of the United States and its opponent.

a president was born and raised in the American South to control for the potential impact of honor orientations (Dafoe and Caughey, 2016). I choose this control variable in particular as this leader-level variable has been explicitly connected to resolve and the duration of conflict. This control also allows me to parse apart the relative power of resolve and image maintenance.

My second analysis uses a logistic regression model run on President-Year data to control for more variables at the structural, domestic, and individual-level. I weigh each observation by the proportion of the year a president served. The dependent variable for this model is whether the United States was at war during that President-Year.⁷

At the leader level, more hawkish presidents will likely fight longer because of a proclivity for using force. Research has found the right-leaning parties are more likely to use force internationally (Bertoli et al., 2019). Therefore, I create a dummy variable, Republican, as a measure of presidential military hawkishness. There is evidence of nuanced effects of leader military and combat experience on conflict. I control for this by using Horowitz et al. (2015) coding of leader prior military and combat experience. Additionally, leader-level prior executive experience has been shown to negatively relate to conflict engagement (Calin and Prins, 2015). I borrow Calin and Prins (2015) measure of prior executive experience to control for the possibility that presidents with prior executive experience may be selecting out of longer wars. I continue to control for whether a president was Southern (Dafoe and Caughey, 2016). Finally, Horowitz et al. (2005) find that older men in democracies are more likely to initiate conflict because of concerns about legacy. I include a control for president age to account for the possibility that older presidents fight

⁷This coding procedure over-weighs wars that start later in a year or end early in a year. Luckily, it seems this is the case for quite a few wars across the distribution of presidential narcissism. The most notable cases are US involvement in WW2 (starts in December of 1941) and US involvement in Vietnam (ends in January of 1973.) For the sake of robustness, I include the results of models where I cut these wars by a year (WW2 begins in 1942, and Vietnam ends in 1972). Results remain largely the same and are found in the Appendix.

in longer wars for legacy-creation.

At the domestic level I control for the effects of economic recession using the National Bureau of Economic Statistics' definition and data (2010). Economic recession could reduce the likelihood of being at war by leaving presidents with fewer resources and greater constraints. Finally, I borrow from Howell and Pevehouse (2005) to code whether there was a unified government. A unified government could raise the likelihood of war involvement because the president faces less constraints.

At the structural level, I account for the general level of global conflict by taking the raw number of MIDS worldwide. Because of the consistent focus on the Cold War in IR scholarship, I create a binary variable to control for the effects of the Cold War (1945 to 1991). Both variables could raise the likelihood of war duration because they capture a more contentious international environment.

Independent Variable: Presidential Narcissism

To measure presidential narcissism, I follow a Big-5 procedure similar to Watts et al. (2013). This means that I first use a convenience sample from Leckelt et al. (2018) to create a facet-level model of NARQ-measured narcissism. I then apply this model to historian ratings of US president's Big-5 facets from Rubenzer et al. (2000) for presidents serving between 1897-2008. The Rubenzer et al. (2000) data is the result of presidential biographers and experts taking the NEO-PI-R (Costa and McCrae, 2008) from the perspective of a figure they specialize in. The biographers and experts are asked to consider the NEO-PI-R from the perspective of their respective figure 5 years before their presidential inauguration. I leave detailed discussion in the Appendix.

The distribution's raw scores resembled distributions commonly found in non-leader populations: normally distributed with a modest right skew. I standardize the raw scores

for the presidents at 0. The results are presented in Table 1 below. In the interest of helping visualize the relationship between narcissism and war duration, Table 1 also includes the raw number of days an administration was at war, as well as the percentage of time that administration was at war.

Table 1: Presidents Ranked by Standardized Narcissism

President	Narcissism	Term	% of Pres at War	# of Days at War
Lyndon B Johnson	2.167	1963-1969	77%	1443
Theodore Roosevelt	1.528	1901-1909	0%	0
Richard Nixon	1.412	1969-1974	72%	1468
Franklin D Roosevelt	0.903	1933-1945	28%	1222
Bill Clinton	0.649	1993-2001	3%	78
John F Kennedy	0.630	1961-1963	0%	0
Woodrow Wilson	0.526	1913-1921	20%	573
George W Bush	0.314	2001-2009	4%	120
Ronald Reagan	-0.153	1981-1989	0%	0
Herbert Hoover	-0.242	1929-1933	0%	0
Harry S Truman	-0.538	1945-1953	37%	1063
Warren G Harding	-0.739	1921-1923	0%	0
Jimmy Carter	-0.775	1977-1981	0%	0
Dwight Eisenhower	-0.780	1953-1961	6%	188
George HW Bush	-0.864	1989-1993	6%	85
Gerald Ford	-0.912	1974-1977	0%	0
Calvin Coolidge	-1.007	1923-1929	0%	0
William Howard Taft	-1.032	1909-1913	0%	0
William McKinley	-1.087	1897-1901	13%	170

Empirical Results

First, Table 2 displays the results of the Weibull models. In all 4 models, Narcissism retains conventional levels of statistical significance with negative coefficients.⁸ Negative signs mean that the variable has the effect of lengthening war. Terrain also achieves significance

⁸In the Appendix, I re-run models using Watts' measure of grandiose narcissism. This results in similar but stronger results. The seemingly stronger coefficients likely result Watts' measure being standardized across all US Presidents.

at the .1 level relating to shorter wars. This replicates results from Bennett and Stam (1996), and Shirkey (2012).

Table 2: Weibull Models of US War Duration

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	war_surv			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Narcissism	-2.336** (0.907)	-2.326** (0.919)	-2.654*** (0.859)	-1.090*** (0.386)
OPDA	-1.420 (2.379)	-1.464 (2.444)		
Southern	1.606 (1.326)	1.472 (1.695)	2.064 (1.347)	
Terrain	3.431* (1.921)	3.498* (2.016)	2.851* (1.657)	
Number of Actors		0.020 (0.155)	0.013 (0.145)	
BOP	-3.832 (3.301)	-3.708 (3.446)	-3.287 (3.268)	
Observations	260	260	260	260
Log Likelihood	-33.939	-33.931	-34.105	-37.734

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Second, Table 3 displays results of a logistic regression model run on President-Year data where the independent variable is a binary variable signifying whether the United States was at war during that President-Year. Narcissism significantly relates to the likelihood that the United States will be at war in a given year.⁹ Note that the constant is significant and negative. This reflects the rare nature of US involvement in extended wars all things equal.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 help visualize and contextualize the results through raw data. I graph the relationship between narcissism and days at war, and percent of presidency at war. Notably, few observations are on the line-of-fit. However, this is expected given the rarity of war. Furthermore, the line-of-fit actually underestimates how long highly narcissistic leaders would be at war. The most notable outliers are Theodore Roosevelt and Harry

⁹I re-run models with Watts' measure of grandiose narcissism in the Appendix. Results remain similar.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results

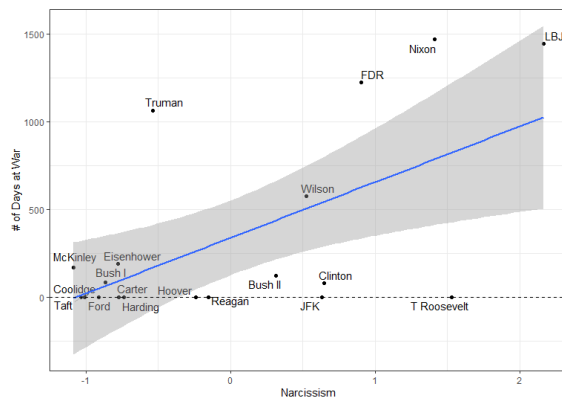
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	At War
Presidential Narcissism	1.278*** (0.440)
Republican Admin	-0.117 (0.920)
Prior Military Exp	1.001 (1.207)
Prior Combat Exp	-1.286 (1.129)
Southern	0.120 (0.693)
Prior Exec Exp	0.369 (1.272)
President Age	0.094* (0.054)
Unified Govt	0.925 (0.788)
Recession	-0.465 (0.588)
Cold War	0.343 (1.110)
nMIDS Worldwide	-0.029 (0.029)
Constant	-7.755** (3.278)
Observations	130
Log Likelihood	-47.927
Akaike Inf. Crit.	119.854
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Truman.

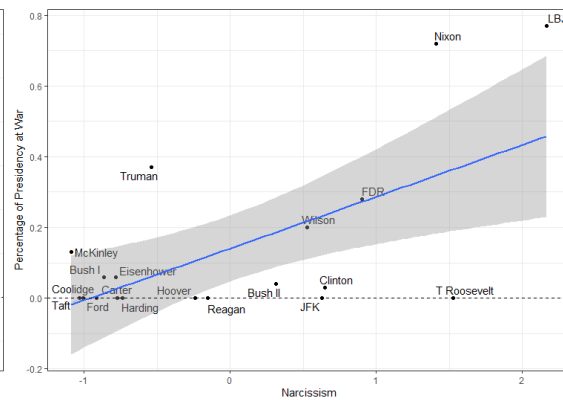
Theodore Roosevelt arguably aligns with theoretical expectations when explored further. While Roosevelt never led the US to war, he certainly approached the prospect of war like a narcissist. Roosevelt sacrificed a cozy cabinet position to form the Rough Riders and volunteer for combat in the Spanish-American War. Roosevelt volunteered cause he saw his “one chance to cut my little notch on the stick that stands as the measuring rod in

every family” (Brands 2019, 335). Additionally, while president, Roosevelt almost brought the United States to war with Germany during the Venezuelan Crisis (Livermore, 1946; Parsons, 1971). Roosevelt did not shy away from war. Instead, he believed it strengthened people.

Harry Truman remained in a conflict for a great period of time despite his lack of narcissism. Given that my theory is probabilistic, not every observation will fit the theory perfectly. The Korean War occurred at the height of the Cold War. Truman, and many of his contemporaries, believed a great deal was at stake in Korea. Narcissism is not the only variable which could determine the duration of wars. Rather, it is a consistently important predictor of war duration. Regardless, Truman devoted serious effort to finding a peace deal. This effort was continued by Eisenhower.



(a) Figure 2.1



(b) Figure 2.2

These results collectively support the claim that narcissistic leaders extend war duration. I now turn to comparing Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon to probe the theory’s causal mechanisms. Nixon and Eisenhower land on opposite ends of the narcissism spectrum. Additionally, Nixon and Eisenhower were both Republican presidents elected during the Cold War to replace a Democratic president. They both inherited a war from their Democratic Party predecessor. The Korean and Vietnam Wars, while unique in many

respects, do share many commonalities. Both wars saw combat located in Asia, and were seen by the Great Powers as a battle of ideology while the Koreans and Vietnamese saw the conflicts as issues of sovereignty.¹⁰

Comparing Eisenhower and Nixon

Eisenhower's Exit from Korea

Eisenhower inherited the Korean War from Truman. Given his lack of narcissism, Eisenhower should be likely to bend to the logic of accountability (Croco, 2011). In other words, Eisenhower should've pursued a quick exit to the Korean War given his lack of political culpability. Despite criticizing the Truman administration for its handling of the Korean War, Eisenhower was supportive of Truman's efforts to scale back US involvement and find a negotiated settlement. However, when running for office, Eisenhower declared that a successful armistice required a "wholly new Administration...(the Truman) Administration cannot be expected to repair what it failed to prevent." (Bowie and Immerman, 78). By the time Eisenhower was elected, negotiations to end hostilities were operating since July 1951.

Shortly after his electoral victory, Eisenhower went to Korea under great secrecy on November 29, 1952 (Ibid., 83-84). He spent two weeks with his National Security (NSC) team, debating how to end hostilities in Korea. He also spent this time interviewing troops on the ground to gather a more complete picture of the situation (Pach and Richardson, 86). The trip provided Eisenhower with a more confident appraisal of the need to end the Korean War quickly. He remarked that the US could not "continue to accept casualties

¹⁰A more detailed justification for comparing the Korean and Vietnam Wars is found in the Appendix. The Appendix also has a section which dives deeper into Eisenhower and Nixon's personalities to probe the validity of the narcissism measure.

without any visible results” (Ibid., 86).

Upon returning from Korea, General MacArthur argued for a conference with Stalin to negotiate neutralization of Korea, Japan, and Western Europe. If no settlement could be reached at this conference, he argued, then the US should launch an all-out assault including the use of atomic weapons, the spread of radioactive materials, and amphibious assault (Ibid., 86). Eisenhower politely declined MacArthur’s suggestions. He was privately against aggressive solutions that would turn world opinion sour, and in letters admitted that he was still uncertain about how to overcome deadlock (Ibid., 86).

Peace talks had broken down over the issue of repatriation of prisoners of war (Ibid., 86). Over the next few months, Eisenhower held multiple meetings with this NSC, as well as civilian leaders. After three months, there was agreement for a contingency plan if negotiated settlement failed. Namely, the US would target Manchuria and China with atomic weapons (Ibid., 86). While using atomic weapons is a harrowing thought, the norm against using atomic bombs had not yet gained traction. Secretary of State Dulles stepped up diplomatic pressure through a series of obtuse warnings against China that failure to reach an agreement would have disastrous consequences. These signals likely failed to convey the message Dulles intended (Ibid., 87). Regardless of Dulles’ messaging, the war weariness of post-Stalinist Soviet leadership allowed the North Koreans and Chinese to accept a compromise on the prisoner of war, which subsequently generated an armistice agreement on July 27th (Ibid., 88).

Eisenhower’s handling of the Korean War aligns with my theory’s expectations as he behaves opposite how a narcissist would. First, Eisenhower never saw the war effort as a means to promote himself. In fact, his initial attempts in working towards a settlement included a private trip to Korea. Eisenhower’s goals remained singularly focused on finding a way to bring POWs home while locating a settlement. Second, Eisenhower lacked

arrogance. He took time to develop strategies, and tried to include many voices in the decision-room. Eisenhower was uninterested in shows of strength that would shore up his own ego. When MacArthur presented a grandiose vision of a massive assault on Korea, Eisenhower held great doubt over the feasibility of the operation, and the impact such an assault would have on world opinion. A narcissist would find such an operation attractive. Third, while I cannot fully evaluate my third causal mechanism as there was not enough time to notice any shifts in Eisenhower's strategy, we do have a picture of what information Eisenhower considered important. Aside from taking full account of the geopolitical context, Eisenhower's private remarks regarding US casualties, and his insistence on finding a solution that brought US POWs home, suggest that how the war impacted US troops was an important consideration.

Fourth, Eisenhower did not approach bargaining from a personal perspective. Eisenhower never expressed publicly or privately that he was being disrespected during negotiations, or that he would personally be able to persuade his opponents. Alternatively, Eisenhower let the negotiators do their job. Finally, Eisenhower didn't express any worry about whether he looked tough or competent. Instead, Eisenhower was prudent and separated his own needs from the situation (Nye, 63). As will be made clear in the next subsection, Eisenhower's handling of the Korean War was starkly different from Nixon's handling of Vietnam.

Nixon's Extension of the Vietnam War

Like Truman, Johnson had begun the process of winding down US involvement in Vietnam through peace talks. Sensing that a peaceful resolution to the Vietnam War would damage his chances in the 1968 Presidential election, Nixon threw a monkey-wrench in Johnson's plans. Nixon used Anne Chennault, a well-connected member of the China lobby, and

Bui Diem, the South Vietnamese (SV) ambassador, as messengers to Thieu, the SV leader. Nixon signaled directly that Thieu should drag his feet during Johnson's peace talks, because he would 'get a better deal with Nixon'. Haldeman, one of Nixon's top advisors, reflects that Nixon dramatically leaned into his political intrigue, playing the soundtrack to the World War II film *Victory at Sea* "loudly" (342).

Shortly following his election, Nixon centered Vietnam decision-making on himself. He used Kissinger to muffle the State and Defense Departments (Farrell 350, Nguyen 2008 185). When presented with various options ranging from gradual withdrawal to indefinite presence in Vietnam, Nixon referred to unilateral withdrawal as "capitulation" and a "bug out" (Steinberg 1996, 172). Rather than merely disagree, Nixon had plans for gradual withdrawal removed from the memo (Ibid., 171). Nixon's initial strategy to gain leverage in negotiations with North Vietnam (NV) was to unite massive bombing with diplomatic pressure on NV through the Soviet Union and China (Nguyen 186). Meanwhile, he publicly touted Vietnamization as a means to bring US troops home. Nixon had come to this strategy while on the campaign trail, suggesting that the memo was merely an exercise in re-establishing his commitment to victory in Vietnam. Nixon was "confident he could keep dissenting opinions and the cumbersome bureaucracy in check, and that his hawkish reputation made him the ideal man for the job, (he) was sure his strategy would end the war within six months" (Nguyen 187).

Nixon used improved relations with Cambodia to begin an intense secret bombing campaign of NV supply lines. Nixon also stepped up reconnaissance missions to demonstrate to the Soviets and NV that he was willing to escalate more than Johnson (Ibid., 188). Nixon, in his memoirs, indicates the bombing campaigns third purpose. Nixon referred to NV's spring offensive as a "deliberate test, clearly designed to take the measure of me" (Steinberg, 174).

By April, Nixon's strategy created no progress in Paris' negotiations. On April 15th, North *Korea* shot down a US spy plane. Nixon writes in his memoirs "we were being tested, and therefore force must be met with force". The NSC advised against retaliation. Nixon regretted not retaliating, and called for a massive bombing run of NV bases in Cambodia, and considered using nuclear weapons (Nguyen 188-189).

By late May there was still no progress in Paris. Nixon sent a letter to Ho Chi Minh calling for peace. Nixon also sent a threat, stating that if peace was not reached by November 1st, there would be grave consequences (Nyugen 190). On August 30th, Ho's reply was received. The reply merely re-established NV's position: that the war was an act of US aggression, and that NV's 10-point-plan was "a logical and reasonable basis for the settlement of the Vietnamese problem".¹¹ Nixon considered Ho's reply a "cold re-buff" (Nyugen, 191). NV's position at Paris remained the same following Ho's death in September.

Nixon, since failing to meet his expectation for war resolution, met with his advisors to reevaluate US policy towards Vietnam. Kissinger advised ending the war quickly by pushing for a settlement, and sharp military action if Hanoi refuses. In other words, staying the course of Nixon's current strategy. State Secretary Rogers and Defense Secretary Laird feared escalation would spark domestic unrest and advised caution. Nixon, "exhilarated by Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon in late July and *incensed by NV defiance*, leaned towards toughness and thus Kissinger's plan" (Ibid., 191). Nixon refused to update his strategy despite data suggesting otherwise.

In late October, Nixon ordered Operation Giant Lance to pressure the Soviets into pressuring NV (Sagan and Suri, 2003). Notably, Operation Giant Lance was a physical

¹¹A transcript of this exchange can be found at the University of Santa Barbara's Presidency Project website: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/letters-the-president-and-president-ho-chi-minh-the-democratic-republic-vietnam>. (Accessed: March 9, 2021)

display of Nixon's Madman Theory. The Operation included the brandishing of nuclear weapons at detectable altitudes outside eastern-Soviet borders to demonstrate that Nixon was 'crazy about NV' and willing to escalate with nuclear weapons. Operation Giant Lance failed to generate leverage. Coincidentally, although Nixon ultimately turned down Operation Duck Hook, which would have included the use of nuclear weapons against NV, he regretted doing so (Nyugen, 192).

By January 1970, intelligence estimates painted another bleak picture of Nixon's strategy in Vietnam. Accordingly, the popularity of the Vietnam War was declining at home (Ibid.). Despite this clear and bleak picture, Nixon was confident that "his diplomatic-military offensives would ultimately succeed in garnering an American-dictated peace" (Ibid.). In March 1970, General Lon Nol successfully took power in Cambodia. Nixon supported the coup. In April, Nixon ordered Operation Total Victory to demonstrate the effectiveness of his Vietnamization policy to the world (Ibid., 193). The Operation failed to meet Nixon's expectations, and was followed by nationwide anti-war protests throughout May.

Congress, encouraged by public demonstrations, tried to cut funding for Nixon's Vietnam policy. While Congress couldn't cut funding, they repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as a symbolic act of disapproval. Instead of re-evaluating his strategy, Nixon struck back at his domestic opponents throughout the summer (Ibid., 194). In response to protests and Congressional opposition, Nixon supported the Huston Plan, a precursor to Watergate. The Huston Plan included the violation of civil liberties, such as wiretapping, opening mail, and burglary to quash domestic opposition (Ibid.).

Throughout 1970, Nixon escalated US operations in Cambodia. Steinberg (1996) covers in detail how these operations lacked support by US military intelligence. Of note, Nixon went to a briefing by the US military on the outcome of an operation. Nixon interrupted the Joint Chiefs as they tried to give feedback on the operation to express the importance of

massive escalation. He claimed “you have to electrify people with a bold decision. Bold decisions make history. Like Teddy Roosevelt charging up San Juan Hill - a small event but traumatic, and people took notice” (Quoted on page 205 of Steinberg (1996)).

By the end of 1970, Kissinger had begun considering a ‘decent interval’ strategy which would allow the US to exit Vietnam, while distancing itself from the eventual collapse of the SV government. Nixon had not yet abandoned the prospect of victory which he defined as an independent non-communist SV. Nixon believed that he had not yet fully implemented major military action or superpower diplomacy (Ibid., 195).

Nixon opened 1971 by executing Operation Lam Son 719. Lam Son was a major offensive against NV in Cambodia. “The intent of this major ‘*show of strength*’ was to prove the success of Vietnamization to the world...and to prove...Nixon was not afraid of expanding the ground war into Laos”(Ibid., 195). Once Congress learned about Lam Son, they immediately worked to cut funding. Nixon met with Laird and Rogers to gather support for the operation. However, once Laird and Rogers learned that NV had acquired the military plans for Lam Son, they rejected the Operation. Despite domestic outcry, and the fact that NV had acquired the military plans for Lam Son, Nixon persisted and ordered the attack on February 7th (Ibid., 196). The operation failed, with cameras capturing and broadcasting SV forces’ retreating worldwide.

On the domestic front, during spring 1971, US veterans staged a massive protest of the Vietnam War in Washington, DC. The “May Day” protests followed shortly after. Nixon ordered arrests on questionable grounds (Ibid., 197). The Pentagon Papers were released by the New York Times on June 13th, implicitly criticizing US foreign policy towards Vietnam from 1945 to 1967. Nixon’s advisors recommended non-intervention as Nixon was not explicitly mentioned or critiqued. Nixon disagreed and went on the offensive against what he considered his detractors (Ibid., 197). Nixon began the Plumbers Operation to break into

the offices of real and potential domestic adversaries.

On the foreign policy front, there was significant progress in thawing US relations with the Soviet Union and China through spring 1971. Nixon believed he could bring immense Soviet-Sino pressure on NV, and subsequently ordered Kissinger present NV negotiators with an ambitious and sweeping peace proposal that allowed for unilateral US withdrawal. Hanoi responded with a plan emphasizing a US timetable for withdrawal by the end of 1971, and the ousting of the SV leader Thieu. Nixon rejected this plan throughout the remainder of 1971, believing that a US meeting with Chinese leaders successfully isolated Hanoi (Ibid., 198).

At the dawn of 1972, Nixon and Kissinger believed 1972 would be a year of reckoning (Ibid. 198). Nyugen writes that despite being able to wage war against NV how they saw fit; “victory had not come, but Nixon intended to use his two major weapons - great-power diplomacy and military escalation - yet again in 1972” (Ibid.). While Kissinger aimed for a ‘decent interval’ and US withdrawal, Nixon remained steadfast in his goal of forcing NV and SV to accept a US-dictated settlement with the option to reenter the war at a later point (Ibid.). Regardless of his unwavering ambitious goal, Nixon remained insecure about his upcoming reelection campaign (Ibid.).

Nixon focused on a major public relations campaign to raise support. This included timed and heavily-publicized diplomatic efforts. Nixon’s trip to China was planned for February 1972. Kissinger referred to Nixon’s obsession with public relations at the time as “monomaniacal” (Greenberg 55). Nixon handpicked friendly reporters to follow him to China, while “blackballing enemies” (Ibid.). Nixon nagged his aides to reassure constant recognition of every detail during the trip. Kissinger recalls that Nixon “seemed obsessed by the fear that he was not receiving adequate credit” (Ibid., 56).

NV recognized the importance of the China trip and forestalled their next meeting

with the US negotiators from March 20 to April 15. On March 30, NV forces armed with Soviet tanks and weapons mounted a successful large-scale offensive against SV. Despite putting Detente at risk, Nixon ordered Operation Linebacker I which included the bombing of Hanoi, and the mining of NV ports in early May 1972. To shore up domestic approval, Nixon had his campaign engineer well-publicized, but phony letters supporting him (Nguyen, 199).

During May 1972, Nixon turned his attention to Detente with the Soviet Union. He dedicated a similar effort towards reassuring the trip to the Soviet Union was meticulously covered by the press (Greenberg, 57). Greenberg notes that “Nixon never learned the fine points of arms control” (57). Instead, Nixon focused on improving lines of communication while “projecting the aura of a peacemaker who would keep America strong” (Ibid., 57). Nixon’s aide Chuck Colson noted that the policies themselves were secondary. Instead, the focus was to “strengthen the president’s image as one of the great world leaders of this century” (Ibid., 57). Nixon privately admitted to Kissinger that he didn’t believe the “SALT thing is going to be all that important (but would) break the back of this generation of Democratic leaders” (Ibid., 57). Nixon returned to the US on June 1st via helicopter to a floodlit US Capitol where he made a speech, underscoring his need to be reelected, before a joint session of Congress (Ibid., 58).

On October 6th, Nixon argued to Kissinger that US image was more important than actual victory, and that time would vindicate his strategy. Nixon confided: “Vietnam is important because of our prisoners and because we don’t want 17 million people to come under Communism, *but...however*, those, basically, are not the really important issues. The important issue is how the US comes out in two ways. One: whether the US in all parts of the world - whether our enemies, neutrals, or allies are convinced the US went the extra mile in standing by its friends...Second point: Now, the historical process moves extremely

slowly. I think the NV are hurting one hell of a lot more than the CIA indicates...the mining has had to hurt them. The bombing has had to hurt them. It's supposed to be pretty good. It's just got to have done it. Now, they're hurting, and hurting badly."¹² Nixon further emphasized that SV would fall given the nature of the SV people and SV's relationship to NV. Therefore, he concluded again, that his strategy was effective, blame lies with the inadequacy of the SV, and that the important thing is "how does the US look in the way it handles this goddamn thing?" (Ibid., 96)

Around election-day 1972, Kissinger attempted to secure his place in the administration through a unilateral push to secure a US-dictated peace in Vietnam. Thieu refused Kissinger's proposal. Nixon, who felt threatened by Kissinger's media attention, "took delight in Kissinger's failure" (Nguyen 200). Nixon was reelected, carrying 48 states, on November 7th. Nixon made a renewed effort to bully both North and South Vietnam into accepting a US-dictated peace deal (Ibid.). Nixon then initiated Operation Linebacker II (a.k.a the Christmas Bombing).

On the surface, the Christmas Bombing seems like a natural reaction to NV refusal to accept a US dictated-peace. Archival evidence indicates otherwise. Back in October, Hanoi had agreed to Nixon's demands. At that time he confided to Haig that he would "bomb the bejeezus out of them" (Ibid.). Nixon also told Kissinger the day before his reelection "After the election, we'll bomb the bastards" (Ibid.). Hughes argues Nixon had used B-52 bombing "to make Hanoi's acceptance of the 'decent interval' terms look like a military victory rather than surrender on the installment plan" (Ibid.). Nixon had plans to massively bomb NV, despite agreement to his peace plan, before his election. As Hughes argues, Nixon was just waiting for an excuse. Nixon received his excuse when Hanoi rejected Nixon's trumped-up demands.

¹²I took the liberty of trimming down this longer quote by removing frequently repeated phrases like 'of course' and similar Nixon verbal tics. The original quotes can be found on pg 96 of Hughes (2015).

NV withdrew the demand for the release of 30,000 civilian prisoners in the South and was still willing to accept Nixon's original demands from October which would return American POWs. In the Oval Office on December 13th, Nixon confided to Kissinger that the American public's "got to hear it clear and loud and simple. Prisoners they will understand" (Hughes 151). The Christmas Bombing was sold as an effort to save American POWs. In reality, American POWs would've been returned following NV's acceptance of Nixon's October proposal. Nixon retracted this proposal, and made a more aggressive proposal, in the hopes it would provide an excuse to run a massive bombing campaign to save his image. Nixon seemed to delight in the operation, as Hughes notes a Joint Chiefs of Staff's study of Vietnam decision-making concluded that Nixon micromanaged the details of the operation even going as far as to pinpoint targets (Ibid. 154). Targets were expansive, and the bombings led to the deaths of 200 Vietnamese non-combatants (Ibid. 152).

Finally, on January 8th, 1973, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resumed peace talks. SV held out for a better deal, but Nixon threatened to cut off US aid immediately unless SV acquiesced to Nixon's demands (Ibid., 200). SV relented on Jan 21st, and a peace treaty was signed on Jan 23rd. Nixon was irritated by the public's reaction of relief, instead hoping for some sort of celebration (Greenberg, 54). Despite Vietnamization, the US experienced about as many casualties under Nixon as they did under Johnson (Ibid., 54).

I now turn to evaluating how my theory accounts for Nixon's decision-making. First, Nixon clearly emphasized his own gain at the expense of state interests. Two major events demonstrate how pursuing his own needs furthered US involvement in Vietnam. First, Nixon's attempted to ruin Johnson's peace deal which would end the Vietnam War. While Eisenhower made moves to draw the Korean War to a close before ascending to the presidency, Nixon had prolonged the Vietnam War to win the presidency in actions that arguably amount to felony and treason (Farrell 2017, 342-343). Nixon's prioritized his

own personal and political gain at the country's expense. Critics of my interpretation could argue that Nixon felt strongly that letting Johnson leave Vietnam would be bad for the US' strategic foothold in Asia. In other words, critics could argue that Nixon committed treason because of domino theory. Nixon's later statements on October 6th 1972 indicating that he didn't care about domino theory as much as he cared about 'US' reputation, Nixon himself admitted in private that he broke up Johnson's peace treaty for the sake of his election campaign (Farrell, 342-343).

Second, I argue that Nixon's private remarks on October 6th were an extension of Nixon's obsession with his own image despite his use of language referring to the US' reputation. Nixon had attention centered on his image throughout his presidency, and even after his re-election during the Christmas Bombings. There is little reason to believe that Nixon suddenly shifted gears to caring only about US reputation while privately confiding to Kissinger on Oct 6th. Additionally, I argue it is important to consider Nixon placing 'US' reputation ahead of issues related to American POWs and domino theory. Most importantly, the plan to use Operation Linebacker II as early as October 1972, led Nixon to prolong the war past his reelection until Jan 1973. The fact that Nixon still used Operation Linebacker II despite NV agreement to his October plan which would return US POWs reflects Nixon's willingness to sacrifice US interests for the sake of his own interests. The Christmas Bombing is unsurprising, as Nixon had referred to the importance of making electrifying, historically notable decisions, as early as mid-1970. Furthermore, the fact the bombing occurred after his reelection, separates his image-related concerns from political survival.

Second, Nixon clearly displayed arrogance and belief that he could personally shift the tide of the war through his 'unique' abilities. Nixon's strategy emphasizes toughness (massive bombing campaigns) and persuasive ability (diplomatic thawing with USSR

and China to pressure NV). A critic could argue that Nixon's strategy merely reflects an acknowledgment of the importance of unifying diplomatic and military tools. I argue that Nixon's belief that he was the 'ideal man for the job', supports my inclination that this choice of strategy emerged from narcissistic arrogance regarding his unique abilities. Regardless of the veracity of his beliefs, Nixon believed he was the perfect man for the job because of his experience and hawkish reputation (Nguyen 187). Nixon centered decision-making on himself, selected Kissinger because of Kissinger's agreement, and intentionally kept dissenting voices out of the decision-making room (Ibid. 187). Perhaps most indicative of his arrogance, Nixon believed he would net a US-dictated peace within six months.

Relatedly, and third, Nixon failed to update his strategy. At multiple points during the war, there was clear evidence that Nixon should've updated or changed his strategy. First, Nixon met with his advisors towards the end of 1969 to assess his strategy, given that there had been no progress. While his advisors were split on how to proceed, Nixon opted for a renewal of his military-diplomatic offensive. Second, by January 1970, intelligence reported that Nixon's strategy was not working, along with his popularity declining at home. Despite this clearly negative picture, Nixon remained confident that his strategy would generate a US-dictated peace. Third, following public outcry and Congressional movement to cut funding after the failure of Operation Total Victory, Nixon struck back at his opponents and failed to update his strategy. Fourth, by the end of 1970, Kissinger had shifted goals, while Nixon remained steadfast. In 1971, even when Rogers and Laird accurately gauged Operation Lam Som 719 as unwise, Nixon persisted. Finally, at the beginning of 1972, Nixon believed his strategy would finally bear fruit. While Soviet and Chinese pressure ultimately did shift NV's position at the bargaining table, the peace treaty Nixon achieved was not much different from the one Johnson proposed in 1968.

Fourth, Nixon took the progress of negotiations with NV personally. Nixon attempted to charm Ho Chi Ming into a peace deal by sending a letter. Nixon also backed up this letter requesting a peace deal with an ultimatum and threat. When Ho replied, simply restating NV's position, Nixon took the rejection personally. Instead of updating his strategy or bargaining position, Nixon doubled-down on his strategy because he was inspired by Armstrong's walk on the moon, and angry at what he considered to be NV defiance. Despite evidence that his strategy had failed to move NV's position much, Nixon's private statements on October 6th 1972 reflect an attachment to the idea that his bombing and mining campaigns would hurt the NV. In other words, in Nixon's mind, his decisions and personal influence would yield results after the end of the war.

Fifth, Nixon's desire to protect his image influenced his decision-making. First, Nixon's sudden desire to nuke Cambodia following EC-121 incident with North Korea reflects the influence of personal factors unrelated to the war. As Steinberg (1996) notes, Nixon felt humiliated by North Korea, and desperately wanted to show his strength elsewhere. The fact that Nixon's personal wrestling match with his self-image in other arenas could spillover into his Vietnam policy is covered extensively by Steinberg. Second, part of Nixon's decision to renew his strategy towards mid-1969 was "NV defiance". Third, the entirety of Operation Linebacker II, and Nixon's commitment to bombing despite NV agreement to his terms, likely arose out of a need to protect his image as a strong decision-maker. His earlier private statements in 1970 about the importance of bold decisions like San Juan Hill following negative news from the front further corroborate my argument that Nixon was concerned that his decisions wouldn't live up to historical notability. Fourth, instead of being upset that Kissinger's peace plan failed in 1972, Nixon was delighted because he saw Kissinger as a threat to his image. Finally, it is worth noting the obvious regarding Nixon: he dedicated a lot of time in his presidency towards attacking his detractors, blackballing

‘negative’ journalists, arresting protesters under questionable grounds, and engaging in related behaviors that led up to Watergate.

Limitations and Conclusion

War, compared to most phenomena IR scholars are interested in, ought to be an incredibly rare event given its destructiveness. Furthermore, rational leaders ought to leave wars when commitment problems are not present, and private information no longer prohibits compromise. However, the results of this paper demonstrate that narcissistic leaders extend war duration for reasons unrelated to private information or commitment problems. As hypothesized, narcissistic presidents spend more time worrying about their image, and their reelection than other presidents. These motivations cause them to drag wars out longer than needed.

This study has some limitations. My narcissism measure is not a direct measure. Because of data availability I rely on a proxy measure of narcissism. The measurement has great face validity as figures towards the spectrum’s lower-end like McKinley, Taft, and Coolidge are known for their modesty and sensitivity, while those on the higher-end like Theodore Roosevelt, Nixon, and Johnson are known for high self-absorption and intense focus on self-image. Furthermore, a detailed look at Eisenhower and Nixon were used to illustrate the measure’s validity in the Appendix.

It is important to note that while the case section shares similarities with Steinberg (1996), there are important and nuanced differences. Steinberg compared Eisenhower, Johnson, and Nixon’s pathological narcissism and their handling of the Vietnam War. I compared only Eisenhower and Nixon, and their handling of the Korean and Vietnam Wars respectively. Furthermore, while Steinberg was interested in demonstrating the impact of pathological narcissistic tendencies like narcissistic rage on ‘poor’ war-time

decision-making and strategy, I was interested in demonstrating how trait narcissism impacts decision-making to prolong wars. ‘Poor’ wartime decision-making is only covered by my causal mechanisms discussing strategy. In summary, my case review only shares a common interest in narcissism (broadly construed), and it’s impact on the decision-making of Eisenhower and Nixon. My choice of decision-making tendencies, personality trait, and compared wars differ.

This study’s analysis focused on democratically-elected leaders of a GP - specifically the United States. Future research can clarify if narcissism has similar effects in different regimes, and weaker states. From a broader perspective, it would be interesting if scholars could revisit formerly studied leader traits and experiences from the perspective of leader goals. Finally, there is plenty of work demonstrating that leader-level attributes relate to dispute initiation and length. However, there is little work demonstrating how leader background and personality traits could influence wartime decision-making.

Finally, both Eisenhower and Nixon had considered using nuclear weapons. However, Nixon faced a much steeper normative constraint against using nuclear weapons than Eisenhower did. Furthermore, despite never actually using nuclear weapons in Vietnam, Nixon’s regrets after not using them, suggest that the “Madman” image Nixon was trying to project may have been closer to reality than he realized. Additionally, it is startling that considerations seemed to arise in response to image-related threats. Future research should explore whether narcissistic entitlement and image-maintenance helps explain why some leaders are willing to violate international norms.

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Appendix

Measuring Presidential Narcissism

The Big-5 is useful in creating comprehensive personality profiles. The Big-5, backed by decades of research, finds that human personality can be placed on 5 trait scales: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Costa and McCrae, 2008). Gerber et al. (2011), Dietrich et al. (2012), and Gallagher and Allen (2014) are examples of Political Science research using the Big-5.

Each Big-5 trait can be broken down into 6 facets. This generates 30 scales (Costa and McCrae, 2008). For example, Extroversion broken down into facets, measures Warmth, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity, Excitement-seeking, and Positive Emotions separately. Social and clinical psychologists create facet level models for personality traits and disorders (Hart and Hare, 1994; Widiger and Costa Jr, 2013; Murphy, 2019). Grandiose narcissism is associated with facets of agreeableness (reversed) and extroversion (Miller et al., 2011; Rogoza, 2018).

To create models for various forms of narcissism, Watts et al. (2013) used facets that correlated significantly with different measures of narcissism at .3 or higher in a meta-analysis. The meta-analysis tracked which Big 5 facets correlated with different measures of narcissism in the general population. Watts and colleagues applied those models to

privately-owned data measuring presidential personality on the Big-5, created by Rubenzer et al. (2000). The Rubenzer et al. (2000) data is the result of surveying over 100 presidential historians and experts who had written at least one book length manuscript on a president. Each of these survey respondents answered over 200 questions about a figure they studied. These questions included the 220 item NEO-PI-R used to measure Big 5 facets.

Survey respondents were asked to answer these questions from the mindset of their respective President *5 years before inauguration*. This eliminates concern that my presidential narcissism measure is influenced by dependent variables. Personality measures derived from an individual taking the NEO-PI-R for themselves are often statistically similar to the results of an acquaintance taking the NEO-PI-R on their behalf (Piedmont, 1994). Therefore, ratings of historians and experts who have written book-length manuscripts on select figures are accurate.

I produce a list of presidents based on a model capturing how one would score on the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ). The NARQ is used to measure narcissism as understood through the NARC, and has been found to accurately capture the core of entitlement while still measuring grandiosity on the narcissism spectrum (Krizan and Herlache, 2018). The models produced by Watts and colleagues for grandiose narcissism relied heavily on the NPI which captures grandiosity well, but doesn't fare as well in capturing entitlement. Because the NARC and narcissistic entitlement are core to my main argument that narcissist's pursue self-image gratification regardless of costs to others, I felt compelled to create a list of presidents measured by how they would score on the NARQ.

First, using a convenience survey sample of 828 Germans from Leckelt et al. (2018), I find what Big-5 facets correlate significantly and substantially (over .3) with total NARQ scores. I use this sample because of data availability. This is the only study to date where

the NARQ and NEO-PI-R were administered to a large population. The cut-off of .3 is used to avoid capturing noise specific to the particular sample. The facets that correlated strongly with total NARQ scores were assertiveness, excitement-seeking, compliance, straightforwardness, and modesty. My narcissism measure is created by adding together these facets, weighing each by its correlation coefficient from the survey sample. Modesty is weighted most heavily at -.62, followed by compliance and straightforwardness (both at -.38).

Like Watts et al. (2013), I apply this model to mean ratings of presidential personality facets from Rubenzer et al. (2000) for presidents who served between 1897-2008. This model, although based on a contemporary German survey sample, is capturing timeless personality facets. Only the way in which these facets are behaviorally manifested changes with time. Therefore, the model is applicable to American presidents from earlier time periods. In other words, this model doesn't care if you seek excitement through grand safaris like Theodore Roosevelt, or through tweeting like Donald Trump. All the model cares about is whether specialized historians believed you seek excitement within your culture and time period.

Robustness Checks

Table A1: Cox Hazard Models

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	war_surv			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Narcissism	-1.364 (0.871)	-1.347 (0.890)	-1.955** (0.925)	-0.800** (0.402)
OPDA	-20.519 (19,448.840)	-20.496 (19,464.680)		
Southern	2.105 (1.488)	2.011 (1.600)	2.587 (1.759)	
Terrian	1.168 (1.818)	1.175 (1.866)	0.643 (1.872)	
nActors		0.022 (0.115)	0.030 (0.107)	
BOP	-0.164 (3.832)	0.108 (4.186)	-0.150 (3.847)	
War-Years	260	260	260	260
R ²	0.042	0.042	0.037	0.019
Max. Possible R ²	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110
Log Likelihood	-9.533	-9.515	-10.250	-12.583
Wald Test	4.450 (df = 5)	4.390 (df = 6)	4.800 (df = 5)	3.960** (df = 1)
LR Test	11.142** (df = 5)	11.178* (df = 6)	9.708* (df = 5)	5.043** (df = 1)
Score (Logrank) Test	9.906* (df = 5)	9.910 (df = 6)	8.010 (df = 5)	4.593** (df = 1)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Table A2: Watts Measure

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	war_surv			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Watts Narc	-9.215** (3.650)	-10.402** (4.117)	-8.173*** (2.762)	-1.983*** (0.634)
OPDA	2.020 (3.297)	2.901 (3.752)		
Southern	7.660** (3.635)	7.861** (3.669)	5.529*** (2.003)	
Terrian	4.289* (2.219)	4.786* (2.519)	5.189** (2.431)	
nActors		0.152 (0.194)	0.114 (0.197)	
BOP	-1.197 (3.579)	0.376 (4.196)	-1.493 (3.231)	
Observations	260	260	260	260
Log Likelihood	-28.600	-28.326	-28.628	-35.765

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A3: Watts Measure and Alternative Coding Procedure

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	At War? (1)	At War? (Shortened) (2)
Watts Narc	1.261** (0.556)	
Narcissism		1.023** (0.416)
RepAdmin	0.172 (0.909)	-0.069 (0.929)
Military	0.297 (1.141)	0.988 (1.197)
Combat	-0.842 (1.055)	-0.782 (1.085)
Southern	0.323 (0.694)	0.479 (0.724)
ExecExp	1.044 (1.202)	0.313 (1.261)
Age	0.078 (0.049)	0.100* (0.054)
Unified	0.840 (0.758)	0.849 (0.794)
Recession	-0.467 (0.573)	-0.621 (0.600)
ColdWar	0.982 (1.084)	0.278 (1.104)
nMIDSWorldWide	-0.030 (0.029)	-0.039 (0.031)
Constant	-7.786** (3.181)	-8.157** (3.348)
Observations	130	130
Log Likelihood	-50.339	-46.657
Akaike Inf. Crit.	124.677	117.315

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Why Compare Korea and Vietnam?

The Vietnam War was different from the Korean War in a variety of respects. Most importantly these two wars differed in the time they took place, the countries involved, the strategies employed by warring parties, the geographic terrain, and it's relationship to the height of the Cold War. I have controlled for strategy, terrain, and worldwide instability in my statistical analysis. Despite these differences, the two war efforts shared a great deal in common when considering international constraints and incentives. Both wars involved the US, broadly speaking, fighting for what they believed to be credibility in the face of a

Communist Soviet-supported aggressor. Both wars occurred in Asia, neighboring Maoist China, were seen as wars of independence by the North Koreans and North Vietnamese respectively, and involved a North-South divide of a previously unified country.

Furthermore, the state of American domestic politics was quite similar. Most obviously, Eisenhower and Nixon were both Republican ‘Cold Warriors’ replacing Democratic Presidents. Furthermore, Gallup found that following the election of Eisenhower, the US public moved from a 37% to 50% support for the statement that ‘US involvement in Korea was not a mistake’ (Crabtree, 2003). Meanwhile, Nixon, during the first four months of his presidency, earned a 44% approval rating for his handling of Vietnam, with nearly a third of Americans uncertain. When announcing a peace offer in mid-May, Nixon’s approval on Vietnam went up to 52% (Carroll, 2004). While Nixon faced a divided government, the Republican Party’s numerical superiority in Congress during the beginning of Eisenhower’s term doesn’t adequately represent the strong divisions within the Republican Party at the time (Pack and Richardson 1991, 42).

Probing the Validity of the Narcissism Measure

Dwight Eisenhower’s Lack of Narcissism

For the 19 presidents studied in this paper, Eisenhower scored 6th lowest in grandiose narcissism. This signifies that Eisenhower has minimal narcissistic tendencies. Unlike Nixon, who clawed his way to the presidency by any means, Eisenhower’s dutiful military service practically brought the presidency to him. Eisenhower was confident, but modest, duty-bound, and uninterested in acclaim.

First, Eisenhower was exceptionally modest for a modern US president. He repeatedly quoted General Connor’s adage “Always take your job seriously, never yourself.” (Pack

and Richardson 1991, 4). Where a narcissist would enjoy the attention that comes with the presidency, Eisenhower guarded his private life from the public eye (Ibid., 43). Eisenhower's modesty even impacted the naming of his meeting spaces. Eisenhower would entertain guests at Franklin Roosevelt's retreat *Shangri-La*. He changed the name to Camp David, after his only grandson, citing Roosevelt's name for the retreat as "just a little fancy for a Kansas farm boy" (Ibid., 44).

Second, Eisenhower was uninterested in acclaim. Eisenhower told a stream of prominent visitors to Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers "I do not want to be president of the United States and I want no other political office or political connection of any kind" (Ibid., 1). He believed that presidential aspirations would interfere with his ability to serve (Ibid., 2). When offered the position of presiding officer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he accepted, but considered the job second to his presidency of Columbia University (Ibid., 14). Regardless of position, Eisenhower led from behind (Nye 2019, 62). Eisenhower eventually accepted the push for the presidency for two reasons. First, to prevent the election of Senator Robert Taft who was seen as too hawkish. Second, to make Truman's foreign and security policies more sustainable (Pach and Richardson, 1991; Bowie and Immerman, 1998; Nye, 2019).

Third, Eisenhower was exceptionally duty-bound. While a narcissist like Nixon will be exceptionally willing to bend rules and betray organizational interests to further their own interests, Eisenhower put his needs second to the institutions he served. In fact, Steinberg (1996) argues that Eisenhower's healthy degree of narcissism allowed him to disconnect his personal feelings from questions of national security. Nye (2019) argues that Eisenhower was able to keep his emotional needs separate from his analysis of foreign policy issues (63). Instead, Eisenhower was driven to serve. He is described by contemporaries as 'trustworthy' (Ibid., 63). Part of his reservation to running for president was his fidelity to duty (Pack, 1).

Duty is also the only reason he stayed on as Chief of Staff during the Truman administration (Ibid., 11). Nye goes further in commending Eisenhower's duty-bound ethics when he compares Eisenhower's lack of deceptive practices while president as far down the scale when compared to Franklin Roosevelt's lies and Donald Trump's tweets' (67).

Richard Nixon's Narcissism

Meanwhile, Richard Nixon, while not known for being particularly gregarious or charming, still scores third highest in grandiose narcissism for the time period under study. This is likely a reflection of his intense entitlement and self-absorption, which are arguably un-matched among past US presidents. Nixon had unbridled ambition. Nixon was hostile, duplicitous, and aggressive in the pursuit of his goals, paid an inordinate amount of attention to his inflated self-image, and spent a great deal of his time putting others down to prop up his own ego.

First, Nixon was ambitious and pursued his goals with intensity. Farrell (2017) notes that Nixon confidants explained his aggressive ambition as a response to some 'deep hurt' and 'rejection'. Farrell goes on to argue that Nixon's grandiose goals and romantic visions were substitutes for meaningful relations (48). Farrell, although not a psychological historian, joins Abrahamsen (1978), Steinberg (1996), and Volkan et al. (2007) in positing that Nixon was some sort of narcissist.¹³ Nixon earned the nickname 'Tricky Dick' because of his unsavory campaign tactics. In pursuit of political office, Nixon would step over anyone who stood in his way, and sacrifice many to achieve his goals (Farrell, 2017).

Second, Steinberg (1996), who studied Nixon from a psychodynamic perspective, has detailed at length the archival evidence pointing to Nixon's personal obsession with his

¹³It is important to note that Volkan and colleagues argue that Nixon's narcissism was exaggerated but not malignant. In other words, Nixon arguably does not fit the sort of concepts covered by scholars of pathological and disordered narcissism like Post (1991).

image. Likewise, Greenberg (2008) argues that each of Nixon's decisions was made with attention drawn to his image and his legacy. Illustrative of this fact is Nixon's private insistence on public funding being re-directed to a public relations coach. Private memorandum from the White House during the Nixon years express Nixon's concern that he did not look tough or intelligent enough. In particular Nixon writes that given 'the millions of dollars that go into one lousy thirty-second television spot advertising a deodorant, it is unbelievable that his own image didn't receive equal attention' (Nixon and Oudes, 1989; Logevall and Preston, 2008). Nixon had scribbled on a note to himself: "Foreign Policy=Strength...Must emphasize-Courage. Stands alone...Knows more than anyone else. Towers above advisers. World Leader" (Reeves, 2001).

Finally, Nixon reacted to challenges and criticism with hostility and anger. Ehrlichman described Nixon's rants to 'the Queen of Hearts in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*' (2017, 358). Nixon, similar to Donald Trump, reserved great scorn for any unfavorable media portrayal. Nixon's outbursts ranged from the comical (banning a journalist from Air Force One and threatening to cut off federal funds from an offending university) to the dangerous (privately ordering nuclear weapons use over minor international challenges and his enemies list).

A revealing anecdote of Nixon's narcissistic self-protection is found in his targeting of Albert Hiss during the Red Scare. When the other members of the House Un-American Activities Committee wanted to drop the Hiss case, Nixon stood alone in arguing to maintain pressure. Farrell (2017) argues that for Nixon it was personal (114). When Nixon had asked Hiss his alma mater, Hiss replied "Johns Hopkins and Harvard and I believe your college is Whittier?" Nixon pursued Hiss' ruin in response to what he perceived to be a grave insult.