The Cuban Missile Crisis: Did democratic peace influence policy-making?

A case study into the Cuban Missile Crisis researching whether factors of the democratic peace theory influenced the policy-making of president Kennedy and his ExComm

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Literature review

The democratic peace thesis is a theory about the relation between democracy and peace, proposed by Immanuel Kant in his 1795 essay *Zum ewigen Frieden* or 'Perpetual Peace'. According to Kant, the foremost condition required for perpetual peace is the universal establishment of republican civil governance in which the executive and legislative powers are separated. He claims that republican states are at peace with each other, because of forming a compact among these states, which Kant calls a pacific alliance. Such a pacific alliance would in the end terminate all wars (Kant, 1932 [1795], 33). His basic idea was that "all men, who have a mutual influence over one another, ought to have a civil constitution", to overcome the state of nature, which is not a state of peace, but of war (Kant, 1932 [1795], 22-23). This civil constitution, then, should be republican. For this claim Kant gives a couple of arguments. First of all, he argues, because a republican civil constitution is "the only constitution based on the idea of the social compact … which is the foundation of all rights" (Kant, 1932 [1795], 24-25). Second, he argues, because a republican civil constitution is the only one based on the liberty of all members of a society, all submitting to a common legislation with the right of equality, which all share as members of a state (Kant, 1932 [1795], 24-25). Third, he states that a republican civil constitution "promises the most happy effect, namely, a perpetual peace" (Kant, 1932 [1795], 26). What is remarkable is that Kant makes a differentiation between a republican civil constitution and democracy. According to him, democracy is a form of despotism, because it creates an executive power contrary to the general will. The will of all in a democracy is not the will of all, but the will of the majority, which according to Kant, is opposite to liberty (Kant, 1932 [1795], 27). After publishing his essay on perpetual peace, Kant's claim is backed-up by various scholars, who empirically found that democracies do not fight wars with one another, thereby expanding Kant's idea of a republican peace to a democratic peace. This would suggest, "a world populated by democracies would be inherently more peaceful" (Eyerman & Hart, 1996, 597). This argument is strengthened by the finding that although democracies are just as war prone as other regime types, they rarely, if ever, fight wars with one another (Eyerman & Hart, 1996, 597-598).

While the claim of a democratic peace, arguing that democracies do not fight wars with one another, seems compelling, there still is a lot of debate on the subject. On one side of this debate are those in favour of democratic peace. These scholars present quite a few arguments that support the hypothesis that democracies have a reduced chance of escalating their

conflicts into a war. However, there are also some scholars who dispute this claim of a democratic peace; Rosato, among others, being one of the prominent critics of the theory. While there has a lot of writing been done explaining the democratic peace theory from the perspective of states, a lot of research explaining the theory from the individual level, from the perspectives of state leaders, still remains to be done. In order to bridge this gap, this thesis will explain the democratic peace theory from the individual level of state leaders.

There are two logics that form the basis of the arguments in favour of the democratic peace theory. The first of these logics is the institutional logic, which focuses on the domestic political structure of a democratic state. It argues that, when elected, political leaders want to retain office. To ensure they are supported by the majority of the electorate, they avoid risky foreign policies that could damage their chances of re-election and pursue foreign policies that have a bigger chance of success (Huth & Allee, 2002, 17). This is because political leaders, especially those in democratic states, rely on the favour of public opinion for re-election. In order to get re-elected and serve another term in office, they cannot afford to take a foreign policy decision with a reasonable chance of failure. That's why, according to Hayes, "democratic political leaders will only threaten or use force in crises with a high possibility of a successful outcome" (2011, 772). However, even threatening to use force rarely leads to an escalation of conflict between democracies. While there is of a type of subtle communication between democratic leaders, one leader can see past the individual rationality of the leader issuing the threat. Doing so, both leaders can try to find a rational compromise as a solution for their dispute, without escalating this dispute into a war. This decreases the chance of war between democracies (Eyerman & Hart, 1996, 599).

The institutional logic thus assumes that a democratic leader is constrained in its ability to make policy decisions, not only by the public opinion, but also by a variety of other parties, such as interest groups, bureaucracies and his close advisors. These constraints also influence a leader's capacity to initiate war against any other state. In a democratic political system a variety of parties can influence a policy. When deciding whether or not to use force against another state, democratic or non-democratic, those opposed to the use of force have the ability to get involved in the decision-making process, and can steer the policy away from violence to negotiations that can defuse the conflict (Maoz & Russett, 1993, 626). While in a democratic state there are many parties involved in decision-making process, these states are constrained by going to war by their need to ensure a broad popular support. Mobilising this support is complex, meaning that democratic leaders will not lead their countries into a war, unless there is a favourable ratio of costs and benefits to be achieved, at acceptable risk.

Because the process of mobilising support for a war is time consuming, this period of time would give negotiations and other means of conflict resolution a chance to defuse the conflict peacefully (Russett, 1993, 38).

Getting popular support for a war in a democracy differs from the situation in an autocratic regime. According to Russett, "leaders of non-democratic states are not as constrained as leaders of democracies are, so they can more easily, rapidly and secretly initiate large-scale violence" (1993, 40). Furthermore, as Hermann & Kegley state in their article, in authoritarian states, comparing it do a democracy, there are fewer political groups that have a significant influence on the policies of the responsive leader and whether he stays in power or not. That's why these leaders will only monitor the elites who have some control over them staying in office or not (1995, 524). Moreover, when reacting to crisis situations, a democratic leader has to bargain between the perceptions of all those different groups that are involved in the decision-making process and has to choose the policy that will be acceptable to most groups. That why, when a democratic leader chooses conflict, it will be a smaller and less risky conflict, unless there is enough support for war (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 524-525). In an autocratic regime, a leader will react to conflict in a way that is acceptable to those powerful elites who can influence the length of him being in office. Therefore, he makes decisions by building a consensus with the opinions of the influential people, which is a much smaller group than the group a democratic leader has to deal with (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 525).

Above the institutional logic regarding the democratic peace theory is discussed. The second logic regarding this theory is the normative logic. One of the main concepts of this normative logic is the separate peace concept. This concept argues, "leaders and people in democratic political systems view other democracies as being like them, and therefore as part of their own group and political identity. Political systems that are not democratic are viewed more suspiciously and often are pejoratively classified as an outgroup with a set of derogatory attributes that differentiate them from the community of democratic states" (Parker, 1994; in Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 516-517). By a democratic leader, other democratic states and their leaders are seen as part of their ingroup and therefore the democratic leader will be more 'dovish' in his relation with these states (Russett, 1993, 31). Moreover, the states in the ingroup are ascribed positive attributes and can be trusted because a democratic leader regards them as similar, while these states share a political system and share the democratic norms. But what are these norms? Democratic regimes are known for "a regulated political competition through peaceful means" (Maoz & Russett, 1993, 625). To win an election, one

does not have to eliminate the opponent. Likewise, losing an election does not mean one cannot try again. While conflicts of interest in a democratic regime are resolved through compromise rather than violence, an atmosphere of 'live and let live' is likely to flourish in a democracy, creating a sense of political stability (Russett, 1993, 31-32). These considerations are named by Maoz and Russett to be the core of democratic norms (1993, 625). They are those institutions that stand at the basis of what people define as a democracy, like freedom of press, freedom of opinion and a shared interest in human rights.

While a democratic leader sees other democratic states as part of his ingroup, he views other political systems that are not democratic as an outgroup. These authoritarian states and their leaders are thought not to share democratic norms and values, but rather have their own set of non-democratic norms. These norms hold that the political competition in these regimes is more like a zero-sum game, and political conflicts are more likely to be resolved through violence and coercion, creating an atmosphere of mistrust and fear within and outside the government. Stability in these regimes is maintained by the absence of an effective political opposition (Maoz and Russett, 1993, 625). Because these political regimes have their own set of norms, democratic states view them with suspicion, distrust and hostility, while they threaten the democratic 'way of life' (Doyle, 1986, 1161).

Norm externalisation of democratic political norms is also considered to be part of the normative logic of the democratic peace theory. According to Russett, in their dealings with other states in world politics, democratic leaders externalise norms of regulated political competition, compromise solutions to political conflicts and peaceful transfer of power. By doing so, democratic leaders are trying to shape international behaviour by projecting their domestic and democratic norms onto the international system and behaving accordingly (1993, 33; Hayes, 2011, 774). If another democratic leader sees a democracy behaving according to its domestic norms, and assuming that all democratic leaders, as part of each other's ingroup of states, indeed share these norms, they create what Hayes calls a "zone of shared norms" that enables peaceful transaction, because democracies sharing norms are more likely to trust one another (2011, 774). Furthermore, when after all a conflict of interest does arise between two democratic states, their leaders are able to apply democratic norms in their interaction. By doing so, they can prevent most conflicts from escalating to the threat or use of military force (Russett, 1993, 33). Although there are scholars that debate the non-violent conflict resolution, given the fact that democratic leaders initiated several armed conflicts since 9/11, these scholars fail to mention that these are wars between a democratic state and a non-democratic state. On conflicts between democracies, one can relatively safely assume

that, while the leaders of these states have shared norms and values and see each other as part of their ingroup, there is a reduced chance of two democracies escalating their conflict into overt violence.

Not every author agrees with the idea of norm externalisation by democratic state. In his article Rosato questions this idea, stating, "democracies have often failed to adopt their internal norms of conflict resolution in an international context" (2003, 588). He argues that there are two justifications for a democracy to go to war with another state: in case of self defence or in case of human rights violations in another country, where the purpose of the war must be the development of the principles of justice and liberal values. However, Rosato claims that democracies have often waged war for other reasons than the ones mentioned above, for example war against colonies and wars fought as a result of imperial competition. In his opinion, these wars fought as a result of imperial competition, especially between France and Great Britain, prove that democracies do not externalise their domestic norms of conflict resolution onto the international context, causing them not to trust each other. According to Rosato, this casts a serious doubt on the normative logic (2003, 588-590). While this may seem convincing, Rosato fails to realise an important aspect of norm externalisation. He fails to understand that norm externalisation is a process between two democratic states, which share norms and values and thus create a zone of shared norms in which peaceful transactions can take place (Hayes, 2011, 774). The wars on which Rosato bases his argument, the war between Great Britain and Afghanistan in 1838 and the one between France and Tunisia in 1881, are both examples of a war between a democracy and a non-democracy (Rosato, 2003, 588). In that case, norm externalisation is irrelevant, as it is a process between two democracies. Therefore, this argument against the democratic peace theory can be named irrelevant as well.

Not only Rosato questions some aspects of the democratic peace theory. Sixteenth century realist scholar Niccolò Machiavelli questions the very nature of liberal pacifism, thereby questioning the entire theory of democratic peace. According to him, republics are not only not pacific, but they are the best form of state for imperial expansion. His republic is known as a classical mixed republic and is not entirely democratic. Machiavelli foresees a republic in which consuls serve as 'kings', aristocrats manage state affairs and tribunes represent the affairs of the common people in the assembly (Doyle, 1986, 1154). In this form, this republic looks like using a preliminary form of the *trias politica*, as described by the French philosopher Montesquieu nearly two centuries later. Machiavelli believes there are two things that are critical for the expansion of a republic, liberty being on of them. Living in

a liberal state encourages an increased population and property, "both of which grow when the citizens know their lives and goods are secure from arbitrary seizure" (Doyle, 1986, 1155). Free citizens also equip private armies who want to fight in glory of the republic. Therefore, he sees a free and popular republic like the one in ancient Rome as the best form of republic for expansion (Doyle, 1986, 1155). The second critical point is political survival. In order to survive politically, a republic has to take out its enemy states and expand its territory, or otherwise face annihilation itself. These beliefs of Machiavelli lead to his theory of liberal imperialism (Doyle, 1986, 1155). Although history supports his theory, with ancient Rome and Athens being imperial republics, the current phase of liberal peace in world history questions whether Machiavelli's theory is still valid.

A third major argument in favour of the democratic peace theory is a logic that has its origin in political psychology and focuses mainly on how leaders are responsive to the constraints in their political environment and how this responsiveness may influence their style of leadership. There are many different styles of leadership to be observed. The typology this thesis is most interested in is the one observed by Snyder in his 1987 book on public appearances. He assumes that there are two types of leadership styles: the more ideologically driven leader and the leader who is more responsive to a situation (Snyder, 1987). As Hermann & Kegley describe it, the first is "guided by a set of ideas, a cause, a problem to be solved, or an ideology", while the behaviour of the second type "arises out of the nature of the leadership context or setting in which the leader find him or herself" (1995, 521). This thesis will focus on the second type of leadership, while research supports that the norms and procedures that according to democratic peace researchers are characteristic to a democracy, make the selection of leaders that are more responsive to popular pressure far more likely (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 522). This is because leaders who are context-responsive are more flexible in their beliefs and alter their behaviour to the situation. They are interested in knowing where others stand with regard to an issue, and how other governments are likely to act before making a decision. External validation from others is necessary for ideas, attitudes, beliefs and motives to become acceptable to this type of leader. These more responsive leaders try to stay well informed in order to adapt their policy initiatives to different situations (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 521-522). These personifications of a context-responsive leader are what is needed in a democracy. While in a democracy there are a lot of groups involved in the decision-making process, a leader has to be flexible and willing to alter his beliefs towards an issue, in order to properly receive the input of all these groups and make a well-informed decision. That's why a context-responsive leader is mainly found in a democratic regime

instead of an authoritarian state. This does not mean however that all democratic leaders are context-responsive. Leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, both in power in the 1980's, are mostly typified as ideological leaders, the type more commonly found in authoritarian states.

As explained above, the context-responsive leader is mainly found in democratic regimes. According to Wright, democracies "tend to give leadership to personalities of a conciliatory type" (1942, 847-848). Because of the competition in democratic regimes, a responsive leader needs to be able to build consensus and compromise. He also needs focus on what his constituents want and try to listen to them "and attempt to win their approval by representing their interests" (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 522). In regard to the democratic peace thesis, this means that these responsive leaders are less likely to engage in conflict than ideologically driven leaders. They seek support for their international decisions, and want to work with a set of permissible choices that their constituents authorise, in order to build consensus over their decisions. That's why these leaders will only move to conflict if their constituents support such a decision. When it comes to engaging in conflict, they are less likely to gain this support for conflict with another democracy than for conflict with a non-democracy (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 522). In sum, when responsive leaders in a democracy engage in conflict, it will be a milder and less risky form of conflict, unless there is a consensus among the relevant political groups that war is preferred. In that case, the country targeted is most likely to be already perceived as an adversary or as acting contrary to the democratic norms (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 525).

While the arguments underwriting the democratic peace seem compelling, various authors still doubt that democracy in fact causes peace. The argument focussing on the normative logic is questioned by Hermann & Kegley. In their article they state, based on books by George, 't Hart and Lebow on decision-making and groupthink in government, that a leader and the leadership are highly influential during crisis situations such as those that typically culminate in decisions to go to war. When regarding decision-making that could lead to going to war, the state leader, who is the one responsible for his policy, dominates the decision-making process. An important example of this process is the meetings the U.S. president has with his foreign policy and military advisors during crisis situations. Ultimately, the president has to make the decision on a policy. Whether he is guided by his advisors or not, is entirely up to him. Moreover, when decisions are made by such a small group of people, these decisions are less likely to be affected by the bureaucratic compromise or by the preferences

of mass publics (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 515). Furthermore, Hermann & Kegley argue that, although it may be safe to assume that leaders who share democratic norms will be more tolerant of others who do so too, it is less certain whether democratic leaders do, indeed, perceive another country as a democracy or whether they believe that they know how specific leaders of other democratic states will act and, therefore, whether they can count on these leaders to resolve disputes peacefully. In other words, how a democratic leader sees another state and whether he believes it to be a democracy, and therefore part of its ingroup is arguably more important (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, 514).

Theoretical framework

There has been a lot of research done trying to explain the existence of the democratic peace phenomenon. The arguments of those in favour of the theory and those opposing it are thoroughly explained above. While there are many interesting arguments discussed by the various authors, my interest was mainly drawn to the normative logic and the logic derived from political psychology. These logics, the first specifying how people and leaders in a democracy regard autocratic regimes and other democracies, the latter focussing on the type of leadership style that is mostly associated with a democracy, interest me while they both focus on the position of a political leader in the decision-making process and his beliefs and motives regarding other states. One has to realise that there are many possible contributing factors that can influence a leader's decision-making, for example party allegiance and party politics, the party's influence in the parliament, re-paying a favour of political support, campaign promises etc. While all these factors could influence a democratic leader's decision-making, they all have been thoroughly researched. Therefore, this thesis will research a part of the decision-making process in crisis situations that did not receive a lot of attention by other scholars. This thesis will dig into small group decision-making in a crisis situation. During a crisis, most leaders surround themselves with a group of advisors. Although a leader has strong beliefs and motives himself, he could be strongly influenced when making decisions on foreign policy by his foreign policy and military advisors, who are specialists with their own area of expertise. In these small decision-making groups, the influence of one of the people involved can have a major influence on the outcome of the decision-making process. Digging into this process of small group decision-making, this thesis will discuss how groupthink influences the decision making process of democratic leaders and their advisors in crisis situations and how this relates to the democratic peace thesis.

As mentioned above, small group decision-making is almost inevitably linked with the concept of groupthink. When thinking about groupthink, many people ascribe negative attributes to the concept. It would lead to inefficient, irrational and dysfunctional decision-making. Although true in some cases, other cases show a positive result. One of the most prominent authors on the concept of groupthink is Janis. His 1972 book *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascos* became one of the most important pieces of literature on this subject. According to Janis, groupthink refers to "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" (1972, 9). This citation from Janis' book underwrites the negative views people have of groupthink. The group unanimity, resulting in the fact that other courses of action may not be considered enough, indeed may lead to irrational and even perhaps dangerous decision-making. In his book, Janis also acknowledges a great role for the group leader, whom is to lead the group to a swift decision-making. On that he states, "to preserve the clubby atmosphere, group members suppress personal doubts, silence dissenters, and follow the group leader's suggestions" (Janis, 1972).

Beside the cohesive atmosphere within the group, Janis names another important concept of groupthink: urgency. When decisions have to be made within a short timespan, groupthink is especially likely to be a part of the decision-making process. When doing his research on foreign policy fiascoes and the decision-making leading up to them, Janis came up with six major defects in the decision-making process that contributed to failure to solve problems adequately. One of them is the fact that in all these fiascoes, group members spend little time discussing how the chosen policy might be hindered by a variety of factors. Consequently, they failed to work out plan to deal with any problems that could danger the success of the chosen course of action (Janis, 1972, 10). What one sees here, is that the group members feel the decision-making is a time sensitive matter and also feel the need to come to a quick consensus. That's why in some cases where groupthink was influential in the decision-making process, the group did not examine all alternative policy options, nor did they take the time to obtain information from experts to assess their different options (Janis, 1972, 10). In these cases, this was a precursor for a foreign policy fiasco. Once a certain path towards the desired policy was chosen, the group members felt there was no turning back. This is one of the reasons why critics of groupthink claim that it leads to rash and irrational decision-making.

Earlier, I mentioned that I want to research the influence of groupthink in the decision making process of democratic leaders and their advisors in crisis situations. To relate this question to the democratic peace thesis, I decided to involve regime type into the research, while arguments favouring the democratic peace theory pay a great deal of attention to the regime type of a state in crisis situations. Knowing the regime type of the opposing state gives a democratic leader a bit of insight in what behaviour to expect from that state during the crisis. An authoritarian state for example, has other norms and institutions than a democratic state, and therefore a democratic state considers it part of its outgroup and views it with suspicion and hostility. Given these sentiments towards an authoritarian state, a democratic leader is likely to act differently when involved in a conflict with such a state then he would do when having a crisis with another democracy. Assuming these factors, I want to decide, researching a single case, the extent to which the regime type of other states influences groupthink and the decision-making process in a democracy in crisis situations. Are democratic leaders in a groupthink scenario influenced by the fact that the other state is a democracy or an authoritarian state? Researching this single case, the question to be answered is: does knowledge of the regime type of the other state, and the above mentioned prejudices on that regime type, influence the groupthink and the decision-making process in a democratic state during an international crisis?

In order to select a suitable case, it is first necessary to decide how one could detect signs of groupthink in a decision-making process. Then one would have to decide which signs of the influence of regime type are visible in a conflict between democracies and which ones in a conflict between a democracy and an authoritarian state.

To detect groupthink in a crisis situation, one has to look for the three major factors of groupthink that Janis mentioned in his article: a strong group leader, group cohesiveness and urgency. First, in order to involve groupthink, the crisis researched must be an urgent matter, with a short timespan to come up with policy options to resolve the crisis, whether it be a peaceful solution or one involving militarised action. Second, the group making the decisions has to show signs of cohesiveness, which would be visible by them quickly agreeing on a policy option without looking at all the alternatives, or not waiting until they have all the information to make a good and well-informed decision. Third, the group must be led by a strong group leader. The group leader is the one making the final decision on what policy option to pursue. During the discussions, one would expect to see the group leader to lead these discussions, deciding which options are valuable for discussion and which are not, and

ultimately choose a policy to pursue, a decision which is then quickly supported by the rest of the group.

In order to detect signs of the influence of regime type in the decision-making process, one has to distinguish between a conflict between two democracies and one between a democracy and an authoritarian state. When a democracy would have a conflict with another democracy, there is a conflict between two states sharing a regime type. As we saw above, sharing a regime type, democratic states and their leaders consider each other as part of their ingroup, because they expect each other to share the democratic norms and values. Therefore, a democratic state will ascribe another democracy positive attributes and will regard it as trustworthy and peaceful. That's why one can expect democratic leaders to behave more 'dovish' in a conflict with another democratic state than in a conflict with an autocracy. Moreover, with the many political groups involved in the decision-making process in a democracy, the chances of an escalation in a conflict between two democratic states are very slim. Mobilising support for a militarised conflict in a democracy is hard, while it is the people who carry the costs of such a conflict, and the people, seeing the people in another democracy as their ingroup, will not support a militarised conflict against another democracy. While this process of mobilising support for a war is so hard, this period of time would give negotiations and other means of conflict resolution a chance to defuse the conflict peacefully.
When there would be a conflict between a democratic state and an authoritarian state, both states have a different regime type, which might cause some friction. The democratic state will in this case regard the autocracy as its outgroup. While the authoritarian state has a different set of norms and institutions than the democratic state, the latter will expect the former to behave in a different way than another democracy. On the basis of its regime type, the democratic state will ascribe negative attributes to the autocracy, like suspicion, hostility and distrust and will argue that an authoritarian state is more likely to resort to militarised action in a conflict than another democracy. That is why this difference in regime type and the assumptions both states make of the actions of the other makes a war between an authoritarian state and a democratic state more likely than one between two democracies.

Case study and research question:

As mentioned above, in order to complete this research I had to select a case in which both regime type, a factor derived from the democratic peace theory, and groupthink could play an important role. The case chosen is the Cuban Missile Crisis. To fully understand the selected case, a comprehensive explanation will know be given.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was a 13-days confrontation between predominantly the Soviet Union and the United States that lasted from October 16th until October 28th 1962. The reason for the confrontation was the deployment of Soviet ballistic missiles in Cuba. These missiles were in striking distance of some major U.S. cities, ranging from the ones in Florida to the ones in the Midwest. One of the reasons for the deployment of Soviet missiles on Cuba, which after the revolution of 1953 until 1959 had been under the communist regime of Fidel Castro, was the failed Bay of Pigs invasion by U.S. forces in 1961. In that year, the United States had secretly prepared an operation to overthrow the communist regime of Cuba, which had ruled the country since 1959. Together with a group of Cuban anti-Castro exiles, the CIA attempted to overthrow the communist regime, because the United States were scared of having a communist state in its own "backyard". In the night of April 16th 1961, the Cuban forces, known as Brigade 2506, together with CIA operatives landed on a beach in the Bay of Pigs. They initially overthrew local revolutionary forces, but with the Cuban people taking side with the revolutionary forces instead of the invading forces, which was contrary to what was expected, the Cuban revolutionary forces quickly gained the upper hand in the battle. The invaders officially surrendered on April 20th, marking the official failure of the operation, which was a major embarrassment for U.S. foreign policy. It also meant even better relations between the USSR and Cuba, exactly the opposite of what the U.S. were hoping for. Another reason for the Cuban Missile Crisis was the prescence of American ballistic missiles in Turkey and Italy, which, in turn, were in striking distance of most of the USSR controlled territory. To balance the scales, Soviet president at that time Nikita Khrushchev, ordered the placement of Soviet ballistic missiles on Cuban territory. A deal for these nuclear missiles, also meant to further deter U.S. harassment of Cuba, was quickly made between the two leaders in July 1962, and construction of a number of missile launch facilities started later that summer.

In the United States, the country was in its midst of an electoral campaign. Charges that the Kennedy administration was ignoring Soviet missiles only 90 miles south of Florida were denied by White House staff. However, on October 14th 1962, a U.S. Air Force spy plane discovered one of the missile sites in Cuba, producing clear images of medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missile facilities being prepared. These missiles were a serious threat to the security of the United States, while they had such a range that they could hit even the cities in the Midwest of the United States. Directly after the discovery of the missile launch sites, president Kennedy and his closest advisors met in the White House to discuss how to handle this situation. A number of policy options were negotiated, from an all-

out war to doing nothing, in order not to provoke the USSR any further. After a period of negotiations, president Kennedy chose a middle ground. A blockade was to be set up in international waters before the shores of Cuba. The blockade, stretching from Florida almost to Venezuela, needed to prevent Soviet ships from reaching Cuba to bring in even more missiles. While the blockade was in place negotiations continued between president Kennedy and Soviet leader Khrushchev and both countries' state departments. These negotiations continued until October 28th, when the two states finally reached an agreement. The Soviet Union were to remove all of its nuclear missiles from Cuba and the United States had to do the same with its missiles in Turkey and southern Italy. Furthermore, as a reaction to the Bay of Pigs invasion, an agreement was made that the United States would never invade Cuba without a direct provocation. A final result of the crisis was the creation of a nuclear hotline between the United States and the Soviet Union. If tensions between the two states were ever to rise to this level again, direct telecommunications between the White House and the Kremlin were possible, in order to solve the matter as peacefully and quickly as possible. With these agreements, the Cuban Missile Crisis formally ended on October 28th 1962. However, the blockade was kept in place until November 20th of that year, just as a precaution.

Now that a brief description of the case and the political sentiments of the crisis have been given, it's time to get a deeper understanding of this case. The research question this thesis will answer is whether knowledge of the regime type of the Soviet Union, and the prejudices on that regime type, influenced the groupthink and the decision-making process in the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In order to get a better understanding of the decision-making process, this thesis looked at transcripts of meetings between president Kennedy and his Executive Committee as one of its sources. These meetings were audiotaped for the memoires of president Kennedy. Looking at these transcripts will give a clear image of how the decision-making process in this case took place and whether knowledge of the regime type of the Soviet Union played any role in this process.

In order to see whether or not knowledge of the regime type of the Soviet Union may have been a part of the decision-making process regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis, looking at people involved in the decision-making is the first thing to do. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, president Kennedy was advised by the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or simply ExComm. The committee was composed of regular members of the Security Council, along with other people whose advice president Kennedy would consider useful during the crisis. The members of the Security Council were president Kennedy

himself, his Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, Attorney General and President Kennedy's brother Robert F. Kennedy, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, Director of Central Intelligence John McCone, Secretary of Treasury C. Douglas Dillon and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General Maxwell D. Taylor. These men, together with three other men, among whom are the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, were the most prominent members of the ExComm. President Kennedy relied on these men for advice in the matter of the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, when he needed additional or more specialised advice, he would invite some specific men of the Department of Defence, Department of State and the CIA to join the ExComm meetings.

President Kennedy was first informed on the prescence of the nuclear missiles on Cuba by National Security Advisor Bundy on October 16th 1962. In the next thirteen days that followed, he and the ExComm met in numerous sessions to discuss the various options how to deal with the crisis. On one thing all group members agreed: the threat was urgent and needed to be resolved as fast as possible. Not knowing whether the missiles were ready to launch and how long it might take to prepare the missiles for launching, made the crisis a very time-sensitive matter. Secretary of Defence McNamara made clear that he didn't expect the missiles to be ready to fire within a day or two, giving the United States some time to come up with a strategy (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 401). However, he still urged for a quick decision-making, before the missiles became operational and ready to launch. During the first meeting of the ExComm on October 16th, a variety of policy options to deal with this crisis were discussed. McNamara discussed the idea of pursuing an extensive airstrike against Cuba, targeting the missile sites, airfields, aircrafts that could carry the missiles and nuclear storage facilities. He immediately admitted that these airstrikes would also cause collateral damage, killing an estimated 2000-3000 innocent Cuban citizens. Followed by the airstrike, he argued for an invasion of Cuba, both by air and by sea, which would be possible seven days after the airstrikes (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 407-408). Secretary of State Rusk agreed with the idea of an airstrike, but according to him, it would not require an invasion of Cuba, while he feared it could potentially lead to an all-out war. Another alternative he considered was to stimulate the Organisation of American States (OAS) procedure for prompt action to make clear that the Rio Pact was violated. This pact, signed in Rio the Janeiro in 1947, called for the response to aggression of OAS member states when another OAS member state was threatened (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 405). He also argued to consult NATO how to deal with the situation and finally he argued to alert U.S. allies and Soviet leader Khrushchev that there is a serious crisis

going on, something Khrushchev might not understand at that point. By doing so, he feared the U.S. would face a situation that could lead to general war. (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 406). The third person to come up with a plan at that meeting was General Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He approached the issue by thinking in a number of phases. First, he urged for a pause in order to get all the information on the target, before rushing any decisions. Second, he agreed with Secretary McNamara and proposed an airstrike to airfields, missiles and nuclear sites. At the same time, he argued that a naval blockade must be put in place, an idea that was issued in a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff earlier that morning (Department of Defence, Transcripts, 1993, 3-4; Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 408-409). As president Kennedy summed up, three serious options where discussed: a quick and limited airstrike, a broader airstrike on the nuclear missile sites, airfields and anything connected to the missiles, or doing both and at the same time launch a naval blockade to prevent more missiles to reach Cuba. Robert Kennedy, the president's brother and Attorney General, added an invasion also to the list of possible strategies (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 416). With these four options, discussions continued. However, after all the discussions, no 'real' military action was taken against Cuba. President Kennedy decided on only launching a blockade around Cuba, which in formal documents was referred to as a defensive quarantine, as a blockade is an act of war under international law. He announced the prescence of the nuclear missiles on Cuba in a speech to the American people on October 22nd. In that speech, he also announced launching a blockade to ensure the safety of the American people. The blockade was launched on October 23th 1962.

With the decision-making process and the outcome of this process being discussed above, this thesis will now look at how groupthink played a role in the decision-making process during the Cuban Missile Crisis. As stated earlier, to detect signs of groupthink during the decision-making process, one has to look for three elements that play a role in groupthink: a strong group leader, group cohesiveness and urgency. Looking at these elements, one could definitely argue that groupthink was part of the decision-making process during the Cuban Missile Crisis. First of all, the crisis was a very urgent situation. The existence of the nuclear missiles in Cuba was only confirmed when they were already in place. Not knowing when the missiles would be operational, the policymakers in the ExComm only had a short timespan to come up with a policy plan to overcome the crisis; otherwise it could have had dramatic effects. Looking at the decision-making process, one clearly sees that the group members see the urgency themselves. During the first meeting of the ExComm, Secretary of Defence McNamara urges for a quick action before the missiles are ready to launch (Naftali &

Zelikow, 2001, 407). Second, the decision-making group, the ExComm, definitely shows cohesiveness. After discussing a set of policy options the group quickly agreed that a blockade would be the best option to resolve the conflict without any militarised action. However, the ExComm did take time to look at all the alternative courses of action, and they also waited for more information on the missiles to come in before making a decision. This exemplifies that, although decisions in a groupthink scenario have to be made under pressure of time, it does not necessarily lead to irrational and dysfunctional decision-making. Third, groupthink involves the role of a strong group leader to lead the group into a swift decision-making process. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, president Kennedy was an example of such a strong leader. As Gopalan notes in his article on decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis, "President Kennedy was spearheading the foreign policy process through a constructive deployment of his advisors in the ExComm" (Gopalan, 2010). He used the ExComm as a means to exchange ideas, giving everyone in the group the chance to share his idea on the matter, making all group members feel as a valuable part of the group. He also let his most important advisors, such as the Secretaries of State and Defence and his National Security Advisor, meet on their own to discuss the policy ideas, in order to create consensus among them (Gopalan, 2010). Kennedy also did not involve the U.S. Congress in the decision-making process, since he wanted the information cycle to be kept small. Therefore, he merely informed Congress about putting in place a blockade instead of engaging it in the decision-making (Gopalan, 2010). Furthermore, during the meetings, president Kennedy decided what issues would be addressed, which ones he would focus on and how. The meetings of the ExComm and the issues discussed during them, were, on order of the president, kept as secret as possible. This course of action gave the ExComm a secret, private and quiet work environment to decide the appropriate U.S. response to the crisis and gave them more time to do so (Gopalan, 2010). And finally, it was president Kennedy to make the decision to launch a blockade, although his military advisers urged him to pursue the airstrikes policy. All these factors show that president Kennedy had the important role in the decision-making process that Janis states in his book. Consequently, while the decision-making process during the Cuban Missile Crisis involves the three elements of groupthink as explain by Janis, this crisis definitely is a fine example of how groupthink influences decision-making, but does not lead to irrational or dysfunctional decision-making.

Having explained above how groupthink played a role in the decision-making process, this thesis will now answer its research question, whether knowledge of the regime type of the Soviet Union, and the prejudices on that regime type, influenced the groupthink

and the decision-making process in the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis. To answer this question briefly, yes it did. As written in this thesis, a conflict between a democratic state and a non-democratic state is more likely to escalate into violence than a conflict between two democracies. The Cuban Missile Crisis is an example of the first, the conflict being between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, being an autocracy, is considered part of an outgroup by the United States, while it has a different regime type. On the basis of this regime type, and the different norms and institutions belonging to it, the United States are expected to view the Soviet Union with distrust, suspicion and hostility, expecting the Soviet Union to resort to militarised action sooner than a democracy. These factors clearly influenced the decision-making process during the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the discussions on what action to take against the nuclear missiles on Cuba, the situation in Berlin, Germany played an important role. Soviet leader Khrushchev was unhappy with the presence of western states in West Berlin, where the French, British and Americans shared control over that part of Germany's former capital. In his last meeting with a high-ranking official of the United States before the Cuban Missile Crisis, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, Khrushchev threatened to go to war to force the issue in Berlin (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 394). President Kennedy knew of Khrushchev's sentiments towards the issue in Berlin, and therefore he repeatedly stated that he did not want a U.S. invasion in Cuba, while the Soviet Union was the real danger and this danger would likely arise later in 1962 in Berlin (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 391). Deciding on the course of action during the Cuban Missile Crisis president Kennedy kept Khrushchev's sentiments on Berlin in his mind in order not to be provoked into a specific course of action in Cuba that would give the Soviet Union an excuse to take military action against Berlin (Naftali & Zelikow, 2001, 411). Furthermore, the Soviet Union could use the missiles in Cuba as leverage to get rid of the prescence of western states in Berlin (Naftali & Zelikow, 2011, 433). Therefore, in order not to provoke Khrushchev, president Kennedy chose the least-provoking option of a blockade, despite objections by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Gopalan, 2010). Hence, we can conclude that, knowing the Soviet Union has an autocratic regime, knowing that these regimes are expected to resort to militarised action sooner than democracies, and knowing that military action against Cuba, whether in the form of air strikes or an invasion, could trigger the Soviet Union to make a move on Berlin, president Kennedy, being the leader in the groupthink and decision-making process during the Cuban Missile Crisis, was in fact influenced by the regime type of the Soviet Union, resulting in him choosing for a blockade instead of other military actions against Cuba. So yes, knowledge of the regime type of the

Soviet Union did indeed influence the groupthink and decision-making process during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Conclusion:

This thesis discussed the democratic peace theory, an idea derived from Immanuel Kant, that democracies are unlikely to resort to militarised actions in their conflicts of interest. Discussing arguments in favour and against the theory, this thesis gave a comprehensive insight into the democratic peace literature. After discussing the literature, this thesis discussed groupthink as an influence on the decision-making process during crisis situations. Focussing on Janis' 1972 book on groupthink, the elements that contribute to groupthink were discussed. To relate the democratic peace theory to groupthink, it was hypothesised that knowledge of the regime type of the adversary in a conflict influences groupthink and therefore also the decision-making outcome. Looking at how to detect signs of groupthink and signs of the influence of regime type in a decision-making process, this thesis moved to discuss the Cuban Missile Crisis as an example of a crisis in which both groupthink and the regime type of the adversary played a role in the decision-making process. Hence, a brief oversight of the Cuban Missile Crisis was presented, followed by an oversight of the different policy options that were discussed in the decision-making process. Knowing the decision-making outcome, this thesis then discussed how groupthink involved the decision-making process, by looking at the three elements presented by Janis: a strong leader, urgency and group cohesiveness. Then it was discussed that also knowledge of the regime type of the Soviet Union played a role in the decision-making process. With the Soviet Union threatening Berlin, president Kennedy did not want to risk actions against Cuba to give the Soviets an excuse to attack Berlin. Therefore he chose not to pursue military actions against Cuba, which could have antagonised the Soviets, but rather go for the least-military option of a blockade. This reasoning then answered this thesis' hypothesis that knowledge of the regime type of the Soviet Union and the prejudices on that regime type indeed influenced the process of groupthink and the decision-making process of the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

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