

# **Trump and the ‘Little Rocket Man’**

*The Influence of Donald Trump’s Presidential Leadership Style on The  
Nuclear Crisis between the US and North Korea*

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## Introduction

The case of the nuclear crisis between North Korea and the US contrasts remarkably to the picture of America stepping back from its prominent role in the world (Jervis, Gavin, Rovner & Labrosse, 2018, p. 15). The current American president, Trump, seems to have been and still is, heavily involved in this conflict (Jones & Pollack, 2017). For the first time, since the Cold War, a president of the United States, explicitly, publicly and repeatedly threatened war against an adversary with nuclear weaponry (Jackson, 2018, p. 1). Trump's discourse is direct, his opinion is very outspoken and his persona has frequently been pointed towards as lying at the root of the aggressive manner of the US (Arkian, 2019). It is thus key to study the influence of Trump's individual leadership style on the transition of the US in the political world order. Specifically, because the presidential leadership style is primarily studied keeping eye on the discourse of leaders (Hermann, 2005, p. 179). Since August 8, 2017, when it became publicly known that North Korea had the capability of reaching the US with nuclear arms, Donald Trump has been very outspoken and threatening against North Korea (Jackson, 2018, p. 1): 'North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury frankly of which the world has never seen before'<sup>1</sup>. This resulted in threats back and forth between Trump and the state of North Korea.<sup>2</sup> However, Trump's discourse and actions took a sharp turn when on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2018, Trump and Kim Jong Un first met in Singapore. After this first summit, Trump tweeted: 'There is No Longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea'<sup>3</sup>, even though nothing changed about the nuclear arsenal of North Korea (Jackson, 2018, p. 2). This sharp shift on Trump's account forms a suitable case for research as it deviates from his overall domestic-focused narrative of 'America first'. Thereby, his threatening approach utilized beforehand seems to have disappeared suddenly and has turned into a more diplomatic way of discourse. How much of this more outside-focused behavior towards North Korea can be equated with Trump and his style of leadership? Especially looking at the shift from a hostile to a more friendly narrative?

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<sup>1</sup> Associated Press (August 8, 2017). Trump: NKorea Will Be Met with 'Fire and Fury'. [YouTube]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p1JgTuKQk>

<sup>2</sup> Higgins, T. (May 30, 2018). 'Here are all the twists and turns in Trump's North Korean nuclear diplomacy' *CNBC*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/30/timeline-of-trumps-soap-opera-diplomacy-with-north-korea.html>

<sup>3</sup> Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (June 13, 2018). Just landed - a long trip, but everybody can now feel much safer than the day I took office. There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea. Meeting with Kim Jong Un was an interesting and very positive experience. North Korea has great potential for the future! [Tweet]. Retrieved from: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1006837823469735936>

The personality of the current president of the United States (US), Donald J. Trump, has frequently been studied by psychologists and psychiatrists. In their studies, they have often described him as misogynist, racist, paranoid, self-aggrandizing, narcissistic and someone prone to bullying (Zimbardo & Sword, 2017, pp. 34-41). His presidency seems to have polarized American society more than ever (Eblin, 2017, p. 1; Tyson, 2018). But not only on the domestic level Trump has changed society, in international politics he has had a big impact as well. Since Trump, the political world order seems to have always been a frailer structure rather than a real set of binding rules. Some scholars even argue Trump has broken the mold of the liberal order by calling traditional beliefs in world politics in question (Jervis, Gavin, Rovner & Labrosse, 2018, p. 15). This liberal world order is what is believed to have originated after the second world war, this system enabled deeper levels of international cooperation built upon international institutions with powerful norms. The liberal world order would have diminished the anarchy in world politics resulting in a long period of respective harmony among states (Jervis et al., 2018, pp. 10-11). Although the liberal world order is at times seen as a fictional set of rules which may or may not have constituted the US in achieving its military and economic goals internationally, many may have been astonished by the speed of the diminishment of longstanding relationships between states over the previous two years (Jervis et al., 2018, p. 11-12). Traditional beliefs belonging to the liberal world order include the importance of maintaining a dominant military capability of the US, as well as the importance of longstanding multilateral alliance commitments and the gravity of international institutions (Jervis et al., 2018, p. 15). These beliefs are what Trump seems to challenge, mainly in his rhetoric, where he calls upon a US-centric, 'America-first', strategy and a transactional style of policy (Jervis et al., 2018, p. 11). Prior to Trump's presidency most major theories in political science, which dealt with the very nature of the political order with the US as the dominant power, were not concerned with individual actors (Jackson, 2018, p. 15). Trump is considered as an actor who forms a tough test on these more traditional IR theories and their belief in the sustainability of the liberal order.

As the leadership style of president Trump has not yet been reflected upon empiric material or even a case like North Korea, a research question could be: *To what extent can the leadership style of Donald Trump serve as an explanation for the case of US relations with North Korea?* This research could, as the question suggests, form an account on Trump's effect on Foreign Policy, taking especially his relations with North Korea in consideration.

## **Studying the Individual Level in IR**

But why would Trump's leadership style be of influence? The traditional narrative, that leaders, and thus the individual level, are only of little relevance in International Relations, has become less and less valid since the end of the Cold War. Nowadays as world politics is not defined by bipolarity anymore and international constraints in foreign policy have become more indeterminate and flexible there is added room for dialogue. This room for dialogue caused the greater and augmented importance of domestic politics and thus enlarged the importance of individual leaders (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 125). But before the end of the Cold War, when paying attention to history, it shows that individuals have always played a big part in International Relations (Byman & Pollack, 2001, pp. 114-133). Even though Waltz (1959) rendered the international system as the most influential image of his world system theory, as opposed to State and Individuals, he still argues the importance of human nature: 'The root of all evil is man, and thus he is himself the root of the specific evil, war.' (p. 3). Waltz, however, saw human nature as a constant, whereas Hermann (2005) proves with her Leadership Trait Analysis that this is far from true (pp. 211-212). Furthermore, only taking notice of the cases of Germany under Adolf Hitler or France under Napoleon Bonaparte, we can observe the great and important role of the individual level (Byman & Pollack, pp. 114-115). Moreover, as mentioned before, there is a lot of discourse in the media and in world politics as well about Trump's persona, in this discourse he is mainly seen as the catalysator for the US stands in the North Korea crisis (Jackson, 2018, p. 1). Thus, according to Kaarbo (2015), an agent-centric and psychology-based theory, like for example Foreign Policy Analysis, can be an addition to the cross-theoretical shift towards the domestic in politics and decision making in IR theory (p. 189). FPA stresses the role of a central decision-making unit and the subjective understandings of leaders as channels for other domestic and international aspects. FPA relies on the belief that all actions that occur in (international) politics are found in human nature as acted out individually or in groups (Hudson, 2005, p. 1). The advantages of adding humans to IR theory are multiple, it allows us to integrate more theories at different levels, it enables a more robust concept of agency in IR, it gives a better explanation for state behavior and it forms a link from IR to different fields (Hudson, pp. 3-5).

FPA shows that studying the, frequently ignored, individual actor level in IR is of great importance and great relevance as well. Therefore, it is important to approach the Trump presidency on an individual basis, especially when we want to explain state behavior, which is the case. This study of Trump's leadership style could perhaps form a great account for explaining the American positions in the North Korea crisis.

## **Analyzing Leadership Style Using Leadership Style Analysis**

Leadership Trait Analysis, or LTA, is one of many theories within the field of political psychology and is mainly used to study the effect of leadership style on foreign policy. Hermann (1980) has originally created LTA to create a framework to categorize political leaders into different leadership styles in foreign policy. As many leaders have already been studied on the basis of their leadership style (Hermann, 1994; Kaarbo & Hermann, 1998), this has proven itself to be of great relevance as: 'International Relations cannot be understood if the role of the individual is ignored' (Byman & Pollack, 2001, p. 145). Furthermore, the applicability of LTA is clearly shown in Hermann's research. In her empiric testing of the LTA of Bill Clinton (Hermann, 1994), she proves the LTA has an influence on the leader's administration, and in her empiric test of the LTA she demonstrates its effects on foreign policy (Hermann, 2005, p. 211-212). It is of great logic and importance, due to the results presented by Hermann, that a similar LTA analysis is exercised over other presidents and that the outcomes are tested on empirical information.

In LTA, we generate seven leadership traits, which interrelate to form specific orientations to foreign affairs (Hermann, 2005, p. 8), based on three dimensions. Each of these three dimensions is constructed around a question. Firstly, how leaders react to political constraints in their environment shows if a leader is more predisposed or responsive. Secondly, how to open leaders are to incoming information marks the difference between more 'open' and more 'closed' leaders. Lastly, what leader's reasons are for seeking their positions shows whether leaders have a relationship or a problem focus (pp. 181-182).

In assessing these dimensions in leadership, seven traits or characteristics have been found useful: (1) the belief one can influence/control what happens, (2) the need for power/influence, (3) conceptual complexity, (4) self-confidence, (5) focus on problem-solving versus focus on group-maintenance, (6) general distrust/suspiciousness of others and (7) the intensity with which a person holds an in-group bias (Hermann, 2005, pp. 184-185). To construct a profile, all these traits can be calculated into scores, which must be contextualized and put in perspective by comparing them with scores of other leaders (pp. 204-205). If the studied leader has a score that exceeds the average of the other leaders, he or she is high on that specific trait. If a leader has a score that is below the mean of other leaders scores, he or she is low on this trait (p. 204). The scores of a leader in first and second traits will form the answer of how he or she reacts to environmental constraints, leaders high in both these traits are expected to challenge constraints; they will meet situations more head-on, look for quick solutions, be decisive and deal forcefully with issues. Leaders low in both traits one and two

are likely to respect constraints; being more empathic, open to bargaining and compromise and more likely to focus on one case (p. 187). How a leader scores on traits three and four will determine how open or closed he or she is to information. If a leader scores high in both, he or she is expected to be open to information, meaning the leader will be more interested in the opinions and advice of experts. However, if a leader is low in the third and fourth trait he or she is expected to be closed to information, meaning he or she is more focused on persuading and will seek information and people more supportive of a certain point of view (p.193). The scores of a leader in the last three traits determine whether he or she has a relationship or problem focus, this can be considered a continuum with both these focal points as extremes. If a leader is high on task focus and high on distrust and in-group bias, he or she is expected to have a problem focus, meaning; being more driven by a specific ideology, cause or interest. However, if a leader is low on task focus and high on trait six and seven he or she is expected to have a relationship focus, meaning; having the desire for acceptance, a group spirit and positive feedback (p. 199).

LTA focuses on the discourse of leaders, preferably the spontaneous kind: interviews. According to Hermann (2005), an adequate assessment of leadership style can be made based on fifty interview responses of a hundred words or more (p. 180). Furthermore, these interviews should be categorized by time, audience and topic in order to show how stable the leadership traits are. This is of great importance because if the traits are the same in these different contexts, we can conclude the leader will react the same in different situations and thus that the traits are stable (p. 180).

LTA has, in a pre-presidential context, already been executed on Donald Trump by Walker, Schafer, and Smith (2018). Taking note of his, mainly, significant scores, and keeping mind of the suspected influence of Trump in the North Korea nuclear crisis, it would be key to use this analysis. It is necessary as well to test the predictions made by Walker et al. based on their LTA about Trump's behavior as a president, as this analysis has been executed pre-presidentially. The goal in this research is thus to test the hypotheses, as formed by Walker et al., by studying Trump's leadership style concerning his foreign policy in North Korea.

### **The Leadership Style of Trump**

Walker, Schafer, and Smith (2018) have utilized their quantitative content analysis, making use of his pre-presidential speeches and interviews in 2016, to produce an LTA analysis of the current US president Donald Trump (table 1). The analysis of Walker et al. focuses on the

operational code of Trump based on an automated content analysis of his public and spontaneous comments during his presidential campaign in 2016 (p. 10). The operational code is a form of leadership analysis consisting of beliefs about the nature of politics and conflict, the individual notion of strategy and tactics and the beliefs to what extent historical development can be influenced (George, 1969, p. 197). Walker et al. used software (Profiler Plus and Verbs in Context System) identifying verbs, nouns and other parts of speech and matching these with other parts of speech to identify the operational code aspects. Resulting from this analysis are Trump's means for each trait, these means were compared to the means of a norming group of US presidents. As a result of this comparison, z-scores were formed, which express the standard deviation of Trump's mean from the means of the norming group (Walker et al., 2018, p. 11). Extrapolating from these operational code results and building on the logic of the game theory, the authors make LTA-based predictions for how Donald Trump is expected to exercise his power as a US president (p. 1).

Firstly, responsiveness to constraints is defined by the traits of the belief in one's ability to control events (trait 1) and the need for power (trait 2). Walker et al. (2018) show that Trump is high in both these traits ( $z = +1.488$  and  $z = +2.833$ ) compared to the average president of the US (p. 14). Based on the scores on these traits they predict that Trump would be a leader to challenge environmental constraints, he would be much more conflict-oriented as he deviates enormously from the mean, namely more than 1 and almost 3 standard deviations (p. 14). This prediction clearly derives from Hermann (2005) who predicts that leaders high in traits 1 and 2, in this case Trump, are prone to challenging constraints, have a goal and will take the lead (p. 188). Expected is that in the case of North Korea, Trump will be prone to react quickly and aggressively. He will as well be likely to go into face-to-face negotiations and initiate most of the policy.

Regarding the openness of a leader to information, the traits of self-confidence (trait 4) and cognitive, or conceptual, complexity (trait 3) matter. Trump's score in self-confidence ( $z = -1.430$ ) is lower than his score of cognitive complexity ( $z = -1.007$ ), this disposes him to be relatively open to information according to Hermann (2005, p. 194). But as Walker et al. (2018) underline: '[trait 3 & 4] are both lower than one standard deviation, making him closed to information compared to the average president' (p. 14), this would dispose Trump to be closed to information (p. 194). This, according to Hermann, would incline Trump to easily lock onto a certain 'successful' position and to radiate narcissism, strive for spotlights, make extreme moves and being preoccupied with 'fantasies of unlimited success' (p. 193). In the case of North Korea, this would signify that Trump to keep holding on to a position which

appears to him as the most 'successful' and he would persuade others to believe this too. Trump would as well show narcissism, look for media attention, tend to go for more extreme moves and have a clear vision (p. 193).

Task focus (trait 5) is another trait focused on in the study of Walker et al. (2018), Trump's score in this trait is very low ( $z = -3.067$ ) when compared to the mean of other American presidents. From this Walker and al. predict Trump will be primarily focused on the forming of relationships and he will be less motivated to solve problems (p. 14). This is in line with Hermann (2005), who argues that leaders low in task focus have a relationship motivation for seeking office, this disposes Trump to 'want to keep the morale and spirit high in the group, be sensitive to what people want and need and try to provide it, have camaraderie, loyalty, and commitment as critical pointers, share leadership and think mobilizing and empowering people are what leadership is all about' (Hermann, p. 199). Expected is that in the case of North Korea Trump will lay great emphasis on the importance of his administration.

Furthermore, and lastly, on the trait 'distrust' (trait 6) Trump has an extremely high score ( $z = +4.651$ ) and he has a diminished score in 'in-group bias ( $z = +0.209$ ) (trait 7). According to the authors, these two scores would make him more likely to remove threats and to take opportunities (Walker et al., 2018, p. 15). Taking all these traits into consideration Walker et al. predict Trump to be focusing the most of his attention in foreign policy to the exercise of negative sanctions (opposing/resisting, threatening and punishment) regarding opportunities and toward opposing hazards and risks (p. 15). They describe Trump's leadership style as more conflict-oriented, distrustful and over controlling, he would as well be prone to maintaining his own belief system that would enable him to rationalize his dispositions to exercise social power (Walker et al., p. 15). Hermann (2005) predisposes leaders high in distrust, and thus Trump, to 'be suspicious about the motives and actions of others, particularly those viewed as competitors for their positions or against their cause or ideology, as well as think others can do nothing right and cannot be relied upon' (p. 203). Furthermore, leaders high in distrust would be very sensitive to criticism and be vigilant (Hermann, p. 203). Because Trump does not significantly deviate from the mean within the trait 'in-group bias', he would, according to Hermann, both focus on taking advantage of opportunities and relationship-building while remaining cautious as well as focus on eradicating possible threats, issues and risks (p. 200). Concerning the case of North Korea Trump will be expected to show and express great distrust of others, he would be hypersensitive to criticism. Lastly, it is expected that Trump will be cautious as well, as

leaders with a high distrust and a lower in-group bias score tend to be more vigilant (Hermann, p. 200).

Walker et al. (2018) form the last hypothesis on the basis of Trump’s results: Trump would be drawn to exercising negative sanctions or action regarding opportunities and toward fighting threats. This expectation can clearly be linked to the traits above (namely, trait 1, 2, 6 and 7). Expected in the case of North Korea is that Trump would be likely to exercise or threaten to exercise negative sanctions or military intervention against North Korea.

In this research, the predictions by Walker et al. (2018) will serve as hypotheses and they will be tested based on empirical data, specifically, the case of the international relations with North Korea and the US will be utilized.

**Table 1 – The LTA of Donald Trump as presented by Walker et al. (2018)**

	<b>Trump’s Mean (Z-score)</b>	<b>US-Presidents Mean</b>
<b>Leadership Personality Traits</b>		
Distrust	.280 (+4.651)	.097
Task	.461 (-3.067)	.651
Belief in Ability to Control Events	.398 (+1.488)	.312
In-Group Bias	.115 (+0.209)	.110
Self-Confidence	.412 (-1.430)	.510
Cognitive Complexity	.580 (-1.007)	.624
Need for Power	.296 (+2.833)	.238

Note. Data from Walker, Schafer & Smith (2018)

### **Method and Data**

The studied case will be the Nuclear crisis between the US/Trump and North Korea. It will be studied from the beginning of Donald Trump’s presidency (January 20, 2017) until the end of the next year (December 31, 2018). From the beginning of Trump’s term of office, North Korea has been one of the main US foreign policy issues and shortly before Trump’s inauguration former president Barack Obama made Trump more aware of this issue in one of their meetings, as it was a concern that started to become of bigger importance (Jackson, 2018, p. 90). From that moment Trump has started speaking out about North Korea. December 31, 2018 is chosen as the end of the studied period because it is considered a clearer end, as the apparent détente between Trump and Kim Jong Un has been established in

this timeframe. It is important to keep in mind that the case of foreign affairs between the US and North Korea is still ongoing, although there is a ‘freeze’<sup>4</sup>, in this way, the situation could thus still change and have a different outcome.

The data will entail interviews and Twitter posts of Donald Trump. Twitter especially is seen as an important source of data as the posts of Donald Trump are considered ‘official statements of the president’ (Blake, 2017). Donald Trump mainly uses Twitter as the first medium to correspond to what he does and thinks. As Trump states himself, he uses the site to quickly react to ‘dishonest and unfair press’<sup>5</sup> and it is ‘his form of telling the truth’<sup>6</sup>. Because of this Twitter is considered the main source of information, it is believed to represent Trump most truthfully. These Tweets will be retrieved from ‘Trump Twitter Archive’<sup>7</sup>, where all tweets posted by Trump are monitored in real-time since January 27, 2017. When selecting the tweets the filters were ‘North Korea’ (130 Tweets), ‘Kim Jong’ (14 Tweets, other filters excluded) and ‘Rocket Man’ (2 Tweets, other filters excluded). The nickname ‘Rocket Man’ is chosen as a filter as it is the only known nickname Trump used in his tweets about North Korea. The focus on interviews is to complement the retrieved data from Twitter and to give an even clearer view of Trump’s spontaneous material, conforming to the principles of data selection of LTA (Hermann, 2005). The selection of the used interviews will be based upon the number of mentions of the keyword-group ‘North Korea’, filtering on at least four mentions there was a result of 12 interviews.<sup>8</sup> Only the sections concerning North Korea will be studied.

The data will be studied per expectation based on the indicators as they are presented in Table 2. These indicators are inspired by Hermann’s (2005) expectations of the effect of the different leadership traits in leaders. The indicators of the first expectation, challenging constraints and being prone to conflict, are thus based on the expectations and measurements Hermann makes concerning traits one and two.

For the first hypothesis, the indicators based upon trait 2 are: acting forcefully, thus using tough/aggressive language and preferring face-to-face negotiation (Hermann, 2005, p.

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<sup>4</sup> The Economist (May 30, 2018). ‘Détente between America and North Korea seems back on track’. Retrieved from: <https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/05/31/detente-between-america-and-north-korea-seems-back-on-track>

<sup>5</sup> Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2017, December 30). I use Social Media not because I like to, but because it is the only way to fight a VERY dishonest and unfair “press,” now often referred to as Fake News Media. Phony and non-existent “sources” are being used more often than ever. Many stories & reports a pure fiction! [Tweet]. Retrieved from: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/947235015343202304>

<sup>6</sup> Ingraham, L. (2018, October 29). Laura Ingraham interviews Donald Trump on Fox’s Th Ingraham Angle. Retrieved from: <https://factba.se/transcript/donald-trump-interview-laura-ingraham-fox-news-october-29-2018>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://factba.se/>

191). The last indicator for this expectation is that Trump will have a clear vision of what he wants, this indicator is based upon the combination of both traits 1 and 2 (p. 188).

The expectation that Trump will be relatively closed to information is measured by the indicators: focusing on persuasion, surrounding himself by ‘own’ personnel, displaying narcissistic manners, looking for media attention and making more ‘extreme’ moves (Hermann, 2005, p.193)

The relationship focus expectation will be measured by the indicators of laying great emphasis on a positive ‘group spirit’, a focus on persuasion and marketing and an unclear focus policy- or ideology-wise (Hermann, 2005, p. 199).

The 4<sup>th</sup> expectation, the removing of threats and taking of opportunities, will be indicated by expressions of distrust (on ‘others’), marking a clear ‘evil’, intent to extend power/ideology, sensitivity to criticism and being vigilant (Hermann, 2005, p. 203)

Lastly, the preference of negative sanctions/action will be measured by mentions of negative sanctions, the deployment of negative sanctions against the adversary and the deployment or mentions of deployment of military intervention.

Not only there will be looked for the presence of these indicators, but attention will also be paid to the lack of any of these indicators or elements that suggest the opposite of what these indicators represent.

**Table 2 – Expectation and Indicators of Trump’s Leadership Style**

<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Challenging constraints, prone to conflict</b>	- Initiating policies and activities	‘I do my own policy. I’m my own strategist (...) and then I make my own decision (...) I don’t have
	- Acting forcefully	any people making decisions’ (Appendix interview
	- Preferring in-person negotiations	1)
	- Having a clear vision	‘North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the ‘Nuclear button is on his desk at all times’. (...) I too have a Nuclear Button and it is much bigger & more powerful one than his and my Button works!’ (Appendix Tweet 1.54)

		<p>‘I think meetings are good. (...) dialogue between two countries is a good thing’ (Appendix interview 10)</p> <p>‘We must all do our part to ensure the complete denuclearization of #NoKo’ (Appendix Tweet 1.36)</p>
<p><b>Closed to information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on persuading</li> <li>- Surrounded by ‘own’ people</li> <li>- Showing narcissism</li> <li>- Looking for media attention</li> <li>- Making ‘extreme’ moves</li> </ul>	<p>‘I’m a very active president (...) I’m dealing with North Korea, I’m dealing with all of these different things’ (Appendix interview 3)</p> <p>‘Being nice to Rocket Man hasn't worked (...) Clinton failed Bush failed and Obama failed. I won't fail.’ (Appendix Tweet 3.1)</p>
<p><b>Relationship-focused</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of a positive ‘Group Spirit’</li> <li>- Focus on persuasion &amp; marketing</li> <li>- No clear focus/ideology/set of specific interests</li> </ul>	<p>‘briefing with my team working on North Korea – Progress being made.’ (Appendix Tweet 1.130)</p> <p>‘But I think we signed a document today which was far, far greater and more comprehensive than people thought - and nobody thought this was possible.’ (Appendix interview 7)</p> <p>‘North Korea is maybe more important than trade. Trade is very important. But massive warfare with millions, potentially millions of people being killed?’ (Appendix interview 2)</p>

<b>Removing threat &amp; taking opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expressing mistrust on ‘others’</li> <li>- Clearly marking an ‘Evil’</li> <li>- Intent on spreading their power/ideology</li> <li>- Sensitive to criticism</li> <li>- Vigilance</li> </ul>	<p>‘You cannot allow a country like that [North Korea] to have nuclear power, nuclear weapons. That's mass destruction.’ (Appendix Interview 1).</p> <p>‘Our Country’s biggest enemy is the Fake News’ (Appendix Tweet 1.103)</p> <p>‘it's funny when you see the fake news, (...) But I signed an agreement where we get everything. Everything. But they say "Trump lost because he agreed to meet."' (Appendix interview 8)</p>
<b>Preferring negative sanctions/action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentioning and deploying Military intervention</li> <li>- Mentioning and deploying negative sanctions</li> </ul>	<p>‘Sanctions and “other” pressures are beginning to have a big impact on North Korea.’ (Appendix Tweet 1.53)</p> <p>‘Gave him nothing except sanctions. We have very heavy sanctions on North Korea. We actually put some more on yesterday because we'd like it to move faster.’ (Appendix interview 9)</p>

## Results

### *Challenging of Constraints and being Prone to Conflict*

The first indicator, initiating policies and activities, can predominantly be found in interviews. Trump frequently mentions he does his own policy and makes decisions: ‘I do my own policy. I'm my own strategist (...) and then I make my own decision (...) I don't have any people making decisions’ (Appendix, interview 1) and ‘the one that matters is me. I'm the only one that matters. Because when it comes to it that is what the policy is going to be’ (Appendix, interview 4). Later, in 2018, when the summit between Kim Jong Un and Trump took place, Trump asked the North Korean leader specifically to send back the remains of American soldiers. This was initiated by Trump, as he says himself because many people begged him for these remains: ‘I've had so many people (...) asking me, please, please’ (Appendix, interview 8). The fact that people asked Trump this favor directly shows that Trump initiated this as well. On Twitter Trump seems to allude his direct influence on policy and activity as

well, as he Tweets: '(...) I too have a nuclear button (...)' (Appendix, Tweet 1.54). It is clear that Trump has the final decision in using (nuclear) weapons.

Acting forcefully is the second factor belonging to this first expectation. This indicator is most clearly found within the utilized data. On Twitter Trump frequently writes in direct and aggressive discourse when talking about North Korea in 2017: 'they won't be around much longer!' (Appendix Tweets 1.39), 'Kim Jong Un of North Korea who is obviously a madman who doesn't mind starving or killing his people will be tested like never before!' (Appendix Tweets 1.37) and lastly: 'North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the 'Nuclear button is on his desk at all times'. Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button and it is much bigger & more powerful one than his and my Button works!' (Appendix Tweets 1.54). Moreover, one of the used filters for the Tweets already shows the appellation of Kim Jong Un as 'Rocket Man', this term, which is thought of as very provocative, is used by Trump five times in his tweets. In his pre-summit interviews Trump does not utilise the same forceful language towards North Korea as he does on his Twitter, apart from 'it is not going to be very pleasant for them' (Appendix interview 4) he has said as well: 'I probably have a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un of Korea' (Appendix interview 6). After the US/North Korea summit in Singapore, June 12, 2018, the forceful language towards North Korea seems to have disappeared out of Trump's discourse, as well on Twitter as in his interviews. From this moment on most of his forceful words concerning the affairs with North Korea seem to shift towards what he calls the 'fake news media' which downplays what he has achieved with North Korea: 'So I get hit by these fakes back here' (Appendix interview 8) and 'You got to watch CNN. I mean, what a fraud it is' to what the interviewer pointed that CNN was behind him and Trump responded in a forceful manner: 'That's fine. Do you hear me?' (Appendix interview 8) And about Kim Jong Un he noted frequently he liked him: 'We got along very well' (Appendix interview 8) and 'I think he liked me and I like him (...) He's smart, he loves his people, he loves his country' (Appendix interview 7).

The third indicator, preferring in-person negotiations is not so much about discourse. Nonetheless, it must be remarked that Trump is the first president in years to negotiate face-to-face with the North Korean leader, but while Trump approved of talking: 'I think meetings are good. Not bad. I think talk is good (...) dialogue between the two countries is a good thing' (Appendix interview 10), 'There is nothing like good dialogue from two people that like each other!' (Appendix tweet 123) and 'When I was talking to President Obama, he essentially was ready to go to war with North Korea. He felt you had to almost go to war. And

I did ask him: "Have you spoken to him?" He goes, "No." I said, "Do you think it would be a good thing to speak to him maybe?" (Appendix interview 8), he did mention, however: 'I think the initial rhetoric was very important. Frankly, as much as I hated to do it' (Appendix interview 7). Still, it can be concluded that Trump is very keen on in-person negotiations.

Having a clear vision of what is wanted, is the last indicator of this expectation. Trump frequently articulates his specific goals. Concerning the case of the nuclear crisis with North Korea, his vision is to completely denuclearize the country. He often voices this on Twitter: 'We must all do our part to ensure the complete denuclearization of #NoKo' (Appendix Tweet 1.36). Later, after his first summit with Kim Jong, he mentioned that denuclearisation was his main goal: 'I mean, we obviously we're talking about the denuclearization 90 percent of the time' (Appendix interview 7).

As all indicators are clearly found in the data, it can be concluded that Trump is likely to be challenging constraints and be prone to conflict. This could explain the US turn towards North Korea, as they beforehand posed a clear threat to the US and Trump acted upon this. Later, Trump made sure to eliminate the threat by going into in-person negotiation to later be able to act more amicable toward North Korea as the threat, according to Trump, was gone.

### ***Closedness to Information***

The focus on the persuasion of others of his own 'successful' vision is an indicator that comes forward most strongly in the way Trump utilizes Twitter. He seems to have used it to post every action he takes and every talk he has in the North Korea crisis and mentioning this in a positive manner. For example: 'Great progress being made!' (Appendix Tweet 111).

Furthermore, he often makes enumerations of things he is doing 'right' to show he is a good president and thus persuade people, he always mentions North Korea: 'I'm a very active president (...) I'm dealing with China, I'm dealing with Japan, I'm dealing with North Korea, I'm dealing with all of these different things' (Appendix interview 3). Considering Trump's persuasion of North Korea, he seems to use his Twitter as a means to persuade the country that he will be forceful if they continue to threaten the US: 'There will never be a friendly solution to the North Korea problem if this continues to happen!' (Appendix Tweet 1.52).

The second indicator, being and preferring to be surrounded by 'own' people, is very obviously present in Trump's dialogue. Especially in the North Korea crisis, he often mentions the great importance he lays upon his close colleagues. Notably, Mike Pompeo who is considered very loyal to and by Trump and has a very strong personal compatibility with the president (Routledge, 2018, p. 5). It is thus obvious that Pompeo was very involved with

North Korea: 'We have great people, right now, working. (...) you look at what we did with North Korea where that was going into a war and now, as you know, the relationship is good - - Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state, there's one.' (Appendix interview 11). What is not mentioned elaborately in the data but what is publicly known as well is that Trump has many family members working for him, including his son in law, Jared Kushner and his daughter, Ivanka Trump (Foreign Staff & Krol, 2017). This, even more, indicates Trump has a preference for being surrounded by his 'own' people.

Showing narcissism, the third indicator for closedness to information is very present in Trump's discourse. When only looking at his tweets Trump seems fairly full of himself as the person to solve the North Korea crisis. In one Tweet he finishes with one of his slogans: 'Bush, tried to get along but didn't have the 'smarts' Obama and Clinton tried but didn't have enough energy or chemistry (...) PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH!' (Appendix Tweet 1.64). Later, when there was seemingly a *détente* between the US and North Korea, Trump seemed to see himself as the reason for that: 'If not for me we would now be at war with North Korea!' (Appendix Tweet 1.109). The discourse in many of his interviews have been found to entail the same narcissistic character, even at the beginning of his presidency, before he started dealing with North Korea, and he only spoke about the crisis concluding: 'I'll make great deals' (Appendix interview 1).

The indicator, looking for media attention, could not be explicitly found in Trump's discourse, but what can be said is that the fact that Trump uses his Twitter as much as he did, makes it evident that Trump laid great emphasis upon the media and the spreading of information. As noted earlier, Trump often made sure that he mentioned all he has done 'good', especially in interviews.

The last indicator, the making of 'extreme' moves, is difficult to signal while it is mostly subjective whether something is considered extreme or not. Nonetheless, the offensive and provocative appellations Trump uses in his discourse for Kim Jong Un can be thought of as extreme moves, as these could spark conflict. He frequently called the North Korean leader 'rocket man': 'The Chinese Envoy who just returned from North Korea seems to have had no impact on Little Rocket Man' (Appendix Tweet 1.50). Furthermore, he suggested indirectly that Kim is short and fat: 'When I would never call him 'short and fat?'' (Appendix Tweet 2.1). The usage of this mocking language towards Kim Jong Un is considered an extreme move as it could easily trigger a greater conflict with Kim being the authoritarian leader of a country with nuclear arms.

Because Trump scores high in all the indicators belonging to being closed to information, we can consider Trump as a leader who is not very open to the opinion or advice of experts and he would mainly trust his 'own' people. For the shift of the US towards North Korea this implicates that Trump would hold on to the position he deems the most 'successful'. In this case, it seems rather devious that Trump's discourse towards North Korea has changed so swiftly from hostile to friendly. Furthermore, Trump's 'America first' rhetoric seems not to include his involvement with North Korea, here he is much more involved with other states.

### ***Relationship-focus***

The first indicator for relationship-focus is the deemed importance of 'group spirit'. As mentioned earlier, Trump speaks frequently very positive about his administration: 'We have put a great team together for our talks with North Korea.' (Appendix Tweet 1.90). In his interviews as well, he talks fondly of his personnel: 'I can only tell you that they're really outstanding. I mean, they're top -- top of the line. And we have great people, right now, working.' (Appendix interview 11) after which he mentions Pompeo. Evidently, we cannot know for sure if this 'group spirit' which Trump showcases is found in the day-to-day office of Trump, but his discourse does point towards this.

The focus on persuasion & marketing resembles the first indicator belonging to closedness to information: the focus on the persuasion of others. As mentioned before, Trump is seen to use Twitter to show the world all 'good' he does, and he mentions his actions in interviews as well.

The inexistence of a clear focus/ideology/set of specific interests forms the last indicator for the relationship-focus expectation. This indicator forms the opposite of the last indicator of the first expectation. Because the vision of Trump, total denuclearization of North Korea, has been proven to be existent it is difficult to argue that a clear focus, ideology or set of specific interests is absent. In the interviews, mainly, he seems to predominantly repeat himself, vocalizing trade is important but peace, and thus denuclearization, will always be more important to him: 'Solve the problem in North Korea. That's worth having deficits. And that's worth having not as good a trade deal as I would normally be able to make' (Appendix interview 1).

As most indicators are present in the data it can be concluded that Trump is indeed more relationship-focused. In the case of the crisis with North Korea Trump has indeed been more

likely to execute his power with his team. An example for this is the fact he frequently sent Pompeo as a representative to North Korea<sup>9</sup>.

### ***Removal of Threats and Taking of Opportunities***

Expressing mistrust on 'others' is the first indicator of this expectation. In the first part of the data, before the first summit between the US and North Korea, Trump mostly expresses his mistrust against North Korea: 'You cannot allow a country like that [North Korea] to have nuclear power, nuclear weapons. That's mass destruction.' (Appendix Interview 1). But later, after the first meeting in Singapore, Trump's mistrust seems to turn, primarily, towards the media and specifically towards what he calls 'the fake news media', who he does not trust to report according to the truth: 'I've educated the public as to the dishonesty of the fake news media.' (Appendix interview 11). Furthermore, Trump seems to have an on and off distrust towards China: 'I have great confidence that China will properly deal with North Korea.' (Appendix Tweet 1.8) as opposed to: 'Trade between China and North Korea grew almost 40% in the first quarter. So much for China working with us' (Appendix Tweet 1.19) and later again: 'China continues to be helpful!' (Appendix Tweet 1.60).

Clearly marking an 'Evil' is the second indicator for the expectation that Trump will aim to remove threats and take opportunities. This indicator resembles the previous 'mistrust-indicator' a lot as when Trump voices a distrust he automatically marks the other party as 'evil'. Like the previous indicator, in the first part of the data, it is noticeable that Trump mainly points towards North Korea and Kim Jong Un as 'the evil': 'North Korea is behaving very badly. They have been "playing" the United States for years.' (Appendix Tweet 1.4). But later on, as relations between Trump and Kim Jong Un are seemingly better Trump targets the 'fake news media' as the main enemy, as they would report falsely about his efforts for the North Korea crisis: 'When I say "the enemy of the people" I'm talking about the fake news' (Appendix Interview 12).

The next indicator, intent on spreading their ideology, extending their power at the expense of others, is not clearly found in the utilized data. However, it can be argued that the frequent usage of Twitter by Trump is a means of spreading his ideas.

The fourth indicator, sensitivity to criticism, is extremely clear in Trump's rhetoric. He seems to be incredibly sensitive to critique as he bashes, what he calls, 'fake news' who write

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<sup>9</sup> Harris, S., Leonnig C. D., Jaffe G. & Nakamura D. (April 18, 2018) 'CIA Director Pompeo met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un over Easter weekend' *Washington Post*, Retrieved from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-china-trade-dispute-looms-over-trump-summit-with-japans-abe/2018/04/17/2c94cb02-424f-11e8-bba2-0976a82b05a2\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.167d17f75b4b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-china-trade-dispute-looms-over-trump-summit-with-japans-abe/2018/04/17/2c94cb02-424f-11e8-bba2-0976a82b05a2_story.html?utm_term=.167d17f75b4b)

badly about what he, in his eyes, has done well. One of the many examples for this: 'Fake News NBC just stated that we have given up so much in our negotiations with North Korea and they have given up nothing. Wow we haven't given up anything & they have agreed to denuclearization (so great for World) site closure & no more testing!' (Appendix Tweet 1.70)

Lastly, vigilance is an indicator that has not been found at all in the studied data. Trump seems to be the very opposite of a cautious person. As shown before, he talks in an aggressive manner and uses provocative language, for instance when calling Kim Jong Un 'rocket man' (Appendix Tweet 3.1 & 3.2) and threatening with using the nuclear button (Appendix Tweet 1.54). These threats could easily spark an even greater conflict, which makes them not vigilant in the least.

Not all indicators have been found in the data, mainly caused by Trump's seeming lack of vigilance. This would mean that Trump would not (always) remove threats and take opportunities as he turned out to be more impulsive in the case of North Korea. According to Hermann (2005), this would place Trump more in the characteristics of a leader with both high distrust and high in-group bias, with these leaders being more risk-taking and aggressive (p. 200). In light of the US's sharp turn in policy towards North Korea, it could be concluded that this was partly due to Trump's more impulsive and assertive manners.

### ***Preference for Negative Sanctions/Action***

Mentioning and deploying military intervention forms the first indicator for the expectation that Trump has a preference for negative sanctions and/or action. It is found in the data that Trump is speaking very forcefully and threatening: 'The US is ready to go hard in either direction!' (Appendix Tweet 1.56). But when he is asked about using the military against North Korea, he remains vague: 'I would not be happy. If he does a nuclear test, I will not be happy.' To what is asked: 'Not happy mean military action?' to what Trump responds: 'I don't know. I mean, we'll see.' (Appendix interview 2). And he mentions about not sending the military during the Olympics: 'I think it would be totally inappropriate to do that during the Olympics.' (Appendix interview 6).

Whereas Trump is not mentioning or deploying military intervention, he does mention and deploys negative sanctions against North Korea. At the beginning of the studied data, he seems to prefer using sanctions a lot in which he involves China as well: 'Additional major sanctions will be imposed on North Korea today. This situation will be handled!' (Appendix Tweet 1.49) Even further in time, when the US and North Korea are already having meetings, Trump mentions: 'sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached' (Appendix Tweet

1.57) and ‘the sanctions were very important -- the sanctions are going to remain on until such time as we see, you know, this is going to happen. And we pretty much see that now, but the sanctions will remain on until we really start dismantling or dismantle the nuclear weapons.’ (Appendix interview 7). When looking at the executed sanctions by Trump, there are plenty, which even more constitutes the presence of this indicator.<sup>10</sup>

As both indicators are more or less present in the data, it can be concluded that Trump does indeed have a preference for negative sanctions/action. In the case of the shift of US policy towards North Korea, this image does not seem to fit as Trump switches to a more diplomatic approach. However, even after this shift in narrative the negative sanctions have sustained, which again constitutes the expectation.<sup>7</sup>

## **Discussion & Conclusion**

As is shown in this research, Trump's style of leadership is an exceptional case. The studied data showed that Trump is likely to be challenging constraints and be prone to conflict, explaining he is the first US president in years engaging in contact with North Korea<sup>11</sup>. This aspect of Trump's leadership style can clearly explain the US relations with North Korea, explaining the first hostile reaction to the nuclear threat and the later more amicable summit in Singapore.

Concerning the closedness to information, Trump would indeed be very closed as he would mainly rely on the opinions which fall in line with his own view. This aspect of Trump's leadership style is more difficult to situate in the North Korea relations, as his behavior seems to shift (from aggressive to diplomatic). Furthermore, the fact Trump has been very involved with North Korea does not always lineate with his primarily domestic ‘America first’ narrative.

The relationship-focus is extremely present when looking at the data concerning the group spirit and persuasion indicators. In the case of the US relations with North Korea, this would mean Trump would get his team involved, which happened very much so. However, The last indicator, the inexistence of an ideology or clear focus, could not be retrieved clearly from the studied data as Trump did seem to have a clear vision, as argued for concerning other expectations. It can be concluded that Trump does have a relationship-focus, but this is not as extreme as Walker et al. (2018) have predicted.

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<sup>10</sup> Tweed, D. (June 7, 2018). ‘What to Know About North Korea and Economic Sanctions’ *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-07/what-to-know-about-sanctions-before-trump-kim-meeting-quicktake>

<sup>11</sup> Berenson, T. (March 9, 2018). ‘Why Trump's Predecessors Did Not Meet With North Korea’. *Time*. Retrieved from: <https://time.com/5192579/trump-meets-kim-jong-un-north-korea/>

Not entirely in line with his LTA, Trump would not always be likely to remove threats and take opportunities. Three indicators studied in the used data do point towards the justness of Trump's tendency to remove threats and take opportunities: Trump has shown to express a great amount of distrust against 'others' he is hypersensitive to criticism and he clearly marks an enemy. While these indicators are very present within the data, the intent of spreading his ideology or vision is more difficult to retrieve and Trump seems to completely lack the indicator vigilance. From this, we can conclude that Trump maybe does not entirely fit the frame the Walker et. al's (2018) LTA analysis sorts him in. In the case of the crisis with North Korea, we can link the sharp turn in US policy to Trump's more impulsive manners in decision-making.

Lastly, as Walker et al. (2018) predicted, Trump would prefer using negative actions and sanctions. While Trump has shown in the case of North Korea that he has a big preference of using economic, 'softer', sanctions, he seems to be more adverse against military intervention. This shows that Trump is keener on a diplomatic and non-violent solution of an issue than Walker et al. initially have predicted. However, Trump's leadership style preferring negative economic sanctions does seem to have been reflected in the case of North Korea. Even when relations between the US and North Korea had become more diplomatic, Trump continued to induce sanctions.<sup>7</sup>

As shown in this study, Trump's leadership style indeed could predict and explain a big part of Trump's policy during the case of US relations with North Korea. However, there are a few expectations, relationship-focus, removing threats and opportunities and preferring negative sanctions, might need adjustment as the indicators belonging to these traits were not always retrieved from the data. It is thus important that more research is exercised, specifically concerning the leadership traits linked to these expectations. Furthermore, more data and cases concerning Trump as a president should be studied in order to constitute the results of this study, determine the stability of each aspect of Trump's leadership style and to guarantee objectivity. It would also be of great importance to test these hypotheses concerning Trump's leadership style on his domestic policy or even his administration, as Hermann did in one of her studies (1994). This study of the influence of Trump's leadership style proves again that leadership style can greatly influence the course of action in international politics and further underlines the importance of the individual level in international relations.

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## **Appendix**

The complete appendix has been sent to dr. F. E. Bakker.