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Political Psychology, Vol. 28, No. 6, 2007

Alliances, Domestic Politics, and Leader Psychology: Why Did Britain Stay Out of Vietnam and Go into Iraq?

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In the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts, British Prime Ministers were asked to contribute forces to an American-led war that was deeply unpopular in the United Kingdom. This presented Harold Wilson and Tony Blair with conflicting incentives and constraints: to support their senior ally or to make policy based upon domestic considerations. Why did Harold Wilson decline to commit British forces while Tony Blair agreed to do so? With situational factors generating conflicting predictions, I argue that investigation of individual-level variables is necessary. In particular, I suggest that leaders vary systematically in their willingness to subordinate the concerns of constituents to strategic imperatives, and that introducing the leadership style categories of "constraint challenger" and "constraint respecter" can make more determinate the linkage between domestic politics and strategic concerns.

KEY WORDS: Alliances, domestic politics, leader psychology, Vietnam, Iraq, United Kingdom

The contrasting British choices in Vietnam and Iraq present a puzzle rich in theoretical and substantive significance. Both episodes involved a conflict initiated by the United States, which requested force contributions from its junior British ally. At the time of the requests, the United Kingdom had strong incentives to contribute forces to ensure the continuation of the alliance and shared to some extent the strategic goals of the actions. However, in both episodes opposition to British involvement in the war was strong among the general public and much of the political elite, providing decision makers with countervailing incentives to avoid involvement. Why, then, was the outcome in Vietnam, in which the British declined to become involved, so different from that in Iraq, where they made a substantial contribution?

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My argument here is that considering these episodes in light of alliance dynamics and domestic politics generates conflicting predictions. Theories that stress alliances lead us to expect a British force contribution and so are comfortable with the Iraq choice but confounded by Vietnam. The reverse is true for theories that stress domestic constraints on unpopular foreign adventures. While both approaches focus upon important factors in the calculations of political leaders, which factor will be dominant in specific episodes depends to an important degree upon the leadership style of the individuals making the decisions (Farnham, 2004, p. 448). Some individuals are more responsive to the wishes of their constituents while others characteristically make foreign policy based upon strategic considerations regardless of the political environment. These characteristic orientations of leaders can be determined from quantitative content analysis of their verbal output, procedures that reveal personality traits linked to a disposition to "respect constraints" versus "challenge constraints" (Hermann, 2003; Keller, 2005a, 2005b).

Drawing upon archival documents pertaining to Vietnam and original interviews with senior members of the Blair government, I consider alliance-based and domestic politics explanations of Britain's choices and show how a focus upon leader psychology can help generate more determinate predictions when these two important situational variables come into conflict with one another.

Alliances

Common practice is to explain British foreign policy in terms of the "special relationship" with the United States, and accounts of British actions must take account of the alliance dynamics involved. In both the Vietnam and Iraq cases, a strong senior ally requested a force contribution from a junior ally. From a classical rationalist standpoint, the incentives for the British to free-ride in both instances were great, as the United States sent strong signals that it was going to eliminate the threat regardless of the British stance, and the benefits of resisting perceived communist aggression and eliminating a rogue regime were public goods from which the United Kingdom could not be excluded. However, the British derived benefits of a security, diplomatic, and economic nature from the alliance, and so had incentives to ensure its continuance and share the burden of taking action with the senior ally (Bennett, Lepgold, and Unger, 1994; Kupchan, 1988, p. 317; Snyder, 1984, p. 466). The situation therefore resembled Glenn Snyder's notion of "alliance dependence," with the junior ally having incentives to resist the myopic temptation to free ride and contribute U.K. forces to ensure the continuation of the alliance over the long-term (Snyder, 1997).

Vietnam. The Johnson administration applied direct and consistent pressure upon the British to provide a force contribution to the Vietnam effort. During Wilson's December 1964 visit to Washington, Johnson told Wilson that "there were . . . places where a United Kingdom military presence, on however limited a

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scale, might have a significant effect. A few soldiers in British uniforms in South Vietnam, for example, would have a great psychological and political significance" (Ellis, 2004, p. 28). On February 10, 1965, during a more heated exchange, LBJ responded to Wilson's suggestions on Vietnam policy that Britain seemed "willing to share advice but not responsibility." Drawing parallels with Britain's own counterinsurgency operations, LBJ suggested that "I won't tell you how to run Malaysia and you don't tell me how to run Vietnam . . . If you want to help us in Vietnam send us some men and send us some folks to deal with those guerillas." (Wilson, 1971, p. 80)

American requests continued through 1965. On April 9, the British Ambassador to the United States, Patrick Dean, warned Wilson that "the president is still very anxious to see a greater participation on the ground in South Vietnam from America's allies, including ourselves" (Ellis, 2004, p. 78). On July 26, LBJ wrote to Wilson that

> I must express to you my own deep personal conviction that the prospect of peace in Vietnam will be greatly increased in the measure that the necessary efforts of the United States are supported and shared by other nations . . . I now ask that you give most earnest consideration to increasing (your) assistance in ways that will give a clear signal to the world—and perhaps especially to Hanoi—of the solidarity of international support for resistance to aggression in Vietnam and for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. (Johnson, 1965)

Finally, in July 1966, Johnson made a further effort. "Could we not send even a token force?" Wilson was asked. "A platoon of bagpipers would be sufficient; it was the British flag that was wanted" (Wilson, 1971, p. 264).

Wilson's stance against committing troops remained firm even in spite of the perilous British financial situation, and the consequent reliance upon the United States for loans and guarantees to stabilize the position of sterling, a factor that added an additional dimension of alliance dependence. As McGeorge Bundy, the National Security Advisor, reported to Johnson in 1964, "it makes little sense for us to rescue the pound in a situation in which there is no British flag in Vietnam" (Pimlott, 1993, pp. 385–386). Indeed, Wilson was aware of this fact, and when confronted by a Labour party colleague as to why he had not simply denounced the Vietnam enterprise he explained earthily that "we can't kick our creditors in the balls" (Ziegler, 1993, p. 229). It was therefore the cause of no little alarm when in late 1965 requests for more American financial help began to be met with inquiries about when the first British battalion would be arriving in Vietnam (Crossman, 1979, p. 407).

Iraq. In contrast to Johnson's insistence upon a British contribution in Vietnam, the Bush administration did not make systematic use of the leverage afforded by its senior ally status, which makes the outcomes taken together even

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more confounding from an alliance politics perspective. Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, was criticized in March 2003 for stating at a press conference that if Blair was unable to commit British troops to the war for domestic reasons, it would not significantly affect United States plans as "there are workarounds" (Danchev, 2007, p. 50) While this was seen as a "gaffe," it embodied an essential truth both about the material situation and the Bush administration's attitude. In fact, the president himself had telephoned the prime minister to suggest that, if domestic opposition remained severe, U.K. troops could stay out of offensive operations and enter Iraq as peacekeepers in the postwar period. "My last choice is to have your government fall," Bush told Blair. "I would rather go alone than have your government fall." Bush said British forces could join as "a second wave, peacekeepers or something," a proposal Blair emphatically rejected (Coughlin, 2006, p. 287). There is therefore little evidence of the type of sustained, direct pressure which President Johnson and his administration applied to Wilson and the British government in the Vietnam case.

Nonetheless, both in public and private, Blair was consistent in stating his absolute commitment to the alliance. "What was propelling the prime minister," said the Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook, "was a determination that he would be the closest ally to George Bush and they would prove to the United States administration that Britain was their closest ally" (Coughlin, 2006, p. 296). For Clare Short, a member of the cabinet at the time, Blair was "tumbling over himself" to get close to Bush (Interview with author, 4/30/2007). Indeed, part of the value Blair sees in maintaining his perceived influence over the United States is that the alliance gives him the ability to achieve goals at the international level that are impossible for Britain acting alone, and there is some evidence that he conceptualizes the U.S.–U.K. relationship in "Greeks and Romans" terms (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 463). For Blair, the alliance with the United States offers the opportunity to turn his rhetoric into action, and he perceives the United States as a genuine force for good in the world. In contrast to the views of some who view the use of U.S. power as dangerous or destabilizing, Blair believes the greater danger is that the United States, if forced to act alone, will retreat into isolationism (Danchev, 2007, p. 49).

In contrast to the choice in Vietnam, then, Britain behaved as an exemplary ally in Iraq. From the alliance maintenance standpoint, often adduced to explain British foreign policy in relation to the United States, the outcomes taken together are therefore somewhat puzzling, and compel us to consider additional explanations for British choices.

Domestic Politics

In the Vietnam and Iraq cases, strong domestic opposition to the wars provided constraints upon potential British involvement. Indeed, the literature on domestic politics and foreign policy suggests that executives in democratic states

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Table 1. Q: If the U.S. government asks Britain to help in the war in South Vietnam what should we do?

	Dec 1964	Apr 1965
Send troops	10	14
Send war materials only	17	22
Take no part at all	46	50
Don't know	29	15

SOURCE: King and Wybrow, 2001, p. 328.

will often bow to strong domestic opposition to foreign policy actions, given that their incumbency ultimately rests on retaining public support (Palmer, London, and Regan, 2004, p. 4; Putnam, 1988, p. 457). Indeed, domestic political support, or at least acquiescence, is often seen as sine qua non, with no gains on other dimensions, such as alliance maintenance, compensating for heavy domestic costs (Mintz and Geva, 1997, p. 84; see also Farnham, 2004; Hagan, 1994; Holsti, 1992; Mesquita and Lalman, 1992; J. Snyder, 1991). As Russett (1990) suggests: "Public opinion sets broad limits of constraint, identifying a range of policies in which decision makers can choose, and in which they must choose if they are not to face rejection in the voting booths" (p. 110; see also McCalla, 1996, p. 468; Powlick, 1991). Therefore, domestic opposition should have provided strong disincentives to Wilson and Blair in committing U.K. forces to the Vietnam and Iraq wars.

Vietnam. In the Vietnam case, Wilson faced domestic opposition to his diplomatic support for America's policy, opposition that would have been much greater had he attempted to contribute forces. The opposition came from three sources—public opinion, senior members of the cabinet, and the rank and file of the parliamentary Labour party.

Table 1 indicates that during late December 1964 and April 1965—the period during which the Johnson administration made the initial requests for a troop contribution—such a move was favored by less than 15% of the British public.

Fully half of the public favored taking no part in the U.S. war at all. Unfortunately, polling on this specific question was only undertaken on those two occasions. However, Table 2 indicates that support for the American war per se, which is a reasonable proxy for the more general question of a British contribution to it, did not rise as the war continued. Indeed, the war was seen, in the United Kingdom as in the United States, as an increasingly poor idea the longer it continued.

In cabinet, the majority of the senior figures were also against committing troops to the U.S. effort (Pimlott, 1993, p. 388). Escalatory moves in Vietnam, such as the resumption of bombing of the north in January 1966, were discussed with disapproval, "so far from promoting an end of the hostilities, the United States action was merely aggravating the tension" (Cabinet Office, 1966). Indeed, many in the cabinet pressed Wilson to more firmly dissociate himself from the American effort.

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Table 2. Q: Just from what you have heard or read which of these statements comes closest to the way you, yourself, feel about the Unites States' war in Vietnam? The US should:

	Sep 1966	Oct 1966	Jan 1967	Mar 1967	May 1967	Jul 1967	Oct 1969
Begin to withdraw troops	42	35	42	41	47	45	54
Carry on its present level of fighting	17	24	18	28	15	15	15
Increase the strength of its attacks against North Vietnam	16	13	14	14	14	15	8
Don't Know	25	28	26	17	24	25	23

SOURCE: King and Wybrow, 2001, p. 329.

In parliament, Wilson did not need to be concerned with the opposition Conservatives as a constraint on committing forces to Vietnam: the Conservative Party is traditionally pro-American and would have supported such a move. However, heated opposition came from his own parliamentary Labour Party. Here, Wilson had to be extremely careful, as his majority was a precarious three until the general election of March 1966, when it increased to almost one hundred. This increase in Wilson's majority is significant in light of the premises of the study—one alternative explanation for the divergent outcomes could be that Blair was simply in a stronger domestic position than Wilson and so able to ignore domestic constraints more easily. However, if it was solely Wilson's initially small majority that prevented him from contributing forces, why then did he continue to refuse American requests after he gained a huge parliamentary majority? This was a point not lost on LBJ, who made it known to the British that he "could not understand" why Wilson was still dissociating himself from Vietnam now he "had a really big majority" (Dean, 1966).

Iraq. As with Vietnam, I operationalize domestic constraints in the Iraq episode as the balance of opinion within the parliamentary and cabinet elite and public sentiment as measured through opinion polling.

Extensive polling data is available on British public opinion concerning war with Iraq. These data reveal a consistent pattern of opposition to British involvement in the circumstances under which the war was fought: the absence of weapons of mass destruction discovered by UN weapons inspectors and the absence of a UN resolution explicitly authorizing force. Polling on the issue began in late September 2002 and showed nearly three-quarters of the public opposing British involvement in an American led intervention. The number in support reached a low of 15% in January 2003, before climbing marginally to a high of 26% immediately prior to the commencement of hostilities (Table 3).

It should be noted that support for the war would have been substantially higher if UN authorization had been obtained or the weapons inspectors had found WMD. Blair was aware of the substantial influence explicit UN support would have had on public opinion, and made efforts to achieve this in order to overcome

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Table 3. Question for 24–25 September 2002 and 17–20 January 2003 entries: Would you support or oppose Britain joining any American-led military action against Iraq, without UN approval? Question for 28 February–2 March 2003 and 14–16 March 2003 entries: Would you support or oppose British troops joining any American-led military action against Iraq in the following circumstances: The UN inspectors do not find proof that Iraq is trying to hide weapons of mass destruction, and the UN Security Council does not vote in favor of military action?

	24–25 Sep 2002	17–20 Jan 2003	28 Feb–2 Mar 2003	14–16 Mar 2003
Support	22	15	24	26
Oppose	70	77	67	63
Don't Know	8	8	10	11

SOURCE: MORI, "Blair Losing Public Support on Iraq," January 21, 2003, http://www.mori.com/polls/2003/iraq.shtml, accessed January 23, 2006 and "Iraq, The Last Pre-War Polls," March 21, 2003, http://www.mori.com/mrr/2003/c030321.shtml, accessed January 23, 2006.

Table 4. Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is handling the current situation in Iraq?

	Sep 2002	Oct 2002	Jan 2003	28 Feb–3 Mar 2003	6–7 Mar 2003	14–16 Mar 2003
Approve	40	35	26	36	29	30
Disapprove	49	47	62	53	53	54
Don't Know	11	18	13	12	18	16

SOURCE: MORI, "Iraq, The Last Pre-War Polls," March 21, 2003, http://www.mori.com/mrr/2003/c030321.shtml, accessed January 23, 2006.

domestic opposition, although the Leader of the House of Commons and Former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook thought it "manifestly unrealistic" that UN approval would be forthcoming (Cook, 2004, p. 314), and Blair ultimately went to war in its absence. It is thus important to bear in mind that, as the polling organization MORI (2003) notes:

> It is a judgment of the particular circumstances rather than an outbreak of mass pacifism which is behind the majority opposition to the present war. Most of the public accept in principle that it may sometimes be necessary to take military action against a particular regime, but many of them nevertheless require proof of the threat and/or endorsement of their judgment by the international community before they will approve a specific action.

Indeed, public evaluations of Blair's handling of the crisis indicate the direct personal cost he was paying for his Iraq policy, with approval of his performance on the issue averaging 33% from September 2002 to March 2003 (see Table 4).

An exclamation point was given to public opposition by the February 15 "Stop the War" rally, which drew one million people onto London's streets and so

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became the largest demonstration in British history (see also Schuster and Maier, 2006, pp. 232–233).

In terms of elite-level politics, the prime minister faced significant opposition within the cabinet. The full records of deliberations have yet to be released, but contemporaneous reports indicated that at various times and to various degrees at least seven members of the cabinet expressed significant doubts about Iraq policy.[1]

Parliamentary opposition provided a further constraint. As with Wilson, the major concern was not the opposition Conservative party, but members of the governing Labour Party. In February 2002, a random sample of 101 Labour MPs (a quarter of the party) were asked whether they believed there was sufficient evidence to justify an attack on Iraq. Eighty-six answered no, with seven undecided and only eight assenting (Clark, 2002). In the run-up to the crucial parliamentary vote in March 2003, various motions which would deny parliamentary support to Blair's policy were proposed, and the cumulative number of signatures of Labour MPs would have been sufficient to deny Blair a majority within his own party, leaving the future of the administration in the hands of the Conservative party. This scenario was precisely Blair's fear (Seldon, 2004, p. 596). After a personal appeal, meetings with dozens of MPs, and significant lobbying, Blair narrowly won the vote on 18 March 2003, but the size of the Labour rebellion was a parliamentary record. Clare Short indicates the lengths to which Blair had to go with the parliamentary party: "every scrap of patronage and pressure was brought to bear to plead with people to be loyal. He was right on the edge of using whatever authority he had, and he kind of squeaked through" (Interview with author, 4/30/2007).

Evidence has subsequently emerged that Blair believed there was a genuine prospect he would be forced to resign during this period. Britain's Ambassador to the UN, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, stated in February 2007 that Blair was "on a knife edge. You got a sense from talking to those in No. 10 how fearful they were they would not survive a vote." While not quite "packing their bags," "they were, I think, examining their drawers to see how easily it was all portable" (BBC, 2/27/07).

Leader Orientation to Political Constraints

We are therefore left with comparable strategic incentives and domestic constraints in the Vietnam and Iraq cases, and a puzzling divergence in outcomes. In this section, I suggest that an additional variable, focused upon leaders' orientation

[1] Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook; International Development Secretary Clare Short; Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown; Foreign Secretary Jack Straw; Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett; Transport Secretary Alistair Darling; Work and Pensions Secretary Andrew Smith. See Cathy Newman, "Most of Cabinet May Oppose War on Iraq", *Financial Times*, Monday September 2nd 2002: 2.

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to their political environment, can be elaborated in a manner which helps predict whether strategic imperatives or domestic constraints will tend to be privileged in a decision maker's calculations.

Some recent work has argued that leader characteristics act as mediating variables between domestic politics and foreign policy and that a complete understanding of this linkage is difficult absent consideration of these variables (Farnham, 2004; Foyle, 1997, p. 164). This line of inquiry builds upon progress made in understanding the impact of individuals upon political decisions. Under certain circumstances—particularly involving non routine policy problems coupled with high stakes—strategically placed individuals can significantly impact political outcomes (Greenstein, 1967; Holsti, 1976). In these instances, the policy preferences, decision-making styles, and information processing tendencies of individuals become important subjects of study (George, 1969; Jervis, 1976; Kaarbo, 1997; Mitchell, 2005; Preston, 1997; Winter, 1987). The fundamental argument of this approach is that situational factors often contain only *potential* constraints and opportunities, which are responded to differently by different leaders according to their relevant individual characteristics (Farnham, 2004, p. 448). In considering foreign policy decisions "a compelling explanation," as Hermann and Kegley (1995) put it, "cannot treat the decider exogenously" (p. 514).

Applying this insight to the issue of constraints upon foreign policy choices, Jonathan Keller has suggested that factors such as public opinion and political opposition are not themselves determinative, but are merely *potential* constraints that must be *activated* by a leader's responsiveness to them before they become relevant to behavior (Keller, 2005a, p. 837; see also Foyle, 1997; Hagan, 1994). Building on work into leadership styles by Margaret Hermann, Keller suggests that leaders can be broadly categorized into two groups—those that respect constraints and those that challenge them. "Constraint challengers" make foreign policy based upon "state goals and interests—not through a dialogue with others or a survey of the political landscape" (Keller, 2005a, p. 843). "Constraint respecters" perceive themselves to be restricted to pursuing international policies that are consistent with the preferences of key domestic actors and public opinion. For constraint respecters, decision making involves "a survey of the political landscape, in order to determine which definition of the problem is broadly accepted and which policy responses would likely receive widespread support or provoke opposition" (Keller, 2005a, p. 844).

In a study involving 39 leaders of democratic states and 147 foreign policy crises, Keller found that leaders classified as constraint challengers were more likely to use violence and to use more extreme violent responses than leaders classified as constraint respecters. Keller's explanation was that in democratic states, domestic political constraints operate as pacifying factors on constraint respecters, but these pacifying effects are much less salient to constraint challengers (Keller, 2005b). In a detailed study comparing Presidents Kennedy (a constraint respecter) and Reagan (a constraint challenger) during key decision-making

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episodes, Keller also found support for the predictions of the approach (Keller, 2005a).

Of course, "constraints" may not be solely domestic in nature, and structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz (1979) view the international system itself as "constraining and compelling" states. From this standpoint an international-level event such as the request for help by a powerful senior ally could also be conceptualized as a constraint. This could call into question some of the logic of the argument, as classifying a leader as a constraint challenger or constraint respecter would beg the question *which constraints* are to be challenged or respected? Indeed, while many uses of the categories have suggested domestic politics is the more likely source of constraints, especially for leaders in democratic states (Hermann and Kegley, 1995, p. 522; Keller, 2005a, 2005b), there has been some recognition that in certain circumstances international factors may also provide constraints that leaders could challenge or respect (Hermann, 2003). This is an important point, and reminds us that the use of individual-level analysis must always take into account the interaction between individual and context in order to generate defensible predictions. In the Vietnam and Iraq cases, as indicated, the constraints upon action were primarily domestic in nature. The United States wanted the British prime minister to contribute forces, while public and elite opinion was against such a move. Further, the evidence is that both leaders perceived the situation as one in which strategic benefits were to be had from supporting the senior ally, but there were significant domestic obstacles to be overcome. The difference between Wilson and Blair was the degree of risk to domestic standing each prime minister was willing to run in challenging these obstacles.

Method and Data

Obviously, we cannot measure an individual's orientation to constraints on foreign policy actions by noting how they behaved in relation to those constraints—a circular argument. In order to provide a separate measure of the leader's orientation to constraints, at a distance analysis of verbal material is employed (Schafer and Walker, 2006, pp. 25–52). The underlying rationale of these methods is that the words of political leaders, when processed by content analysis schemes linked to psychological concepts, reveal important information which helps us to understand and predict decision-making behavior (Schafer, 2000, p. 512; Winter, 2003, p. 114). As Suedfeld, Guttieri, and Tetlock (2003) note, the assumption is that "thought processes underlie spoken or written communication," and that it is reasonable to infer that "the (thought) process and the (spoken or written) product are related and that the product reflects some important aspects of the process" (p. 246).

The individual variables used to predict orientation to constraints in this study are adapted from Margaret G. Hermann's leadership trait analysis framework

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(Hermann, 1980, 2003). Hermann's approach draws upon trait psychology to suggest that leaders have stable dispositions towards their political environment and that these dispositions mediate between the environment and the behavior of the leader. In particular, a leader's "belief in ability to control events" and "need for power" combine to predict their orientation to political constraints. Belief in ability to control events is an individual's subjective feeling of control over their environment. Individuals higher in this trait are said to have an internal locus of control, while individuals who score lower have an external locus of control. Need for power refers to the impulse to gain, maintain, or restore the individual's control over people, policy process, and outcomes. Higher scores on both variables indicate increased propensities to challenge constraints. A more complex picture emerges if a leader scores "high" on one variable and "low" on the other (see Hermann, 2003) but this does not arise here given the data on Wilson and Blair.

Both of the traits are measured by content analysis of verbal output for words tagged as indicative of a high or low score on the trait in question, with the final trait score between 0 and 1 determined by the ratio of high to low "hits" within the material coded. Coding for belief in ability to control events focuses upon verbs indicative of action or planning for action of the leader or relevant group as a percentage of total verbs used. Coding for need for power focuses upon verbs which reflect attempts to establish, maintain, or restore the leader's power. Hermann's approach has been subject to extensive validity testing and found to provide data that reliably discriminates between individual political leaders and are significant predictors of behavior (Dille and Young, 2000; Kille and Scully, 2003).

The content analysis is conducted by the "Profiler Plus" software program, which perfectly replicates the analysis each time and so eliminates interrater reliability concerns. Material analyzed for Wilson and Blair is the entirety of their responses to foreign policy questions in the British House of Commons. Wilson and Blair are therefore speaking about foreign policy to a domestic audience—ideal material from which to determine their orientation to constraints on foreign policies.[2] Further, the responses are both plentiful and relatively unedited by speechwriters or aides. For Harold Wilson, the scores reflect his answers to parliamentary questions from 16 October 1964, the date of his assumption of the office of prime minister, to 9 June 1970, when his Labour Party was defeated in the general election. For Tony Blair the scores come from analysis of his answers to parliamentary questions from 5 May 1997 (first day in office) to 31 March 2007, updating earlier trait data on Blair (Dyson, 2006, p. 293). Material was in both cases taken from the *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* series: a verbatim record of every word spoken in the British House of Commons. Table 5 reports the results.

[2] It logically follows that if one were interested in leaders' orientations toward other types of constraints upon other areas of policy, one would collect material with relevance to that topic area (Hermann, 2003).

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Table 5. Comparison Trait Scores of Harold Wilson and Tony Blair
Entries are mean of quarter-year trait scores (standard deviations in parentheses)

	110 Leader Reference Group	Harold Wilson (n = 18)	Tony Blair (n = 40)	t-score (Wilson/Blair)
Belief in Ability to Control Events	0.34 (0.04)	0.33 (0.06)	0.44 (0.05)	6.87***
Need for Power	0.26 (0.03)	0.21 (0.03)	0.29 (0.06)	5.49***

***$p = < .001$. Data for 110 leader reference group from Michael Young, Social Science Automation.

The data reported are the mean of scores generated by analysis of verbal material grouped into quarter-year-long segments (to provide a sufficient number of words for each measurement), while the standard deviations are shown to indicate stability across observations, and a t-test comparison of means indicates the statistical significance of the differences in the scores between the two leaders. These data reveal that Wilson and Blair differ substantially on the individual variables of interest. Wilson scores significantly lower than Blair on both belief in ability to control events and need for power. As can be inferred from the standard deviations, the scores for Wilson and Blair and the interval between the two individuals is relatively consistent, and the t-tests reveal that the differences between the two are significant.[3] Of course, showing that Wilson and Blair differ is not the same as showing that they can be classified as "high" and "low", and hence placed into "constraint challenger" and "constraint respecter" categories. However, given that the basis of the inquiry is that of two individuals in comparable situations, judging them in relation to each other is appropriate, especially given the clarity and significance of the quantitative differences in scores. That being said, I provide data on a 110 leader reference group to further set the scores in context. In relation to this group, Blair is substantially higher than the mean on both traits, and Wilson is close to the mean on belief in ability to control events, and substantially below the mean on need for power.

Leader Orientation to Constraints: Explaining British Choices

Wilson. A leader with Wilson's trait scores faced with the Vietnam decisions would be predicted to respect the constraints upon foreign policy actions repre-

[3] The scores also do not change substantially for the period immediately preceding American escalation of the war in Vietnam (October 1964–March 1965) for Wilson, and immediately preceding the start of hostilities in Iraq (September 2002–March 2003) for Blair:
Wilson's belief in ability to control events: 34.5
Wilson's need for power: 20
Blair's belief in ability to control events: 43.6
Blair's need for power: 27
This removes the concern that either or both prime ministers' orientation to constraints changed as the decisions in question approached.

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sented by severe domestic opposition. The ideal outcome for such a leader would be to maintain the benefits of alliance without contributing forces and have the Americans appreciate that the junior British ally was helping as much as possible given the domestic climate. If they would not, then ultimately Wilson would be expected to refuse to imperil his domestic standing by committing troops to Vietnam.

The evidence is that Wilson did indeed respond to the domestic political constraints and concluded that they ruled out a positive response to U.S. requests. During his April 1965 visit to Johnson, Wilson gave the president an extensive run-down of the domestic obstacles to a British contribution and felt that LBJ was left "in no doubt about the problems" (Ellis, 2004, p. 81). When the issue was raised again in Wilson's December 1965 visit, the prime minister "referred to, and showed him, the letter I had from 68 Labour MPs, only a few of them traditionally concerned with the Vietnam question. He disagreed with some of the diagnosis in the letter but was very understanding about my internal political problems" (Wilson, 1965a; see also Wilson, 1971, p. 187).

When controversy erupted over the American resumption of bombing after the Christmas 1965 pause, Wilson again made Johnson aware of the severity of the constraints he faced, reporting that he had been subject to a "very dangerous attack from within the parliamentary party on the question of Vietnam." Most worrying for Wilson was that the "attack" came not just from left-wing irreconcilables, but "a wide consensus right across the party, including some who had previously supported our action" (Wilson, 1966a).

Apart from precluding the commitment of forces, Wilson indicated to Johnson that the public differences he expressed with him on Vietnam policy were motivated primarily by domestic necessity:

> The fact that the British people are physically remote from the problem and, in particular, are not suffering the tragedy of the losses which your people are suffering serves to increase the lack of understanding of my full support for your basic policy . . . where we have differed in detail—but never in basic policy—and have had to express a different point of view . . . I must be frank in saying that this is the price I have to pay for being able to hold the line in our country where the public reaction is very wide spread. (Wilson, 1966b)

The evidence is that Wilson is sincere in telling Johnson of his "full support for the basic policy," and this is a significant point in terms of one possible alternative explanation—that Wilson simply thought Vietnam was immoral or ill-advised—and this explains his refusal to burden-share. Wilson was not a pacifist, and of course the British were engaged simultaneously in combating a communist insurgency in Malaysia. Moreover, most accounts indicate that he shared at least some of the U.S. fear that a quick communist victory in Vietnam could lead to a

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"domino-effect" collapse in Southeast Asia. His biographer Ben Pimlott notes that he agreed with "the underlying premise that in Indo-China, as in Malaysia, Communist insurgency must be held in check" (Pimlott, 1993, pp. 384–385). As Wilson wrote to Johnson in August 1965, "In the face of the persistent North Vietnamese refusal to negotiate, I can see no alternative to your policy of strengthening your forces in South Vietnam in order to demonstrate to Hanoi the futility of their dreams of military victory" (Wilson, 1965b).

Wilson sought to appeal to Johnson's political instincts in asking the president to understand his domestic situation, being "sure that the president, himself a master politician, will readily appreciate what an effort it has been, in terms of the British political situation, for Ministers to maintain as much support as they have for American policy in Vietnam . . . Ministers have only been able to maintain their Vietnam policy, because they have been able to assure critics that Britain is at least not involved militarily" (Foreign Office, 1965).

In the Vietnam case, therefore, examining Wilson's decisions indicates that he ultimately weighted the political constraints higher than alliance maintenance benefits in considering whether a British contribution was possible. "His response," Pimlott (1993) concludes, "was to give the Americans everything they wanted, short of what they wanted most, which was British troops in Vietnam" (p. 385).

Blair. Based upon his trait scores we would expect Blair to challenge domestic political constraints and make foreign policy on the basis of his perception of strategic considerations. Previous work focused upon Blair's personality and worldview has established that he has a proactive policy orientation and a Manichean view of international affairs, and that he applied this worldview to the case of Iraq (Dyson, 2006). The relevance to the present research is that these dispositions toward interventionism and black and white thinking enhance the value, in his eyes, of the alliance with the United States by holding out the prospect of utilizing American power to achieve his ambitious and strongly held foreign policy goals, adding to the benefits of maintaining the alliance and the costs of imperiling it. The ideal outcome for a leader such as Blair faced with the Iraq decisions would be to secure public support for the enterprise. However, if this could not be achieved, Blair would ultimately be predicted to challenge the domestic constraints on taking action. Process-tracing evidence supports these expectations.

In a key policy making meeting in July 2002, the minutes of which were subsequently leaked (known in the United States as the "Downing Street Memo"), many of Blair's advisors and cabinet colleagues expressed significant concern over public opposition to the war and indicated that this may preclude British participation. However, Blair was a voice of optimism, asserting that "the British public will support regime change if the political context is right" (Rycroft, 2002). David Blunkett, the Home Secretary at the time, confirms that Blair had an "overwhelming certainty and confidence in his own judgment" and "believed that he could carry people with him" (Interview with author, 5/1/2007).

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Indeed, Blair was not swayed by the protests of key cabinet colleagues, disquiet that culminated in the resignation of the Leader of the House of Commons and former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, and the International Development Secretary Clare Short. The Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who also harbored doubts about the policy, suggested what in light of the above we might call the "Wilson option": the United Kingdom would provide political support, but given the unpopularity of the action and the lack of UN cover, would not commit forces. Presented with the opportunity to replicate Wilson's Vietnam stance, Blair rejected it as out of the question (Kampfner, 2004, p. 303).

Indeed, rather than compromising and seeking consensus within the government, Blair's preferred strategy was to restrict debate of Iraq policy as much as possible, making decisions in smaller, hand-picked groups (Dyson, 2006, p. 302). Clare Short describes cabinet meetings during this period as essentially "Blair updating people" on things "everyone had read in the press." Genuine discussion was stifled: "the squeeze was on: you've got to stick with Tony . . . in the Blair government, cabinet has not functioned properly" (Interview with author, 4/30/2007).

Confronted with mounting public opposition, Blair did not compromise, instead appearing exasperated with those who did not agree with him. "People have just got to make up their minds whether they believe me or not, I'm afraid," he suggested in February 2003, "I've never claimed to have a monopoly of wisdom, but one thing I've learned in this job is you should always try and do the right thing, not the easy thing" (Kampfner, 2004, pp. 278–279). "I do not court unpopularity as a badge of honor," said Blair in February 2003, "but sometimes it is the price of leadership" (Jeffery, 2003, p. 1).

As David Blunkett aptly summarizes, "the easiest thing for Tony Blair would have been to oppose the US in terms of intervention in Iraq, to have demonstrated that publicly, to have avoided sending troops with the US, and to have been as belligerent and vocal as Chirac and Schroeder. He would have made himself pretty heroic [domestically]" (Interview with author, 5/1/2007).

Clearly, then, Blair did not conclude that the domestic constraints were insurmountable and made policy primarily upon his perception of the strategic situation and the necessities of alliance maintenance. While, as a rational political leader, he would have preferred to have domestic political support and did make efforts to gain it, when this proved to be impossible he challenged the constraints upon taking action in his political environment and committed forces to the invasion of Iraq.

Conclusion

Considering standard accounts of the factors that would determine the policy of a junior ally in cases such as Vietnam and Iraq, the evidence from the Vietnam case runs counter to an alliance dynamics perspective, but supports a domestic

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politics explanation. The opposite pattern is true for the Iraq case. A combination of the two perspectives with the leader psychology approach correctly predicts that Britain would ultimately refuse to make a burden-sharing contribution in the Vietnam case and agree to do so in the Iraq case.

We can return to the theoretical basis of the paper in light of our examination of the Vietnam and Iraq episodes, drawing together the alliance dynamics, domestic politics, and leader psychology strands of the inquiry in order to consider some of the more general implications of the analysis. In situations of alliance dependence, the request of the senior ally to a junior ally for a force contribution is certain to be given serious consideration. If the domestic political climate within the junior ally is supportive of a force commitment, then the junior ally would be expected to agree to the request of the senior ally on the basis both of shared strategic goals, the fear of abandonment, or both (a situation that seems to characterize U.K. policy in the Korean war and the first Persian Gulf War, both of which commanded strong public support for the commitment of British forces). If there is strong domestic opposition to force commitment, the outcome may well depend upon the orientation of the leader of the junior ally towards this opposition. In the Vietnam case, high alliance dependence and the strong wishes of the senior ally for a burden-sharing contribution was matched by strong domestic opposition to British involvement. Harold Wilson, whose characteristic orientation was to respect constraints, recognized the domestic opposition, sought to explain the situation to the senior ally, and did not commit forces. As McGeorge Bundy accurately put it to LBJ, "Wilson prefers his own survival to solidarity with us" (Ellis, 2004, pp. 68–69). In the Iraq case alliance dependence and shared strategic goals were again matched by strong domestic opposition to a force contribution. Tony Blair, whose orientation was to challenge constraints and who valued the alliance with the United States very highly, was willing to pay a heavy domestic political cost and so committed forces.

The current research has indicated that theories of the linkage between domestic politics and foreign policy can be made more determinate by considering the characteristic reactions of elite politicians to the constraints present in their environment, supporting the earlier findings of Foyle (1997), Keller (2005a, 2005b), and others. The different actions of Wilson and Blair when faced with similar constraints indicate that these factors are latent or potential barriers that are actuated by the perceptions and predispositions of leaders to respect or to challenge them. This suggests not that a focus upon individuals supersedes a focus upon situational factors, but rather that individual and situational foci are complementary and the combination resolves what would otherwise be empirical anomalies within the explanatory scope of the approaches.

As noted earlier, while individual-level variables can help resolve indeterminate predictions from a situational standpoint, the context of the situation is likewise crucial in understanding how individual factors will influence outcomes. Vietnam and Iraq were situations in which the constraints upon action were

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primarily domestic in nature, but other situations have other patterns of incentive and constraint. In fact, some of the early Vietnam decisions from the American point of view may represent an instance when domestic politics compelled rather than constrained a foreign policy action. Wilson records that in their December 1965 meeting, while LBJ was "very understanding about my internal political problems, he went on to describe his, particularly the recent poll showing that 58% of Americans wanted him to intensify the bombing" (Wilson, 1965a).

In policy terms, the analysis suggests that the Bush administration was somewhat fortunate in having a junior ally leader in Tony Blair who was prepared to challenge the constraints to joining the war. A Harold Wilson type figure, the above suggests, would probably not have committed combat troops to the invasion and occupation of Iraq, exacerbating the problems of both numbers and legitimacy of the operation by forcing the United States to enter Iraq without British support. By the same token, a constraint challenger such as Tony Blair faced with Lyndon Johnson's requests for British troops in Vietnam may well have agreed. As Pimlott (1993), considering Wilson's Vietnam choice, speculates: "What would a different kind of Prime Minister have done? One answer is that another administration or premier might easily have become more deeply embroiled . . . and might well have been persuaded to send ground troops to Vietnam" (pp. 393–394).

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