Cognitive Idiosyncrasies in USA’s Foreign Policy Decision-Making

A Comparison of Obama’s and Trump’s Foreign Policy Decision Making Processes Regarding to the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995

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Abstract

Decisions made by individuals representing states do not only impact citizens living within the state’s political jurisdiction, but also those from other political jurisdictions. The U.S. Executive’s role in global and international politics is quintessential case of how behaviors of individuals representing a state can shift the balance of power in the global political system. This study aimed to gain a new understanding into how this phenomenon occurs by analyzing the influence of personal characteristics on behaviors of individuals with executive decision-making powers. The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 was used as the case to understand which personal characteristics at the level of cognitive idiosyncrasies were present in Obama’s and Trump’s decision-making processes regarding the Act. The study was an interpretivist enquiry which analyzed speeches gathered using a discourse analysis method and analyzed through the lenses of the cognitive idiosyncrasy theoretical model. Results showed that there were cognitive idiosyncrasies of framing, anchoring, images, evoked set, cognitive consistency, availability of information, historical analogies and verbal styles present in both presidents’ behaviors. The study concluded that though personal characteristics influence decision-making, the extent of their influence varies depending on the individual’s experience, expertise, and interests in the foreign policy problem.

Keywords: decision-making, foreign policy, cognitive idiosyncrasies, individual behaviors
# Table of Contents

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1

Aim and Research Questions .............................................................................................. 3

Relevance to Global Politics .............................................................................................. 4

Research Outline ................................................................................................................. 4

Delimitations .......................................................................................................................... 5

Literature Review on U.S. FPDM .......................................................................................... 6

Defining FPDM ...................................................................................................................... 6

U.S. Foreign Policy Rationales ............................................................................................ 7

Challenges of Pluralism in Decision-Making ..................................................................... 8

Individuals, Interest Groups and Lobbying Influences in U.S. FPDM ............................... 10

Situating Individuals in FPDM .............................................................................................. 11

The U.S. President as an Individual Policy Decision-Maker .................................................. 13

Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................................... 15

Research Philosophy ............................................................................................................ 15

Proposal Relating to the Analytical Model of the Relationship Between Cognitive Characteristics of the Decision-Maker and the Executive Behaviors of the Two Presidents in Foreign Policy .... 16

Nature of the Situation ......................................................................................................... 18

Operationalization of the Cognitive Idiosyncrasy ................................................................ 19

Filters ........................................................................................................................................ 22

Critique of the Cognitive Idiosyncrasy Model .................................................................... 23

Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 24

Discourse Analysis ................................................................................................................ 24

Analysis .................................................................................................................................. 29

Nature of the Situation ......................................................................................................... 29

Latitude of the Decision-making Environment .................................................................... 29

Defining the Policy Problem ................................................................................................. 31
Conclusions ........................................................................................................................ 57

Study Implications ............................................................................................................... 58

Future Research .................................................................................................................. 58

References .......................................................................................................................... 60

Appendix 1 .......................................................................................................................... 66
  Codes.................................................................................................................................. 66

Appendix 2 .......................................................................................................................... 70
  Coding Matrix ................................................................................................................ 70
Introduction

The contemporary global political system, though shifting away from states as sore aggregators of power in global governance, still relies on the decisions they make on behalf of their citizens. These decisions do not only affect citizens within a state’s political jurisdiction, but also have an impact on citizens of other political and, beyond state borders and boundaries (Babones and Aberg, 2019). On the global stage, states as primary decision-makers in international political affairs interact with each other to make agreements, wage wars, make peace, cooperate to fight for common causes or to make universal decisions on issues impacting all humanity (Waters and Waters, 2015). To find and maintain balance of power in this contemporary global political setup, the starting point for a stable and sustainable global world stage is the recognition of sovereignty, self-determination, and mutual respect among members of the international and global community (Quester, 2005). In principle, this rationale suggests that all states are equal. However, in practice, no state is equal to the other because of a disequilibrium in the distribution of global resources. This disequilibrium results in powerful states domineering weaker and smaller ones. Powerful states such as the U.S. impose their ideologies on weaker ones in return for donor aid, foreign direct investment, defense assistance among other resources (Jacob, Scherpereel and Adams, 2017). The domineering of powerful states on the global stage is especially visible in the U.S. foreign policy behaviors (Allison, 2015). Decisions to invade Iraq, start and end war in Vietnam or the Cuban Missile Crisis and the recent withdrawal from Afghanistan are quintessential to how U.S. FPDM behavior can shift the balance of power in the global order.

This study looks into the Israel-Palestine Conflict which is one of the world’s longest conflicts in modern history. For the past half century, international actors have worked on various multi-lateral peace initiatives to deescalate the situation, to forge a sustainable, and achieve long-lasting peace between the two aggrieved parties (Slater, 2001; Çuhadar and Dayton, 2012). However, in 1995, the U.S., through an Act of Congress unilaterally departed from the international consensus on the status of Jerusalem which is one of the highly contested issue between Israel and Palestine (U.S. Congress, 1995). These sudden unilateral actions by a powerful state have a potential to hamper peace processes and escalate conflicts between the aggrieved parties, and result in the loss of trust from other global actors. Furthermore, the U.S FPDM processes present another layer of sophistication to an already complex global political system. Branches of the government and individuals are delegated authority to autonomously make foreign
policy decisions on behalf of the state. Therefore, this study explores the behaviors of individual presidents when they are given a great latitude of decision-making power and the responsibility to autonomously make foreign policy decisions on behalf of the U.S. government.

Problem statement

Researchers attribute challenges of FPDM to the way international systems and governments are structured, in particular, the separation of power between different branches of governments (Svensen, 2019; Klynina, 2020). Studies show that powerful states often impose their authority, policy preferences, and ideologies over weaker sovereignties which creates imbalances in the international systems (Busch and Jörgens, 2005; Holzinger and Knill, 2005; Legrand, 2012). Their hegemonic dominance in pursuit of or to secure their national interests leads to behaviors that depart from equitable international norms while exerting pressure on other states to comply with foreign standards and conditions culturally insensitive to their contexts (Busch and Jörgens, 2005). The U.S. government through its different administrations in particular, is criticized for its departure from ‘realpolitik’ approach in favor of ‘idealistic moralism’ necessitating unipolarism in pursuit of its national interests (Caruson and Farrar-Myers, 2007).

The majority of studies discussing this problem focused on international systems, states, and institutions as main units of analysis using traditional rationalist approaches. They have, however, failed to explain the complexities of the decision-making environment especially when states allocate decision-making power to individuals acting as representatives of the state. Studies concerned with the behaviors of states, organizations, and leaders have underrecognized the role of subjective factors which individuals representing states and organizations might bring into the decision-making environment. As a result, rationalist models have failed to account for the presence of personal characteristics influencing how certain policy decisions and actions are arrived at while others are not. This failure by rationalist models to account for how and why certain decisions are made or not and the failure to account for individual subjective factors calls for a different approach in the selection of units of analysis, methodological designs, theoretical frameworks, and philosophical approaches. Ergo, this study contributes to the field of Global Political Studies (GPS) by doing two things. First, the study investigates how cognitive factors influence different leaders, behaviors in the decision-making environment even when they are exposed to similar stimuli. Secondly, the study informs the field of GPS of the consequences of giving a great latitude of foreign policy decision-making power to individuals by states.
Aim and Research Question

The aim of this study is to gain a new understanding into how personal characteristics influence behaviors of individuals with executive decision-making powers in the global decision-making environment.

To achieve the objectives of the study’s aim, the study will comparatively analyze behaviors of two U.S. Presidents towards the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 during their time in office. The research process comprises of three iterative steps. First, the study acknowledges that the foreign policy problem in question is situated in a broader political context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from which it cannot be isolated. The inclusion of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict context in this study is informed by the assumption that due to the sensitivity of the nature of the policy situation, some individuals might not address the policy problem as a separate issue but part of the broader conflict problem while others might treat it as a single and separate issue. Events in the broader conflict context may be able to help understand how certain decisions and actions were taken or not. Second, there is an exploratory component which will allow the study to carry out an in-depth qualitative interrogation of the cognitive factors present in each president’s actions. This will allow the study to create profiles of their cognitive behaviors as operationalized in the theoretical chapter. Third, the aim consists of a comparative component which will allow the analysis to identify similarities, differences, and patterns in the two presidents’ behaviors in foreign policy. To achieve these objectives, the study will attempt to answer the following question:

Which are the cognitive idiosyncrasies that intervened in Trump’s and Obama’s Jerusalem Embassy relocation decision-making processes?

To answer the above question, the study operationalizes the research question as follows:
Intervene will refer to the occurrence of cognitive idiosyncrasies that are occurring to change, maintain, prevent an action or decision from happening. Cognitive idiosyncrasies will refer to presence of the following personal characteristics of a decision-maker, framing, anchoring, information processing, overevaluation, utility, cognitive consistency, evoked set, images, learning and historical analogies, and verbal styles that either consciously or unconsciously influence their behaviors in the decision-making environment. Finally, decision-making process in this study refers to a series of choices, decisions and actions situated in a three-staged scheme.
where the above cognitive idiosyncrasies can be identified: stage 1, nature of the situation, stage 2, intervention of personal characteristics, decisional and interpersonal styles, and stage 3, filtering. For full details of the operationalization, see theoretical framework section.

**Relevance to Global Politics**

The USA’s domineering on the global political stage has both positive and negative ramifications on the sustainability of the contemporary global political arrangement (Babones and Aberg, 2019). Foreign policy decisions made by such a powerful state have an impact on local, regional, and global orders while the ramifications indiscriminately impact other political actors and social groups which might or might not have been involved in processes in the first place. At local level, the foreign policy might cause an imbalance in the distribution of power between aggrieved groups, particularly when the decisions made favor one group over the other. At regional level, conflicts may have an overspill effect into other countries and involuntary human displacement as a consequence of violence and destruction of homes may exacerbate an already protracted Palestinian refugee and statelessness crisis or trigger a new wave of Palestinian refugee movement across “state” boundaries. The price USA’s unipolarism is often paid by states in the immediate vicinity of impacted countries (Mohamad, 2015).

Last but not least, the unilateral Jerusalem embassy relocation policy has a global impact due to the sensitivity of the matter in relation to the international consensus on the status of Jerusalem. Groups and actors with direct or indirect religious, social, and political interests in the political and legal status Jerusalem city such as Muslims, Jews, and Christians are affected regardless of whether they are situated in the Jerusalem area or not because of the city’s historical, spiritual, and cultural relevance.

**Research Outline**

This study follows the following structure. Section 1 above presented a brief introductory remark about the topic and the intended contributions and relevance to the field of GPS, followed by the problem statement, aim and research question. Section 2 reviews previous research and academic discussions about the nature of U.S. FPDM and its implications on the global political order. Section 3 presents the theoretical framework. Section 4 presents the research method and how it fits into the bigger picture of the research purpose. Section 5 presents the analysis which is divided into three analytical schemes; nature of the situation will provide a background of the phenomenon
and serves the purpose of providing a context under which the cognitive idiosyncrasies influence behaviors. The second scheme is the main area of analysis exploring the two presidents’ cognitive idiosyncrasies. Finally, the analysis presents the filters with which each individual views the policy problem. Section 6 provides concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

**Delimitations**

The field of FPDM is broad and has many traditions, methodologically, theoretically, and philosophically. These traditions support different research assumptions based on the purposes of a given research. Therefore, it is imperative to point out at the onset of its inquiry what the audience should and should not expect to be covered by the study. The aim of this study has a very limited scope guided by the chosen theory, philosophy, and method of choice. For that reason, the study is only aiming to descriptively answer the question “which” cognitive factors contributed to the decisional behaviors of Barack Obama and Donald Trump in relation to the Jerusalem Embassy Act within the broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study does not attempt to address question about impacts and outcomes of the decisions or actions will not be addressed by this study, neither does the study present itself as a quintessential of FPDM in other cases or contexts.
Literature Review on U.S. FPDM

Published research on the U.S. foreign policy topic exploring the dynamics of FPDM using post-positivist approaches is perpetually growing and challenging traditional approaches that have dominated FPDM analysis (Ciot, 2016; Abdiel, 2020). Traditionally, foreign policy research has focused on systems and structures while minimizing the role and influence of individuals’ subjective and sociological factors (Espiritu, 2006; Reshani, 2020). Questions arising in this research pertain to the role of personal factors that influenced the two presidents’ decision-making processes regarding the status of Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995. This section explores what has been discussed by other scholars regarding the topic of U.S. FPDM and how different models of analyses were applied to draw certain conclusions. The chapter is divided into three subsections, Defining FPDM, U.S. Foreign Policy Rationales, followed by Individuals, Interest Groups and Lobbying Influences in U.S. FPDM under which the U.S. President as an individual decision-maker will be discussed.

Defining FPDM

Foreign policy decisions and actions taken by powerful individuals, on behalf of organizations, groups or states they represent, impact how politics ensue at local, national, regional, and global levels. These actions can be analyzed as they happen or retrospectively (Ciot, 2014). Retrospective enquiries help to understand how certain decision were arrived at in the past and how those decisions impacted future political events, actions and decisions (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010; Deborah Stone, 2012). For instance, retrospective exploration of motives and interests behind individual choices of actions, words and decisions selected allow researchers to draw lessons and use cognitive historical analogies and learning processes to predict the future of global politics or a global situation (Ciot, 2016). The retrospective FPDM analysis as shall be applied to the analysis of this study will help to understand how past individual subjective attributes intervened in decision-making processes of the two leaders.

FPDM scholars have distinctively applied philosophical and epistemological tools in their investigations of FPDM and through different traditions, attempts have also been made at redefining FPDM to adapt its application to different political disciplines and contexts (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010; Deborah Stone, 2012; Diane Stone, 2012; Ciot, 2016). In abstract sense, FPDM entails choices of leaders, states, and international systems as arbiters of power and only units of
analysis in international politics (Stone, 2012). This definition was developed further to include “choices individuals, groups and coalitions make that affect the nation’s actions at the international stage” (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 3). Another attempt was made to include all entities which decide in international affairs without necessarily limiting the number of actors based on traditional systems of international politics (Ciot, 2014). The latter definition conforms with the objectives of this study and will be used as the operational definition of FPDM. The rationale behind the adoption of Ciot’s (2014) definition is its ability to interrogate actions of individual leaders as independent actors whose actions can be influenced by subjective factors when making decisions.

U.S. Foreign Policy Rationales

McKinney (2005), Thayer (2010), Rodríguez and Targ (2015) claim that the United States’ foreign policy approach is premised in three rationales of geopolitical expansionism, economic and ideological dominance in the world. These rationales can be traced back to the-then Secretary of State James Blane’s 1890 Waterville’s speech claiming that “the United States had reached a point such that one of its highest duties was to enlarge the area of its foreign trade...our great demand is expansion; I mean expansion of trade with countries where we can find profitable exchanges” (Rodríguez and Targ, 2015: 20). Though the study analyzed historical U.S. foreign policy on Cuba and USA’s behavior in the western hemisphere, the behavior has consistently remained the central principle guiding U.S. foreign policy beyond the Western Hemisphere (Boettcher and Cobb, 2006; Khazzoom, 2018). These principles have both positive and negative implications on the U.S. as well as foreign countries and the international systems (Rodríguez and Targ, 2015; Reshani, 2020). Scholars have also argued that there is a traceable pattern of unilateral approaches in cases where the benefits to the state are perceived to be high if decisions or actions are taken unilaterally (Caruson and Farrar-Myers, 2007). In cases where the risk is too high and the benefits too low, literature shows a pattern of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other international actors (Kelton and Willis, 2019; Mania and Pugacewicz, 2019; Reshani, 2020). Cooperation in FPDM is not only limited to state-state relations. At home, the Executive and the Congress may choose to cooperate in decision-making depending on the nature and the latitude of the foreign policy problem (Gries, 2014; Abdiel, 2020; Klynina, 2020).
Challenges of Pluralism in Decision-Making

To begin with, researchers claim that the entanglement problem comes from the U.S. constitution’s ambiguity in providing a clear “understanding of the mechanism for ensuring foreign policy…this issue has, in fact, been left without the attention of the creators of the US Constitution, which has no specific sections on foreign power” (Klynina, 2020: 30). The authors of the constitution did not fully anticipate the complexities of contemporary politics. One such issue often discussed in U.S. FPDM research is the separation of power between the Legislative and the Executive (Zoellick, 2010; Klynina, 2020). They did not anticipate the influence of lobbying firms, the diaspora and other pressure groups either (Haglund and Stein, 2013; DeWind and Segura, 2014; Sharma, 2017; Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019).

Scholars have also pointed out how various areas of foreign policy decision-making entanglements within government branches and other actors impact how decisions and actions are arrived at (Hinnebusch, 2007; Mohammad and Nourigholamizadeh, 2018). Kengor (2000) and Klynina (2020) claim that the amount of power given to individuals within the Executive branch such as the Secretary of State, the Vice President, and the Secretary of Defense, are instrumental in providing information, designing, and implementing foreign policies on behalf of the government. Their influence also present another level of entanglement in U.S. FPDM which has consequences on the state’s behaviour in the international decision-making environment (Kengor, 2000; Klynina, 2020).

The availability of different forms and levels of entanglements in U.S. FPDM is an indicator that traditional rationalist analytical approaches are not sufficiently accounting for all variables interfering in the decision-making process (Quester, 2005; Hinnebusch, 2007). Variables such as individual factors such as competences and experience, social and political identities, emotions or social motivations which are visible in some of the decisions made are not accounted for in positivist analyses (McKinney, 2005; Smidt, 2005; Abdiel, 2020). For instance, positivist thinkers have often argued that there was no justification for the Bush Administration to invade Iraq because facts did not back the disposition supporting the war (Smidt, 2005), because weapons inspectors had come to a conclusion that there were no weapons in Iraq before the invasion happened (Hinnebusch, 2007). Hinnebusch (2007: 1) claimed that scholars “dissected and discredited the claims that even a nuclear-armed Iraq posed a threat to the US, that it could not be contained, and therefore had to be taken out by preventive war; he concluded that the only thing
that made deterrence appear inadequate for US purposes was the overweening ambition of the Bush administration to dominate and overthrow any regime it disliked”.

The Bush Administration’s approach towards Iraq was a direct contradiction of what it had termed a “new era” in global order grounded in the “realist” ideology of nation building, respect for separate and mutual sovereignties (Quester, 2005). In his realist political rhetoric, Bush had vowed to deviate from Bush Senior’s and Clinton administrations’ Middle-East foreign policies, to diverge from the “world policeman” approach while encouraging building a “good society” abroad where independent states were equal international partners responsible for their own destinies (Leffler, 2004; Quester, 2005; Mohamad, 2015). However, it is the-then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s claims of morality which Quester (2005) finds problematic in the realm of realism. Claims of “moral feeling” about other countries’ domestic policies “is a departure from Hans Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, Bismarck or Richelieu’s advice and practices on realism” (Quester, 2005: 17). Realist foreign policy approach “is placed in the burden of proof against the launching of wars…as even realpolitik statesmen of Bismarck’s time tried to be sure that their adversaries were responsible for the initiation of an armed conflict” (Quester, 2005: 17).

In principle, even though the foreign policy approach proposed by the Bush Administration was grounded in realist politics endorsing political freedom at home and abroad, in practice, there was a notion of policing global “moral” standards to ensure that foreign states upheld certain democratic values based on ‘idealistic moralism’ (Smidt, 2005; Hinnebusch, 2007). Under these moral premises, any form of non-compliance by foreign governments is deemed a threat to democracy (ibid). Lang’s (2004) and Fisher’s (2003) examples of the deviation confirm doubts about the Bush Administration’s realism held by Hinnebusch (2007) and Quester (2005). The question posed by these scholars whether the decision to invade Iraq was based on realpolitik or moral policing “out of the belief that Islamic ideologies were a threat to Israel’s national security” (Quester, 2005: 15). Hinnebusch claims that intelligence reports and information were manipulated to frame the “Iraq problem” as a threat and “bad” for a healthy democracy therefore fitting into the Administration’s “regime change agenda” (Hinnebusch, 2007). “The campaign for war was dominated more by fear than facts, more by assertions of what might be, or could be, or used to be, than what actually existed. Those who now felt duped had not been paying attention.” (Fisher, 2003, p389).
Rodríguez’ and Targ’s (2015) study suggested that due to the failures in foreign policy exposed by (Fisher (2003, Quester (2005), and Hinnebusch (2007) during the Cuban and Iraqi crises, there is a need to revisit the three rationales of U.S. hegemony, to restore rather than to abandon them in order to address issues such as individual and pressure groups’ opportunism influencing foreign policy. This proposal will for instance help to address paradoxes in the exercise of foreign policy decision-making between different branches of the government and curtail powerful individuals and groupings exerting political pressure on key decision-making structures within the Executive branch (Gries, 2014; Rodríguez and Targ, 2015).

**Individuals, Interest Groups and Lobbying Influences in U.S. FPDM**

Positivist models’ claims about the availability of information to inform rational choices are put to question by scholars such as Pevehouse and Vabulas (2019), Fisher (2003), and Rodríguez and Targ (2015). Pevehouse and Vabulas’ (2019) doubts about realism and the positivist approach to foreign policy decision-making are premised in the claims that if lobbying firms, pressure groups (Fisher, 2003), fear and ‘unfactual’ information are influencing human rights reports submitted to the government to inform foreign policy, are the decisions made out of those reports rational? Research has demonstrated that ethnic diaspora groups have vested interests in U.S. foreign policy relating to their home countries and continents (DeWind and Segura, 2014). However, their interests can be attributed to the role played by the US in their home countries’ domestic politics (Gartner and Segura, 1998; Haglund and Stein, 2013; Rodríguez and Targ, 2015). These entanglements of interests between the U.S. and the diaspora have implications on the behaviour of the U.S. in the global decision-making arena.

Rodriguez’ and Targ’s (2015) analysis on the U.S. interference in Cuba’s domestic politics argued that the influx of Cuban exiles and refugees in the U.S. culminated into ethnic enclaves with political interests both in the U.S. and Cuba (DeWind and Segura, 2014). These ethnic diaspora enclaves often push for reforms and changes of political landscapes in their home countries by framing terms of the debate, provide information to different branches and institutions of the government and to also provide policy oversight in Washington (Haglund and Stein, 2013; DeWind and Segura, 2014). On the other hand, pressure groups “use their social power or their ability while passing or keeping others from passing a legislation” (Bayler and Tabancali, 2019, 3).
Other pressure groups and foreign governments also gain influence in Washington through lobbying as a means to counter narratives of ethnic diasporas and to shape policy discourses favorable to their own interests (Sharma, 2017; Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019). These influences might result in decision-making based on who has the best representation while facts about the actual problem are ignored (Fisher, 2003; Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019). As a consequence of these entanglements, issues of U.S. national interest such as corruption, human rights violations and shrinking democratic spaces in foreign countries are overlooked or exaggerated to justify declaration of war, sanctions or diplomatic disengagement (McKinney, 2005; Thayer, 2010).

Research indicates that the vulnerability of the U.S. politics to foreign interference is not something new (DeWind and Segura, 2014) can be traced back to the 20th Century when NAZI Germany was suspected of paying public relations firms to propagandize American journalists and similarly during the Cold War Era when Russia was suspected of buying influence in Washington (Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019). In 1996, it was also discovered that the Chinese government was directing funding to the Clinton campaign through the Democratic National Convention (Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019). Not only is the problem of interference in US politics influenced by lobbying firms but top government officials are also paid to advocate for favorable foreign policy causing concerns about the claims of rationalist models of FPDM (Quester, 2005; Hinnebusch, 2007; Sharma, 2017; Beck, 2019). If foreign policy is an instrument for geopolitical, ideological and economic dominance for the benefit of the U.S., does the state really benefit if the people advising its decision-makers are paid to represent foreign interests which are against U.S. national interests? (Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019).

**Situating Individuals in FPDM**

In an attempt to understand how certain foreign policy decisions concerning the Jerusalem Embassy relocation were made by Trump and Obama, the inquiry should start by acknowledging that decisions are made by “social creatures who care about others as well as themselves” (Stone, 2012: 22). Societies play a major role in socializing and educating these individuals into certain rules associated with their identities (March, 2009). While social factors shape one’s identity, personal factors intervene in the internalization (embracing) or externalization (performance) of those identities. For instance, sociocultural factors such as family ties of a president might have influenced their interests in the policy vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. However, it is the
individual’s degree of identity internalization which distinguishes their actual characters (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010).

Leaders with different religious, educational, professional and other social attributes, perceive a problem in different ways, so are their perceptions of probable solutions to that problem (March, 2009). Stone and March argue that individuals are educated into seeing images of themselves and others as opposites, often in contradiction and in competition with self-interest (Deborah Stone, 2012). However, the conflict between self and other is not always permanent because self-interest, altruism and identities are not chronically present but shifting depending on the context and nature of the problem leaving the individual with either vast or limited latitude to individually decide on policy matters (March, 2009; Deborah Stone, 2012).

Individual identities can be classified into two categories, self-imposed and socially imposed. Self-imposed identities emerge from images of individualization giving rise to self-imposed responsibilities, standards and roles, while in the socially imposed identity category, “actions are imagined to rise from learned obligations, responsibilities or commitments to others” (March, 2009: 63). The first category agrees with Ciot’s contextualization of an individual which treats constrains of decision-makers’ behavior as voluntarily chosen, while the second category suggests that individuals’ identities are bound by collective rules which must be followed when making decisions.

The two categories of individual and social factors are mutually inclusive because, though decision-makers are “individuals and unique, defined by an assortment of behaviors and ideas they endorse” the idea of self itself arise from a “process of socialization into socially defined relationships and roles” (March, 2009, 62). This might mean that actions of the presidents are circumscribed by identities they possess or identities they attempt to deviate from as well as their personal preferences. For instance, “as parents and children in many cultures can testify that the process of adolescent identity formation and revolt is a complicated mixture of individualistic differentiation and socialization into group conformity” (March, 2009: 63). When these children revolt against one social norm, they do so in conformity with competing alternative ideas whether pre-existing or emerging. Hence, decision-makers’ behaviours and attitudes cannot be fully construed if they are viewed in isolation from processes of “socializations” shaping their perceptions of the world around them. Therefore, even though this study agrees that individual behaviours are not without influence from societies from whence they come from, the initial unit
of analysis in FPDM should be the individual who is an independent and autonomous constituent of a bigger group, and their individual behaviors can be understood through the analysis of their cognitive processes.

The U.S. President as an Individual Policy Decision-Maker

Zoellick (2010) and Klynina (2020) pointed out that the separation of powers clause in the U.S. constitution ensures oversight among the three branches of the government, especially in foreign policy where the Executive has more latitude in decision-making than the Congress (Svensen, 2019). However, the Congress makes laws compelling the Executive to take or stop taking certain actions which impacts how the Executive behaves in the international system (Zoellick, 2010). Researchers have also claimed that the Congress’ oversight is a necessary mechanism for providing checks and balances due to the Executive’s propensity to make “questionable” individual and unilateral decisions on behalf of the state (Marshall and Pacelle, 2005; Zoellick, 2010; Beck, 2019; Mania and Pugacewicz, 2019).

Regardless of this oversight, the latitude of the President’s power allows him/her to circumvent treaties requiring congressional consent, presidents resort to the use of executive agreements and orders instead (Marshall and Pacelle, 2005; Caruson and Farrar-Myers, 2007; Klynina, 2020). “The executive agreement offers the president a great deal of diplomatic flexibility, and as such, it represents a powerful presidential tool in the conduct of foreign policy” (Caruson and Farrar-Myers, 2007: 631). It is this latitude in decision making McKinney (2005), Quester (2005), Hinnebusch (2007), Rodríguez and Targ (2015) find problematic when viewing the process through the lenses of realism. The problem is premised in their claims that U.S. presidents have a history of unilaterally imposing authority over other sovereignties disregarding the respect for separate and mutual sovereignties around the world which is enshrined in realpolitik when given such individual responsibility to decide on behalf of the state (Quester, 2005; Reshani, 2020). Arguments are also made to rationalize the U.S. approach by claiming that sovereignty is not an exemption from compliance with U.S. liberalism model under which, preemptive or preventative war is justified as long as there is enough proof that national interests are under threat (Quester, 2005; Hinnebusch, 2007). According to this logic, as long as the president has “evidence” to prove “undemocratic behavior” by foreign states, preemptive actions are justified (ibid). Finally, the imminent question that emerges is, what becomes of the decisions made by
presidents when the available proof is manipulated by individuals and groups surrounding him or her (Boettcher and Cobb, 2006; Hinnebusch, 2007; Beck, 2019).

In conclusion, research clearly indicates that the U.S. foreign policy is problematic and does not qualify as realpolitik regardless of the attempts by some presidents to align with its central tenets. The vulnerability of the U.S. system of governance to external and powerful office bearers within the government makes it problematic for the state to behave rationally. While availability of information is key to forming foreign policy such as with human rights reports, the entanglements and the vulnerability to personal and pressure groups distorts the information compiled in these reports and result in irrational behaviours such as unjustified declaration of war, imposition of sanctions among others. Some scholars have proposed that the principles underpinning U.S. foreign policy frameworks need to be revisited to readjust rather than abandoning them.
Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study is to gain a new understanding into how personal characteristics influence behaviors of individuals with executive decision-making powers in the global decision-making environment. Therefore, this chapter will present and discuss the theoretical approach used to analyze data in order to achieve the objectives and has three main purposes. First, to introduce the research philosophy and the general theory of foreign policy decision making. Second, to critique the three analytical traditions in IR and argue why these models are not compatible and informative to the objectives of this study. Third, the chapter will present the cognitive idiosyncrasy theory as the alternative relevant framework to the analysis. Finally, the chapter will operationalize the theory and explain how it will be applied when analyzing data to answer the research question.

Research Philosophy

Interpretivism is a philosophical approach to research which allows researchers’ subjective interests to be integrated into the interpretation and analysis of the study. The philosophy claims that social constructions such as language, consciousness and instruments are the means by which humans can access reality (Myers, 2008). Interpretivism supports both the theoretical and methodological choices of this study which aim to identify and compare subjective and individual factors influencing foreign policy decision-making through the analysis of language in speeches.

This study rejects previously held positivist philosophical positions in FPDM analysis that meaning resides within the world independent of conscience (Farrelly, 2013; Yin, 2016). They also claim that information of the natural world is not attained through researcher’s subjective interpretations but rather the role of the researcher is to merely observe to use reason and logic (Halperin and Heath, 2012). These philosophical points of departure do not comport with the central assumptions of this study that the researcher’s own preconceptions of social events, relations and objects in the real world are important tools to understand the social world in which individual decision-makers act. However, this does not give a free pass to ‘sloppiness’ and subjectivity in the conduct of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). A cautious detailed procedure supported by an audit trail was followed to minimize subjectivity and bias while attempting to increase trustworthiness. The audit trail is provided as appendix (#).
Proposal Relating to the Analytical Model of the Relationship Between Cognitive Characteristics of the Decision-Maker and the Executive Behaviors of the Two Presidents in Foreign Policy

The aim of this study is to gain a new understanding into how personal characteristics influence behaviors of individuals with executive decision-making powers in the global decision-making environment through the lenses of Margaret Herman’s (1993) cognitive idiosyncrasy theory. The starting point of Hermann’s theory is that decision-makers bring their personal characteristics into the decision-making environment which influence decisions and actions taken by institutions they represent (Ciot, 2014). The scheme comprises of four categories of cognitive, social perceptions, motivational and emotional idiosyncrasies. Though this model has been applied to quantitative studies, this study takes inspiration from Ciot (2014) successful proposal of the application of the scheme in qualitative discourse analysis. The scheme was used to understand how personal characteristics influenced individual decision-making of the Romanian Chief Negotiator During Romania’s accession to the EU (Ciot, 2014). Ciot (2014) identified 36 subcategories and additional sub-subcategories under the verbal style sub-category. However, due to time constraints, this study proposes to reduce the number of categories and sub-categories to complete the scheme at the level of cognitive idiosyncrasies identified in speeches and interviews of Trump and Obama concerning the broader Israel-Palestine question in relation to the Jerusalem Embassy Act during their tenure of office. These speeches and interviews will be retrieved from their respective archived White House websites.

Herman (1993) and Ciot (2014) used the individual idiosyncrasy scheme to answer these two questions: how can the idiosyncrasies of political leaders influence their behaviors with respect to foreign policy? and what are the idiosyncrasies that influenced that influenced the decision-making process of Romania’s accession to the European Union? The two scholars divided their theories into three sections; “nature of the situation in which the decision-maker is found, the personal characteristics of the political leader who will have great influence on the foreign policy which will be outlined by the respective leader, and last but not least, filters which examines the personal characteristics” (Ciot, 2014: 199). According to Ciot (2014), these filters determine which degree of influence the personal characteristics of a leader have on foreign policy of a state.
Ergo, in relation to the proposed level of analysis in this study, a similar theoretical approach will be taken, leave for the personal characteristics section which will be adjusted, and variables reduced to only one category of cognitive idiosyncrasy, instead of four which were used by Herman (1993) and Ciot (2014). Furthermore, in lieu of the claims made at filters level by the two scholars, filters will be used to determine the degree of influence cognitive idiosyncrasies of the two leaders have on USA’s foreign policy towards the Jerusalem Embassy relocation issue rather than all variables of personal characteristics as proposed by Ciot (2014) and Herman (1993). The three sections are operationalized respectively below.

Fig 1: Adjusted analytical scheme

The diagram above demonstrates how the cognitive idiosyncrasies intervene in decision-making (adaptation from (Ciot, 2014))
Nature of the Situation

This variable refers to the environmental conditions and context surrounding the foreign policy problem in which the individual decision-maker is found (Ciot, 2014). The nature of the situation variable may allow or determine the extent of the influence of the two presidents’ cognitive idiosyncrasies regarding the Embassy relocation foreign policy problem. The first condition refers to the latitude of decision-making (Ciot, 2014). According to Herman (1989), this condition is similar to a “honeymoon” phase following a challenging period such as an electoral period. It can be assumed that a new political leadership “can afford a certain capital based on personal popularity or fear which may place them in a better position to generate changes in policy or to impose their own will” (Ciot, 2014: 201). In this study, the latitude of the decision-making will not only be defined by the momentum gained through certain political events because the policies of each administration are derived from a legally binding legislation.

The second condition refers to how the situation of the foreign policy problem compels the decision-maker “to define or interpret the respective situation” (Ciot, 2014: 201). The definition and interpretation processes are impacted by whether the situation is stable, ambiguous, unstable, whether there is a clear precedence or routines and last but not least, when a spontaneous or particular actions are required (ibid). The condition will help the analysis to explain the two leaders’ different approaches, interpretations, and definitions of the foreign policy problem. The third condition refers to the situation in which personal traits of a leader influence decision-making when that respective leader participates in decision-making (Ciot, 2014). The level of participation in which these leaders participate vary with the position they occupy (ibid). Therefore, it is expedient to this analysis to clearly define the authority and responsibilities given to the decision-makers by the Jerusalem Embassy law.

Personal Characteristics

As mentioned earlier, the individual idiosyncrasy model has four main categories at personal characteristics scheme which include cognitive idiosyncrasies and at least 36 subcategories. Even though previous studies applied all the four categories of the model in their analyses, this study agrees with Herman (2010) that a large number of variables in qualitative studies might blur the analysis from focusing on the depth of the data. Therefore, where Ciot (2014) introduced four idiosyncrasy categories at personal characteristics level, this study proposes to use only one: the cognitive idiosyncrasy.
Operationalization of the Cognitive Idiosyncrasy

Cognitive idiosyncrasies are defined in this study as systematic deviations from acceptable norms governing rational behaviour within a particular decision-making environment as a result of “heuristic information processing such as framing, anchoring and overevaluation” (Ciot, 2014: 160-161). The fundamental assumption of this theory is that decision-makers misjudge risks, value, and other objects they interact with in the decision-making environment. Below are the operationalized cognitive idiosyncrasy themes the analysis will attempt to identify in verbal and non-verbal communications of the two leaders concerning their policy on Jerusalem within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Framing

Framing refers to the ways decision-makers mentally and socially construct a situation or problem. This process can result in either positive or negative frames depending on how the situation is constructed in one’s mind. Framing can help avert risks or foster a hostile environment and increases the probability of conflicts (Ciot, 2014). Decisions made by other actors in the decision-making environment also influence how the problem is eventually framed, specifically, when decisions about a single issue are entwinned to a bigger context. Therefore, framing will be used to answer the question, how did Trump and Obama construct the Jerusalem Embassy relocation within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict context? How is the problem constructed in their speeches and interviews?

Images

Images refers to the mental representations used for framing and organizing the world and can be considered stereotypes the mind uses to categorize events and other people (Ciot, 2014). Images are useful for simplifying the complicated world, but they place the decider in a situation of risk by over generalizing, being formed by the interweaving of three elements: strategic balance, perceived opportunity or threat and perceived culture (Hermann, 1997; Ciot, 2014). Therefore, the idiosyncrasy will be used to understand how the two presidents used certain representations as stereotypes for categorization of people and events in their communications.

Anchoring

Anchoring refers to the cognitive bias where individual’s decisions are influenced by a particular reference point. The value placed on the reference point by the individual functions as an anchor to every action or decision made. In the absence of anchors, a different conclusion may be arrived
This does not mean that negotiators cannot be convinced to change their positions during the process, but the problem is that individuals have a tendency of ignoring information which contradicts their pre-existing images and beliefs (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, anchoring will be used to answer the question, how were past events or knowledge about other used as reference points when making decisions? Did these reference points change over the course of time?

**Availability of information**

This refers to the decision-maker’s access to certain information relating to the policy problem before and during the decision-making process (Ciot, 2014). Information available to the decision-maker may determine how much the decision-maker knows about the policy problem and the options available to them. The availability of information variable can be used to explain how the decision-maker frames the problem and the actions they take in relation to what they know about the issue (ibid). For instance, live, emotional, and concrete information has greater impact in decision making than abstract, outdated and less emotional information (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, availability of information will be used to answer the question, what kind of information was available to the two leaders during the decision-making process according to their own accounts? How did they gain access to the information? At what point in the decision-making process did they gain access to the information?

**Overevaluation**

Overevaluation refers to the process of placing very high, often exaggerated value of one’s influence in decision-making leading to a tendency of overestimating the probability of an outcome. Decision-makers might overestimate the probability of other actors and mediators eventually conceding to their conditions and terms in a negotiation. As a consequence, overevaluating actors are less likely to compromise their position and make a concession unlike those that are realistic and cognizant of their limited potential (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, overevaluation will be used to answer the question, how did the two leaders valuate their potential during the decision-making process and in what form did these valuations manifest in the communications?

**Utility**

Utility refers to the will to maximize mutual satisfaction from a negotiation. Utility in decision-making appears when all parties concerned perceive mutual benefits from the proceedings of a negotiation based on a win-win principle. Therefore, this idiosyncrasy will be used to answer the
question, how did the two leaders perceive benefits proceeding from the decisions and actions vis-à-vis the benefits of other parties (the Israelis and the Palestinians).

**Cognitive Consistency**

Cognitive consistency refers to the attempt by decision-makers to minimize the reception of certain information deemed incompatible with preconceived images and beliefs, or the attempt to pay an exaggerated amount of attention to information comporting with pre-existing images and beliefs. New information is a threat to consistency because it may result in the altering of attitudes. Therefore, “new information is processed through pre-existing images and decision-makers perceive what they think is there” (Ciot, 2014: 165). Therefore, cognitive consistency will be used to answer the question, how did the two leaders handle new information they interacted with in the decision-making environment? How is cognitive consistency and new information manifesting in the way they communicated?

**Cognitive Content Processing**

This refers to the mental process of gaining knowledge about the problem and the ability to understand it. The processing procedure involves constant thinking, knowing, remembering, judging, and the decision-maker’s ability to solve the policy problem (Ciot, 2014). This idiosyncrasy will be used to answer the question, how did the two leaders’ knowledge of the policy problem, judgement, and ability to solve the problem manifest in their communications against their actions and decisions?

**Evoked Set**

This refers to the immediate concerns about the issue or problem present in the mind of the decision-maker. These concerns are based on what the decision-maker know about the policy problem and the environment (Ciot, 2014). This idiosyncrasy will be used to explore what immediate images were manifest in the two leaders’ communications when asked or talked about the policy problem and groups of people attached to it?

**Learning and Historical Analogies**

Historical analogies generally refer to the comparison process of present events to counterpart occurrences in the past. It supports the assumption that when leaders experience events demanding decisions, they tend to reflect the past similar circumstances to seek for alternatives and possible outcomes (Ciot, 2014). Leaders tend to draw lessons from these analogies either to avert a risk or to imitate a decision or action. Learning from the past appears when the decision-makers look at
the past in order for it to be helpful in solving present problems (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, this idiosyncrasy will be used to explore how historical occurrences of similar policy problems or decisions and actions were used to draw lessons in the two leaders’ attempts to solve the Jerusalem Embassy relocation policy problem?

**Verbal Style**

Verbal style refers to the decision-makers use and choice of words as a representation of their personalities and the use of certain verbal structures can help to bring out the decision-maker’s imagery which is not always conscious. Verbal style is one of the concepts in cognitive idiosyncrasy theory used to identify decision-making and leadership styles of individuals through the analysis of their spoken and written communications (Ciot, 2014). These verbal styles allow the comparative aspect of this study to explain differences in the two leaders’ decisional and leadership styles by understanding their use of qualifiers, retractors, pronouns, impersonation frames, negations, explanations, emotions, adverbs, and direct references. See description of verbal style variables in Appendix 1.

**Filters**

The filters scheme is another set of personal characteristics which influences decision-makers behaviors (Ciot, 2014). Filters are interests of the decision-maker in a given foreign policy problem, their level of foreign policy training shaping their world view, and experience in foreign policy which determines their familiarity with working with others and how to navigate the environment. Ciot (2014: 205) claims that “the influence of a leader lacking general interest in international relations will have a minimal effect” while a leader interested in international relations will keep updated in latest developments. Thus, the greater the interest, the greater the attention the leader pays to foreign policy (ibid). The level of one’s interest predetermines what actions they might take in the future. Therefore, once the analysis has managed to identify these interests, the next step will be to filter these interests through the lenses of their training and expertise. Hermann (1993) claims that a leader lacking experience or training is ample to fail due to their lack of personal experience to rely on. Finally, the decision-maker’s sensitivity to the decision-making environment influences “the consistency of relationships between other features and foreign policy” (Ciot, 201: 205). This sensitivity can be defined abstractly as the degree of the decision-makers reception of stimuli in the decision-making environment, where on the one hand, less sensitive leaders adjust stimuli to comply with their world view and on the other, sensitive
leaders adjust their views to comply with environmental stimuli (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, the filters scheme will be used to find out how interests, expertise, and sensitivity shaped the world view of each president which influenced their behaviors.

**Critique of the Cognitive Idiosyncrasy Model**

The proposal to reduce the number of variables from four categories of idiosyncrasies to only one allows an in-depth exploration of a specific intervening factor allowed this study to focus on a few variables thereby allowing to an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. This approach has implications on the credibility of the study because of this slight departure from the tradition of individual idiosyncrasy analysis. The use of only one category of personal characteristics of individual idiosyncrasies is also problematic. Thompson, Neale and Sinauceur (2004) claim that the assumptions made about the individual in the cognitive idiosyncrasy theory is problematic because FPDM takes place “in an inherently social situation” and the individual is a situated negotiator in a myriad of social interactions rather than individualistic as claimed by this theory. Individuals are not entirely independent because of subconscious decisions and actions they take as a result of their belonging to a certain social collective or as a result of previous social experiences or their interactions with other independent actors in the decision-making environment (Ciot, 2014). Another limitation is that cognitive behaviors are not a given, a constant or chronically present, interactions with other actors might interrupt the individual’s pre-existing images to shape new ones (Thompson et al., 2000).
Methodology

The aim of this study is to gain a new understanding into how personal characteristics influence behaviors of individuals with executive decision-making powers in the global decision-making environment. First, this chapter introduces discourse analysis (DA) as the method of choice. Followed by sub-categories discussing the sampling, collection, evaluation respectively and finally, the results presentation strategy rationalizing.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis recognizes that people are beings that communicate either as individuals or collectives and the way they choose to communicate is influenced by relationships, institutions and systems (Mills and Birks, 2017). These communications are situated at different levels of the social ecology either micro, meso, or macro and language is the tool by which these communications take place. Language, either verbal or non-verbal, “is structured in a certain way so that it produces meanings and discourses which operate independently of the intentions of the speaker or the text writer” (Parker, 1992: 125). In DA, “every person, event or situation can be described in several manners, and taking into account the social context is the most important one” (Ciot, 2014: 10). Discourse analysis allowed the analysis to “highlight the relationship between power, domination and ideologies grounded in statements…to identify discursive patterns that would mark the presence of certain types of idiosyncrasies and investigate the association of their presence with the decisions undertaken” (Ciot, 2014: 12). Below is a table illustrating how the analytical model was used together with the discourse analysis method to gather and analyze data.

Table i: Operationalization Table (adaptation from Ciot, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Theoretical Component</th>
<th>Research Questions &amp; Data Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nature of the situation (Background) | • Latitude in decision-making power | Questions  
- What is the context in which the decision-maker is situated?  
Data Allocation  
- Policy documents, previous research, and other literature  
• Defining the problem | Questions  
- How does the individual define the policy problem?  
Data Allocation  
- Speeches and Interviews |
### Situation

#### Questions
- What kind of situation is this and what action needs to be taken? Are the actions required procedural or spontaneous?

### Data Allocation
- Policy documents (The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995) previous research and other literature

### Cognitive Idiosyncrasies

- Framing
- Anchoring
- Images
- Utility
- Cognitive Consistency
- Evoked Set
- Availability of Information
- Verbal Style
- Cognitive Content Processing
- Learning & Hist Analogies
- Overevaluation

#### Questions
- How did these two presidents’ personal traits impact their decision-making processes?

### Data Allocation
- Pre-recorded interviews and speeches

### Filters

- Foreign policy training and competences
- Foreign policy experience
- Foreign policy interests

#### Questions
- What filters did the decision-maker use to inform their world view?

### Data Allocation
- Biographies and other relevant documents

### Data Allocation

A non-probabilistic purposive approach was used to systematically select material for analysis and clearly defining the inclusion and inclusion criteria. A clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria for data collection increases trustworthiness of this research’s findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Data was allocated according to the three respective levels of analysis to answer the research question and achieve the objectives of the study. First, to answer questions pertaining to the context in which the individual was supposed to make foreign policy decisions, the study allocated historical and policy documents which relate to issues; U.S. Executive power in relation to the Jerusalem Embassy and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict issues. Second, to answer questions pertaining to the influence of cognitive idiosyncrasies in decision-making, the study allocated data from
January 20, 2009, when Barack Obama became the 44th U.S. president and the subsequent eight years in office that ended in January 2017. Another set of data was also allocated from January 20, 2017, when Donald Trump became the 45th U.S. president and the subsequent four years in office which ended in January 2021.

Textual material selected included direct speeches and interview transcripts where the two presidents mentioned Israel, Jerusalem, Palestine, Jerusalem, U.S. foreign policy on Israeli-Palestinian and Jerusalem policy within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict context. The data was retrieved from the two archived White House websites, Obama’s, and Trump’s respectively. Hermann (2010) argued that extra caution should be taken when analyzing language of leaders because most of the speeches attributed to them are written by their secretaries and advisor. Their representations through opinions of authors in text will not be included for analysis. Finally, the results were coded and categorized into themes according to the theoretical framework using the NVivo Software (release 1.4.1). See codebook attached as appendix (xx).

Furthermore, to explore the filters scheme, background information from online sources such as autobiographies and biographies of each president was integrated to allow the study to explain the two leaders’ predispositions which might have factored into their individual behaviors. The analysis followed an existing tradition of presenting the nature of the situation scheme first, followed by the personal characteristics scheme and finally the filters scheme(Hermann, 2010; Ciot, 2014)

**Source Criticism**

To increase transparency while minimizing bias and to avoid treating every source as necessarily precise, accurate and complete recordings of events that have happened, this study ensured that the purpose of the document, authorship, origin, and its contribution were established first before passages were extracted for analysis (Bowen, 2009). This process requires a rigorous reading and re-reading of data selected for inclusion. (Each quote used in the results section is referenced.)

**Trustworthiness**

Interpretivism in qualitative discourse analysis especially in the context of this research where two different individuals are compared against each other raises concerns about bias in the interpretation of results. This can be a result of the positionality of the researcher against each unit analyzed resulting in unbalanced and to some extent, the influence of the researcher’s bias in
analysis. Scholars have argued that the interpretative approach such as employed in this study lacks rigor and is less objective. Therefore, a transparent process was developed to ensure trustworthiness, a clear description of the two cases was presented and justified, followed by a detailed and explanation of choices of philosophical, methodological, and theoretical approaches. Finally, the use of reliable and already tested the NVivo instruments for data arrangement and reduction ensures the availability of code books for verification (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Credibility

One of the central concerns in qualitative research pertains to the question of how the researcher can ensure internal validity and measure what the research intended to measure? To do so, this study is situated within an established FPDM analysis research tradition using methods and theoretical concepts applied to previous research by other scholars within the field (Ciot, 2014). Definitions of concepts and their operationalization was kept as close to conventional traditions as possible, and these processes are documented throughout the study (Farrelly, 2013). The study did not have the privilege to cross check if participants views were accurately represented in the analysis due to the use of pre-recorded primary and secondary data sources used. However, the researcher carried out a thorough review of sources, to familiarize with how the archiving system works and to ensure that information retrieved met the inclusion criteria (Elo et al., 2014). Additionally, a triangulation process of data sources was carried out to check and verify the information found on the archived websites corresponded with information available on other sources such as newspaper articles and what other scholars have discussed in their studies (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Though it is difficult to guarantee that the findings from this study can be applicable to other situations, the researcher ensured external validity by providing a detailed background of the cases and leave the question of the study’s transferability to researchers with interest to test the analysis in other cases (Shenton, 2004). The researcher does not make claims that the cases are typical representations of others and does not dismiss its transferability either because other researchers might find the Obama and Trump cases typical representations of a broader group of decision-makers. Shenton claims that practitioners who find their situations to be similar to the one presented in the findings of a study, may proceed to relate it their own positions. However,
considerations of contextual differences must be taken into account and should proceed with caution (ibid).

**Dependability**

The study provided a step-by-step detailed process of the case selection, data allocation and analysis which will allow the audience of this study and future researchers to repeat the process, however, not to necessarily come to a similar result and conclusion. The study also provided a thorough operationalization of the theory and method to demonstrate what the analysis was looking for in the allocated data (see also Appendix 1) (Farrelly, 2013).

**Confirmability**

To increase confirmability, the study ensured that there is a transparent and detailed process of data allocation by developing a detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria. The researcher’s predispositions are reflected upon to inform the audience about conscious and unconscious biases that may have influenced choice of methods, data allocation and analysis (Shenton, 2004). Merits and demerits of choices made are discussed in the methodological and theoretical implications, and alternative epistemological tools which could have been applied to provide different research insights pointed out in research implications towards the end.

**Results Presentation and Interpretation**

Results will be presented in a comparative and narrative sequential format which entails a systematic and exhaustive process of equally presenting one case at a time. This strategy allows the study to bring out the interpretive wholesome account of each case and to link relationships between various factors within a single case. This allows the analysis to bring out the comparative element of the study to compare similarities, differences and relationships of variables within and across the two cases (Snowden and Atkinson, 2012; Goodrick, 2014; Yin, 2018).
Analysis
This section presents the results of the study whose aim was to comparatively explore cognitive factors that intervened in President Obama’s and President Trump’s decision-making processes relating to the Jerusalem Embassy relocation within Israeli-Palestinian context. The study intended to fulfil its objectives by answering the question, how do cognitive factors intervene in foreign policy decision-making? Results are presented following sequential case-by-case basis starting with the findings from the Obama case and followed by the Trump case. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the results.

Nature of the Situation
This variable was used to present background information giving context to the environmental conditions and context surrounding the foreign policy problem in which the individual decision-maker is found (Ciot, 2014). Contextualizing the environment in which the policy problem is situated might allow the analysis to explain the presence of cognitive idiosyncrasies in the two individuals’ foreign policy behaviors.

Latitude of the Decision-making Environment
The policy problem is situated in a broad historical problem involving a host of political, economic, and humanitarian actors making it a more global problem than an American foreign policy issue or an Israeli-Palestinian problem. The two sections below describe some of the fundamental aspects of the “Jerusalem Problem” paramount to this analysis.

Corpus Separatum
This study traces the history of the modern Jerusalem diplomatic and political “problem” back to the end of the British Mandate of Palestine in and the declaration of Israel’s independence in 1948 (Wilkinson, 2006). In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed Resolution 181 with multiple objectives including the partitioning plan of Palestine into two states; one Jewish and one Arab, and additionally recognizing “the special position of Jerusalem, withholding the city and its surroundings from the Partition plan as a corpus separatum under its own special UN Trusteeship Council” (Wilkinson, 2006: 198). Following this resolution, Jewish representatives in Mandate of Palestine unilaterally declared the establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948 (Ben-Gurion, 1948).
Between 1948 and the present day, eight wars and intifadas have been fought between the Israeli state and Arabs (Kacowicz, 2005). Though in theory the city remained divided by the armistice demarcation between eastern and western sections under the principle of Corpus Separatum, in reality Israel gained control of some of Palestinian Arab territories after 1967 War and in the process, ended the armistice demarcation of Jerusalem (UN, 1997). In 1980, the Knesset passed the Jerusalem Basic Law of 1980 which declared Jerusalem an undivided capital of Israel (Zank, 2016). However, the international community has always reiterated its opposition to Israel’s aggression and occupation of land ceased from Palestinians including the annexed parts of Jerusalem (UN, 1997). The UN and the international community also condemned the Jerusalem Law of 1980 passed by the Knesset to recognize the city as an undivided Israeli territory. The UN Security Council retaliated by passing the Resolution 478 of 1980 prohibiting any state from establishing and, or maintaining a diplomatic mission in Jerusalem and this resolution became a customary international law reinforcing earlier international consensuses on the status of the “Holy City” (Alzoughbi, 2019).

Contrary to international treaties prohibiting maintenance or establishment of diplomatic missions in Jerusalem to which it is part of, the U.S. continued to maintain its consulate in Jerusalem since 1854 when Palestine was still under the Ottoman control until 1968 when a permanent Embassy was established in Tel Aviv-Yafo (Abdiel, 2020). From 1968 to November 2018, the U.S. maintained its embassy in Tel Aviv which it recognized as the capital of Israel (Knesset, 2014).

**Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995**

Departing from the precedence of multilateral international and global interventional cooperation, the U.S. passed Public Law 104–45 on November 8, 1995 (also known as the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 or PL104–45) (U.S. Congress, 1995). Though the Act can be understood as an extension or an act of safeguarding U.S. national interests abroad, it violated a number of international laws and treaties (Alzoughbi, 2019). It made four declarations which are of interest to this study: First, Section (3)a(2) stated that the U.S. officially recognize the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (ibid). This argument was based on the fact that every sovereign state has a right to determine and designate the location of its own capital within its sovereign territory. Therefore, embassies should be located in close proximity to these key host-nation institutions. Second, Section (3)a(3) the law claimed that the U.S. should establish its embassy in Jerusalem based on the first rationale. Third, the law made it a legally binding obligation for a seating U.S.
president to implement the relocation and establish the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem (ibid). Fourth, the law further attached two conditions to the relocation obligation: 1) that it should be done no later than May 31 of 1999 and, 2) that “not more than 50 percent of the funds appropriated to the Department of State for fiscal year 1999 for “Acquisition and maintenance of Buildings Abroad” may be obligated until the Secretary of State determines and reports to Congress that the United States Embassy in Jerusalem has officially opened” (Section (3)b(1)) (ibid). The law also provided a clause under Section (7) that “the President may suspend such limitation for an additional six-month period at the end of any period during which the suspension is in effect under this subsection if the President determines and reports to Congress in advance of the additional suspension that the additional suspension is necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States” (U.S. Congress, 1995).

Defining the Policy Problem
This second condition makes assumptions that the foreign policy problem compels the decision-maker “to define or interpret the respective situation” (Ciot, 2014: 201). Given the prescriptive and legal binding nature of the Jerusalem Embassy law, how did the two leaders interpret the situation and law to define their own Jerusalem Embassy relocation policy.

Interpretation of the Law and The Invocation of the Waiver Clause
Regardless of the specificity of the Act on the time frame of its implementation, clause 7 invited the subjective interpretations and definitions of situation whether the given circumstances posed a real threat to the interests and security of the U.S., or a mere postponement based on the administrations’ defiance of the Act. As a result, a de facto precedence formed on the sidelines of the Act. Presidential candidates defined the Relocation policy as an urgent foreign policy matter during their political campaigns but framed its implementation as a national security threat once elected into office (Ruebner, 2016; Wise, 2016).

Participation in Foreign Policy Decision-Making
There are two main issue of concern that may give context to the analysis of individual cognitive idiosyncrasies of the two presidents. The blurred lines in the constitution on the authority and responsibilities of the executive and the congress in foreign policy on the one hand and on the other, the constitutional congressional oversight over the executive. The provisions of the Necessary and Proper Clause states that Congress has the power to pass laws “that shall be
necessary and proper for carrying into execution all powers vested in the government of the United States or in any department or office thereof” (Halberstam, 1995: 1388). Therefore, by an Act of the Congress, the Jerusalem Embassy Act gave the executive the obligation to implement the Embassy relocation. Thus, the participation of the U.S. Presidents was not a matter of Administrations’ own foreign policy preferences but a legally binding legislative obligation. Thus, whether the relocation was implemented or not between 1995 and 2018, the respective Presidents during that period participated in making foreign policy decisions relating to the given Act.

Analysis of Barack Obama’s Idiosyncrasies

In total, 12 of Obama’s interviews and speeches were included for analysis. Eleven of the speeches and interviews were retrieved from his archived White House website (Obama White House, 2017), and one was retrieved from a news site where he was interviewed (Mason and Rascoe, 2017). The documents used for analysis included his speeches and interviews related to the Israeli-Palestinian issue in which the Jerusalem Embassy relocation is a part of. Even though Obama did not state his intentions to implement the policy during his time in office, his conversations about the broader conflict issues are informative to the cognitive factors which influenced his inaction.

Framing

How did Obama frame the Jerusalem Embassy problem within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict context? Decision-makers can either frame a problem either positively or negatively. Depending on the nature of the situation, the way the problem is framed can either avert risk or exacerbate it. Though Obama had earlier framed the policy problem positively during his 2008 Presidential campaign, this framed changed after he got elected as president and claimed that,

When sudden unilateral moves are made that speak to some of the core issues and sensitivities of either side, that can be explosive… That’s part of what we’ve tried to indicate to the incoming team in our transition process, is pay attention to this because this is … volatile stuff.

(Mason and Rascoe, 2017)

According to his interpretation of the nature of the situation, the implementation of the Act did not only pose a threat to Israel and Palestine but was also a national security threat to the U.S.
I hereby determine that it is necessary, in order to protect the national security interests of the United States, to suspend for a period of 6 months the limitations set forth in sections 3(b) and 7(b) of the Act.

(Presidential Memorandum: Suspension of Limitations under Jerusalem Embassy Act – June 4, 2013)

Obama did not only reverse his position once but also corrected the way he framed Jerusalem in a urology at Shimon Perez’s funeral.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release
September 30, 2016

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA
AT MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR FORMER ISRAELI PRESIDENT SHIMON PERES

Mount Herzl
Jerusalem, Israel

These changes demonstrate that Obama was willing to avert risk at all costs and remain neutral if the pursuance of the frames from the Act were offensive to other parties.

**Anchoring**

Decision-makers sometimes fail because of their unwillingness to adjust their reasoning from the baseline while at the same time their idiosyncratic starting point impact the outcomes. The absence of the policy issue in his speeches other than in the waivers demonstrate willingness to adjust his reasoning away from the baseline reasoning of the Act. This is demonstrated by the differences in his speeches on the embassy relocation while campaigning when he said “Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided” and his sudden shift after becoming President to say

When sudden unilateral moves are made that speak to some of the core issues and sensitivities of either side, that can be explosive.
Images

How did Obama use mental representations to categorize people and events? There are two dominant images conveyed in his speeches one of terrorism and the other of victimhood. Israelis are portrayed as victims of Hamas’ violence and Palestinian groups were portrayed as perpetrators of violence and terror.

When I consider Israel’s security, I think about children like Osher Twito, who I met in Sderot -- (applause) -- children the same age as my own daughters who went to bed at night fearful that a rocket would land in their bedroom simply because of who they are and where they live.

(Remarks of President Barack Obama to the People of Israel, March 21, 2013)

“Hamas has been and is an organization that has resorted to terror; that has refused to acknowledge Israel’s rights to exist. It is not a partner for a significant, realistic peace process.”

(Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel After Bilateral Meeting, May 20, 2011)

The presence of images of violence and terrorism in his speeches conformed with the personal fears he held about the “explosiveness” and sensitivity of the implementation of the relocation. These images also confirm his concerns about the implementation of a unilateral policies in an environment where multilateralism was the norm.

Availability of information

The availability of information whether concrete, live, emotional, or ambiguous affects the negotiations and decision-making. The decision-maker often ignores information that does not conform with their predispositions and choose. There were different types of information available to Obama in the decision-making environment. There was concrete information from the Act itself which gave legally binding responsibilities to the president.

The United States Embassy in Israel should be established in Jerusalem no later than May 31, 1999 (Section 3.a.3)

(U.S. Congress, 1995)
There were also other kinds of information which intersected with Act and were allowed by the same act to be used by the President to make determinations to either implement or postpone the relocation. This information was live and emotional as it relied on events that took place in real time.

I'm encouraged by some of the things I'm seeing on the ground. We've been seeing reports in the West Bank in particular that checkpoints have been removed in some situations. The security forces of the Palestinian Authority have greatly improved and have been able to deal with the security situation on the West Bank in a way that has inspired not just confidence among the Israeli people, but also among the Palestinian people.

(Remarks by president Obama and President Mubarak of Egypt during press availability, August 18, 2009)

The availability of information from these real time events might have resulted in his shifting positions and that decision-makers might decide to ignore information that does not conform with their dispositions.

**Overvaluation**

Data shows that Obama overestimated the impact of international pressure on Israel and estimated that international condemnation would eventually cause Israel to alter its course, return to the negotiations and concede to what was being offered in a peace deal.

The goal of the resolution was to simply say that the ... growth of the settlements are creating a reality on the ground that increasingly will make a two-state solution impossible, it was important for us to send a signal, a wakeup call that this moment may be passing.

(Remarks by the President in Final Press Conference, Jan 18, 2017)

But I know that, regardless of the outcome, the Prime Minister will make those decisions based on his absolute commitment to Israel’s security and his recognition that ultimately Israel’s security will be enhanced by peace with his neighbors.

(Remarks by Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu in a Joint Statement to the Press, Mar 9, 2010)

**Utility**

Decision-makers achieve more if they conceptualize utility as a subjective preference. The decision-maker who conceptualizes utility as a subjective preference will maximize mutual
satisfaction for all parties in a negotiation. Data demonstrates that Obama’s approach to peace was based on mutual respect, multilateralism, responsibility, and accountability among all parties. In this approach, both the Israelis and Palestinians were treated as equals, and both bore equal responsibility for the status quo.

Yesterday, I had a constructive meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. We have made some progress. Palestinians have strengthened their efforts on security. Israelis have facilitated greater freedom of movement for the Palestinians. As a result of these efforts on both sides, the economy in the West Bank has begun to grow. But more progress is needed. We continue to call on Palestinians to end incitement against Israel, and we continue to emphasize that America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

(Responsibility for our Common Future: Address to the United Nations General Assembly September 23, 2009)

The picture emerging from his approach is that impartiality would result in both parties making compromises that will result in equal benefits, concessions and loses and, that Palestinians would also eventually cease to use violence to achieve their political goals while the Israelis desist from further occupation of Palestinian and Arab-Israeli land.

**Cognitive Consistency**

Obama’s shifting position on the policy issue demonstrates that pre-existing images and perceptions did not influence his judgement of the impact of current affairs on the practicality of the Act. His speeches demonstrate that he did not rely on his pre-existing images and perceptions, but other historical events and current affairs information shaped his perceptions and new images.

I'm encouraged by some of the things I'm seeing on the ground. We've been seeing reports in the West Bank in particular that checkpoints have been removed in some situations. The security forces of the Palestinian Authority have greatly improved and have been able to deal with the security situation on the West Bank in a way that has inspired not just confidence among the Israeli people, but also among the Palestinian people.

(Remarks by President Obama and President Mubarak of Egypt during press availability, Aug 18, 2009)

**Evoked Set**

Data show that Obama was concerned mostly about the probability of a violent confrontation that could ensue as a result of unilateralism in decision-making. The immediate concerns that are visible in his speeches are the images of the ramifications of violence on children.
I think about children the same age as my own daughters who went to bed at night fearful that a rocket would land in their bedroom simply because of who they are and where they live.

(Remarks of President Barack Obama to the People of Israel, Mar 21, 2013)

**Learning from Historical Analogies**

Obama’s speeches demonstrate that he did not treat his own position in the decision-making environment as isolated from other historical events, peace initiatives and interventions surrounding the Israel-Palestine question.

And just as we’ve been there with our security assistance, we've been there through our diplomacy. When the Goldstone report unfairly singled out Israel for criticism, we challenged it. (Applause.) When Israel was isolated in the aftermath of the flotilla incident, we supported them. (Applause.) When the Durban conference was commemorated, we boycotted it, and we will always reject the notion that Zionism is racism.

(Remarks by the President at AIPAC Policy Conference, Mar 4, 2012)

**Verbal Style**

Obama’s use of language as a tool for communication was systematic and congruent with his reasoning identified in other idiosyncrasies logical which reflects how he valued interpersonal relationships with other political leaders. His use of language also reflects on his decisional and leadership style.

**Adverbial intensifiers**

Obama seldomly used verbal intensifiers to give emphasis to certain words, or phrases. When he did, it was giving emphasis to a positive emotion adjective rather than as a sign of authority.

…and to President Abbas, as well as to President Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan, I am very grateful for their participation

(Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel after Bilateral Meeting, Sep 1, 2010)

In another instance, the intensifier “very” was used to give emphasis to the duration of a process of negotiations (noun). Again, the use of an intensifier in the second scenario was to give emphasis to an emotion word describing the process.
I want to commend publicly the efforts that Prime Minister Netanyahu had made in very lengthy and painstaking negotiations with my Secretary of State, John Kerry, Abu Mazen.

(Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu before Bilateral Meeting, Mar 3, 2014)

**Direct referencing**

Obama used direct references in the form of monikers to address the leaders from the two parties demonstrated his level of engagement and warmth. The use of monikers shows that he perceived them as equal partners and friends. He directly referred to the Israeli Prime Minister by his moniker Bibi, 13 times in all the 12 data sets analyzed.

“I have shared with Bibi, as I’ve said to the entire world,”

(The President's News Conference with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel in Jerusalem, Israel, Mar 20, 2013)

He directly referred to the Palestinian President Mohamoud Abas by his moniker Abu Mazen, four times in all the 12 data sets analyzed. Though a little less than Bibi, this shows that he wanted to make an impression that he had a personal relationship with the said leader.

I want to commend publicly the efforts that Prime Minister Netanyahu had made in very lengthy and painstaking negotiations with my Secretary of State, John Kerry, Abu Mazen.

(Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu before Bilateral Meeting, Mar 3, 2014)

**Emotional**

The use of emotional words and phrases in his communication demonstrated his level of engagement with the issue and conforms with his style of mutual beneficiation presented in the results above.

So, I just want to let President Abbas know that I said when I took office this was an issue that I cared deeply about, and I was willing to spend a lot of time and energy and political capital on. That commitment has not wavered.

(Remarks by President Obama and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority after Meeting, Jun 9, 2010)
Pronouns

The use certain pronouns in a speech demonstrate how the individual positions ‘self’ and ‘other’ actors in the decision-making environment. Obama used these pronouns consistently with other cognitive idiosyncrasies which demonstrate how he perceived himself and others. Such as the use of *I* to express his individual opinion by attaching the pronoun to action word think that he was passing an opinion and the use of pronoun *I* coupled with *continue to believe* showed that the views he shared previously were still present at the moment of speaking but were entirely his beliefs.

(From presidential speech)

*I* said that yesterday in the speech, and *I* continue to believe it. And *I* think that it is possible for us to shape a deal that allows Israel to secure itself, not to be vulnerable, but also allows it to resolve what has obviously been a wrenching issue for both peoples for decades now.

*(President Obama Hosts Prime Minister Netanyahu: “An Extremely Constructive Discussion”, Mar 20, 2011)*

When referring to the interventions and deliverables of the peace initiatives, he moved from singular pronoun *I* to plural *we*.

*We* need a two-state solution; *we* need a viable Palestinian state and a viable state of Israel, side by side. And whatever *we* can do in order to constructively accompany this along the way *we* will gladly do.

*(Remarks From Obama, Merkel News Conference, Jun 5, 2009)*

The use of plural personal pronoun *we* is a conscious representation of self as part of a group to which he was only a self-appointed spokesperson speaking on behalf of other parties involved in decision-making. The consistent alternation between singular and plural pronouns in conjunction with certain views and actions consistently relate to his framing of the problem, decisional and interpersonal styles.

**Filters**

The filters scheme was used to find out how interests, expertise, and experience shaped the Obama’s world views which had an impact on his behaviors in the decision-making environment.
Experience and Expertise

Obama attained his academic qualifications from Columbia University where he studied undergraduate degree in Political Sciences in 1983 and Harvard Law School where he graduated in 1991 (Wallenfeldt, 2021). Before running the 2008 presidential campaign on a Democratic Party ticket, Barack Obama was a member of the U.S. Senate representing the state of Illinois from 2005 until November of 2008. He is the fifth African American person elected to the U.S. Senate where he chaired the Senate’s Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European Affairs. His political ideologies were evident in his support for liberal policies such as immigration reforms, armament reduction, relief aid, federal transparency among others (Burns, 2014).

In 2007, the-then Senator Obama began his campaign to become the 44th president of the United States and its first African American president. The popularity garnered from the 2004 Congress and the subsequent his experiences in the U.S. Senate coupled with his second Democratic National Congress appearance strengthened his chances at winning both the primary elections and the national vote. He moved into the White House as one of the most informed presidents on matters of U.S. foreign policy than any other U.S. president which is attributable to his acquaintance with ethnic diasporas in his senatorial constituency (Ruebner, 2016).

Interests in Foreign Policy

One of his key foreign policy promises was to have a balanced approach towards a two-state deal between Israel and Palestine. However, while promising to be impartial, Obama also promised to recognize Jerusalem as an undivided capital of Israel (Ruebner, 2016). He also appeared at events hosted by both the Jewish and Palestinian diaspora groups. For instance, in his 2008 speech to the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) where he asserted his support for an undivided Jerusalem under Israel’s sovereignty and in the same speech asserting his support for the Palestinian causes which drawing criticism from his opponents (Ruebner, 2016).

Analysis of Donald Trump’s Cognitive Idiosyncrasies

In total, 10 of Trump’s interviews and speeches were included for analysis and were retrieved from his archived White House website (Trump White House, 2021). All speeches and interviews were in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in which the Jerusalem Embassy relocation is a part of. Trump eventually implemented the Embassy relocation in his second year as president. Below are the findings:
Framing
Decision-makers can either frame a problem either positively or negatively. Depending on the nature of the situation, the way the problem is framed can either avert risk or exacerbate it. Trump framed the Embassy relocation policy problem as positively contributing to the U.S. national interests and also as positively protecting interests of a U.S. ally.

Under this vision, Jerusalem will remain Israel’s undivided - very important - undivided capital. (Applause.) But that’s no big deal, because I’ve already done that for you, right? (Laughter.) We’ve already done that, but that’s okay. It’s going to remain that way.

(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of the State of Israel in Joint Statements, Jan 28, 2020)

Contrary to the assumptions made in the Theoretical Chapter, the nature of the policy situation is the opposite because positively framing the relocation policy would not avert risk

Anchoring
Decision-makers sometimes fail because of their unwillingness to adjust their reasoning from the baseline, and they intend to use the baseline as their idiosyncratic starting point which impacts the outcomes of a decision. Trump used the Jerusalem Embassy Act was used in his speeches as a reference point to rationalize his behavior, decisions, and actions.

In 1995, Congress adopted the Jerusalem Embassy Act, urging the federal government to relocate the American embassy to Jerusalem and to recognize that that city — and so importantly is Israel’s capital. This act passed Congress by an overwhelming bipartisan majority and was reaffirmed by a unanimous vote of the Senate only six months ago.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 26, 2017)

This demonstrate that Trump was not willing to make compromises and rethink his pre-dispositions to move away from the baseline definitions made in the Act.

Images
Trump’s mental representations were consistent with the way he framed Israelis (positively) and Palestinians (negatively). He used his positive images to categorize Israelis as a symbol of hope and perceived them as friends.
Israel is a light unto the world. The hearts and history of our people are woven together. The Land of Israel is an ancient home, a sacred place of worship, and a solemn promise to the Jewish people that we will never again repeat history’s darkest hour.

(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of the State of Israel in Joint Statements, Jan 28, 2020)

Negative images were used to categorize Palestinians as enemies filled with hate which is taught to young children in schools which symbolize a continuum of intergenerational violence and hate against Israelis.

I think the Palestinians have to get rid of some of that hate that they are taught from a very young age. They're taught tremendous hate. I've seen what they're taught. And you can talk about flexibility there too, but it starts at a very young age, and it starts in the schoolroom.

(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Joint Press Conference, Feb 15, 2017)

Availability of information

The availability of information whether concrete, live, emotional, or ambiguous affects the negotiations and decision-making. The decision-maker often ignores information that does not conform with their predispositions and choose. There were different types of information available to Trump in the decision-making environment. There was concrete information from the Act itself which gave legally binding responsibilities to the president which he had access to before and after becoming president.

In 1995, Congress adopted the Jerusalem Embassy Act, urging the federal government to relocate the American embassy to Jerusalem and to recognize that that city — and so importantly — is Israel’s capital. This act passed Congress by an overwhelming bipartisan majority and was reaffirmed by a unanimous vote of the Senate only six months ago.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 6, 2017)

Trump was also exposed to live and emotional information which was coming from current affairs such as advise from his predecessor and the events taking place in real time such as violent confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians.

That’s part of what we’ve tried to indicate to the incoming team in our transition process, is pay attention to this because this is ... volatile stuff.
By looking at the information available to him and the actions taken, data shows that Trump ignored information from Obama because it did not conform with his pre-dispositions and images.

**Overvaluation**

Trump had a tendency of overestimating his potential to individually bring about a pragmatic intervention that will result in a peace agreement, while ignoring the implications of his unilateral individual decision-making approach. He understood his strategy as the best.

I’ve judged this course of action to be in the best interests of the United States of America and the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. This is a long-overdue step to advance the peace process and to work towards a lasting agreement.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 6, 2017)

**Utility**

The decision-maker achieves more if they conceptualize utility as a subjective preference. The decision-maker who conceptualizes utility as a subjective preference will maximize mutual satisfaction for all parties from a negotiation. Data demonstrates that Trump’s approach to peace was based on favoritism, bias, and prejudice. multilateralism, responsibility, and accountability among all parties. In this approach, both the Israelis and Palestinians were treated as equals, and both bore equal responsibility for the status quo.

Last year, I kept my promise to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, as we have since moved our embassy from Tel Aviv to its rightful home in the Holy City.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 6, 2017)

Trump did not evaluate the impact his decisions would have on the Palestinians and the prospects of peace. However, Trump did not completely disregard creating an environment where both parties equally benefit from his interventions. The problem with his conceptualization of utility is that he treated the Israel-Palestine issues as isolated processes deserving separate interventions. These interventions were not balanced and exposed his prejudice towards Israel.

This map will more than double the Palestinian territory and provide a Palestinian capital in eastern Jerusalem where America will proudly open an embassy. (Applause.) No Palestinians or Israelis will be uprooted from their homes.
(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of the State of Israel in Joint Statements, Jan 28, 2020)

**Cognitive Consistency**

Trump showed that at the level of knowledge, his decisions and actions were influenced by his own images and pre-dispositions about the policy problem. Even though there was large amounts of concrete, emotional and live information contradicting his position, he did not allow this information to influence his judgement.

Yet, for over 20 years, every previous American president has exercised the law’s waiver, refusing to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem or to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital city. Presidents issued these waivers under the belief that delaying the recognition of Jerusalem would advance the cause of peace. Some say they lacked courage, but they made their best judgments based on facts as they understood them at the time.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 6, 2017)

Trump was also aware that his actions might have future implications, however, he dismissed them as predictable and could be circumvented through other means of cooperation, of which the notion of cooperation was in itself contradictory and inconsistent with his demonstrated unilateral and divisive decisional and interpersonal styles.

There will, of course, be disagreement and dissent regarding this announcement. But we are confident that ultimately, as we work through these disagreements, we will arrive at a peace and a place far greater in understanding and cooperation. This sacred city should call forth the best in humanity, lifting our sights to what it is possible; not pulling us back and down to the old fights that have become so totally predictable. Peace is never beyond the grasp of those willing to reach.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 6, 2017)

**Evoked Set**

Trump was concerned that violent events would recur and compromise Israel’s security hence the need for a peace deal. However, his concerns were biased because they did not take into account the implications of Israel’s actions on Palestinian civilians.
We will not allow a return to the days of bloodshed, bus bombings, nightclub attacks, and relentless terror. It won’t be allowed. Peace requires compromise, but we will never ask Israel to compromise its security. Can’t do that.

(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of the State of Israel in Joint Statements, Jan 28, 2020)

**Learning and Historical Analogies**

The reference to historical events in speeches demonstrate the decision-maker’s willingness to draw lessons from other leaders and contexts. Trump referred to many historical events dating back to the declaration of Israel’s independence and actions taken by prior administrations.

It is time for the Muslim world to fix the mistake it made in 1948 when it chose to attack, instead of recognizing, the new State of Israel. It’s time. (Applause.) Since then, the amount of needless bloodshed and all squandered opportunity — so many squandered opportunities — in the name of senseless causes is beyond measure.

(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of the State of Israel in Joint Statements, Jan 28, 2020)

He used these events to learn how to circumvent failure relating to the implementation of the Embassy relocation.

**Verbal Style**

His use of language as a tool for communication was unconventional and did not follow proper grammatical rules which makes it challenging to determine whether his choice of words was conscious. His verbal style is also consistent with factors discussed above and can inform the analysis about his cognitive capacity to function as a decision-maker.

**Adverbial Intensifiers**

These are adverbs or phrases attached in a sentence that amplify the meaning and gives emphasis to what is being said by the speaker. Overusing them mean that the speaker is either a dramatic or a boring leader and can also take away the credibility of what is being said.

Trump had a tendency of not overusing intensifiers, but he also repeated them within the same sentence which might mean that he wanted to strengthen the meaning of his expressions.

But we’re fighting **very hard**. We are trying **very hard**. We’re all getting along together well. We’ll see if we can do it. And, if we do it, it would be a **great, great legacy for everybody** — **for everybody**.
We’ll never have a team like we have right now. We have a team of people that love the United States, and they love Israel, and they’re very smart and very, very committed.

(Remarks Prior to a Meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in New York City and an Exchange with Reporters, Sep 20, 2017)

Direct Referencing

The use of direct references in speeches indicate the decision-makers warmth, friendliness, and level of engagement with other actors. Trump directly referred to other decision-makers using their first names, official titles attached to their names and monikers which functioned as an indicator of his interpersonal relationship with his counterparts in the decision-making environment. His use of formal title functioned as a recognition of the person’s authority, while his selective use of moniker to refer to Prime Minister Netanyahu more than 17 times demonstrated his bias and partiality.

Even Bibi didn’t know if this was going to be possible. Bibi, right? But now multiple Arab countries across continents have made peace with Israel.

(Trump announces Israel-Sudan peace on call with Jerusalem, Khartoum, Oct 24, 2020)

However, he never referred President Mohamoud Abbas of Palestine by his moniker, he only used his formal titles. This might indicate his level of engagement with the said leader and that they had no personal connection beyond formal functions.

It’s a great honor to have President Abbas from the Palestinian Authority with us and his representatives.

(Remarks Prior to a Meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in New York City and an Exchange with Reporters, Sep 20, 2017)

Pronouns

Use of pronouns can show how the individual perceives his/her positionality in the issue spoken about. The use of first-person pronouns, I and my, in a sentence show that the person wants to be as independent as possible in the matter, while me shows passivity beyond the subject’s control and
The use of singular personal pronoun in the quote below comports with Trump’s unilateral and individualistic decisional style as presented above.

All prior administrations, from President Lyndon Johnson, have tried and bitterly failed. But I was not elected to do small things or shy away from big problems. (Applause.) On Sunday, I delivered to Prime Minister Netanyahu my vision for peace, prosperity, and a brighter future for the Israelis and Palestinians. This vision for peace is fundamentally different from past proposals.

(Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of the State of Israel in Joint Statements, Jan 28, 2020)

However, Trump also used the plural personal pronoun “we” shows that he was speaking as a representative of a group or its spokesperson. The use of we also demonstrate that he did not take full individual responsibility for other aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, but it was a collective responsibility to which he was part of.

We want an agreement that is a great deal for the Israelis and a great deal for the Palestinians. We are not taking a position of any final status issues, including the specific boundaries of the Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, or the resolution of contested borders. Those questions are up to the parties involved.

(Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, Dec 6, 2017)

Filters
The filters scheme was used to find out how interests, expertise, and experience shaped the Trump’s world views which had an impact on his behaviors in the decision-making environment.

Experience and Training
Though Trump graduated from University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Finance and Commerce with an undergraduate degree in Economics, he did not have any training or experience in foreign policy (Duignan, 2021). Among other former U.S. Presidents, Trump was one of the least qualified and experienced presidents. Before being elected as the 45th President of the U.S., Trump had never held any politically elected position. Since he was never elected to a political office, he had neither political nor foreign policy experience and expertise. Nonetheless, he was the presidential candidate of the Reformation Party in 2000 (Nagourney, 2000; Duignan, 2021). Trump is known for his business negotiation skills which is one of the transferable skills which he
promised to use once elected to office. Biographers such as McAdams (2016) acknowledged that one of his strengths is that he always wants to enter a negotiation from a position of strength and to also create personal relationships and prefers one-to-one negotiations.

Interests

In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian affairs, he was forthright about his willingness to unilaterally implement his campaign promise to “recognize Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the State of Israel” and to relocate the embassy once he was elected (Wise, 2016). In a speech at the 2016 AIPAC Convention, he openly stated that

I love the people in this room. I love Israel. I love Israel. I’ve been with Israel so long in terms of I’ve received some of my greatest honors from Israel, my father before me, incredible. My daughter, Ivanka, is about to have a beautiful Jewish baby.

(Begley, 2016)

He criticized his predecessors for betraying Israel while describing himself as a lifelong and true friend of the Jewish state who would not become a neutral mediator but would use his veto powers against any UN resolution against Israel (Bennis, 2016).

In a speech at the AIPAC Summit he claimed that “you cannot achieve peace if terrorists are treated as martyrs. Glorifying terrorists is a tremendous barrier to peace. It is a horrible, horrible way to think. It’s a barrier that can’t be broken. That will end and it’ll end soon, believe me” (Begley, 2016). In his view, Palestinians were the villains and an impediment to the peace process, accused them of naming squares after terrorists and spreading hatred through education while Israelis were portrayed as peace loving, friendly and innocent victims (Bennis, 2016).

Comparison of Trump’s and Obama’s Idiosyncrasies

There are three issues that will be presented below, similarities, differences, and patterns in the two leaders’ idiosyncrasies present in their foreign policy behaviors.

Similarities

Data shows that both Obama and Trump were neither rational nor irrational in their foreign policy behaviors. At the level of cognitive idiosyncrasy analysis, both leaders allowed some personal characteristics to influence their decisions while ignoring others. Both leaders allowed their
stereotypes against Palestinians influence their judgements. Trump and Obama blamed only Palestinians for violent disturbances and ignored the fact that Israel was also responsible for violent attacks on Palestinians. The selective use of biased images and stereotypes of one actor while portraying the other as a victim demonstrated that these decision-makers were not entirely rational. However, the extent of these biases and stereotypes differed when analyzed in conjunction with other cognitive idiosyncrasies.

Differences

Data demonstrates that idiosyncrasies present in the two decision-makers had different influence to their behaviors in the decision-making environment. While the nature of the situation was similar to both presidents and information available to them almost similar too, they framed they differed in their perception of the benefits or risks associated with the implementation of the policy. Obama did not base his judgement on the predispositions and baseline descriptions of the policy problem but integrated new, live, and emotional information coming from events happening on the ground to influence his decision to view the policy a national security risk. Trump on the other hand, did not fully integrate new information which indicated that pursuing America’s national interests would pose national security threat. He treated this information and advice as signs of weakness and failure. His perceptions and images about the problem did not change from baseline which is an indication that he ignored information that contradicted his views. Therefore, unlike Obama, Trump’s framed the relocation policy positively both before and after becoming president.

Patterns

Other than subjective factors influencing foreign policy decision behaviors, there are patterns of objectivity present in the way the two decision-makers interacted with the Act which compelled them to behave rationally regardless of their subjective preferences. Regardless of their subjective preferences, whether negative or positive, there were limitations to how much they could influence their actions because of the legally binding nature of the problem. Though Obama thought that implementing the Act would result in an unmitigated risk, the law required him to report to the Congress every six months. This meant that regardless of his silence on the policy matter in other aspects, he was obligated to talk about it twice a year and justify why he thought it was not ideal to initiate the relocation. Similarly, regardless of Trump’s positive frames regarding the policy and the willingness to initiate the process, the time limits of the Act also implored him to invoke the waiver clause.
Discussion

Results of this study demonstrate that cognitive idiosyncrasies intervened in the two presidents’
decision-making confirming theoretical doubts about positivist theories that treat the decision-
maker as a rationale actor. The study established a link between decision-making, personal
characteristics, and filters which correlate with their interests and sensitivity to the policy problem.
What is striking in the results is that other than foreign policy training and interests, experience
also plays a role in shaping one’s view of the problem, without which the individual is less
knowledgeable about the less sensitive about the volatility of the situation. Insensitivity to the
policy context increases the likelihood of taking risks and reduces the likelihood to cooperate with
other actors. This discussion will focus on four main areas of the results, framing, anchoring,
availability of information and verbal style.

Framing

The picture that emerged from the analysis is one that began with framing as an intrinsic process
in decision-making congruent with the decision-maker’s level of foreign policy training,
experience, and interest. The analysis comported with the theoretical claims that the above factors
influence the world view of the decision-maker and can be used as predictors of future behaviors
(Hermann, 1993). The above factors also inform the analysis about the decision-maker’s ability to
understand the nature of the problem they are dealing with (Ciot, 2014). On the one hand, the
analysis demonstrated that an untrained decision-maker is less likely to have a nuanced and
multipronged approach when framing the problem. The analysis of Trump’s idiosyncrasies
demonstrated that an untrained decision-maker is more likely to isolate the problem from the
broader conflict issue and reduce it into a single manageable unit. This approach prejudices one
actor over the other, does not strive for a balanced in the benefits each part gains from a negotiation.

On the other hand, a trained decision-maker has a wider understanding of issues and looks
at more factors and issues intersecting with the policy objectives. This expertise in foreign policy
allows them to incorporate a plurality of these intersecting factors before he/she come up with their
frames. The analysis of Obama’s cognitive idiosyncrasies demonstrated that it is less likely for a
trained decision-maker to isolate a single issue from a broader foreign policy problem. A trained
individual’s foreign policy problem framing will strive to find a balance in the benefits each party gains from a negotiation.

Furthermore, the presence of these different frames demonstrates that decision-makers, though independent individuals capable of making autonomous decisions according to their authority, the way they frame the problem when looked at from the interests perspective demonstrates that social belonging is also an influence. Pevehouse and Vabulas (2019) came to a similar conclusion that the interaction with ethnic diaspora groups shapes decision-makers’ interests in a foreign policy problem. The analysis of interests as a component of the filters scheme established that the interaction of the two Presidents with Jewish and Palestinian diaspora groups is consistent with their level of interests and their problem framing. It was demonstrated that Trump who was mostly prejudiced against Palestinians had a close relationship with Jewish lobbyists, AIPAC hence his framing of the policy to favor Israel. Obama’s framing and utility was also consistent with his close relationship with both Palestinian and Jewish groups hence his will to remain impartial and balance utility. This demonstrates that framing and the choices made by the decision-maker when defining and interpreting the policy problem are subjective and based on the identity of the individual.

The presence of these personal characteristics is also visible when analyzed from the perspective of the nature of the policy which was based on specific legally binding instructions. Under positivist models, these instructions will be the baseline informing policy preferences (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010). Hence the failure of the positivist models to explain why and how individuals fail to implement national policies while others do. Nonetheless, this analysis successfully describes which factors might have influenced these two divergent individual behaviors in foreign policy.

The analysis also demonstrated that the framing of the policy problem is not a single event, neither is it static but cyclical and transitional. The individuals’ perspectives and position regarding the foreign policy problem shift overtime depending on their personalities and willingness to adapt to changes in the decision-making environment. The analysis argues that the initial cognitive processes of framing a problem by a presumptive decision-maker before gaining authority can be influenced by the individual’s need to gain trust from the institution they intend to represent. Ciot (2016) argued that people who have low levels of agreeableness are untrustworthy, but this is not limited to a certain category of politicians because apparently all politicians dissemble from their
true intentions. While other scholars might frame it as a sign of untrustworthiness, lies or dissemblance, the analysis argues that what one knows before gaining access to a certain level of decision-making might make them frame a problem differently from when they eventually get the mandate. This is especially when taking into consideration the level at which one is participating as a decision-maker (Hermann, 1993). This analysis terms this phenomenon ‘transitional framing’ and explains the changes in Obama’s promise to implement the policy and his recognition of Jerusalem as an undivided capital of Israel before becoming the President, to claiming that implementing the policy would pose a national security risk and editing out Jerusalem from a document which earlier stated that Jerusalem was located in Israel.

The authority given to act individually on behalf of an institution creates a conducive atmosphere for the intervention of personal traits. Ciot (2014: 214) argued that “personal characteristics will have a greater impact on foreign policy in situations where politicians are involved in decision-making”. This claim agrees with the findings of this analysis when viewed from the lenses of the interests of the two political leaders, party affiliations, and experience. Obama’s behavior as a politician shows that there is a close proximity between politics and subjectivity where political interests influence how the decision-maker’s actions and behaves in the decision-making environment.

**Anchoring**

The theory made assumptions that decision-makers sometimes fail because of their unwillingness to adjust their reasoning from the baseline (Ciot, 2014). The use of baseline as an idiosyncratic starting point to decision-making impacts the outcomes of a negotiation (Ciot, 2014). While the use of anchors was present in both presidents’ speeches, the analysis shows that there are variations in the way certain past events, processes and definitions were used. Each President’s use of these anchors was consistent with their problem framing, interpersonal, and decisional styles. The analysis of Obama’s idiosyncrasies at the level of anchoring demonstrated that an impartial decision-maker stirs away from baseline if it hampers chances of averting risk. However, Obama’s idiosyncrasies, when looked at from before gaining authority, it is difficult to predict future behaviors of such a decision-maker. His anchoring idiosyncrasy informs the field of FPDM on how to measure the predictability of a decision-maker and also informs the field that to understand the behaviors of an individual in the decisional environment, it is imperative to also analyze their anchors before receiving the decision-making mandate. Though it was not the objective of this
study to analyze why these idiosyncrasies occurred, the analysis of Obama’s case demonstrated that reasoning away from baseline might not be a voluntary choice but a sign of willingness to compromise on values and beliefs. However, the causality of that compromise cannot be explained by this analysis. Due to theoretical choices made earlier, a close proximity to both ethnic diaspora groups involved in the negotiation or policy problem can be one of the explanations which compelled Obama to departure from prior anchors one might have used. Therefore, anchors are an instable predictor of individual behaviors in foreign policy because they can be altered at any time. The analysis of Trump’s case also demonstrated that anchors can be used to predict future behaviors of an individual if there is a stability and consistency in their problem framing before and after receiving a mandate to decide on behalf of an institution. However, this stability in problem framing does not mean that the individual is acting rationally to pursue national interests. The analysis provides an illustration that if the stability is anchored on baseline reasoning, it means that the individual is incapable of incorporate other views and one chooses to not make their own individual assessment of the situation but takes the easiest way out of a situation. This conclusion is supported by Mintz and DeRouen (2010) argument that there are multiple constraints present in the decision-making environment such as time constraints which make it difficult to process a lot of information before coming up with a decision. Ciot (2014) also added that decision-makers might then choose to ignore that information and rely on what they already know about other and the problem to make decisions.

Availability of Information
It was demonstrated that the information available in the decision-making environment is not reliable because of its vulnerability to manipulations through individual interpretations and interests. When foreign policy is informed by a legislation, information is readily available to everyone delegated the authority to make decisions on behalf of the state. However, different individuals understand the information differently through the lenses of what is already known about the policy problem and others (Pevehouse and Vabulas, 2019). March (2009) argued that individuals are not only educated to view the world in a certain way, but societies also socialize them to assume certain identities which affect how they interpret the information they receive in the decision-making environment. Thus, when Obama claimed that he had passed information to the Trump Administration warning them about the risks of unilaterally relocating the embassy to Jerusalem, it was Trump’s responsibility to review that information and decide whether to integrate
it into his framing of problem or ignore it. Incorporating information from his predecessor could have cause him to depart from his predisposition and reason away from the baseline. Ignoring the information means that he might have not trusted the source of information or perceived the information as inaccurate since he had already labelled his predecessors approaches to the foreign policy issue as failure.

Another explanation from Fisher’s (2003) arguments is that information available in the decision-making environment is untrustworthy because authors have their individual and cognitive idiosyncrasies influencing them to view and frame the problem in compliance with their interests. According to Fisher (2003) information can be falsified to sway the decision-maker’s views which has an influence on actions eventually taken. Hence, Trump’s disregard for precedence and warnings might have been influenced by his understanding of the role played by divergent world views, identities, and priorities of his predecessors in the formulation process of the information they left in the decision-making environment. This finding also agrees with Hinnebusch (2007) who claimed that information informing foreign policy is easily manipulated and falsified to sway decision-makers. His conclusion was that due to this falsification and trust given to presidential advisors, Bush II was misled to invade Iraq. However, there are other explanations to the reason why information may be ignored which this study did not attempt to explore.

The complexities of the nature of the Jerusalem Embassy relocation foreign policy problem can be attributed to the long history of unwillingness to implement the Act by other administrations. This unwillingness created a precedence of perpetual postponement of the implementation and a vacuum of information which required the decision-maker to come up with their own explanations justifying their inaction thereby adding more information to an already complex problem. The transfer of this information from Obama to Trump demonstrates that predecessors expected their successors to use this accumulated information as a new baseline rather than the Act itself.

At the level of information processing, the analysis shows that the availability of too much information in the decision-making environment can result in the decision-maker choosing the convenient and easiest way out of the policy dilemma instead of studying to comprehend the alternatives. Post, Walker and Winter (2006) individual decision-makers often thrive to simplify complexities by taking the easiest way out of a situation. Both cases, regardless of the way they framed the problem or their world view, confirmed the theoretical assumption that decision-makers
are less likely to move away from their dispositions. On the one hand, Obama ignored other information provided by the law which contradicted his view that the problem could only be solved through multilateral cooperation. While on the other, Trump chose to rely only on information conforming with his worldview. Therefore, the analysis of availability of information idiosyncrasies of the two presidents demonstrated that personal characteristics could lead to distrust of the information available in the decision-making environment. Personal characteristics could also result in the creation of alternative explanation reasoning from the baseline of national policy. Finally, personal characteristics could result into an illusion that once precedence is set away from baseline, future decision-makers will eventually behave similarly.

**Verbal style**

Finally, the analysis of verbal styles demonstrates that the decisional style and sensitivity to the decision-making environment corresponds with one’s filters in the decision-making environment. (Winter et al., 1991) and Ciot (2016) posit that common sense makes us judge a person’s personality through their use of grammar even though grammatical choices are not consciously made. Obama’s case is anecdotal to the significance of training and experience to the use of language as tool in decision-making. While individuals with foreign policy training exhibited calmness, emotions, sensitivity to other leaders, the study also agreed with Post, Walker and Winter (2006) that these factors can lead to excessive organizational ability and attention to detail which can result in indecisiveness.

The presence of verbal idiosyncrasies in both cases analyzed demonstrates that different individuals perceive other actors in the decision-making environment differently. The analysis of their use of language also shows that impulsive and pragmatic decision-makers are biased and less sensitive to other leaders. While an indecisive leader is conscious about their words and sensitive to other actors. Their use of language as a tool for diplomacy attempts to blur differences between groups and avoid provocation, however, these factors lead to indecisiveness. The pragmatic decision-makers' biases allow them to avoid complexities ensuing from overlapping interests of different groups converge. Congruent to the framing process where the pragmatic decision-maker isolates a single issue from a broader policy problem to minimize complexity, a pragmatic decision-maker also uses language to make divisions among other decision-makers and to choose one side over the other. This was evident in Trump’s friendliness and warm treatment of Benjamin Netanyahu using monikers. This agrees with McAdams' (2016) findings that Trumps negotiating
skills are based on the exhibition of strength (the strongmen mentality) and prefers a one-on-one approach giving him an upper hand over his counterparts. However, this approach is problematic in political decision-making where decisions made by a powerful state have a far-reaching impact on humanity and the global political system. Caution should be taken with respect to theoretical and philosophical limitations that aversion of complexity might not be the only factor influencing Trump’s approach. Idiosyncrasies of social belonging, identities, emotional and motivational factors might also have played a role.

Similar to other cognitive idiosyncrasies, the absence of adequate foreign policy skills and experience in Trump’s case and the presence of these two factors in Obama’s case can explain the differences in decisional, and leadership. The analysis, though without making assertions about the correlation between educational background and one’s use of language, there is sufficient evidence to make claims about the congruency between experience and the use of verbal structures in political communication. An experienced decision-maker avoids use of impulsive language while an unexperienced decision-maker acts and speaks without considering the consequences (Winter et al., 1991). However, there could be other explanations to Trump’s unconventional construction of verbal structures and choice of words.
Conclusions
The aim of this study was to gain a new understanding into how personal characteristics influence behaviors of individuals with executive decision-making powers in the global decision-making environment. It explored cognitive idiosyncrasies which intervened in President Obama’s and President Trump’s decision-making processes to achieve this understanding and the USA’s Jerusalem Embassy relocation foreign policy was the case analyzed to identify the presence of these cognitive idiosyncrasies. Evidence from the results to supports the conclusion that cognitive factors influenced Obama’s and Trump’s decision-making processes. The presence of these cognitive idiosyncrasies in the form of framing, anchoring, images, availability of information, learning and historical analogies, cognitive consistency, and verbal styles supports the conclusions of this study. Though these factors were identified in both cases, the extent of their influence differed depending on other personal characteristics such as one’s interpretation of the nature of the policy situation and filters through which one’s world view is informed.

Though the analysis did not intend to answer ‘why’ cognitive idiosyncrasies are present in decision-making, it demonstrated that if elements of the nature of the problem such as definition of the problem are ambiguous or left open for individual interpretations, there is a likelihood that individuals will dissemble and adjust their reasoning further away from national policy baseline. While adjusting reasoning according to events taking place in real time in the decision-making environment can be advantageous to the aversion of risk and maintaining the balance of power between leaders and beneficiaries of a decision, overdependency on this cognitive idiosyncrasy leads to indecisiveness delaying national interests. The opposite also demonstrated that lack of experience and expertise results in the simplification of complexities because of the inability to go through complex details required to make a rational decision.

The study concluded that the latitude of the decision-making environment and the specificity or ambiguity of the laws determine the degree of the intervention of idiosyncrasies. Where legislation give unilateral power to presidents to make individual decisions, it is likely that they will feel empowered to incorporate their personal interests while ignoring national interests. Hence the need for policymakers to ensure that laws are concrete enough to limit subjectivity. The insertion of the waiver clause in the law for instance allowed presidents to make determinations whether the situation was conducive for the implementation of the law or not. This meant that the individual was empowered by the law to use their own interpretation of the situation which
required the application of their personal filters to make judgements about potential risks and benefits.

**Study Implications**

The study acknowledges challenges encountered due to methodological choices made when allocating data which might have resulted in a biased analysis. The selection of data for analysis, though applied indiscriminately, exposed the weaknesses of interpretive and qualitative research. The study allocated data from speeches and interviews by the two leaders during their tenure of office and found fewer documents from Obama mentioning the Embassy relocation policy than Trump. The above issues affected the analysis’ trustworthiness and credibility because data from his speeches on the broader Israel-Palestine Conflict discourse was then used to deduce rationale for his adjustment of reasoning from the Act and leading to inaction. This might have resulted in overstretching and overanalyzing meanings to fit the data into predefined categories and answer the research question. Regardless of these weaknesses, the research successfully established a pattern of the presence and use of personal characteristics in both cases and these personal characteristics intervened to alter their behaviors in the decision-making environment.

The study’s philosophical and theoretical choices’ limitations leave more questions unanswered. Firstly, the question about why cognitive idiosyncrasies are present in the two Presidents’ decision-making required a different set of questions and methodological choices. A different approach to answer the above question would have asked questions about motives behind their actions or inaction. The study also failed to deeply explore the presence of socialization as a contributing factor to one’s cognitive idiosyncrasies which could have informed the analysis about other processes that occur beyond the cognitive frame. Previous research pointed out that though decisions are made by individuals, those individuals are socialized into identities which are instrumental in decision-making. Therefore, there is need for future research to explore the impact of socialization, motivational and emotional factors on individuals delegated to represent institutions, more precisely, in situations where the individual has great latitude and power.

**Future Research**

Finally, due to time and resource constraints, the study could not address some of the questions above because the researcher reduced the number of variables of the individual idiosyncrasy model. Only the cognitive idiosyncrasy scheme was applied. While this approach allowed for an
in-depth analysis of personal cognitive characteristics, there are other components of the model which could have given the analysis a holistic picture of interrelated personal characteristics influencing decision-making. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future research should attempt to apply the entire individual idiosyncrasy model in comparative studies to get a holistic picture of how and why these factors intervene in decision-making. According to the researcher’s knowledge, this was the first ever attempt at applying the theories to a comparative study and also at reducing the number of variables of the model, there is also need for further research that applies this reduced model to test its applicability in different FPDM scenarios and contexts.
References


Mohamad, H. (2015) Following the events of September 11, President George W. Bush shifted his approach in support of further involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. He delivered, JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AND AREA STUDIES.


Winter, D. G. *et al.* (1991) ‘The Personalities of Bush and Gorbachev Measured at a Distance:'


# Appendix 1

Below are the codes derived from NVivo according to the theoretical operationalization

## Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Files</th>
<th>References</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchoring</td>
<td>Anchoring refers to the cognitive bias where individual’s decisions are influenced by a particular reference point. The value placed on the reference point by the individual functions as an anchor to every action or decision made. In the absence of anchors, a different conclusion may be arrived at. This does not mean that negotiators cannot be convinced to change their positions during the process but the problem is that individuals have a tendency of ignoring information which contradicts their pre-existin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Information</td>
<td>Availability of information refers to the access to information decision-makers have before and during the decision-making process and can be used as an indicator for the success of the decision-making process. Live, emotional and concrete information has greater impact in decision making than abstract, outdated and less emotional information (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, availability of information will be used to answer the question, what kind of information was available to the two leaders during the decision</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Consistency</td>
<td>This refers to the attempt by decision-makers to minimize the reception of certain information deemed incompatible with preconceived images and beliefs, or the attempt to pay an exaggerated amount of attention to information comporting with pre-existing images and beliefs. New information is a threat to consistency because it may result in the altering of attitudes. Therefore, “new information is processed through pre-existing images and decision-makers perceive what they think is there” (Ciot, 2014: p. 165</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Content Processing</td>
<td>This refers to the mental process of gaining knowledge about the problem and the ability to understand it. The processing procedure involves</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
constant thinking, knowing, remembering, judging, and the decision-maker’s ability to solve the policy problem (Ciot, 2014). This idiosyncrasy will be used to answer the question, how did the two leaders’ knowledge of the policy problem, judgement and ability to solve the problem manifest in their communications against the actions and decisions made?

**Evoked Set**

This refers to the immediate concerns about the issue or problem present in the mind of the decision-maker. These concerns are based on what the decision-maker know about the policy problem and the environment (Ciot, 2014). This idiosyncrasy will be used to explore what immediate images were manifest in the two leaders’ communications when asked or talked about the policy problem and groups of people attached to it?

**Framing**

Framing refers to the ways decision-makers socially construct a situation or problem. The social construction of a frame can be either positive or negative. Depending on how the situation is framed in one’s mind, framing can help avert risks or fosters a hostile environment and increases the probability of conflicts (Ciot, 2014). Decisions made by other actors in the decision-making environment also influence how the problem is eventually framed specifically when decisions about a single issue are entwined.

**Images**

This idiosyncrasy refers to the mental representations used for framing and organizing the world and can be considered stereotypes the mind uses to categorize events and people (Ciot, 2014). Images are useful for simplifying the complicated world, but they place the decider in a situation of risk by supra-generalizing, being formed by the interweaving of three elements: strategic balance, perceived opportunity or threat and perceived culture (Hermann, 1997, Ciot, 2014). Therefore, the idiosyncrasy will be u

**Learning and Historical Analogies**

Learning and Historical Analogies Historical

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<tr>
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<td>This refers to the immediate concerns about the issue or problem present in the mind of the decision-maker. These concerns are based on what the decision-maker know about the policy problem and the environment (Ciot, 2014). This idiosyncrasy will be used to explore what immediate images were manifest in the two leaders’ communications when asked or talked about the policy problem and groups of people attached to it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>Framing refers to the ways decision-makers socially construct a situation or problem. The social construction of a frame can be either positive or negative. Depending on how the situation is framed in one’s mind, framing can help avert risks or fosters a hostile environment and increases the probability of conflicts (Ciot, 2014). Decisions made by other actors in the decision-making environment also influence how the problem is eventually framed specifically when decisions about a single issue are entwined</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>This idiosyncrasy refers to the mental representations used for framing and organizing the world and can be considered stereotypes the mind uses to categorize events and people (Ciot, 2014). Images are useful for simplifying the complicated world, but they place the decider in a situation of risk by supra-generalizing, being formed by the interweaving of three elements: strategic balance, perceived opportunity or threat and perceived culture (Hermann, 1997, Ciot, 2014). Therefore, the idiosyncrasy will be u</td>
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<td>Learning and Historical Analogies</td>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Analogues</td>
<td>analogies generally refer to the comparison process of present events to counterpart occurrences in the past. It supports the assumption that when leaders experience events demanding decisions, they tend to reflect the past similar circumstances to seek for alternatives and possible outcomes (Ciot, 2014). Leaders tend to draw lessons from these analogies either to avert a risk or to imitate a decision or action. Learning from the past appears when the decision-making process is guided by past experiences to inform current actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overevaluation</td>
<td>Overevaluation refers to the process of placing very high, often exaggerated value over an object leading to a tendency of overestimating the probability of an outcome. Decision-makers might overestimate the probability of other actors and mediators eventually conceeding to their conditions and terms in a negotiation. As a consequence, overevaluating actors are less likely to compromise their position and make a concession unlike those that are realistic and cognizant of their limited potential (Ciot, 2014).</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>Utility refers to the decision-maker’s will to maximize mutual satisfaction from a negotiation. Utility in decision-making appears when all parties concerned perceive mutual benefits from the proceedings of a negotiation based on a win-win principle. Therefore, this idiosyncrasy will be used to answer the question, how did the two leaders perceive benefits proceeding from the decisions and actions vis-à-vis the benefits of other parties (the Israelis and the Palestinians).</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Style</td>
<td>This idiosyncrasy refers to the decision-makers choice of words as a representation of their personality. Verbal style can be used to differentiate decision-makers based on their use of verbal structures and can also help to bring out the decision-maker’s imagery which is not always conscious (Ciot, 2014). Therefore, this variable will be used to explore how the two leaders’ personalities and styles of leadership were visible through their use of qualifiers,</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>retractors, pronouns, impersonation frames, negat</td>
<td>Adverbs which emphasize or add more authority to a statement are adverbial intensifiers (very, really);</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Referencing</td>
<td>Direct references appear when the person speaking refers directly to the person spoken to.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Those who usually assign emotions or self-assessments (often saying I like something) or use other expressions related to emotions, transmit warmth;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations</td>
<td>Using explanations (because, therefore, since) suggests rationalizing, points of view which are justified, explained or excused;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal Forms</td>
<td>Using impersonal forms (someone did this, where the subject is not specified), where it is more feasible to make a recognizable reference, is known as impersonal reference;</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negatives</td>
<td>Oppositional behaviour or stubbornness is indicated by the use of negatives (not, never, nothing);</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>Using the pronoun I, rather than we indicates the need of a person to be seen as independent, vs. a spokesman for a group or a cause;</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifiers</td>
<td>A large number of qualifiers (like perhaps, might be), occurring in the text may indicate indecision or a lack of desire to have a point of view;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retractors</td>
<td>Using the retractors (for example, anyway, however) are signs of impulsivity;</td>
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Appendix 2

Below is a table consisting of codes and how they are distributed according to cases

**Coding Matrix**

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<tr>
<td>1: Obama</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2: Trump</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2: Trump</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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