

Jfk: Abd Dış Politikasında ‘Yapabiliriz’ Psikolojisi

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Özet

1960'ların başında başkan Kennedy ve ABD dış politikası isteklerini elde etmek için aynı heyecana ve 'yapabiliriz' psikolojisine sahipti. Bu başkanın açısından bir dizi başarısızlığa, ABD açısından da birkaç uluslararası krize ve Soğuk Savaş sorunlarının derinleşmesine sebep oldu. Bunların arasında Berlin Krizi, Domuzlar Körfezi çıkartması ve Küba misil krizi ve Vietnam sayılabilir. Sıra dışı bir karizmaya sahip olan Kennedy, sadece her bir krizde ayakta kalmayı başarmadı, aynı zamanda her başarısızlıktan da adeta başarı imajı yayarak çıkmayı becerdi. Diğer yandan, Kennedy barış isteyen ve kendi ülkesi ve insanları için güvenli bir gelecek arzulayan bir liderdi. Başkan olarak geçirdiği ilk bir iki yılın ardından Kennedy toprak altı denemeler hariç bütün nükleer testleri yasaklayan Nükleer Test Yasağı Anlaşmasını imzaladı. Kısaca, 1960'ların başında Amerikan dış politikası ve Başkan Kennedy güç gösterisindeki heyecan ve kararlılıktan, barışın değerini anlamaya uzanan bir olgunlaşma sürecinden beraber geçmiştir. Diğer bir deyişle, Kennedy'nin başkan olarak olgunlaşma süreci 1960'ların dış politikasında gözlemlenebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: JFK, Amerikan tarihi, Soğuk Savaş, 1960'lar, ABD dış politikası

Jfk: ‘Can-Do’ Psychology In Us Foreign Policy

Summary

President Kennedy and the US foreign policy in the early 1960s had the same passion and 'can-do' psychology in achieving what they desire. This caused a series of failures on the President's side and a couple of international crises and deepening of Cold War issues on the US' side. Among which, Berlin Crisis, Bay of Pigs and Cuban missile crisis, and Vietnam can be counted. Being a leader of extreme charisma, Kennedy managed not only to survive each crisis but also to transmit the image of success after each failure. On the other hand, Kennedy was also a leader urging for peace and a secure future for his country and people. After few of years of presidency, his politics changed significantly and he managed to come to the point of signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which banned any nuclear tests other than that of under the ground. In brief, the US foreign policy in the early 1960s and President Kennedy have both gone through the same maturation process from the excitement and determination of displaying power to appreciating the value of peace. In other words, the maturation process of Kennedy as president can be observed in the foreign policy matters of 1960s.

Key Words: JFK, American History, Cold War, 1960s, US Foreign Policy

The US foreign policy in the early 1960s could be marked with the phrase that summarizes the zeitgeist: 'can-do'. President Kennedy was an energetic young leader creating and also being affected by the winds of change and progress. America followed him, admired him, and responded him. This

paper aims to provide a brief look into that special era via evaluating his acts of foreign policy as his progress as a president and the change America went through in such a short period of time from a parallel track within it. Thus, it seems that by studying the US foreign policy of the 1960s it is possible to unfold the 'can-do' psychology of the President and the nation itself and to discover the reasons and the consequences of change in that psychology which seems to follow a path from overt display of power to understanding the value of world peace.

I. PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY

“ Let every nation know that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty ” said John Fitzgerald Kennedy in his inaugural speech in 1961(1). Being a young, good looking, ambitious and promising president, he was a Cold War fighter like Eisenhower himself with style -not policy- in difference. He argued that the domestic and foreign policies are inseparable on his television debate with Nixon before the presidential elections and accused Republicans for failure at home and abroad. His slogan in his presidential campaign was “I think it’s time America started moving again.”

John F. Kennedy was born in 1917 to politically active parents, and after graduating from Harvard, he fought in World War II (Paterson, Clifford and Hagan 2000, 325). Kennedy was a true embodiment of America in the 1960s: young, dynamic, enthusiastic, desired changes, not tolerant of ‘losing’, liberal, and played to win. He was a daring and an extremely charismatic leader. Norman Mailer realizing both the positives and negatives about Kennedy wrote:

I knew if he became President, it would be an existential event; he would touch the depths in American life which were uncharted. . . and we as a nation would finally be loose again in the historic seas of a national psyche which was willy-nilly and at last, again, adventurous. And that, I thought, was the hope for America. So I swallowed my doubts. . . . [he] was unlike any politician who had ever run for President in the history of the land. . . (Mailer 1960, 146)

Kennedy’s personal charisma and intelligence did not only help him win the elections and popularity along with it, but also played a crucial role in foreign policy affairs. Though his ‘can-do’ psychology worked against him- in Cuba and Berlin and even in Vietnam-, he was appreciated by his biggest rival Khrushchev as “too liberal to fight” as well as his speech at American University in 1963 as “the best speech ever made by an American president” (Kennedy 1963, 195). Foreign policy as domestic policy employs much from personal style and charisma. In that sense, Kennedy’s foreign policy was fruitful

as much as his domestic policy. His advisers and administration were also like him.

. . . Kennedy and his advisers were, as one official complained, 'sort of looking for a chance to prove their muscle'. Schlesinger [presidential adviser and historian] captured the mood: 'Euphoria reigned; we thought for a moment that the world was plastic and the future unlimited.' (Paterson, Clifford and Hagan 2000, 326)

Kennedy worked on building up arms nearly from the first day he took office to fulfill his campaign commitment 'flexible response' which was based on the idea of being capable of any kind of war from guerilla to nuclear. He had blamed Eisenhower for letting the Soviet Union being superior in the armed forces. Though later he learned that in fact the United States had colossal superiority, he continued to support military expansion. In 1961 defense budget was increased by 15 percent (Paterson, Clifford and Hagan 2000, 328). By 1963, the increase in the United States' arms and armed forces worldwide was immense: 275 major bases in 31 countries, trained American soldiers in 72 countries and one and a quarter million military-related personnel in overseas. The number of ICBM's (Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles) rose from 63 to 424. The Soviets in return joined the arms race and tried to catch up with the United States.

a. The Berlin Crisis

The debate on Berlin had started long before the Kennedy administration. After the Second World War, the United States insisted on staying in Berlin. After all, the possibility of Soviet Premier Khrushchev's signing a peace treaty that would put the western zones of Berlin under the control of East Germany was still on the table (Divine, Breen, Fredrickson, Williams, Roberts 1990, 509). When Khrushchev said that he wanted nothing more to do with Eisenhower and would wait for the next administration to negotiate the Berlin issue, Eisenhower had already stated that the United States would defend Berlin by 'massive retaliation', a U2 spy plane had been shot down on Soviet skies and Eisenhower first denying then accepting the plane's mission, had claimed that America would continue such activity. On the other hand, Britain and Germany along with America failed in diplomacy and "after years of stating that it was the Soviet division of Germany that was the cause of European instability, the United States and Britain accepted the Soviet claim that the principle source of tension over Berlin was its 'abnormal' situation and continued occupation by the allied [western] powers so many years after the war." (Spanier 1992, 120).

Eisenhower, trying to escape the consequences of 'massive retaliation' after stating it, was blamed by German and French leaders as showing too much flexibility on Berlin. His reaction on the U-2 spy plane incident did not gain him

any dignity, either. He also lost the possible negotiation opportunities with the Soviet Union. Thus, Kennedy had to inherit the postponed crisis.

Being different only in style from Eisenhower in Cold War issues, Kennedy perceived Berlin as “the great testing place of western courage and will” and “essential to the entire free world” on his passionate televised address to Americans on July 25, 1961. Only a month ago in Vienna at a summit meeting the two leaders had come together and could not agree upon Berlin. The speech and Kennedy’s determination of calling the reservists and asking Congress for an additional \$3.2 billion for defense budget had their effects on Soviets. Eighteen days after the speech on August 13th, Soviets put up a wall dividing the city into two and therefore stopping the ‘brain’ escapes to West Berlin.

General Lucius Clay, Kennedy’s special representative in Berlin, decided- by himself- to knock down the wall and on October 27, and sent ten armed US tanks with bulldozer attachments to the wall. The tanks were met by ten Soviet tanks on the other side of the checkpoint. Kennedy and Khrushchev negotiated for 16 hours via a secret channel and in the end both sides withdrew their tanks. The Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara years later in 1996 in an interview at UC Berkeley would call the Berlin Crisis as one of the two incidents -during the Kennedy administration- when they came “very very close” to war with the Soviet Union (Kreisler 1996, 6). The other incident, which was even worse, was over Cuba.

b. The Bay of Pigs and The Cuban Missile Crisis

The Bay of Pigs invasion was one of the many attempts of America to unseat the popular and powerful leader of Cuba, Fidel Castro, who defeated the previous Fulgencio Batista dictatorship backed by America. Castro just like Kennedy himself promised ‘freedom’ and at home was as popular as him. His actions to reduce American interest and domination on Cuban economy soon met by unrest and hostile responses from both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations.

When Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations with Cuba, he had decided to invade Cuba and had already ordered the CIA to train anti-Castro forces composed of Cuban exiles. When he left office, he “advised Kennedy to advance plans for the invasion” (Norton et al ..., 536). Being carried away by the ‘moving’ mood he himself created, Kennedy did not want to negotiate with Cuba; instead he listened to Eisenhower and the CIA who showed him a picture of a victory. The plan was simple: The Cuban exiles would invade the south shores- the Bay of Pigs and the Cubans would join them and rise up against Castro and in the mean time a CIA trained assassin would shoot Castro dead. The plan was not very bright: On April 17, 1961 the invasion started as planned but no Cubans were there to join the invaders. On the contrary, the CIA trained commandos were defeated badly. Over a hundred of them were killed and more than a thousand were captured. Kennedy did not want an open military interference from America’s side and vetoed the last minute American air strike.

The plan turned out to be a complete failure within two days. President Kennedy “blamed the CIA and Joint Chiefs of Staff for faulty intelligence and sloppy execution.” (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 335). But when he went to public, he took personal responsibility for the failure; though “In his address to the American people . . . he showed no remorse for arranging the violation of a neighboring country’s sovereignty, only regret at the outcome.” (Divine et al 1990, 511).

Kennedy quickly got over the disappointment of the failure and continued similar efforts to unseat Castro. Giving the ‘Cuba’ issue top priority, he executed tighter economic blockade to Cuba and gave secret orders to CIA for further plans. Under the name Operation Mongoose CIA agents organized a hit-and-run sabotage to be carried out with Cuban exiles to specific targets of Cuba, like oil facilities, and continued making new assassination plans against Castro. However, all these somehow failed and made America look more and more desperate. “‘If I had been in Moscow or Havana at that time,’ Secretary of Defense McNamara later remarked, ‘I would have believed the Americans were preparing for invasion.’” (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 335). The strong economic blockage of Cuban goods had only resulted in Cuba’s improving trade with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev later told Kennedy that “Castro was no communist but ‘you are well on your way to making him a good one.’” (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 334). The series of unsuccessful attempts and foreign policy failures of America against Cuba had much worse repercussions than Kennedy administration could foresee.

Being no less intelligent than Kennedy, Castro did not sit and wait for further US ‘plans’, instead he decided to take some precautions to protect himself and his country’s independence from the future consequences of American Imperialism. He was aware of the assassination plans and even had witnessed sabotage attacks. As a result, only few months after the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro approved the installation of Soviet missiles and nuclear weapons in Cuba. Had there been no Bay of Pigs invasion, no economic and diplomatic isolation operations, no assassination plans and no hostile attacks to Cuban Revolution in general, there might very well not be a Cuban Missile Crisis and the Soviet weapons might have never landed on Cuba.

By mid-October most Soviet weapons had already reached Cuba. A U-2 spy plane spotted the medium-range missile sites being planted in Cuba on October 14. Kennedy’s preference was clear: “We’re certainly going... to take out these... missiles.” (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 336). After long hours of discussions with his executive committee (Ex Comm), Kennedy reached a two-step final decision: The execution of naval blockade to stop the arrival of further Soviet weapons in Cuba and threaten Cuba and the Soviet Union with a nuclear strike unless the already planted weapons and missiles were not to be removed. Should this did not work, Cuba would be invaded and the missiles were to be removed by force. Kennedy, as usual, went on the TV once again on

October 22, and gave a passionate speech to Americans. He, at the same time, informed the Soviets of American policy: "We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth- but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced." (Kennedy 1962, 1). He also called upon Khrushchev ". . . to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations." (Kennedy 1962,1). It was one of the worst times of the Cold War Era and Kennedy was very well aware that the main issue was in fact about the balance of power.

On October 24, Soviet ships approached the blockade and stopped. The secretary of the United Nations urged talks and Khrushchev offered meeting but Kennedy demanded the removal of the missiles first. Khrushchev sent two letters of which the first one demanded guarantee that the United States was never to invade Cuba- also insisting that the missiles were defensive not offensive-, whereas the second additionally asked for the removal of US missiles from Turkey. On October 27, a U-2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba. The crisis reached its peak. America prepared to retaliate. Another U-2 plane went into a dogfight with the Soviet MIGs on Soviet skies. Later in the day the second letter arrived and Kennedy agreed to pledge that Cuba was not to be invaded and on October 28, Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba. A secret agreement was also made with the Soviet Union that the missiles from Turkey would also be removed so long as it was kept as a secret. Senator Robert Kennedy played a crucial role in soothing the crisis and made couple of private talks with the Soviet ambassador.

John Kennedy seemed to have managed and succeeded in removing the missiles from Cuba but the aftermath of the crisis was not that favorable. The showing off the military domination of America gave way to the Soviets to try harder to catch up with America in the arms race. Critics argued whether the crisis was really necessary. Castro and Cuba ended up in receiving a formal promise that Cuba was not to be invaded although no peace treaty was signed among the three countries.

The only positive outcome of the crisis could be that both sides realized that the world was not 'plastic'. This led a cooler relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Being frightened of the possible consequences of a nuclear holocaust the two leaders showed a smoother way of dealing with the issues related to each other. A safe phone line 'hotline' was installed between the US and the SU for direct communication in possible future crises. They also signed the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (July 1963), which prohibited nuclear testing in the atmosphere and under the water. Kennedy had more to do in his agenda; the CIA quickly went back to its assassination plans nearly right after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

c. The Beginning of Vietnam Years

The defeat of American-backed government in Laos in early 1961 caused Kennedy to send several hundred military advisers to Laos. In fact, there were two other reasons: The Eisenhower's domino theory (If Laos and Vietnam were to fall to Communism, the other nations would eventually fall like dominoes), and the Bay of Pigs failure (Kennedy did not want to 'lose' anymore). Since military advisers asked for over a hundred thousand troops and authority to use nuclear weapons -if needed- to guarantee a victory in Laos, President Kennedy agreed to sign an agreement in Geneva a month later (May 1961) leaving Laos neutral, against all foreign interferences on its land. Unfortunately, this agreement could not bring peace to Laos. Soon after the agreement signed in Geneva, the United States secretly shipped weapons to the new Laos government to be used against both Pathet Leo (a pro-Communist rebel group in Laos) and eventually North Vietnam.

The US interest in Southeast Asia was just beginning. Though Kennedy thought that the Asians "had to fight their own battles" (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 341), he approved the expansion of the US presence in Vietnam since he believed in the Domino Theory. Besides, he could not afford another withdrawal on his side. The long years of French failure in Vietnam and Charles de Gaulle's warning, "we failed and you will fail" (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 341) did not have any effect on the can-do psychology of the young, determined president. He was seeking a Cold War victory (Norton et al . . . , 542). The number of military 'advisers' including the Green Berets who were trained in counterguerilla methods jumped from 3,205 to nearly 17,000 by the time of Kennedy's death in November 1963. The worst of all was that when these forces started fighting against North Vietnam and Vietcong guerillas, they failed. America was not wanted in either part of Vietnam. President Kennedy was aware of it, but preferred to wait until the 1964 elections to withdraw from Vietnam. This remained a possibility since he could not live to the elections.

The Vietnam issue was taken over from where it was and was carried to a step forward by the next president Lyndon Johnson. It was the beginning of the biggest failure in American history and foreign policy. The Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara years later would say "...with respect to Southeast Asia I am certain we exaggerated the threat. Had we never intervened I now doubt that the dominoes would have fallen. . ." (Kreisler 1996, 6). The American foreign policy in the early sixties was not only about disagreements with the Soviet Union and showing off muscles. The Third World countries were yet another area of interest for Kennedy administration.

II. THE COLD WAR and THE THIRD WORLD

Though Kennedy was an active Cold War fighter with courage and passion, he believed in 'peaceful revolution' in Third World countries. The administration planned an extensive aid program to improve their economy and to 'modernize' the countries in general. The aim was to implant a free market

economy and to prevent the expansion of communism into these countries. The program was called Nation Building. This was another way of fighting against communism; moreover, it would make Americans feel superior and powerful and that they have a right to interfere with other nations' affairs. The image of a powerful and capable leader was also confirmed with the idea of Nation Building program and Kennedy added new dimensions to his charisma.

a. Nation Building

It was a policy designed to give financial and technical aid to Third World countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to help them have a stable economy. The basic programs introduced were about agriculture, transportation and communication. Within this policy in 1961, President Kennedy created Peace Corps; groups of teachers, agricultural specialists, health workers and technicians to conduct the necessary activities within different parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. With these people Kennedy also sent the military personnel –especially the Green Berets or Special Forces Units- to give training to the local police and the armed forces; in fact to protect the American civilians from possible insurgents.

In the same year he introduced a special program for Latin America: Alliance for Progress. The sum of the funds was \$20 billion for the program. “In return, Latin Americans promised land and tax reform, housing, and health improvements;” and- unspoken- ‘good relations’ with the United States (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 331). This project was particularly important since Kennedy administration was afraid that the Cuban revolution would be a model for other Latin American nations. Besides, it would provide a good opportunity to isolate Cuba from other Latin American countries.

All these nation building programs seemed like a bright idea and wonderful plans to export American culture, and to show the rest of the world how powerful and capable America was; but things did not come out as they were planned. Though the Peace Corps were successful in conducting agricultural and some technical systems of communication, they were not as good in all areas. The young American volunteers were not properly trained in developing an understanding of other cultures. Another problem was that some volunteers, on the contrary, developed too much understanding of other cultures and identified themselves with local people. This raised constant debate with the administration in America since the volunteers joined locals in their efforts to be neutral and away or ‘free’ from American policies and determinations.

Alliance for Progress on the other hand became a complete failure since the promises given by the Latin American countries were not kept. Most funds never reached their final destination. Some were “pocketed,” and some were shared by the ones in better conditions and never reached the poor (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 332). The funds helped the raise in adult literacy and in infant mortality rates, but in the end Latin American economies did not show

notable improvement. When it came to mid-1960s the Alliance had “turned its resources to military purposes. . .” (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 332).

Nation Building policy as a whole proved that Americans could not simply go to other countries and implant their culture and expect other nations act in accordance with American policies. However, it- for the time it was carried out- might be seen as having reached its major aim, to prove that America has the strength and capability to interfere with other nations’ affairs. Unfortunately, it turned out to be nothing more than America’s ‘proving [her] muscles’ to the Soviet Union.

b. Speech at American University

While the Peace Corps were busy in implementing an American way of life and order in many parts of the world, President Kennedy was giving a significant speech at American University on June 10, 1963. The speech urged an end to Cold War for the first time on America’s side and showed how courageous Kennedy was. Going through all the failures and discouragements of Berlin, Bay of Pigs, and Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy revealed signs of his personal maturity as a powerful leader and his understanding of the meaning and importance of ‘world peace’.

‘What kind of peace do I mean? What kind of peace do we seek? ... I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children -- not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women -- not merely peace in our time but peace for all time...Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process -- a way of solving problems.’ (Kennedy 1963, 192)

He was not a young, inexperienced, passionate leader who was itching to do ‘something’ and to ‘move’ anymore. He was a powerful leader aware of his responsibilities and possible contributions to world peace. Within two years he had developed a better and a thorough understanding of world issues. This speech is also particularly important in displaying a new leader and his talent in understanding ‘others’.

‘Some say that it is useless to speak of world peace or world law or world disarmament -- and that it will be useless until the leaders of the Soviet Union adopt a more enlightened attitude. I hope they do. I believe we can help them do it. But I also believe that we must reexamine our own attitude -- as individuals and as a nation-- for our attitude is as essential as theirs. And

every graduate of this school, every thoughtful citizen who despairs of war and wishes to bring peace, should begin by looking inward-- by examining his own attitude toward the possibilities of peace, toward the Soviet Union, toward the course of the cold war and toward freedom and peace here at home.' (Kennedy 1963, 192-93)

It was also the summer of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous 'I Have a Dream' speech. America wanted peace and there was no one better than her 'new' leader to give it.

'So, let us not be blind to our differences-- but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.' (Kennedy 1963, 193)

Kennedy had managed to win the hearts of Americans again. The speech had an immense effect on them. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (presidential adviser and historian) noted that the speech was prepared by the president himself. Kennedy felt that there could be some kind of new movement in the relations with the Soviet Union and started looking for an opportunity to give a 'peace speech' since the spring of 1963. According to Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State of Kennedy administration, the speech was remarkable because, ". . . it had so much of President Kennedy personally in it. Because it reflected his magnanimity, his urbanity and the sense of the civilized man that marked so much of his mood and his action, and his style. And because it reflected his total commitment to peace" (Kennedy 1963, 195).

The speech also had its profound impression on the Soviet Union and Khrushchev. As Jerome Wiesner noted, "Intelligence reports indicated that Chairman Khrushchev had said it was the best speech ever made by an American President" (Kennedy 1963, 195). He also added: "We were hopeful that this would finally mean real progress on a nuclear test ban treaty" (Kennedy 1963, 195). The hopes became real. Only one and a half months later Kennedy was to give another impressive speech on both radio and television and would inform the Americans on the new treaty.

c. Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

On his address on July 26, 1963 President Kennedy announced the signing of Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and gave another remarkable speech:

' . . . A war today or tomorrow, if it led to nuclear war, would not be like any war in history. A full-scale nuclear

exchange, lasting less than 60 minutes, with the weapons now in existence, could wipe out more than 300 million Americans, Europeans, and Russians, as well as untold numbers elsewhere. And the survivors, as Chairman Khrushchev warned the Communist Chinese, ‘the survivors would envy the dead’ . . . For in today's world, a nation's security does not always increase as its arms increase, when its adversary is doing the same, and unlimited competition in the testing and development of new types of destructive nuclear weapons will not make the world safer for either side. . . The loss of even one human life, or the malformation of even one baby-- who may be born long after we are gone-- should be of concern to us all. Our children and grandchildren are not merely statistics toward which we can be indifferent.’ (Kennedy 1963, 1)

He had taken a long way from ‘Let every nation know that we shall pay any price...’ to ‘Our children and grandchildren are not merely statistics. . . ’ The signing of this treaty can be accepted as one of the very significant steps taken to end the Cold War Era and surely Kennedy’s most fruitful foreign policy performance. Kennedy seemed to come to the point of realizing the priorities and responsibilities as well as capabilities of a leader as powerful as him.

III. CONCLUSION

The American foreign policy in the early sixties followed the same track with President Kennedy and his personality. Kennedy was a young and determined leader and ended up letting America face the consequences. In the course of his short years in the office, he almost led his country to a war with the Soviet Union twice- first, during Berlin crisis, and second, during Cuban missile crisis. On the other hand, he was peaceful in character and wished to build a better future for his country. That’s why he signed the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and did not approve last minute air strike on Cuba.

Kennedy’s foreign policy, especially the first year or so, can be seen as the policy of contradictions. He had the ‘moving’ mood America needed, but was also easily carried away by it. He was an outstandingly intelligent man, but approved some really ‘unintelligent’ plans as in Bay of Pigs. He wanted peace but did not want to share America’s power. Therefore, led the Soviets erect the Berlin Wall. He and his policy were riddled between Cold War issues and urge for peace. He could not tolerate ‘losing’, so with the help of Khrushchev carried the world to the edge of nuclear holocaust. This can-do psychology and not being able to tolerate ‘losing’ also made him send more and more troops to Vietnam and let America sink to the biggest loss of her history. On the other hand, he spent billions to help Third World countries all over the world. In time,

Kennedy showed certain development from being a picture of determination to that of wisdom and dependability. In the beginning, Kennedy was not a man of negotiation; he was a man of action. He did not want to negotiate over Berlin; he said “We cannot negotiate with those who say: ‘What’s mine is mine and, and what’s yours is negotiable’” (Spanier 1992, 122). He did not want to negotiate with Castro either; he chose to act and approved the Bay of Pigs invasion. He did not want to negotiate with Khrushchev when he called for a summit meeting over Cuban Missile Crisis; he demanded the “removal of the missiles first” (Paterson, Clifford, Hagan 2000, 338). Only after coming to the edge of nuclear war in Cuban Missile Crisis, he approved the hotline which would provide direct communication with the Soviet Union. However, it was also the same leader that gave the famous American University speech, signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and searched for permanent peace with neighboring countries with programs like Alliance for Progress.

Apart from all these, Kennedy provided a profile of a true leader. The World War II hero simply exuded charisma. His rhetoric, his ability to use television successfully in his addresses, his good looking young face and his intelligence made him one of the most popular presidents of the country. His administration was in fact full of ups and downs and failures, but Kennedy somehow managed to leave every crisis with the image of ‘success’. He failed to respect a neighboring nation’s sovereignty and had Bay of Pigs disaster, he failed diplomatically in Berlin and- in a way- caused the erection of Berlin Wall, he failed to respect the same neighboring nation’s sovereignty the second time and caused the Cuban Missile Crisis, he failed in the Nation Building program and wasted America’s money and manpower, and he failed in Vietnam and Laos by sending military personnel and billions of dollars. But, he never failed on TV and came out as a hero after nearly all the incidents.

American foreign policy in the early 1960s was the embodiment of these actions of ‘can-do’ psychology and was very much affected by the Cold War Era as the President himself. Kennedy finally found a better way in his acts of foreign policy: working for peace instead of working to threaten the rival. Another new era began with him in the summer of 1963 with his speech at American University and the Limited Test Ban Treaty about a month later. He did not only come to the point of understanding and appreciating the necessity of disarmament, but also brought his rival- Khrushchev- to the same point. His speech on world peace at American University was probably the most revolutionary speech given by a politician of his time. With this speech and with the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and Civil Rights legislation prepared and fought by mostly himself, Kennedy finally showed a real and remarkable progress in foreign- and domestic- policy. A few months after signing the treaty- On November 22, 1963- he was assassinated.

All in all, the US foreign policy in the early 1960s can be seen as reflective of how such affairs are often conducted on thin ice and how they can

be ruled and bent by a leader's psychology. Thus, it can be said that the change in the US foreign policy in the early 1960s is due and parallel to the maturation process in Kennedy's personality. One of the most influential leaders of America might have been lost too soon though; without being able to complete the Civil Rights legislation, without pulling the troops back from Vietnam, without sending the first man to the Moon, and maybe even without ending the Cold War itself.

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