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Case Studies in Selectorate Theory: Successes, Failures, and Alternate Explanations

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Senior Honors Thesis

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Introduction

A unique trend is emerging in the literature surrounding the choices made by

leaders in the international system. As the influence of mathematical analysis in the field of

international relations grows, a new theory has gained ground. A newcomer to the field,

Selectorate Theory builds a model for assessing the behavior of leaders based on the

assumption that leaders are motivated primarily by a desire to obtain and retain power

within their nation. While it may seem appealing for its clarity and simplicity, which is often

lacking in theories that address the individual level of analysis in international relations,

Selectorate Theory's explanation of leaders' behavior excludes the influence of a variety of

critical factors in its current incarnation.[1] The theory will require a significant amount of

further development and growth to explain the variety of factors that influence leaders'

behavior.[2]

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[1] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics.* Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2010,

228 – 238.

[2] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D.

Morrow,. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003; Bruce Bueno De

Mesquita and Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior Is Almost Always*

Selectorate Theory thus far does not fully account for the existence of leaders who are motivated by more than a desire to expand their influence. The historical record is full of leaders who by all accounts, seem to have eschewed choices that would have helped them to retain power in favor of options that do not grow their influence. These leaders are left unexplained by Selectorate Theory, and their cases could easily be left behind as anomalies. However, they are sufficiently numerous that they merit investigation, and that investigation reveals that such anomalies do not necessarily fit a particular pattern. Leaders make choices that are not consistently based on what their people want, and these can come about for a variety of reasons, ranging from an inability to functionally participate in the political "game" to an ability to create the impression that they have followed the wishes of their constituents while in fact failing to do so.

Not all leaders fall outside the purview of the theory, and it is certainly the case that some leaders strive exclusively to gain and retain power. These leaders' decisions can be sufficiently explained by today's incarnation of Selectorate Theory, and by no means can the theory be said to be ineffective in all cases. Instead, this contribution seeks to expand on the explanations brought to the table by Selectorate Theory and give additional information and explanation in cases where leaders do not seem to be adhering to the "by the book" basics of Selectorate Theory. Assessing all leaders as mathematically calculated actors who form policy based solely on the policy's likelihood of increasing the amount of power they

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Good Politics. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012; Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future.* New York: Random House, 2009; Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics.* Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2010.

hold is an unforgiving view of their decision-making processes. This analysis will attempt to account for leaders' choices when they act on motivations beyond the acquisition of power, and act outside the confines of the theory.

Motivations for Analysis

It is an established truth that leaders are often guided by the literature in the field in which they work. When leaders seek guidance from theorists, if they encounter only analysis that assesses their decision-making based on its ability to gain them power, then their decisions will in turn become more focused on these ends. The number of available lenses through which to view the world stage of international relations has increased significantly. With newer theories gaining traction in the field, it is critical that all parties continue to investigate theories to bring them to their fullest potential, so they can be of the greatest possible use in describing, explaining, and predicting all outcomes in interactions between nations.

When a government utilizes the majority of its time and resources on endeavors that seek to tighten its grasp on power, then those resources become unavailable to be used in service of actual governance. In short, if dominant theories focus only on how best to retain power, then that is what the leaders themselves will focus on and what is in the best national interest will fall by the wayside. It is my hope that an increased focus in the world of theory on not just decisions motivated by power, but decisions that extend beyond the bounds of what today's Selectorate Theory can easily explain, will remind both those who theorize and those who lead that there is more to strive for in the decision-making process than power and influence.

Critical Questions

The most difficult questions to answer in the field of international relations often come down to the individual level. Most theories address interactions between nations as single units, and necessarily fail to address the actions and motivations of individuals that are involved in the nation's decision-making processes. The question is left then, to address the thought processes of leaders within their countries as they make choices and align their goals. How do leaders decide what to do? Are they motivated by personal gain, or by some other factor or combination of factors?

If one assumes that leaders are not solely motivated by the personal desire to stay in power, then a variety of factors could be behind the differences between leaders' choices. These factors could range from the personal, such as issues that leaders have personal attachments to, to the nationally strategic. How do leaders choose which issues they emphasize? Do they focus on longer range planning? Do leaders choose issues in adherence with what they promised during campaigns? It's also possible that leaders shift their focus over time and as they near the end of their terms, they become less willing to conform to political norms that require them to skirt issues they care about. The permutations are endless in any given scenario, and the mathematical constraints of Selectorate Theory make this question a difficult one to answer.

Another critical observation to make when determining a leader's motivation is their skill at "playing the political game". Some leaders may appear to be purposely making choices that do not favor their political success for some other aim, when in reality they are actually attempting unsuccessfully to retain power. It is important in analysis to distinguish

between those who are striving for something other than retention of power and those who are trying and failing to act in their own self-interest for political survival. While this may seem to be a departure from the assumed motivation of leaders to retain power, this is in fact simply a distraction from the core issue. We seek to understand leaders' motivations, and while objectively in some cases leaders may make choices that do not help them retain power, if their motivation was still based on a desire for power then they do not in fact deviate from the structure predicted by Selectorate Theory. This analysis will attempt to additionally account for a leader's skill in gauging the needs of those who keep him in power, and failed attempts to do so will not be counted as departures from the established model in which leaders are primarily motivated by power.

All of the factors discussed above are independent variables that have the capacity to influence the choices that a leader makes, be they in service of their own personal ends or other motivators. While on first glance they may seem to span a broad range of motivators, these factors can be compressed into two major categories. First, leaders may be motivated to make decisions based on personal attachments to issues that they particularly care about. Second, leaders can be motivated by a perceived national interest, through which they attempt to do what they think is best for their nation whether or not that choice would help them to retain power. Overall, this analysis will demonstrate that leaders do, in some circumstances, depart from the model proposed by the established literature and act on motivations outside of the gain and retention of power. In doing so, a need is identified for an expansion in Selectorate Theory to account for these additional cases.

Dependent Variables and Measures

This assortment of motivators is widespread, and can be difficult to capture. The only reliable way that we can determine which actions result from others is by investigating what paths leaders have chosen and what actions they have taken. This requires an assessment of the options that leaders have presented to them in combination with the choices that they have in fact made. To simplify the analysis, it is important to address the issues on which leaders make decisions in the context of the individual issue, and not in terms of other nations. This discussion will not address the choices that leaders make in a comparative fashion from country to country or leader to leader, but instead will compare the choices that leaders make in actuality against the other options that they could have selected when presented with the same situation.

The outcomes that leaders produce are often complicated by a variety of logistical factors stemming both from outside sources in the international system and other aspects of their nation's government. In an attempt to produce situations that can be clearly analyzed, this analysis will focus on outcomes that stem from a single leader's decision, and not those produced by a large voting body with a number of members. These measurable outcomes will be expressed in the form of binary choices made by leaders in policy, i.e. to continue or not continue a policy. The decisions that leaders make in one direction or the other will be the definable output of their various motivations and decision-making processes.

Explanations from Literature: Selectorate Theory

One of the most popular explanations for the behavior of individual leaders in the field today comes from Selectorate Theory. Selectorate Theory is a relatively new perspective first presented by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita in his book, *Principles of International Politics.* This theory addresses the choices that leaders make as the product of a set of calculations made by leaders to assess the best way for them to stay in power. Bueno de Mesquita posits that there are a variety of goods that a leader has the capacity to distribute in a variety of ways. These goods can be either public goods or private goods. Public goods are benefits that are freely available to anyone within a nation, such as public education, national security, or clean streets. Private goods are benefits that are only made available to a limited number of people, such as cash incentives or individual housing. Any leader has a set amount of resources that they can distribute in various ways between public or private goods and services. In general, private goods are more costly to distribute per person than public goods. [3]

Bueno de Mesquita also describes three major groups of individuals that are relevant to the choices that leaders make. First is the nominal selectorate, or the full body of people that hypothetically could have a say in choosing who holds leadership positions within a nation. In the United States, for example, the nominal selectorate is made up of all registered voters. The next group is the real selectorate, which is comprised of the people who in reality have a say in choosing the next leader. In the context of the United States,

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[3] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics.* Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2010, 228 – 238.

the real selectorate is made up of all of the registered voters who actually cast a vote on

Election Day. Finally, the winning coalition is the group whose support is actually necessary

to ensure victory for a potential leader. In the United States, this is the number of voters

that need to vote for a candidate to get them the 270 electoral votes that ensure a victory

in an election.[4]

Selectorate theory bases its analysis on the assumption that the primary goal of any

leader is to gain and retain power. This means that leaders use their resources to obtain the

combination of public and private goods that will best help them to please the winning

coalition so that their winning coalition will stay loyal to them and ensure that they stay in

power.[5] If a leader's winning coalition is dissatisfied, they may choose to back a different

potential leader that could oust the previous leader from power.

The system in which a leader is operating can dramatically change the goods that

the leader distributes, as well as the ratio of public goods to private goods. For example, in

a large democratic country, the winning coalition is extremely large because a large number

of voters have to support a leader for them to gain power. This means that since private

goods cost more per person, it is in the leaders best interest to provide a large number of

public goods to satisfy their large winning coalition. A satisfied winning coalition will

continue to keep the leader who satisfied them in power, but since the public goods they

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[4] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D.

Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003, 37 – 52.

[5] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow,

The Logic of Political Survival. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003, 15.

are receiving are not as motivating a private goods would be, they are susceptible to

changes in support from a challenger who promises superior public or private goods.

On the other hand, certain types of government produce smaller winning coalitions,

such as dictatorships. In a dictatorship, it is possible for the winning coalition to only

comprise the few individuals it takes to forcibly maintain a leader's power, such as a few

financially powerful backers and a personal guard to stop a coup from occurring. In this

scenario, it would be more advantageous for a leader to distribute private goods to the few

relevant individuals that keep them in power.[6] In this way, the leader can follow the first

"rule" of governing according to Selectorate Theory: "Depend on as few key people to keep

you in power as possible."[7] The small size of this group motivates the members of the

winning coalition to keep the current leader in power so they can retain their access to

private goods, and it keeps the leader secure in their position of power. This means that

since the winning coalition is small and well-satisfied with private goods, the leader has little

motivation to provide public goods to the rest of their nominal selectorate.[8]

All in all, Selectorate Theory provides a comprehensive picture of how leaders could

manage their choices and distribution of resources to best maintain power. Selectorate

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[6] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D.

Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003, 55.

[7] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics.* Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2010,

80.

[8] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow,

The Logic of Political Survival. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003, 37 – 52; Bruce Bueno De

Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics.* Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2010, 228 – 238.

Theory also provides a believable account of how leaders might vary their strategies

depending on the type on system in which they seek to gain power, and it is undoubtedly

accurate in some cases when assessing behavior. However, it fails to account for

motivations in leadership other than the desire to gain power. This theory's most basic

assumption that leaders seek only to grasp for power is at the root of its most basic flaw.

A New Perspective

While selectorate theory may seem to be a clear-cut explanation for behavior in

some cases, the historical record is rife with cases in which leaders actions are at odds with

the choices that Selectorate Theory would predict that they would make. Some leaders

simply don't seem to fit the mold, and seem to ignore the wants or needs of their winning

coalition in favor of some other motive. Their actions are not based on the wants or needs

of the winning coalition, and Selectorate Theory provides no alternate explanation for their

behavior. This leads us to ask a necessary question: What motivates leaders other than the

desire for power? This analysis will offer a new answer to that question, based on a variety

of factors that have the potential to impact leaders' actions.

Personal Preferences

In certain scenarios, it becomes clear that leaders have personal preferences or

opinions that come to light through their actions while in power. They might have

particular attachments to issues due to personal experience or beliefs. This perspective

provides an explanation for leaders who for example, do not strictly walk the party line. A

candidate for election from a party who is generally pro military might still be anti-war due

to personal experiences with the military, even if being pro-war might gain him more ground with his winning coalition.

Subjective National Interest

Selectorate Theory also fails to address the case of the "true patriot" who actually seeks to do what they think is best for the nation. Leaders who seek truly to better their nation make choices based not on what they think will make them more popular, but based on what they think will bring the nation as a whole the most benefit. In nations with a large winning coalition whose members are well educated, these leaders may seem at first glance to be doing simply what is necessary to please that winning coalition. The differences between a leader who is simply attempting to gain power and a leader who is acting based on national interest can be highlighted when the leader makes and defends choices that are unpopular with their winning coalition. These leaders might focus on issues that are not considered to be important by the general population in their nation, but they nonetheless continue to champion the causes that they see as vital to protecting the national interest.

In assessing these cases, it may be difficult to determine what choices are truly in the objective national interest, since perception of what is actually the best choice can vary widely. To assemble an accurate representation of what a leader deems to be in his state's subjective national interest, we can investigate the metrics of "images, beliefs, and intentions" set out by Jervis in his analysis of perception in the field of international relations.[9] To understand these metrics, we need not investigate what other external parties in the system actually did in any given situation, nor do we need to know what the

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[9] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics,* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976. 48.

external party even intended to do. All that matters is what the leader thought the external

party was going to do, and that knowledge will allow us to identify the actions taken.

According to Jervis, decision-makers hold onto theories about how the world works and

under what conditions the world operates. When they receive new information, they

simply fit this information into what they see as the state of the world and process it in that

context, so the objective state of the world does not impact their decision-making process

and we need only be concerned with how they interpret data.[10]

For the purpose of analysis, it is practical only to discuss the subjective national

interest as perceived by the leaders themselves. This means that when assessing leaders'

motivations, it is possible only to rely on the views expressed by those leaders on issues

they champion. This will ensure that we are assessing the leaders motivations, and not

attempting to compare their actions to some normative definition of objective national

interest for a nation.

Cases Under Consideration

These arguments could be used to assess any number of cases throughout the

historical record. In fact, any choice made by a leader throughout history could be subject

to consideration under each of these models. For the purposes of this analysis, it is

important to restrict our discussion to a limited number of cases. Each of the following

cases will be investigated both from the perspective of Selectorate Theory, and through the

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[10] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics,* Princeton, New

Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976. 48.

lens of the alternate explanations presented above. The analysis will predict based on Selectorate Theory the choice that the leader would have been expected to make, then compare that selection to the actual course of action taken by the leader. This comparison will be facilitated by investigation in the context both of the leaders' personal attachment to the issues, and the leaders' perceived impact of their choice on the national interest.

Churchill in Wartime

During WWII, Winston Churchill exhibited a leadership style that was uniquely suited to the challenges that Great Britain faced. He is almost universally remembered as an incredibly popular politician during that time period, and his speeches from that era have gained enduring fame. However, most people find themselves hard-pressed to find any specific aspects of his performance to laud, beyond his success in winning the war for England. Where did Churchill's appeal come from?

While Selectorate Theory initially seems to hold that Churchill must have wisely distributed the public and private goods that his selectorate valued, a set of alternate explanations present themselves. It is possible that Churchill's particular set of abilities gained him traction with the English people, as it is also possible that his penchant for success in war contributed to his ability to hold the attention of his constituents during the war. However, a final explanation includes both aspects of Selectorate Theory and alternate explanations: that Churchill's selectorate only have one public good of value in mind when they assessed his performance, and that good was winning the war and maintaining their own safety and security. This analysis of Churchill's leadership and his people's satisfaction during WWII will assess all of these possibilities.

After World War II: Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill is widely acknowledged as one of the United Kingdom's most popular leaders. His leadership during the Second World War generated him a great deal of domestic support, and he seemed poised to ride his success in the war into a long and successful period in power as prime minister. However, Churchill did not adhere to what the winning coalition at the time wanted to see accomplished. He spoke in vigorous opposition to a number of popular ideas, such as improvements to public education and the creation of a system of national public health care. Churchill exhibited a focus on the retention of civil liberties above all else that at the time was not incredibly popular with his constituents.[11] Churchill was additionally an early supporter of pan-Europeanism, and spoke in support of the idea long before other English leaders expressed support for the initiative.[12] His pattern of focusing on unpopular issues in the face of opposition from his winning coalition indicates that Churchill's time in power and subsequent defeat in the 1945 election warrants analysis.

Winston Churchill's behavior could potentially fall into either of the alternative camps described in this explanation. It is possible that Churchill's wartime experiences created a personal preference for retention of civil liberties above all else, and that this set of personal feelings motivated his opposition to these popular policies. Alternatively, it is possible that he perceived potential downsides from the proposed policies, such as the significant budgetary concerns of greater financial support for public education and

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[11] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 789 – 794.

[12] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 810.

healthcare. He could have seen these concerns as outweighing the benefits that the

populace perceived from these policies, and opposed them out of a genuine fear of the

harm they could do to the nation. It is certainly also possible that Churchill was in fact

actively attempting to retain power, as evidenced by his bid for reelection, and was simply

an unskilled political player when removed from the context of a nation at war. This

analysis will assess that possibility, as well as both of the alternative explanations for his

decision-making.

The Present Day: President Obama on Drone Warfare

President Obama's policy on drone strikes, or "targeted killing" programs, is a critical

and divisive issue that presents insight into the motivations behind his decisions on

controversial issues. While there is significant opposition to the policy abroad and the

domestic opposition is vocal, a majority of the American people still support its use as it is

currently in existence. Obama has stated that he feels the time has come to "scale back" on

drone usage and that he opposes the use of drones against any civilians, but he has not cut

out their use completely by any means[13]. His continued use of drones could indicate that he

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[13] Bruce Drake, "Obama and Drone Strikes: Support but Questions at Home, Opposition

Abroad." *Pewresearch.org*. Pew Research Center, 24 May 2013.

http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/24/obama-and-drone-strikes-support-but-

questions-at-home-opposition-abroad/ (accessed April 27, 2014); Chuck Todd, Mark

Murray, Domenico Montanaro, and Brooke Bower, "First Thoughts: Obama to Scale Back

Drone Policy." *NBC News*. National Broadcasting Corporation, 23 May 2013.

is unwilling to discontinue the practice when a majority of Americans are still in support of

drone usage, and he is simply doing what he must to maintain the support of his winning

coalition. Alternatively, one could assess his continued use of drone strikes as an adherence

to what his administration sees as the national interest, in protecting the United States from

outside forces who wish to do it harm.

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http://firstread.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/05/23/18443867-first-thoughts-obama-to-scale-

back-drone-policy?lite (accessed April 27, 2014).

Chapter Two

Churchill During The War

Churchill's Successes During World War II

Winston Churchill is historically renowned as one of the most interesting public men of the last hundred years. His moving speeches of wartime are some of the most often recounted in history, and libraries internationally are overflowing with biographies describing Churchill's meteoric rise to power as prime minister of Great Britain and his startling fall from popularity in subsequent years.

The writings on Churchill's personality are sprawling, encompassing nearly every aspect of his often-amusing interactions with friends, family, and dignitaries. He is remembered in an impressive variety of ways. Some accounts focus on his intellect, some on his wit, and many others on his irascibility.[14] With such a varied set of accounts of his life and personality, those who attempt to understand the decisions are nonetheless often left at a loss in spite of the volume of information that is available about Churchill as a man and a leader. What made this unusual man so incredibly popular during World War II?

Many answers to this question boil down to the idea that Churchill successfully gave the people what they wanted during the war: victory. These answers are consistent with Selectorate Theory. They hold either that Churchill's set of skills for accomplishing critical tasks during wartime helped him to be successful in the war and thus earn the support of the people, or that his presence as a gruff and war-like leader assuaged his constituents'

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[14] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965.* N.p.: Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2013, 454 – 460.

fear and gained him critical popularity and faith from his people.[15] Each of these

explanations draws from the Selectorate Theory and could potentially elucidate why

Winston Churchill was so popular during WWII.

However, an alternative set of reasoning that is an offshoot of Selectorate Theory

also seems to hold a great deal of water in this particular case. While the previous options

imply that the British people were spending a significant amount of time weighing and

assessing the choices that Churchill made in office, an alternative explanation proposes

simply that they were merely apathetic to all non-war issues while he was initially in office.

While Selectorate Theory assumes that the choices that leaders make and the support of

their winning coalitions are dependent on the distribution of public and private goods, it is

also possible that the circumstances of a war as total and global as World War II negate the

impact of these goods entirely.

Churchill's Special Set of Skills

An initial hypothesis about the root of Churchill's success as a wartime leader

presents itself immediately. Churchill was a leader with a very particular set of skills and

interests. He focused heavily on topics that interested him, often leaving aside those that

he considered to be of lesser importance.[16] Churchill's staff maintained for him a box which

contained information on every aspect of the war that was currently at hand, and was

organized in order from what he considered to be most important to what he found to be

least important. He frequently requested that not only troop movements and logistical

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[15] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 791 – 794.

[16] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 775 – 788.

details of the war were included in the box, but also detailed reports on the functioning of

rationing and numerous other aspects of daily life in Britain be not only included in the box,

but placed at the top of the stack.[17] Churchill was unwaveringly interested in the welfare of

his citizens during the war, and always kept detailed information on the progress of day-to-

day life. The area that he seemed most drawn to was always war in the microcosm, which

helped him ensure the well-being of the members of the British selectorate.

Additionally, Churchill's skills lent him to management of the lives of his constituents

in a nation at war. He had an incredibly detailed system for organizing his work such that

the most pressing matters always made it to the top of his "box", maintained by three

typists who never left his side and a number of other personal staff members. He

consistently worked through the box in order from what he considered to be the most

important to what he thought was the least pressing, never leaving a critical matter

behind.[18] This occasionally caused him to let what he considered to be small matters slip by

the wayside, but when he worked to clear the box of pressing matters, those that pertained

to the war at hand were always handled as soon as possible.[19]

Many of the matters that most caught Churchill's attention when he was Prime

Minister focused on the minutiae of the lives of his constituents. He focused on the needs of

the people during the war, which endeared them to him. In effect, this would mean that in

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[17] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965.* N.p.: Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2013, 454 – 460.

[18] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965.* N.p.: Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2013, 455.

[19] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 775 – 788.

essence, the Selectorate Theory does hold for Churchill's period of popularity while Britain was at war. Winston Churchill's unique method of prioritizing tasks and working through problems may have made him uniquely suited for the job of a wartime Prime Minister, in the eyes of his winning coalition as he focused on the issues most dear to them in their day to day lives.

Warlike Personality

An alternate manner of operation for Selectorate Theory is also possible in Churchill's case. While in the prior section, it was posited that Churchill's attention to the lives of his constituents propelled him towards success and popularity with his winning coalition, it is also possible that it was his inattention to many aspects of the rest of the country that actually endeared Churchill to his winning coalition and contributed to his popularity as a leader.

While war was at hand, Churchill seemed to think of nothing but war. Even when the situation appeared to no longer be on the brink of actual combat, he continued to warn the people of Britain that they needed to be wary and prepared for the eventuality of conflict. Churchill spoke incessantly of war to his constituents, and seldom focused on anything else. Even when it seemed that the Nazis would never come to actual combat with Allied forces, Churchill's public talks implored the nation to be ready.[20]

Churchill's personality was known to be incredibly gruff. He frightened his typists by refusing to allow them any sort of margin for error, and early in his career as prime minister

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[20] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965.* N.p.: Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2013, 454 – 460.

he entirely befuddled his staff with his particular needs. [21] He held onto few conventions of polite human interaction. He was known for mumbling, grumbling, and incredibly witty and biting insults that were lobbed at everyone he knew.[22] In general, Winston Churchill's personality gave the impression that he was always at war with those around him.

Churchill is to this day, regarded as one of history's greatest speakers. His great orations are some of the most popular in history and at the time they were initially given, had the effect of stirring the people of Britain into a patriotic and warlike fever for victory, and he wrote all of his own speeches and employed no speechwriters.[23] In examining the speeches that Churchill gave however, one will find that his most successful and memorable speeches were all given as rallying cries for victory in WWII. Almost none of the speeches that are best remembered by history diverge from the topic of war, and they weight most heavily on warlike and bloody imagery. [24] In fact, he is arguably best remembered as an orator today for his "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" speech, delivered to the House of

[21] McKie, David. "Churchill Didn't Win Votes on Popularity." *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 19 Apr. 2010. Web. 2013 (accessed August 26, 2014)

[22] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965.* N.p.: Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2013, 463.

[23] Stephen Bungay, *His Speeches: How Churchill Did It.* N.p.. http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-about-winston-churchill/his-speeches-how-churchill-did-it (accessed August 26, 2014)

[24] "Selected Speeches of Winston Churchill." *Selected Speeches of Winston Churchill*. Winstonchurchill.org, n.d. https://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill (accessed August 26, 2014)

Commons in 1940.[25] Churchill was a specialist in getting his constituents riled up for war and

thirsty for victory. Those speeches were incredibly moving, and caused many of his

constituents to view the war effort more positively. His skills in speaking were very well-

aligned with his "war-like" personality, and endeared him to the winning coalition while

Britain was at war.

Churchill often comported himself as if he were waiting for war. While there was no

war in fact afoot, this may have been detrimental to his popularity.[26] When there was

danger at hand however, his proclivity for seeing potential violence may have actually

endeared him to his winning coalition. While Churchill seemed always to be preparing for

war and there was no war, his desire to warn the people of the potential for conflict might

have made him seem unbalanced. Before Nazi troops had spilled into France, Churchill

expended a great amount of time and energy in his speeches extolling the British people to

be prepared for war. He was a constant reminder to the British people of the "million

German soldiers… drawn up ready to attack on a few hours' notice" that could mean their

impending doom.[27] His speeches were a constant reminder that war was at hand, and they

made him uniquely suited to lead the nation during WWII. When there was war and his

warnings held true, however, he was hailed by the members of his winning coalition as a

visionary leader who helped them prepare safely for a coming war.

[25] Winston Churchill. "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" June 4, 1940.

[26] David McKie. "Churchill Didn't Win Votes on Popularity." *Theguardian.com*. Guardian

News and Media, 19 Apr. 2010. Web. 2013 (accessed August 26, 2014)

[27] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of

the Realm, 1940-1965.* N.p.: Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2013.

Situational Apathy of the Selectorate

In the midst of war, Churchill was incredibly popular. Up until he lost out on re-election for Prime Minister, Churchill held an approval rating of eighty-three percent. He was met with acclaim everywhere he went, and hailed as a war hero in towns all across Britain. However, that outpouring of support was not based on his political merit, but on his success in winning the war for his country. As explained by someone who was present in the cheering masses, "the cheers were for a great successful war leader, not for a Tory politician."[28] In short, Churchill wasn't seen as a political leader, but as an impressive soldier who had allowed England to win the war and saved the lives of the British people. This distinction meant that he was incredibly popular based on his military successes, but had in fact not retained any actual political capital for use in office after the war. This leaves all other policy choices to be regarded as irrelevant by his people.

When the Second World War was in full swing, British citizens in general did not spend their free time contemplating their social welfare system or what they felt were the best choices for import and export policy. Instead, the British people were focusing on what they saw as more pressing issues: keeping themselves and their families alive. The British people were busy being concerned with air raids, and food shortages, and the possibility of invasion and occupation by Nazi soldiers. This set of concerns did not leave much spare

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[28] David McKie, "Churchill Didn't Win Votes on Popularity." *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 19 Apr. 2010.

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/19/churchill-nick-clegg-popularity (accessed August 26, 2014)

time in their lives for them to contemplate the finer aspects of politics in their country. In

effect, what the Selectorate Theory describes as public and private goods had been reduced

to a single good of any value: survival.

The operation of the Selectorate Theory rests on the assumption that the leader has

a certain number of goods to dole out. These goods can be either public or private, with

public meaning that they are made available to a large number of people and can be shared,

and private meaning that they are made available to a small number of people and are held

by single individuals.[29] In the absence of any meaningful public or private goods to

distribute, the leader no longer has any "political capital" to spend, and all goods either

public or private, become irrelevant. WWII is just such a scenario, in which all public and

private goods became relatively meaningless when compared to the only real commodity at

the time, which was survival. A war in which danger falls into a nation's own borders

nullifies the value of most goods for the people of that nation. During the Second World

War, the people of Britain were focused primarily on their survival, with all efforts on the

home-front being directed towards securing survival in the war at the expense of personal

wellbeing or comfort.[30] This unwavering focus rendered any goods that Churchill may or

may not have been providing entirely irrelevant in comparison.

In the case of Britain during WWII, not only were all goods irrelevant, but any goods

that were provided were destroyed. Private goods, such as homes and physical possessions

[29] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D.

Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003.

[30] Angus Calder, *The People's War; Britain, 1939-1945.* New York: Pantheon, 1969, 165 –

177.

were being destroyed by Nazi bombs, and public goods such as roads and schools were also being destroyed[31]. In times of crisis, nothing truly separates the average citizen from the wealthier or more influential than average citizen. Both groups simply fear for their lives, and in WWII Britain, all those who remained to give approval or disapproval to Churchill still had their lives. Since that was the only relevant good at the time, to them Churchill had achieved success.

This type of political capital however, does not necessarily hold once the nation is no longer in crisis. Churchill's having led his people to relative safety made him a war hero, but it did not necessarily lend him long-term political credibility. His approval was born solely of the apathy of the people towards all goods that were not directly relevant to their ability to continue living. No other goods had any significance in comparison to their survival, and Winston Churchill had provided them with survival. The fact that they were simply not yet dead was more than enough for many British citizens to proclaim Churchill as a war hero and a great success. In short, the British people's apathy towards any issue but their own survival during the war led to Churchill's immense popularity.[32]

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[31] Arthur Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War; War, Peace, and Social Change, 1900-1967.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1968, 331 – 334.

[32] David McKie, "Churchill Didn't Win Votes on Popularity." *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 19 Apr. 2010.

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/19/churchill-nick-clegg-popularity (accessed August 26, 2014)

Chapter Three

Churchill After The War

Churchill's Conservativism

At the close of WWII, Churchill was not content with his wartime successes. Having already been acknowledged and immortalized as a war hero, Churchill strove also to be a national hero in peacetime. Winston Churchill felt deeply that he had a "destiny" to build a legacy not only as a leader in war but also afterwards; in other words, "he had won a war, and now he would win a peace".[33] He found himself then with a daunting task as he faced reelection: how would he maintain his political prowess in the unfamiliar waters of a Britain during peacetime?

Churchill found himself unwilling to relinquish power to those who sought to displace him, since the political tides seemed to be turning against him. Churchill had long been a traditional Conservative, and had maintained himself as "a backer of imperialism, *l'aissez faire* economics, and limited social reform."[34] The Conservatives were certainly not the party of social reform and safety nets, and in his time in the party, Churchill did not stray far from this view. Up to and through the war, Churchill opposed the changes

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[33] Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *Churchill Defiant: Fighting On (1944 – 55), by Barbara Leaming.* New Statesman, 2010. http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2010/11/churchill-eden-1945-election (accessed August 27, 2014)

[34] Winston Churchill, "Winston Churchill on Liberalism and Socialism." *Government, Politics, and Protest: Essential Primary Sources*. Detroit: Gale, 2006. 256 - 257. *Global Issues In Context*.

that the Liberal party cried out for. Winston Churchill opposed any activities or programs

that could be construed as having socialistic or collectivist trends, and noted them as ill

omens worthy only of suspicion, whether the idea for them stemmed from a Liberal or a

Conservative.[35] In fact, at various times throughout his political career, Churchill "used

force to break up strikes; said that the miners of the 1926 General Strike should be shot

with machine guns; sought to deploy the British army to defeat the Bolsheviks after the

Russian Revolution; praised Benito Mussolini for defeating Italian Communists."[36] By no

means could he be construed as a supporter of socialized programs.

Churchill held a strong focus on civil liberties above all else in his domestic policy

decisions, and paid little mind to the will of his constituents on issues such as public health

and public education, even as they gained traction with the English people.[37] He clung to

beliefs so conservative in fact, that they left no room for the social safety nets that his

constituents so desired. In a speech in 1936, Churchill even proclaimed that "I rank the

citizen higher than the State, and regard the State as useful only in so far as it preserves his

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[35] Justin D. Lyons, "Winston Churchill's Constitutionalism: A Critique of Socialism in

America." *The Heritage Foundation*. N.p., 2004.

http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/05/winston-churchills-constitutionalism-a-

critique-of-socialism-in-america (accessed April 28, 2014)

[36] Winston Churchill, "Winston Churchill on Liberalism and Socialism." *Government, Politics,

and Protest: Essential Primary Sources*. Detroit: Gale, 2006. *Global Issues In Context*. 255. 21

Feb. 2014.

[37] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 789 – 794.

inherent rights."[38] He had no history of holding Labor ideas in high regard, in spite of the

interest they held for the British people.

He also held onto a focus on ideas that were not deeply unpopular, but that held

little interest to his constituents. Churchill spoke in support of pan-Europeanism many

years before any other English leaders addressed the idea, and in post-WWII England the

idea had little traction with the people.[39] As the British people were focused on cleaning up

the rubble from WWII bombs and attempting to make ends meet for their families,

Churchill's focus was on higher-level issues of pan-Europeanism and fear of collectivist

expansionism. His inattentiveness to the issues that were the most critical to the British

selectorate was a poor omen for his electoral success in 1945, and in hindsight his defeat

should not have come as a shock to the British people.

At Odds With His People

After the close of WWII, the minds and hearts of the British public shifted strongly in

favor as social support systems. With their cities ravaged by war, the British people were

too busy picking their lives out of the rubble to focus on Churchill's lofty ideals of a hands-

off, Conservative government. The people wanted support from their government, in the

form of public education, public healthcare, and a welfare system. Their new desires were

brought into the spotlight by what was referred to as the Beverdige Report. The report,

presented in November of 1942 by Sir William Beveridge, outlined the variety of problems

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[38] Winston Churchill, "What Good's A Constitution?" 22 August 1936.

[39] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*. New York: Plume, 2002. 810.

facing British citizens. It outlined a "Plan for Social Security" that included methods of

welfare that it called "Social Insurance", pensions, and nationalized healthcare.[40]

The report was almost immediately widely popular with the people, and yet

Churchill chose to ignore its burgeoning impact with his constituents. Max Hastings notes

that, "His indifference... to the Beveridge Report, which laid the foundations of the Welfare

State, was wholly at odds with the popular enthusiasm that greeted it."[41] Churchill was

always entirely focused on what he saw as the big picture issues, such as war. Anything else

was inconsequential to him, including the wants and non-life-threatening needs of his

people. His chief of staff, Pug Ismay, summed up Churchill's tendency to focus only on the

highest-level issues neatly in a classically English cricket metaphor. He noted that "The PM

can be counted on to score a hundred in a Test Match, but is no good at village cricket."[42]

Churchill's disdain for what he saw as "minor" issues did not serve him well in the eyes of

his people.

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[40] William Beveridge, *Beveridge Report: Social Insurance and Allied Services*. Rep. N.p.:

Presented to Parliament, n.d. Socialist Health Association, Nov. 1942. 14 – 16.

[41] Max Hastings, "Churchill Had Won the War, but His Contempt for the Humdrum Affairs of

Peace Turned Britain against Him." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 27 Aug. 2009.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1209266/Churchill-won-war-contempt-

humdrum-affairs-peace-turned-Britain-him.html (accessed April 27, 2014)

[42] Max Hastings, "Churchill Had Won the War, but His Contempt for the Humdrum Affairs of

Peace Turned Britain against Him." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 27 Aug. 2009.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1209266/Churchill-won-war-contempt-

humdrum-affairs-peace-turned-Britain-him.html (accessed April 27, 2014)

The prime minister's lack of attention to the issues that most troubled his people led to overwhelming mistrust of his policies. He spoke widely on the need to finish the war with Japan, which indicated to his people that he had a continued plan for combat.[43] For a time, London was filled with rumors that Churchill planned to start a new war, this time against Russia.[44] No writings since have ever indicated that this was on Churchill's to-do list, but the prevalence of this rumor indicates the lack of trust in Churchill that the British people maintained. Yet again, he focused on the wrong issues and failed to inspire trust, let alone support for another term in power, in the selectorate.

While the people contemplated the Beveridge Report and found it more than passable, Churchill spent his time speaking on what he considered to be the numerous evils of social support by government entities. This opposition lives on in one of his numerous popularized quotes. "In the opening broadcast of the campaign, on 4 June, he warned that the introduction of Socialism into Britain would require '... some form of Gestapo, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance.'"[45] This assertion was regarded widely as

[43] Paul Addison, "Why Churchill Lost in 1945." *BBC News*. BBC, 17 Feb. 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/election_01.shtml (acccessed April 27, 2014)

[44] Paul Addison, "Why Churchill Lost in 1945." *BBC News*. BBC, 17 Feb. 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/election_01.shtml (acccessed April 27, 2014)

[45] Paul Addison, "Why Churchill Lost in 1945." *BBC News*. BBC, 17 Feb. 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/election_01.shtml (acccessed April 27, 2014)

ridiculous, and gained him little ground with the voting public. Churchill stuck to scare

tactics instead of the issues immediate to his people. He attacked the widely popular views

espoused in the Beveridge plan, as opposed to assembling a Conservative version of the

plan in an effort to address his people's needs.

Winston Churchill not only failed to build a rebuttal to the points contained in the

Beveridge plan, but he also chose to remain silent on the concerns that actually impacted

the day-to-day lives of his constituents. The Economist ran an editorial prior to the election

that asked the question weighing on many English minds: "When has the Prime Minister

made one of his great and compelling speeches on the theme, not of world strategy, but of

the hopes and fears of the British people? 'So long as he is silent, Conservatism is silent, and

the belief grows that maybe the Conservatives are out to do nothing but conserve."[46] The

gap between Churchill's priorities and those of his selectorate are made quite clear in the

context of this question, as Churchill elected to ignore the new issues that were pressing on

the minds of his people in favor of a continued focus on old issues that held no interest for

his selectorate.

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[46] Max Hastings, "Churchill Had Won the War, but His Contempt for the Humdrum Affairs of

Peace Turned Britain against Him." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 27 Aug. 2009.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1209266/Churchill-won-war-contempt-

humdrum-affairs-peace-turned-Britain-him.html (accessed April 27, 2014)

Churchill's Shifts

At no point in Churchill's career did he indicate any kind of unwillingness to change

his mind or shift his opinion on matters. Churchill certainly had no steadfast opposition to

making changes in policy and party, and in fact had a historical record of doing exactly that.

Winston Churchill did not respond directly to the plans for social safety nets

espoused by the Beveridge Report, and instead chose to turn to the outrageous scare tactics

such as his "Gestapo" quote.[47] Did he avoid building a competing plan out of moral

opposition to the idea of socialized policies in Britain? While at first this might seem to be a

viable reason, given that he opposed socialized policies both before and after the war, the

historical record in fact indicates that he in fact shifted on this policy as well. "He attacked

socialism before and after World War I, while during the War he promoted war-socialism,

calling for nationalization of the railroads, and declaring in a speech: 'Our whole nation must

be organized, must be socialized if you like the word.'"[48] Churchill was not able to claim a

consistent moral opposition to socialized policies. Instead, it seems that he was willing to

change his mind on the idea depending on his priorities. During WWII, his attitude of total

focus on victory for the Allies made socialized systems a viable option, but after the war he

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[47] Paul Addison, "Why Churchill Lost in 1945." *BBC News*. BBC, 17 Feb. 2011.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/election_01.shtml (acccessed April 27,

2014)

[48] Ralph Raico, "Rethinking Churchill." *LewRockwell*. N.p., n.d.

https://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/ralph-raico/man-of-blood/ (accessed April 26,

2014)

shifted back to an opposition to such policies, in spite of their popularity with the British people.

Churchill in fact had a history of changing his mind not only on particular issues, but he had also wholly swapped out his party affiliation. "He had twice changed his party affiliation from Conservative to Liberal, and then back again. His move to the Liberals was allegedly on the issue of free trade. But in 1930, he sold out on free trade as well, even tariffs on food, and proclaimed that he had cast off "Cobdenism" forever."[49] Clearly sticking with the same ideas or parties was not a critical point for the prime minister, so what could have stopped him from making the transition again?

Too Little Too Late

On July 26th, 1945, Churchill lost the election to Clement Atlee. The vote was a landslide against Churchill. While the outcome had been predicted by pollsters, their work was still a novelty at the time and had not been taken seriously as an indicator of the election's outcome.[50] The Conservative party was shocked, and the Liberals took their first

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[49] Ralph Raico, "Rethinking Churchill." *LewRockwell*. N.p., n.d.

https://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/ralph-raico/man-of-blood/ (accessed April 26, 2014).

[50] Ralph Raico, "Rethinking Churchill." *LewRockwell*. N.p., n.d.

https://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/ralph-raico/man-of-blood/ (accessed April 26, 2014).

ever majority with 393 seats. Winston Churchill resigned from office immediately.[51] Max

Hastings notes that "Churchill's loss of power was immediate and jarring. His unexpected

defeat in the 1945 election left him at a loss that may have catalyzed his eventual

movement towards compromise with the policies of social support that he had previously

warned against."[52]

Churchill fell from the highest of potential heights. He had spent his previous term

as an inspiring war hero, and by all accounts he thought he was beloved by his people. He

had been the leader that defeated Hitler and won the war, and yet he found himself

abruptly ousted from power. Churchill was out of place at best, and he was suddenly

overwhelmed with free time in which to contemplate his fall from power. He reflected on

this fact almost immediately. "'The rest of my life will be holidays,' he said to [his doctor,

Lord] Moran. 'It is a strange feeling, all power gone.'"[53]

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[51] "1945: Churchill Loses General Election." *BBC News*. BBC, 26 July 1945.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/26/newsid_3572000/3572175.stm

(accessed on April 26, 2014).

[52] Max Hastings, "Churchill Had Won the War, but His Contempt for the Humdrum Affairs of

Peace Turned Britain against Him." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 27 Aug. 2009.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1209266/Churchill-won-war-contempt-

humdrum-affairs-peace-turned-Britain-him.html (accessed April 27, 2014).

[53] Max Hastings, "Churchill Had Won the War, but His Contempt for the Humdrum Affairs of

Peace Turned Britain against Him." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 27 Aug. 2009.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1209266/Churchill-won-war-contempt-

humdrum-affairs-peace-turned-Britain-him.html (accessed April 27, 2014)

In spite of the abruptness of his loss however, it seems that he had some idea of what exactly happened. He showed a grasp, even immediately after the election results came in, of the reasoning behind his defeat. "When Lord Moran, his doctor, said something about voters' ingratitude, Churchill responded: 'Oh no, I wouldn't call it that, they have had a very bad time.'"[54] It seems clear that Chuchill's process of contemplation began incredibly soon after the election's close. Unfortunately for him, that process did not occur soon enough for him to recognize the selectorate's priorities and shift his focus onto the issues that were most critical to them.

After his loss in the election, Churchill eventually began to settle into the cause of collective social safety nets for the masses. Beatrice Webb, a critical figure in the birth of the National Health Service, noted that Churchill was "'definitely casting in his lot with the constructive state action.'"[55] After a time, it became obvious that Churchill felt that the causes espoused by the Liberal party had sufficient clout that they ought to be addressed. "He perceived [the Liberal party] both as an electoral threat and as a potential ally and, crucially, he clearly felt that there was a body of 'liberal opinion' in Britain that deserved to

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[54] Max Hastings, "Churchill Had Won the War, but His Contempt for the Humdrum Affairs of Peace Turned Britain against Him." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 27 Aug. 2009. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1209266/Churchill-won-war-contempt-humdrum-affairs-peace-turned-Britain-him.html (accessed April 27, 2014)

[55] Ralph Raico, "Rethinking Churchill." *LewRockwell*. N.p., n.d. https://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/ralph-raico/man-of-blood/ (accessed April 26, 2014).

be courted."[56] This was a distinct shift from his previous set of opinions, in which the "liberal

opinion" was hardly given a second glance.

He refused to give in entirely to the ideas of the Liberal party, and in 1949, he still

warned of the potential dangers of "nationalization" of the country in a speech to Ibox park

in Glasgow.[57] While he managed to avoid bowing entirely to the idea of social safety nets,

"he capitulated that many industries were irrevocably nationalized, but he still campaigned

for a growth in local control of these enterprises. In this, he attempted to find a middle

ground that absorbed the well-loved aspects of social safety nets while maintaining his

distance from the socialist policies that he had spent years warning against."[58]

Through a Selectorate Lens

Clearly Churchill's priorities did not align solidly with his constituents' priorities. He

had a history of realigning himself as the tides shifted in favor of certain issues and parties,

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[56] "'I Am A Liberal A Much As A Tory' Winston Churchill And The Memory OF 1906."*Journal of Liberal History* 54.Spring (2007): 38-45. *Http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk/*.

[57] Winston Churchill, "Conservative Party Rally Speech 1949." *Conservative Party Rally Speech 1949*. Winston Churchill Foundation, n.d. <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/biography/in-opposition/conservative-party-rally-speech-1949>.

[58] "'I Am A Liberal A Much As A Tory' Winston Churchill And The Memory OF 1906."*Journal of Liberal History* 54.Spring (2007): 38-45. *Http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk/*.

but he did not make the same move in the months leading up to the 1945 election. The

people had a clear preference for social reforms, particularly those espoused by the

Beverdige Report, but Churchill failed to address these concerns. In fact, he never even

clearly rebutted them in his campaigning. All of this begs the question, "What failed

Churchill?"

A critical tenet of Selectorate Theory that is not so often addressed is the fact that

being a skilled leader is not necessarily the same as being a skilled politician. While Winston

Churchill was an incredibly skillful leader and he led his nation and the allied forces to

victory in WWII, he was not so incredibly skilled as a politician. By all indications, he had no

overwhelming attachment to his political ideologies or even his party.[59] Nothing seemed to

stop him from switching allegiances, and yet he didn't choose to shift sides until after the

1945 election, when it was too late.

In the case of Winston Churchill, only one explanation for his failings remains: he

failed to read the desires of his selectorate. In all other ways, his case conforms to the

principles of Selectorate Theory. He eventually changed to fit his people's desires, but

Churchill was just too slow to the punch. He failed to use the newly available tools of the

time, the new practice of polling potential voters, to his advantage.[60] This caused him to

incorrectly read the desires of his real selectorate, and his case then follows the simplest

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[59] "'I Am A Liberal A Much As A Tory' Winston Churchill And The Memory OF 1906."*Journal

of Liberal History* 54.Spring (2007): 38-45. *Http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk/*.

[60] Ralph Raico, "Rethinking Churchill." *LewRockwell*. N.p., n.d.

https://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/ralph-raico/man-of-blood/ (accessed April 26,

2014).

aspects of Selectorate Theory. He didn't give the selectorate what they wanted, so they chose a new leader who they felt would meet their needs.

His failure to embrace the ideas of socialized systems of support implies not that he hung doggedly to principles that he believed in to the core, but that he missed a step in the political game. Churchill's shock at his own defeat in the 1945 election, when coupled with his previous willingness to shift his opinions, indicates that he fell victim to a severe political miscalculation. His case is a clear example not of a failure of Selectorate Theory, but of a political failure by a leader that is explained by Selectorate Theory.

Chapter Four

Obama's Drone Policy

More Than Two Sides

Selectorate Theory in its current incarnation focuses distinctly on two aspects of the

political landscape: what leaders do, and what the selectorate wants a leader to do. This

simple analysis can be very functional in many cases, but in today's world it can leave out

some critical variables. The growth of technology has given leaders the opportunity to

obfuscate their actions, and to speak to an immense audience while gauging feedback on a

particular topic, and Selectorate Theory has yet to account for the additional twists and

turns that this ability adds to any situation.

If a leader seeks to please his small selectorate through direct transfer of funds, then

the leader will have a difficult time convincing his supporters that they have been paid if no

money has changed hands. They can check their bank accounts to see whether the good

has been provided, or if they need to find a new leader to support who can pay them better.

When public goods are being provided to a large winning coalition, it can sometimes also be

easy to spot whether or not the promised rewards are being provided. The average person

can easily check in to see whether or not public education or healthcare is available to

them, and little confusion is possible on these fronts. When a leader is working with a large

selectorate and providing less easily visible goods however, it can be far more tricky for a

member of the selectorate to ascertain whether or not a good has actually been provided to

them.

A clear example of this phenomenon is the current Obama Administration's policy

on drone warfare, or the practice of making targeted strikes against individuals using

unmanned aircrafts. Those in support of the policy maintain that they're effective, taking

out high-level terrorists and eliminating threats, and they're cost effective in comparison to

boots-on-the-ground strategies.[61] This line of reasoning certainly presents an appealing

initial picture of drone warfare. While many supporters also claim that drone strikes are

widely popular with Americans, their support is only circumstantial in many cases.[62] The

abundance of information from conflicting sources both inside and outside the

administration acts as an obfuscating factor in attempting to determine whether or not

President Obama is adhering to the principles of Selectorate Theory on the issue of drone

policy.

What the People Want

The American people can, in the case of The United States as viewed by Selectorate

Theory, be seen as the hypothetical driving factor behind the Obama Administration's

decisions. In theory, if the people support drone strikes, then the administration will

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[61] Romesh Ratnesar, "Five Reasons Why Drones Are Here to Stay." *Bloomberg Business Week*. Bloomberg, 23 May 2013. http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-05-23/five-reasons-why-drones-are-here-to-stay (accessed April 26, 2014).

[62] Bruce Drake, "Obama and Drone Strikes: Support but Questions at Home, Opposition Abroad." *Pewresearch.org*. Pew Research Center, 24 May 2013. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/24/obama-and-drone-strikes-support-but-questions-at-home-opposition-abroad/ (accessed April 27, 2014).

continue with the strikes in order to retain favor with critical supporters and ensure

continued success for their political party. On the surface, there is support for the use of

drones for military purposes. Eight in ten Americans said that they support the use of drone

warfare on suspected terrorists overseas, when asked by a Washington Post poll in February

of 2012.[63]

When further investigation is conducted however, it seems that the American

people have a more nuanced opinion. While a large portion of the population supports

drone use in general, that number drops significantly. A survey by the Huffington Post

found that Americans have "a *very dim view* of the drone program 'if there was a possibility

of killing innocent people,' with only 27 percent in favor" of the program if civilians were

potentially in harm's way.[64] Additional research indicates that the American people do not

support the use of drones if civilians overseas are put in danger in the process. According to

Pew Research, 53% of American were "very" concerned about whether drones endanger

civilian lives, while a further 28% were "somewhat" concerned about this factor.[65]

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[63] Chris Cillizza, "The American Public Loves Drones." *The Washington Post*. N.p., 6 Feb.

2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/02/06/the-american-public-

loves-drones/ (accessed April 28, 2014).

[64] Jason Linkins, "Drone Program Poll: The Public Does Not Uncritically Embrace Targeted

Killings." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 15 Feb. 2013.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/15/drone-program-poll_n_2696352.html

(accessed April 27, 2014).

[65] Bruce Drake, "Obama and Drone Strikes: Support but Questions at Home, Opposition

Abroad." *Pewresearch.org*. Pew Research Center, 24 May 2013.

All in all, it is clear that there are no grounds upon which the Obama Administration could imply that there is a mandate for unbridled use of drone technology in a military context where civilian lives overseas are potentially in jeopardy. In fact, "even among those who approved of the [unmanned military aircraft] program, 42% say they are very concerned the attacks risk lives of innocent civilians."[66] Clearly the Obama Administration can make some drone strikes on those who are clearly high-level enemy combatants with the approval of the selectorate, but for the program to be publicly supported, it must not put civilians in harm's way and it must reduce collateral damage to the bare minimum when it is used.

Drone Policy in Actuality

The Obama Administration has relied heavily on the use of unmanned military aircrafts throughout both of Obama's terms in office. In his first five years in office, President Obama authorized 390 covert drone strikes.[67] According to research conducted

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http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/24/obama-and-drone-strikes-support-but-questions-at-home-opposition-abroad/ (accessed April 27, 2014);

[66] Bruce Drake, "Obama and Drone Strikes: Support but Questions at Home, Opposition Abroad." *Pewresearch.org*. Pew Research Center, 24 May 2013. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/24/obama-and-drone-strikes-support-but-questions-at-home-opposition-abroad/ (accessed April 27, 2014);

[67] Jack Searle, "More than 2,400 Dead as Obama's Drone Campaign Marks Five Years."*The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 23 Jan. 2014.

by the New America Foundation, "since it began in 2004, the drone campaign has killed 49

militant leaders whose deaths have been confirmed by at least two credible news

sources."[68] However, the total number of deaths from drone strikes executed during the

Obama administration is more than quadruple the number by the end of the Bush

administration. Estimates range from 1,494 to 2,618. In fact, the 49 confirmed militant

leaders account for less than two percent of the total deaths from drone strikes, and

between 1,332 and 2,326 of those who lost their lives in drone operations were described

simply as "reported militants," who do not fall into the category of non-civilian deaths that

the American public has been shown to support.[69]

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http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2014/01/23/more-than-2400-dead-as-obamas-

drone-campaign-marks-five-years/ (accessed April 27, 2014)

[68] Peter Bergen and Megan Braun, "Drone Is Obama's Weapon of Choice |

NewAmerica.org." *Drone Is Obama's Weapon of Choice*. New America Foundation, 6 Sept.

2012.

http://www.newamerica.org/publications/articles/2012/drone_is_obamas_weapon_of_cho

ice_70970 (accessed April 26, 2014)

[69] Peter Bergen and Megan Braun, "Drone Is Obama's Weapon of Choice |

NewAmerica.org." *Drone Is Obama's Weapon of Choice*. New America Foundation, 6 Sept.

2012.

http://www.newamerica.org/publications/articles/2012/drone_is_obamas_weapon_of_cho

ice_70970 (accessed April 26, 2014); Jason Linkins, "Drone Program Poll: The Public Does

Not Uncritically Embrace Targeted Killings." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 15

This begs the question, where is the public uproar? The Obama administration is clearly acting in a manner at odds with what its winning coalition is in support of, but the American people have yet to march en masse on the White House in protest of drone policies that they don't support. The answer is clear once one begins to examine the "results" of the current drone policy that are made publicly available to the American populace by the Obama administration.

Broadcasted Results

Clearly there is a divide between what the people want, and what the Obama administration has enacted with actual policy towards unmanned military aircrafts. The American people prefer targeted strikes that do not put civilians in harm's way, and exclusively take out those who orchestrate actions against the United States. The Obama Administration has been enacting policies that lead to a far larger number of deaths, only a limited number of which effectively target leaders of overseas terrorist organizations.

However, the definition of a "civilian" is incredibly unclear and causes an immense amount of variability in the numbers. When calculating civilian deaths in drone strikes, the administration has used unclear communication to create a large space for ambiguity in accounting for which deaths were "civilian" and which deaths actually were listed as successful strikes on terrorist individuals. "Obama embraced a disputed method for counting civilian casualties that did little to box him in. It in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants, according to several administration officials, unless

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Feb. 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/15/drone-program-poll_n_2696352.html (accessed April 27, 2014).

there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent."[70] In this way, the

administration can distribute and hold to artificially compressed figures for how many

civilian casualties occur, by excluding a huge number of individuals from the civilian

category. This new method of counting creates a new set of information for the

administration to distribute to the selectorate, creating the illusion that their needs are

being met.[71]

Using the numbers based on his altered definition of "militant", Obama is able to

make strong assertions in favor of the effectiveness of the program that seem to align with

what the American people want from the drone program. In his May 2013 speech,

President Obama discussed drone policy with the strong assertion that "To begin with, our

actions are effective." The president immediately goes on to cite intelligence that indicates

that Osama Bin Laden distinctly feared airstrikes, such as the ones executed by U.S. piloted

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[70] Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and

Will." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 28 May 2012.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-

qaeda.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 26, 2014)

[71] Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and

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http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-

qaeda.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 26, 2014)

drones.[72] When the numbers appear to support him, the President can make strong

statements, like the following from the same May 2013 speech, to garner support from the

selectorate:

> It is false to assert that putting boots on the ground is less likely to result in civilian
>
> deaths or less likely to create enemies in the Muslim world. The results would be
>
> more U.S. deaths, more Black Hawks down, more confrontations with local
>
> populations, and an inevitable mission creep in support of such raids that could
>
> easily escalate into new wars.[73]

In this way, the lack of certainty that the administration is able to project essentially

confuses the selectorate. Even though the selectorate is strongly against taking action with

drone strikes when civilians may be harmed, the Obama Administration has the ability to

alter the methods of reporting through redefining the word "militant" so that the

selectorate thinks that its concerns are being addressed. In this case there is no reliable

"bank account" for the members of the selectorate to check in on, and therefore there is no

reliable way for them to investigate whether or not their public goods are being provided.

Due to this ambiguity of information, Obama's drone policy is unlikely to face any major

negative response from the public, simply because the selectorate cannot gain sufficient

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[72] Barack Obama, "Obama's Speech on Drone Policy." *The New York Times*. The New York

Times, 23 May 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/politics/transcript-of-

obamas-speech-on-drone-policy.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 28, 2014)

[73] Barack Obama, "Obama's Speech on Drone Policy." *The New York Times*. The New York

Times, 23 May 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/politics/transcript-of-

obamas-speech-on-drone-policy.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 28, 2014)

information to determine whether or not the goods provided are in line with their

preferences.

A Selectorate Perspective

Were we to take President Obama's speech on drone policy from May 2013 at face

value, it would indicate that the administration's stance on drones is directly in line with

what the people want. According to his speech, "before any strike is taken, there must be

near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured" in that strike. Since that's what the

majority of Americans are troubled by there appears to be no conflict between what the

public wants and what the President is enacting.[74] However, the real alignment there exists

exclusively between what the administration is stating and what the American people want.

There is no agreement between what is actually occurring and what the American people

want.

Skillful management of information has added another layer to the constant

interplay of public opinion and the political strategies of leaders. This additional layer has

effectively added another tool to the leader's toolbox in their efforts to gain an maintain

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[74] Barack Obama, "Obama's Speech on Drone Policy." *The New York Times*. The New York

Times, 23 May 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/politics/transcript-of-

obamas-speech-on-drone-policy.html?pagewanted=all (accessed April 26, 2014); Jason

Linkins, "Drone Program Poll: The Public Does Not Uncritically Embrace Targeted

Killings." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 15 Feb. 2013.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/15/drone-program-poll_n_2696352.html

(accessed April 27, 2014).

power. By obfuscating the flow of information, the Obama Administration has given itself a

great deal of leeway on drone policy to act without fear of vocal disapproval from the

American public. This additional layer of political life is not addressed in the currently

available discussion of Selectorate Theory, and for the theory to accurately describe the

modern political world, it will need to account for this level of distraction between what

leaders do and what the selectorate wants.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

In any analysis of a complex environment, it becomes nearly impossible to account

for all factors that have an impact on any situation. This process becomes exponentially

more difficult when human beings are involved, with all their layers of unpredictability. It

stands to reason then, that the international system encompassing all human beings and

their systems of governance would be the most difficult set of variables to attempt to

manage. Selectorate Theory encounters every possible difficulty in its efforts to explain

behavior in the international system, but it nonetheless seems to come out ahead.

Similarly to the note made by Churchill himself that "democracy is the worst form of

Government except for all those other forms" it seems that Selectorate Theory is the worst

method by which to explain the system of international relations except for all the other

theories.[75] Upon first examination its explanations may seem incomplete, but with some

new additions and aspects to be considered, Selectorate Theory seems to provide a

coherent explanation for previously unexplained historical cases of surprising policy and

leadership choices.

If the merit of a theory is to be determined based on its ability to describe the

current state of the international system, explain the manner in which the system arrived at

its current state, and predict the future of the international system, then Selectorate Theory

has a strong track record in comparison to most other theories such as Realism and Liberal

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[75] Winston Churchill, and Richard M. Langworth. *Churchill by Himself: The Definitive*

Collection of Quotations. New York: PublicAffairs, 2008, 241.

Theory. Selectorate Theory would have predicted Churchill's failure in light of his post-war policy choices, and can explain his success during the war. With growth and additions accounting for the growing impact of technology and communication on the modern political landscape, Selectorate Theory can also describe the mechanism through which President Obama maintains policies that clash with what his selectorate wants while retaining approval of those same policies.

Opportunities for Growth

Selectorate Theory does in fact have the power to fulfill all the requirements of a successful theory, but it is still a young theory that will need time to grow and develop its innovative approach before it can gain widespread acceptance. The theory's new, mathematically based approach will necessitate further significant inquiry before it can be widely used to predict change with any accuracy. While Selectorate Theory seems to have proven its ability to adapt to unusual scenarios, to do so consistently it will require further study. Some key areas for expansion include the role of technology and information dissemination in the international system, and the relative weights of different private and public goods.

The current literature in Selectorate Theory does not provide perspective on modern leaders' ability to obfuscate whether or not certain public goods have been provided. In some cases the fact of whether or not the good has been provided is very clear: either the roads have potholes or they are well-maintained, and the selectorate can see for themselves whether or not the leader's end of the bargain has been upheld. In today's world however, the presence or absence of such goods is often much less clear. In

many cases, like that of President Obama's drone policy, it is possible to make it appear as if a public good is being provided whether or not it exists in reality through carefully calculated dissemination of information. To become a more inclusive theory with better predictive properties, Selectorate Theory will need to grow to encompass not only the realities of a situation but also its perceptions within the system.

In its present incarnation, the literature on Selectorate Theory does not provide an in-depth manner in which the relative value of goods can be calculated. Weighting the importance of goods, both public and private, can have a huge impact on the political outcome of a situation as it did for Winston Churchill. In Churchill's case, some goods were incredibly important to the people (first success in the war, and then later nationalized healthcare) while others retained less value to the selectorate. Even though Churchill may have had a large number of technically valuable public goods that could have been of assistance to him in his reelection, only a few were actually critical to success. Further delineation of the methods for determining the relative values of goods must occur before Selectorate Theory can gain widespread traction and functionality.

Final Thoughts

Since its inception, the study of international relations has been regarded as an inexact science. Previous theories held little ability to truly predict the future of actors on the international stage, and succumbed easily to outliers in the historical record. For much of its existence, the study of international relations has been relegated to the realms of historical contemplation. With the growth of Selectorate Theory and the related study of game theoretical applications to international relations, a new door is opening in the field.

These manners of thinking about the international system allow theorists to treat the

historical record as data against which assumptions can be confirmed or denied, and lend a

more traditionally scientific outlook to the study of international relations. This new

outlook has the potential to broaden the appeal of theoretical international relations to a

far wider audience, ranging from academics to actual policy-makers, all of whom will be

better equipped to understand their own methods of decision-making.

It is certainly the case that this shift will have a major impact on all those who

choose to study the shifting landscape of international politics. Hopefully this change will

be for the better, and more opportunities for accurate prediction will become available to

the academic community. In our ability to predict outcomes lies our ability to impact them,

and subsequently with superior theories come superior outcomes. The more we

understand the system, the more effectively we can educate our leaders, our populations

and the world at large to produce an international community that can understand its own

mechanisms and make educated choices for its own betterment.

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