APRES MOI LE DELUGE: INDIVIDUALS, INCENTIVES, AND CONFLICT

TERMINATION

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By

John Furman Daniel, III, B.A.

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APRES MOI LE DELUGE: INDIVIDUALS, INCENTIVES, AND CONFLICT TERMINATION

John Furman Daniel, III, BA.

Thesis Advisor: Robert Lieber, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This work analyzes the impact of a leader’s personal security on the conflict termination process and asks three questions. First, why do some states surrender when they still have latent military capabilities? Second, why do some states continue fighting when they have little if any hope of achieving their war aims? Third, why do some states fail to act as rational-utility maximizers during the conflict-termination process? To answer these questions, this work begins by examining the predictions of existing systemic, domestic, and cultural models and then proposes and tests an alternative theory based on the personal security of individual leaders. This alternative theory claims that national leaders are particularly sensitive to their private security needs and, under certain circumstances, will alter their nations’ war aims to protect their personal welfare. Building on this theory, this work proposes and tests six hypotheses for how personal security of national leaders may alter national war aims and conflict termination outcomes. To test these hypotheses, this work performs a qualitative analysis of five cases (Poland during The Russo-Polish War, France during WWII,
Japan during WWII, Iraq during the Iran Iraq War, and Iraq during Gulf War I) and compares the actual behaviors of leaders with the theoretical predictions of the existing and alternative theories. After an analysis of these theoretical models, this work concludes with a series of policy recommendations and directions for further research.
“Them that don't know him won't like him and them that do,
Sometimes won't know how to take him.
He ain't wrong, he's just different but his pride won't let him,
Do things to make you think he's right.”—Waylon Jennings

More thanks are due than can be expressed in a few short lines. I consider myself lucky to have had so much support and help in this project, and I will never be able to fully repay the efforts of my colleagues, friends, and family.

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To Christina, my \textit{raison d'être}
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Foreign Relations of the United States  FRUS
United States Strategic Bombing Survey  USSBS
“Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI: Twenty Interviews and  FBI Interview or
Five Conversations with ‘High Value Detainee # 1’ in  FBI Conversation
2004”
CHAPTER 1: A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

“War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means.”-Carl von Clausewitz\(^1\)

“War is the most terrible tragedy of the human race and it should not be prolonged an hour longer than is necessary.”- General George Marshall\(^2\)

In early-August 1945, it appeared that the worst was yet to come in the Pacific War. Despite the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the firebombing of Tokyo and Japan’s industrial centers, the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, and the tightening naval blockade of the Japanese home islands, few on either side believed that the war would end quickly. Both sides were preparing for an invasion of Japan and a protracted military campaign that was expected to continue well into 1946. In anticipation of this invasion,


American officials ordered an additional 500,000 purple hearts and were quietly discussing the predicted unpopularity of the coming campaign. In Japan, the military remained committed to their previous strategy of inflicting atrocious losses on the Allies to convince them that conquering Japan was prohibitively expensive. The Japanese people responded to the threatened Allied invasion by enduring additional sacrifice and organizing home-defense units with whatever weapons they could muster. Because of their strong belief in personal honor and loyalty to their emperor, few in Japan doubted the claim that, “If we are prepared to sacrifice 20,000,000 Japanese lives in a special attack effort, victory shall be ours.”

For most observers, the Allies and the Japanese Empire were locked into a collision course that would lead to mutual self-destruction and few good options remained to avert the coming Armageddon. Despite the fact that a mutual suicide pact appeared inevitable, Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced his intention to surrender to the Allies via radio on August 15. On September 2, 1945, the Japanese officially surrendered to the Allied forces on the deck of the USS Missouri and the most destructive war in history was finally over.

Just as this outcome was surprising to participants on both sides, it also does not appear to match the predictions of international relations theories. Had Japan committed to resisting an invasion, it is possible that it could have maintained its own national sovereignty or received a better set of peace conditions from the Allies than it ultimately

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did. Similarly, surrender was not an option favored by most within the Japanese government or by a majority of the Japanese population. This aversion to surrender was exacerbated by the traditional Japanese cultural belief that surrender was unacceptable and that the Japanese must fight to the bitter end to protect their national polity.

These factors would suggest that Japan would continue the struggle, in order to protect both the sovereignty of the national government as well as the Japanese social identity. Instead, against expectations, Japan chose a surrender that was nearly unconditional. The singular condition that the Japanese demanded—and were granted—was that Emperor Hirohito would be protected after the war. This abrupt surrender, contrary to all its societal and national tendencies, does not appear to have been the result of military, domestic, or cultural pressures. This puzzling outcome has had lead some observers to ask a fundamental question—Why did Japan act this way?

The alternative theory presented in this work claims that under certain conditions, leaders can play a critical role in determining how wars end. This may appear logical to outside observers, but it is a difficult proposition to accurately model and runs contrary to the dominant theories of international relations scholarship. Although most existing models do allow for the possibility of an individual agent profoundly impacting international events, they typically suggest that other factors such as the structure of the international system, the domestic politics of a nation, or cultural factors are better

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variables for predicting international behaviors.\(^5\)

For the purpose of theory building such a reduction of human agency is often necessary for the simple reason that human beings are often unpredictable. Of the over six billion people in the world, it is impossible to predict the impact of any single person on world events. Even among the more limited set of world leaders, it is nearly impossible to model how when and why they will affect international politics because of the complex interaction effects between individuals, systemic incentives, domestic audiences, and cultural influences. Most existing theories of international relations acknowledge these limitations and accept the reduction of human agency as a necessary trade off for the purposes of parsimony, generalizability, and theoretical consistency.\(^6\)

\(^5\) On this point, Kenneth Waltz is especially candid, insisting that: “[S]tructures never tell us all that we want to know. Instead they tell us a small number of big and important things. They focus our attention on those components and forces that usually continue for long periods. Clean and simple definitions of structure save us from the pernicious practice of summoning new systems into being in response to every salient change within a system. They direct our attention to the units and to unit-level forces when the particularity of outcomes leads us to search for more idiosyncratic causes than are found in structures.” Kenneth Waltz, “A Response to My Critics,” in Keohane, Robert. ed. Neorealism and its Critics, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. p. 329. For a more extended explanation of the ability of individuals to explain only proximate causes for international events, see also: Waltz, Kenneth N. Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959. p. 218.

\(^6\) For two accounts of the field’s reaction to Waltz’s structural approach, see: Legro, Jeffrey W. and Moravscik, Andrew. “Is Anybody Still a Realist?” International Security 24:2 (Fall 1999): 5-55. esp. 22-
This work, does not wish to dispute the utility of these theories for predicting broad and important trends in international relations. Rather, it suggests that individuals may provide the proximate cause for a specific set of outcomes that are outside of the set of behaviors typically predicted by existing theories. Most existing theories suggest that factors such as the structure of the international system, domestic, or cultural forces limit the choices of individuals and directs them to generally predictable courses of action. This work attempts to expose and correct a potential blind spot within the international relations literature by providing an alternative theory where, in a narrow set of conditions, human agents may have a profound influence over their nation’s war aims and conflict termination process.  

To provide such a theory of agents overcoming the structures that typically constrain them, it is necessary to reverse the causal arrows. Rather than looking at the cases where agents are constrained by structures, this research will look at how agents overcome these constraints and how these outcomes appear to differ from the predictions of existing


theories. To explore this alternative, it is critical to select cases where individuals have had strong theoretical constraints upon their actions and have been forced to choose between conforming to these restraints or perusing their own security interests. If leaders could potentially break with these constraints but choose not to do so, then the evidence supports the existing theories by suggesting that even in special cases when leaders could break with such constraints, they acted as if such limits to their agency still held. However, if leaders can break with these constraints and choose to adopt course of action outside of the predictions of these theories, then it calls into question the validity of existing theories because, within a limited set of conditions, the observed behaviors do not fit with the proposed theories.

This research will examine the ability of leaders to break with constraints upon their agency during the concluding phases of interstate wars. Such periods are ideal setting to test potential influence of agents for three primary reasons. First, assuming that the likely outcome of the war is already determined, then the expected behavior of states is clearly predicted by existing theories. This makes deviation from the expected courses of action more clear and should provide for easier theory testing. Second, war raises the stakes and should make leaders more concerned about how their actions affect both their own interests as well as those of their nations and the international system. Third, there are many good reasons to believe that a leader may have greater opportunity to exert their agency during the conflict termination process than during times of relative stasis. These reasons include, but are not limited to, a sense of crisis, a demand for rapid action, a
collective avoidance of responsibility by other domestic actors, the disruption or destruction of the normal government structures, and the tendency of citizens to rally around charismatic leaders during times of uncertainty.\(^8\)

To test the influence of leaders, this research will purposely seek moments where leaders have had the opportunity to use their agency to conform to or overcome systemic, domestic, and cultural constraints upon their actions. By examining leaders’ choices during these moments of crisis, this research hopes to illuminate two fundamental questions for the agent-structure debate, “[A]re real leaders as constrained as most scholars assume? [and] What alternatives do we have to the privileging of constraints and the discounting of choice?”\(^9\) To better answer these questions, this work will examine the existing conflict termination literature; propose an alternative theory with six testable hypotheses which may explain variations from existing theories; and tests both the existing and alternative theories against four empirical cases of conflict termination from recent history.

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1.1 An Introduction to War Termination

War termination is typically understood as a bargaining process where each belligerent attempts to secure the best possible set of concessions or “bargain” for their respective side. The modeling of conflict termination as a bargaining process has a deep tradition in international relations theory because it combines two fundamental principles of international politics: uncertainty of intentions and the difficulty of states to enforce binding commitments on each other. Because of the high-stakes nature of war and the

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10 The first prominent proponent of war as a bargaining game is Thomas Schelling who in 1960 claimed that: “If war to the finish has become inevitable, there is nothing left but pure conflict; but if there is any possibility of avoiding a mutually damaging war, of conducting war in a way that minimizes damage, or of coercing an adversary by threatening war rather than waging it, the possibility of mutual accommodation is as important and dramatic as the element of conflict. Concepts like deterrence, limited war, disarmament, as well as negotiation, are concerned with common interest and mutual dependence that can exist between participants in a conflict...To study the strategy of conflict is to take the view that most conflict situations are essentially bargaining situations.” Schelling, Thomas. The Strategy of Conflict. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960. p. 5. For additional works describing conflict termination as a bargaining process see: Ikle, Fred Charles. Every War Must End: 2nd Revised Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.; Kecskemeti, Pual. Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958.; Pillar, Paul. Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.; and Reiter, Dan. How Wars End. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

unpredictability of international politics, existing models predict that these negotiations are complex, politically motivated affairs where states are highly incentivized to extract the greatest possible concessions from their opponent. In these models, states are expected to extract the maximum expected benefits relative to their various military and economic capabilities, domestic commitment to the war, and their expected probability of winning. In such models, there is a sense of balance and proportionality with neither side gaining or losing more at the peace table than they could reasonably expect to win on the battlefield. According to these bargaining theories, these negotiations should rarely produce peace agreements which are blatantly sub-optimal for one side. Despite this theoretical elegance, uneven peace agreements do occur and they often have a profound impact on international politics.

This work attempts to examine some of these unpredicted outcomes and ask three fundamental questions. First, why do some states surrender when they still have latent military capabilities? Second, why do some states continue fighting when they have little if any hope of achieving their war aims? Finally, why do some states fail to act as rational-utility maximizers during the conflict-termination process?

These questions are important for three reasons. First, by definition, any failures in reaching an efficient negotiated settlement represent a sub-optimal outcome. This means that at least one of the nations involved in the conflict should have expected a better deal than it received. This may call into question many assumptions regarding the utility maximizing goals of states and their ability to make decisions that accurately reflect these
goals.

Second, the costs of inefficient conflict termination are often very high. In both human and material terms, the consequences of not securing the best possible bargain are potentially catastrophic for a nation. For a winning power, failing to maximize a potential gain may result in a case where an adversary can quickly rise to fight again or may benefit disproportionately from the peace. For a defeated power, inefficient conflict termination could make the consequences of an already bad war much worse and potentially threaten the survival of that nation.

Finally, such cases may provide additional insight for international relations theorists to sharpen their theoretical understanding of an important element of international relations. Given the high stakes of international conflict, even a few variations from the optimal predictions of existing theories is troubling and worth detailed study. Analyzing how nations negotiate and what they expect from war and diplomacy is a critical question that may reveal powerful insights to international relations scholarship.

National expectations for war termination can be defined in two ways, by the theoretical equilibrium point and by the observed state war aims. The theoretical equilibrium is the precise point where the expected value curves for fighting for each of the belligerent nations intersect. To take a simple example, if nation A has a 60% chance of winning a war against nation B, then nation A should expect to receive 60% of the

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benefits from the conflict. Nation B should therefore expect 40% of any benefits from a resulting peace agreement. Any deviation from the 60-40 split would by definition result in one of the two nations receiving a better than expected pay off and the other nation receiving a worse than expected pay off.

Even in the realm of theory, this logic quickly becomes more complex as nations are highly incentivized to bluff, information is often scarce or unreliable, and the two sides may legitimately disagree about their expected chances for victory. For the purpose of this work, it is enough to say that the equilibrium point for a conflict termination should fairly weigh the expected costs of fighting with the expected benefits of ending a war to produce a rational calculation of what peace conditions a nation should accept.

The second component of national expectations is a nation’s war aims. War aims are simply the minimum set of conditions that a state will accept to terminate a conflict. If all states were completely rational in the formation of their war aims, then their war aims would correspond perfectly with the expected equilibrium described above. In practice, states often set different expectations or war aims than these theoretical predictions. By formal definition, such behaviors are irrational because they will likely produce sub-optimal outcomes for one of the belligerent nations.

This research will attempt to explain these unusual outcomes by examining how nations define and alter their war aims. Assuming that states are acting rationally, their war aims should be fluid and they should revaluate and alter their war aims in response to changes in information. Favorable information should cause states to increase their
demands whereas unfavorable information should cause states to decrease their demands. If states properly digest this new information and alter their war aims accordingly, they should be able to avoid sub-optimal outcomes because they are constantly altering their nation’s demands for peace in response to changes in information and are never asking for more at the peace table than they could reasonably expect on the field of battle.

War provides that information to states in a number of ways. First, war eliminates some of the “commitment problems” in international politics by signaling that states are not bluffing about their willingness to back up an argument with force. By demonstrating their willingness to fight, states may be able to stop opponents who believe that they can be intimidated into providing concessions with only a token use of force. This test of an opponent’s commitment should cause states to reevaluate the reasons why they are fighting and potentially alter their war aims to reflect these signals of commitment from their opponents. Second, war eliminates some of the questions regarding the relative power and military effectiveness of different states vis-à-vis each other. The audit of combat helps clarify these questions by providing clear evidence as


14 Predicting combat outcomes is notoriously difficult, because it is typically much more than simply counting the numbers of equivalent forces. In fact, many examples can be provided where a numerically inferior force was able to triumph because of other factors such as quality, leadership, or luck. Because of this, there are innumerable opportunities for military analysts to err in their judgments. For just a few works
to the martial strengths of each power and their likelihood of achieving their goals at an acceptable cost through battle. Although net-assessment and strategic analyses are particularly difficult to achieve under even the most favorable conditions, battles won or lost should provide additional information to both sides which they may use to alter their war aims.\footnote{Of particular interest is the issue of cost. It has been observed in many places that military planners often believe that they can achieve their war aims briefly and at relatively low cost. To cite just two prominent examples from recent history, during the early months of the American Civil War, the typical enlistment for military volunteers was a mere 90 days because few military planners could imagine the war lasting that long and during the first months of WWI on the Western Front, both sides believed that they would “be home before the leaves fall.” Tuchman, Barbara W., \textit{The Guns of August}. New York: Random House, 1962. For prominent examples of this tendency to underestimate the costs of war within the academic literature, see: Blainey, Geoffrey. \textit{The Causes of War: 3\textsuperscript{rd} Edition}. New York: Free Press, 1988.; Jervis, Robert. “War and Misperception.” \textit{Journal of Interdisciplinary History} 18:4 (Spring 1988): 675-700.; Snyder, Jack L. \textit{The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914}. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.; and Van Evera, Stephen. \textit{Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict}. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.} Finally, after the occurrence of a decisive battle or campaign, war provides chronicling the difficulty of predicting battle outcomes, see: Biddle, Stephen. \textit{Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle}. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.; Dupuy, Trevor. \textit{Numbers Predictions and War: Using History to Evaluate Combat Factors and Predict the Outcome of Battles}. Fairfax, VA : Hero Books, 1985.; May, Ernest R. \textit{Strange Victory: Hitler’s Conquest of France}. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000.; and Millet, Alan R. and Murray, Williamson eds. \textit{Calculations: Net-Assessment and the Coming of World War II}. New York: Free Press, 1992.
answers to the most basic question of any conflict—who will win?

This information is of fundamental importance to decision makers because it points to the likely direction of the conflict and clearly presents the alternatives, victory or defeat. Even if a nation has miscalculated its prospects for victory, this new information should cause it to reassess its chances and alter its war aims accordingly. In theory, war should provide states additional information that they can use to make optimal decisions regarding war aims and acceptable conditions for peace. In practice, however, new and better information regarding the likely outcome of a conflict has often had little effect on the strategies and war aims of national leaders.¹⁶ Because of this, it is necessary to examine the process that states use to change their war aims and to look at cases where observed war termination results may not match with existing international relations theory.

To answer these questions regarding changes in national war aims and sub-optimal peace agreements, it is first necessary to examine existing international relations theory. In the section that follows, this work will briefly lays out the expectations of systemic, domestic, and cultural theories regarding how and why states should alter their war aims. This section proceeds by first addressing the assumptions of each theory, then examining their claims regarding war termination and national war aims, and finally concludes with

a discussion of how one would evaluate these theories to determine if their claims matched the evidence of a particular case.

1.2 Guidance from Existing Theories

1.2.1 System-Level Theory

System-level theories attempt to create parsimonious theories of international politics by examining the ordering principle of the international environment, the functional differentiation between various states, and the alliance patterns between those states.\textsuperscript{17} According to systemic theory, the ordering principle for the international system is anarchy. Because of the anarchic nature of the international environment, states cannot fully trust the intentions of each other and there is no universal power to enforce international agreements or treaties. In this uncertain world, systemic theories assume that the primary objective of a state is survival.\textsuperscript{18} This survival motive conditions states to


\textsuperscript{18}According to Waltz, “I assume that states seek to ensure their survival. The assumption is a radical simplification made for the sake of constructing a theory. The question to ask of the assumption, as ever, is not whether it is true but whether it is the most sensible and useful one that can be made...Beyond the survival motive, the aims of states may be endlessly varied...Survival is a prerequisite to achieving any goals that states may have, other than the goal of promoting their own disappearance as political entities.”

act in similar rational utility maximizing ways. This pressure to conform to the incentives of the international system has the effect of minimizing the importance of domestic structures in international politics because nations typically choose to act in roughly similar ways. Differentiation of national capabilities and alliance patters the most important variables for predicting outcomes in the international system. These variables determine the distribution of power across the international system and thus direct the actions the state must take to survive.

Systemic theories have several critical claims regarding the war termination process. Again, system-level theory assumes that the states seek to survive and will take rational steps to maximize their expected security.¹⁹ In these theories, there is no distinction between the theoretical cost-benefit equilibrium and the domestic or cultural expectations

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¹⁹ This assumption has been broadly criticized within the international relations literature. According to Randall Schweller, this assumption leads to a “status quo-bias” within international relations theory because it depicts states as only concerned with maintaining their current status in the international system. John Mearsheimer goes even further suggesting that Waltz’s work actually rejects rational actor assumptions altogether and instead “that the theory’s strong suit is its normative value-its ability to explain how the world should work, not how it actually works, at least not how it has worked up to now.” To their credit, Waltz and others do not claim that states will always act hyper rationally, only that they should act to preserve their own security and that they will typically be punished for any variation from these predictions. See: Schweller, Randall. "Neorealism's Status-Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" Security Studies 5:3 (Spring 1996): 90-121. and Mearsheimer, John. “Reckless States and Realism.” International Relations, 23:2 (June 2009): 241-256.
of the state. States should alter their expectations in a fluid manner as a response to new information regarding the prospects for victory. If a state is winning, it should ask for more, and if a state is losing, it should demand less. States should evaluate the prospects for third party intervention in a similar manner with expected aid or intervention on the states behalf increasing a states war expectations and expected interference from outside actors decreasing war expectations from that state. Once a state has secured a settlement that meets or exceeds its expected utility for fighting, system-level theories predict that states will move quickly to terminate the conflict to lock in any of their hard won gains or avoid further losses or uncertainty.

Because of the powerful incentives and the consequences of anarchy, system-level theories do not predict significant variation from their claims. Any deviation from the rational utility maximizing expectation would be considered irrational and may result in states being punished and potentially eliminated from the international arena for violating the imperatives of the system. Because states are aware of these incentives they will typically make rational choices as a means of avoiding punishment.\textsuperscript{20} These strong and clear claims make it relatively simple to test the claims of systemic theory as they relate to conflict termination. If these models are correct, states should respond to changes in information regarding the likely outcomes of war in a rational manner consistent to the

\textsuperscript{20} According to Waltz, one major supporting piece of evidence for this claim is that states have consistently shown that they are durable survivors and that state death is very rare. Waltz, Kenneth N. \textit{Theory of International Politics}. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979. p. 95.
survival interests of the state. The decision to alter national war aims that result from these calculations should roughly approximate the expected rational equilibrium point for continued fighting. Similarly, any treaties or agreements that the states produce should be expected to represent the utility maximizing interests of the state and not domestic, cultural, or individual interests because the imperatives of the system compel states to act on their international best interests. Variation from these predictions may be the result of misperception or misinformation but should not be the product of domestic, cultural, or individual factors.²¹

Systemic theories do not claim that these factors can never influence international politics, rather that they are typically constrained by the incentives and pressures of the

²¹ Although the misperception variables are potentially quite fruitful research area, they are also very troubling. Misperception is difficult to distinguish without a broad historical perspective and is also difficult to isolate from random error. Further, any failures to act rationally can be labeled as a misperception rather than a deliberate choice to act in a particular way. In addition to constraining human agency, this creates an additional problem of falsification. Because of these limitations, this research will attempt to account for the potential of misperception and limited information by assessing what leaders knew when they made their decisions and analyzing these choices within their historical contexts. After these decisions have been placed in proper context, they will then be compared to the expectations of existing international relations theory. Jervis, Robert. Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. pp. 6-9.
international system.\textsuperscript{22} In short, these theories predict that states will act in their own best interest as defined by economic utility maximization and that the macro-level incentives of the international system will most strongly influence the conflict termination process. The burden of proof for system-level theories is that states should consistently adopt war aims that reflect the incentives of the system and should avoid outcomes where they suffer unnecessary punishment. If they do not, these theories should be questioned.

\textit{1.2.2 State-Level Theory}

State-level theories attempt to predict the foreign policies of states by examining the domestic politics of nations as well as the structures of that nation’s government. Unlike systemic models, state-level theories assume that states are functionally differentiated and that they respond to a broader range of domestic as well as international pressures. Although states are still rational-utility maximizers, these theories claim that states attentions are often directed to domestic audiences rather than simply the incentives of the international system. Because state-based models maintain that domestic politics shape foreign policy outcomes, they assume that differentiation of regime type and the influence of coalitions within the state are the most important variables for predicting

\textsuperscript{22} According to Waltz this incentives of the system can never fully constrain a world leaders, and “a small-number system can always be disrupted by the actions of a Hitler and the reactions of a Chamberlain.”

state behavior. According to this logic, these regime type variables are the most critical because they define the domestic attentions and interests of the state and determines the freedom of action that the state’s leaders have to pursue their various ends in the international system.

State-level theories make several distinct claims regarding the conflict termination process. During conflicts, these theories predict that regimes will try to balance domestic and international incentives as best they can as part of a two-level game designed to maximize both domestic and international payoffs. To this end, state-level theory predicts that regimes will alter war aims in a fluid manner as a response to pressures from their electorate which may or may not be directly linked to new information regarding the prospects for victory. According to these theories, the degree to which policy makers are allowed to influence this process and alter their nation’s war aims is a product of the domestic structure of that nation as well as the ability of the electorate to punish or reward the regime for its actions. For example, these theories argue that liberal democracies typically have state structures that restrict the war powers of its leaders. These restricted powers combined with the pressures of a potentially fickle public may make these states less accepting of losses and more willing to end unpopular wars. Similarly, an absolutist regime may have fewer constraints on the war making powers of its leaders. Because absolutist leaders are more insulated from the pressures of public

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opinion, its leaders may be able to more directly influence the conduct of wars and a nation’s war aims to suit their own purposes. Finally, such theories claim that mixed regime types typically have a highly cartelized power structure where leaders’ actions are influenced by a small but powerful domestic audience. These regime types may be uniquely dangerous during conflict termination scenarios because the narrow and potentially tenuous nature of the leadership’s political support may cause these leaders to alter their nation’s war aims in extreme ways to maintain the power and support of a narrow but decisive domestic audience. Whatever the regime type of a nation, these theories predict that once a state has secured a settlement that meets or exceeds the demands of the domestic audience, it will move quickly to terminate the conflict.

Although these state-level theories predict wide variation on conflict termination outcomes, they link these expected outcomes with the domestic political structure of the nation in question. Because of their strong and clear predictions, and despite this variation of outcomes, such theories are relatively simple to test. Consistent with these claims, states should respond to changes in information regarding the likely outcomes of war in manner that is driven primarily by the domestic structure of the state. A close

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examination of the domestic incentives placed on a regime should reveal variation in outcomes that correspond to variation in regime type. Thus, any alteration of a nation’s war aims or peace agreement will reflect the interests of regime in power, the limits of power placed on that regime, and the desires of electorate which holds the regime responsible for its actions. In liberal democracies, war aims should be the product of public opinion; in autocratic regimes, war aims should be the product of that nation’s leader; and in mixed regimes, war aims should be the product of the small but powerful group of elites that provide power and support for that nation’s leadership cadre. In short, these theories predict that war aims and resulting peace agreements should correspond to the restrictions of power placed on that nation’s leadership as well as the interests of the electorate that empowers and supports that nation’s policymakers. For this theory to be supported, historical evidence must clearly demonstrate that domestic factors shape the changes in state war aims more powerfully and consistently than other models.

1.2.3 Cultural Theory

Cultural theories attempt to predict the foreign policies of different nations by examining the effect that differing norms and beliefs have on a nation’s foreign policymaking. Like state-level models, cultural approaches assert that states are functionally differentiated and may have varied conceptions of their national interests as well as the best means for achieving their goals. Because the cultural differentiation between states shapes their values, these models suggest that it is necessary to relax the
assumption of fixed-economic preferences and instead focus on the influence of particular beliefs or values within a state to predict responses to international events. In these models, there is not a one-size fits all model or set of assumptions for predicting state behaviors and thus, a deeper understanding of states culture is necessary for explaining state behaviors. Although these theories willingly surrender some of their predictive leverage, they claim that deep cultural knowledge is the best single variable for predicting international outcomes.25

Despite this theoretical slipperiness, cultural theories do advance a series of claims for how states may define their war aims and make peace agreements. First, states should act in ways that are consistent with their conception of cultural values. Because of this, national war aims may not be directly linked to either the pressures of the international system or domestic factors within the state. Depending on how powerful this cultural influence is, such cultural forces may be the primary determinant of a nation’s willingness to alter its war aims. In general, if a war is being fought in a manner

consistent with the cultural values or priorities of a nation, the nation will not alter its war aims. Conversely, if a war is being fought in a manner which is inconsistent with the cultural values or priorities of a nation, the nation will alter its war aims to more closely reflect its cultural preferences. In its simplest form, a nation with a strong warrior ethos such as ancient Sparta would be expected to fight more fiercely and endure greater hardships than a pacifist state comprised of Tibetan monks, but this alone is not sufficient to construct a theory regarding war aims.  

One of the difficulties in testing the predictions of cultural theories is that they rely on a detailed understanding of the beliefs of specific nations as well as conceptions of their adversary and their nation’s place in the international system. Rather than attempt to apply “thick” system-level constructivism, this work will examine each case independently and ask two questions. First, what is the national culture of a particular nation? Second, how does this culture influence the war aims of that nation? Although

26 For an intriguing thesis of culture determining war aims and outcomes, see: Codevilla, Angelo and Seabury, Pual. War Ends and Means; Second Edition. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2006. According to Codevilla and Seabury, “wars are won or lost, nations live or die, primarily by the people’s willingness to fight, their ability to impose discipline upon themselves and their readiness to subordinate themselves to chiefs who know what they are doing, thereby turning potential into actual force at the right place at the right time.” p. 10. Despite the appeal of this approach, it is difficult to operationalize this truism into a parsimonious and predictive model.

this sacrifices some of the predictive leverage of systemic constructivism, this approach treats each state’s foreign policy as unique representation of that nation’s culture rather than a product of system-level beliefs.

For the purpose of predicting war aims, this approach has two distinct advantages. First, this provides a simpler and less contentious test for cultural models. Rather than attempting to prove that cultural forces act across the whole of the international system, this research will examine the effect of cultural beliefs in only the nations that are actively involved in the fighting. Second, this allows for a more detailed examination of how the specific beliefs of particular nations affect their war aims. This approach allows for greater variation of outcome by avoiding questions regarding the effect of “thick” culture across the entire system and instead focuses on the power of cultural forces within a nation to shape conflict termination.  

In general, states should be to adopt war aims that are compatible with their cultural values and reject those war aims that are incompatible with their specific cultural beliefs.

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28 In fairness, Wendt, and other “thick” constructivists do not claim to predict specific war aims of a belligerent power or conflict termination outcomes. Rather, systemic approach attempt to predict a nation’s willingness to cooperate based on the prevailing norms of the system. Although these type of models may predict broad trends of anarchy across the international system, for any given case it would still be necessary to answer difficult questions regarding states’ self conceptions of the international system. See: Wendt, Alexander. Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. esp. pp. 246-312.
Variation in war aims or war outcomes should correspond to variation in the cultural values of a given society. Despite the elegance of these general claims, they present a tricky methodological problem. Because cultural theories claim that these beliefs can be widely varied, it is very difficult to generalize about conflict termination outcomes across a wide range of cases. Falsifying the claim that cultural beliefs shape war aims is difficult because it presents a potential tautology. If war aims are the products of culture, then any observed shift in war aims must therefore reflect the cultural preferences of that nation.

The difficulty of establishing direct causation requires additional empirical scrutiny. Instead of simply looking at how variations in war aims match the culture of a given nation, it is necessary to directly examine cases where strong cultural incentives to change war aims were ignored in favor of other factors. If it can be demonstrated that states explicitly weigh cultural imperatives above other considerations when determining their war aims, then the historical evidence supports the predictions of cultural models. Although few would argue that culture does impact nations’ international behaviors on the margins, this theory claims that culture shapes international outcomes more strongly than any other factor. These cultural theories are difficult to support or refute thoroughly but are worthy of additional scrutiny and historical analysis. To this end, this research will examine the impact of culture on war aims and attempt to test the proposition that the particular culture of belligerent nations shapes their war aims.
1.3 A Theory of Leaders’ Motivations During Conflict Termination

1.3.1 The Theory in a Nutshell

This work proposes and tests an alternative theory of how states define their war aims. In brief, this theory claims that leaders are highly motivated to protect their own survival and may attempt to alter their nation’s war aims to account for their own security concerns. This effect should be most pronounced in cases where nations are facing defeat in an interstate war because of the uncertainties associated with national defeat. Because leaders prioritize their own security, this theory predicts that leaders will revise their nations’ war aims to assure their future survival. These personal needs frequently oppose the optimal war aims predicted by existing theories and may result in outcomes that are antithetical to the best interests of the nation.

Compounding this dynamic is the fact that because leaders seek to avoid punishment, they place a lower limit to their nation’s war aims. This lower limit on a nation’s war aims means that states may not be able to accept optimal peace conditions if such conditions would likely result in the physical or legal punishment of their national leader. Conversely, leaders may alter their nations’ war aims to accept side payments or security guarantees such as exile, immunity, or collaboration as a condition for terminating a conflict. In such cases, leaders may produce sub-optimal outcomes because they choose to accept peace conditions that disproportionately benefit them over their nation. In short,
this theory claims that under certain circumstances, leaders will alter their nations’ war aims to reflect their own security interests and this alteration of national war aims may produce very severe consequences for international politics.

1.3.2 Assumptions

This alternative theory is based on two assumptions regarding human motivation. The first is that human beings most primal motivation is to seek physical security. The second is that leaders will attempt to use their power to protect their security. On the simplest biological level, human beings typically view physical security as a basic bodily need such as food, oxygen, excretion, and sleep.\(^{29}\) Because physical security is an essential good that is necessary to maintain homeostasis, this theory assumes that all rational living beings wish to maintain control over their own bodily safety. Although humans should desire more than just the bare minimum needed to maintain life, without satisfying this basic need all other human goals are impossible.\(^ {30}\) Because all leaders are human, this assumption should apply broadly to all leaders whatever their specific political, ideological, religious, or cultural biases.

This assumption brings up a question of possible selection bias. By definition, leaders


are very unique. Leaders represent the minority of people who possess the drive, political skills, and luck to obtain high office. Because of their unique talents and willingness to actively engage in the political process, it is reasonable to argue that leaders calculate risk and rewards differently. Even if leaders are not biologically or psychologically different than non-leaders, it is possible that they are uniquely committed to a particular cause and would be more willing to risk their lives, liberty, and honor to achieve their chosen ends.

While it is possible that leaders are uniquely risk acceptant as a group and do not prioritize their own security in the same way as non-leaders, such an assumption is necessary for the purpose of constructing this theory and is easily falsifiable. If closer inspection reveals that leaders do not express concerns regarding their own security or that certain other cultural, ideological, or political factors trump these security motivations, then it should cast doubt on this assumption.

On a more venal level, it is possible that leaders should be more sensitive to risk because the wish to avoid death as a means of enjoying not just the basic pleasures of life but the unique opportunities and

31 Harold Lasswell has suggested that leaders are uniquely insecure on a personal level and will thus be more willing to accept risk in order to provide for their personal need for affirmation and importance. Lasswell, Harold D. World Politics and Personal Insecurity. New York: Free Press, 1965.

32 If it is true that leaders are unique and do not prioritize their own security, then Raymond Aron’s claim that leaders willingly risk their safety for higher goals such as prestige and glory appears to be an acceptable truism and future research should be guided towards analyzing how leaders are psychologically or biologically unique from “ordinary” people or non-leaders. Aron, Raymond. Peace and War: a Theory of International Relations. Garden City: Anchor Press, 1973.
increased status associated with their rule. In any event, this theory is premised on the assumption that leaders are strongly motivated by their own mortality and will wish to avoid physical punishment and death.

The second assumption of this theory is that leaders will attempt to act on their security concerns and when possible use the structures of their states to provide for their security needs. This assumption builds on the belief that uncertainty and mistrust drive international politics and that leaders cannot wholly trust others to protect their own security. In such a self-help system, leaders must rely on their own actions to achieve their goals and will attempt to use their position as a world leader to satisfy this need for security. This does not mean that these leaders will always be successful in their attempts to use the state for their own ends. Rather, this assumes that leaders will try to protect their own security interests and will attempt to manipulate their states to serve this purpose. Indeed as other theories suggest, there are many good reasons to believe that leaders will be prohibited from taking such actions or that they will not be able to wield influence over the conflict termination process as they intend. Much like the prior assumption regarding human motivation, this assumption is relatively simple to test by looking at how leaders discuss threats to their security and if they attempt to satisfy these goals by using their power over the state to further their own interests. While history does provide examples of leaders choosing to sacrifice their personal security, such behaviors appear rare when leaders have other options such as continued fighting or negotiating a peace settlement that provides for their post-war security. Significant deviation from
either of these assumptions should call into the question the premise of this alternative theory; however these assumptions are necessary for creating a theory that is generalizable across a broad range cases.

1.3.3 A Theory of Private Security and Public Choices

Many different concerns compete for the attention of international leaders, but none so powerfully as the need for personal security. Leaders respond to an exceedingly complex range of systemic, domestic, and cultural incentives and audiences but they should also be acutely aware of their own personal needs. Of those private needs, nothing should be more pressing than the need to avoid death or severe punishment. Although it is difficult to model exactly which of these variables will drive leaders’ decisions during periods of relative stasis, leaders should be highly aware of their need for personal security during periods of interstate war.

War raises the stakes of international relations, increases the probability of cataclysmic shifts in power, and may leave leaders particularly vulnerable to death, capture, humiliation, or other forms of punishment. For better or worse, leaders are often associated with the wars their nations fight. While a victorious leader may expect to profit from a successful conflict, defeated leaders have good reasons to fear the
consequences of defeat.\textsuperscript{33}

Leaders are often explicitly targeted by their opponents during conflicts. In some cases, the death of a leader is even adopted as a specific war aim of a belligerent nation. This may stem from the tendency of states to personify the nation with its leader or from a more base desire to eliminate potentially dangerous leaders from positions of power. For obvious reasons, the demand for a leader’s death as a condition for war termination provides clear signals regarding the costs of defeat for that leader.

Even when regime change is not a specific war aim of a nation, leaders should have much to fear from war and its aftermath. Decapitation strikes aimed to kill the top command echelon or isolate key leaders from command and control of their forces present threats to those who may be in the crosshairs of these attacks. There is evidence to suggest that such tactics have become increasingly common with the advent of more accurate and destructive weapons and the ability to use such weapons at relatively safe stand-off ranges.\textsuperscript{34} While such attacks may not always achieve their intended objectives, they do appear to cause leaders to divert time and resources to their own security and also


\textsuperscript{34} For two recent articles highlighting the growing trend of targeting leaders, see: Byman, Daniel. "Do Targeted Killings Work?" \textit{Foreign Affairs} 85:2 (March/April 2006): 95-112. and Lotrionte, Catherine “When to Target Leaders?” \textit{The Washington Quarterly} 26:3 (Summer 2003): 73-86.
disrupt command and control. Such attacks on leadership targets send very clear and threatening signals to those leaders and should make them carefully consider their prospects for survival.

Even when the fighting stops, leaders have many reasons to fear for their own security. Since the end of WWII, international legal regimes have increasingly brought defeated leaders to trial and have frequently enacted severe punishments including death. Leaders may also fear other forms of ad hoc victor’s justice such as summary execution, a rigged show trial, or the handoff of the leader to hostile dissident groups. Whatever their legal status or legitimacy, all of these potential outcomes are unacceptable to a leader because they pose a clear threat to their post-war security. Consistent with the


36 During WWII, many within the United States and British governments favored summary execution of top Nazi leaders such as Hitler, Himmler, and Goering. Kochkavi, Arieh J. Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998. pp. 63-91. Winston Churchill was particularly adamant regarding his desire to quickly dispose of Hitler should he fall into Allied hands. According to recently released transcripts of British cabinet meetings, Churchill devised a scheme to borrow an American-made electric chair to execute Hitler on the spot. Although this contingency was rendered moot by historical events, it does underscore the fact that leaders should fear extra-legal threats to their survival even at the end of interstate wars. Crossland, John. “Churchill: Execute Hitler Without Trial.” Sunday Times, 1 January 2006.
assumptions of this theory, leaders have powerful incentives to avoid all of these potentially threatening outcomes.

Contrary to the predictions of systemic, domestic, or cultural models, this theory suggests that under certain circumstances, leaders will have a disproportionate effect on the conflict termination process. When leaders exert agency over their nations’ war aims, this model predicts that changes in national war aims should reflect the security concerns of those leaders. These leaders will alter their nation’s war aims in a fluid manner as a strategy to protect their own security. Unlike nations, that can move across the entire spectrum of outcomes from total victory to total defeat, a security seeking leader will rarely accept an outcome that results in their own death, capture, or punishment.

This creates a potential bargaining problem for leaders facing defeat because it places a lower limit on the nature of defeat they are willing to accept. While a state would be expected to lower its war aims to accommodate the expected value for continued fighting, leaders have incentives that are divergent from their nations on the lower end of the spectrum. These divergent interests may be particularly evident when a nation’s expected bargaining equilibrium is below non-negotiable lower limits mandated by its leader or when the punishment of that leader is a specific war aim of the opposing nation.

Assuming that personal security is the primary motivation for leaders, it should take precedent over public concerns such as the national welfare, domestic tranquility, or cultural logics of appropriateness. No matter what the costs, this model posits that leaders should never willingly accept conflict termination that jeopardizes their own security.
even if such outcomes were in the best interests of their nations or the international system. Although this alternative incentive structure is entirely rational from the perspective of an individual leader, it does not match existing theories for war termination.

This dynamic should be particularly pervasive when leaders are faced with defeat and cannot provide for their own security through negotiation with their opponents. Because leaders are unwilling to lower their war aims below a level necessary to maintain their personal security, they will adopt a set of behaviors that will attempt to provide the best guarantee for their security under the given circumstances. When leaders are faced with defeat in an interstate war, this model claims that leaders’ behaviors should fall into one of four basic categories: delaying, dealing, gambling, or self-sacrifice.

Delaying strategies are, in effect, a temporary acceptance of the status quo. As part of a delaying strategy, war aims remain unchanged. Although the leader in question may not be satisfied with the current state of affairs, a delaying strategy may be preferable to either making a deal to end the war or escalating the fighting. Delaying strategies seek to buy more time for events to unfold. Because delaying strategies seek to extend the duration of the conflict by retaining the existing war aims, they are most likely in the presence of uncertainty or low-levels of threat to the leader. Leaders who adopt delaying strategies are waiting for more information involving international events and their likely post-conflict fates or are hoping to perpetuate a military or political stalemate. If the demands of an opponent are unclear or peace negotiations are stalled, then leaders should
keep their war aims relatively unchanged as they wait for further information regarding the outcome of the war or their likely post-conflict security. This strategy should be particularly attractive to leaders who face unclear political or military situations and are not immediately threatened by military force.

Dealing strategies seek to end the conflict via negotiation. As part of a dealing strategy, war aims may be lowered to end the fighting on terms that are acceptable to both sides. Such strategies are most likely when a leader is threatened but has the ability to impose costs on their opponents that exceed the opponent’s willingness to pay. If a belligerent party is willing to negotiate, a leader may demand security guarantees as a *quid pro quo* for accepting peace. These assurances can range from immunity from legal prosecution, to an arranged exile, and even explicit collaboration. Whatever the arrangement, these deals require an opponent that is willing to accommodate a leader’s desire for security and is unwilling to pay the costs of continued fighting. Although this rational calculation appears similar to the predictions of system-level theories, it differs because the negotiation is focused on a settlement that maximizes the security of the leader rather than the expected security of the nation. Indeed, contrary to the prediction of system-level theory, a leader may very well accept such a deal even if it is overtly contrary to the best interests of his state. This strategy should be attractive to leaders who believe that without such a deal that the conflict would ultimately result in their own punishment and that their adversary can credibly commit to maintaining such an agreement.
Gambling strategies are the option of last resort for most leaders.\(^{37}\) As part of a gambling strategy, war aims remain unaltered or may even increase in spite of the increasingly unfavorable military situation. In such cases leaders continue fighting unproductive wars while maintaining the faint hope of a miracle victory. When presented with the stark choice between accepting punishment or betting on a slim chance for redemption, leaders should prefer to gamble as a means to delay future punishment. Gambling strategies are highly risky for the nation and its people but relatively low cost for the leader. The worst outcome for a leader who loses an attempted gamble is that they have delayed punishment to a future date at the cost of their nation. From a leader’s perspective, gambling strategies are attractive because it keeps open the possibility of winning while passing the costs of losing disproportionately on the nation. This strategy should appeal to leaders who believe that they cannot end an unprofitable conflict without risking their security lives.

A final possible strategy is self-sacrifice. As part of a self-sacrifice strategy, war aims

\(^{37}\) There is an alternative explanation that some leaders, such as Saddam Hussein, enjoy high-risk statecraft and may be particularly willing to expose themselves to danger. This behavior is generally considered highly unusual and does not appear typical of most world leaders. This alternative explanation will be discussed at length in chapter 5 when it is applied to the case of Saddam Hussein. On the alternative explanation of leaders acting as egotistical power seekers, see generally: Lasswell, Harold D. *World Politics and Personal Insecurity.* New York: Free Press, 1965. and Post, Jerrold M. *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
are reduced to whatever level necessary to end an unproductive conflict. According to the alternative theory presented here, self-sacrifice strategies should occur very rarely because it is contrary to the individual security assumption and exposes the leader to potential punishment. Rather than lower war aims to achieve an uncertain peace, leaders should prefer to pass the costs of continued conflict on to their nations and adopt any of the previous options.

The underlying tension in this alternative theory is the divergent interests between the leader and the state. If leaders are primarily motivated by their own security needs, they should be willing to take actions that are contrary to the best interests of their nations. This dynamic is summarized in the Figure 1.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War Ended</th>
<th>Leader Safe</th>
<th>Leader Not Safe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safe-End ((1,1))</td>
<td>Not Safe-End ((4,2))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing</td>
<td>Self Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Continued</td>
<td>Safe-Continue ((2,3))</td>
<td>Not Safe-Continue ((3,4))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delaying</td>
<td>Gambling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For the Leader:** Safe-End > Safe-Continue > Not Safe-Continue > Not Safe-End

**For the State:** Safe-End > Not Safe-End > Safe-Continue > Not Safe-Continue

**Figure 1.1.** 2x2 Breakdown of Leaders’ Choices for Continuing or Ending a Unprofitable Interstate Conflict

1.3.4 *Hypothesis Testing the Alternative Theory*

This work attempts to test both the motivations of leaders as well as their ability to break with systemic, domestic, and cultural constraints on their actions and produce outcomes that are not predicted by systemic, domestic, and cultural theories. To answer the original three questions regarding unusual conflict termination dynamics this work will advance six hypotheses \((H1-H6)\).
Question #1. Why do some states surrender when they still have latent military capabilities?

*H1: Leaders alter their nations’ war aims during interstate wars to protect their post-conflict security.*

This hypothesis builds on the assumption that leaders are primarily motivated by their personal security and claims that they will alter national war aims to reflect this private need. To this end, leaders should use their militaries where necessary to protect their security. For this hypothesis to be true, we would expect to see leaders altering their nations war aims in manners that do not reflect the predictions of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories but instead promote a course of action where leaders use the conflict to provide for their own security needs. In terms of the matrix above, leaders should consistently order their preferences as: Safe-End (Dealing Strategy) > Safe-Continue (Delaying Strategy) > Not Safe-Continue (Gambling Strategy) > Not Safe-End (Self-Sacrifice Strategy).

If true, this hypothesis suggests that leaders use their states as tools to protect their own security interests. Although leaders should prefer winning over losing, national power is ultimately irrelevant if it does not produce an acceptable degree of security for the nation’s leader. This willingness to use national power for security seeking purposes may help explain the variation of military capabilities at the end of wars. While a leader would prefer to end a war with the greatest possible amount of military power, they will
use these capabilities if needed to protect themselves from punishment.

*H2: Leaders will move to end unprofitable wars once they can credibly guarantee their post-conflict security.*

This hypothesis builds upon the previous hypothesis and proposes how leaders protect their security by ending unprofitable wars once they have guaranteed their own security. Although leaders wage wars for a wide range of issues, they should never allow these conflicts to jeopardize their own security. To this end, leaders should avoid potential losses in their security by ending wars as soon as they can assure their own survival. For this hypothesis to be true, we would expect to see leaders ending unprofitable conflicts as soon as they secure credible guarantees regarding their post conflict security. This does not mean that leaders willingly forego better outcomes for their states to protect their own security, rather that security concerns drive their willingness to accept peace agreements and that such assurances are a necessary inducement to end unwanted wars. In terms of the matrix above, this means that leaders may be willing to accept a sub-optimal “Safe-End” provided that they believe that such a dealing strategy produces an outcome that is truly safe.

If true, this hypothesis helps answer the above question by suggesting that leaders are risk adverse and will end unprofitable wars as soon as they can guarantee their future security. This should help explain why leaders prefer to avoid fighting to the last man and instead seek to preserve some of their latent military capabilities for future use. Despite
these preferences, leaders are not above using their forces to extend their security for even a brief period of time as described below.

Question #2. Why do some states continue fighting when they have little if any hope of achieving their war aims?

**H3: Leaders place a lower limit on their conditions for peace and will not willingly accept an outcome that results in their own death, capture, punishment, or any other threat to their personal security.**

Like hypothesis #1, this hypothesis attempts to address the ability of leaders to alter their nations’ war aims. Unlike systemic, domestic, or cultural theories, this hypothesis suggests that leaders will not alter their war aims along the entire spectrum of outcomes from total victory to total defeat, but instead place a lower limit on their nations’ war aims. This minimum security limit creates a dynamic where leaders will not accept an outcome that results in their punishment. For this hypothesis to be true, we would expect to see leaders refusing to lower their nations’ war aims below any outcome that resulted in their own punishment despite the fact that systemic, domestic, or cultural theories would predict that they should accept a lesser bargain for their nation. Consistent with the terms of the above matrix, leaders will only adopt dealing strategies when they can obtain “Safe-Ends” to conflicts. Instead of negotiating a self sacrificing “Not Safe-End,” leaders would prefer to adopt delaying or gambling strategies. If true, this hypothesis helps
explain why leaders are unwilling to lower their nations’ war aims and accept the possibility of punishment. This refusal to lower national war aims may explain why wars may be continued to protect the interests of the leader despite the fact that a nation has little or nothing to gain from continued fighting. This fundamental bargaining problem may provide insight into conflict termination by highlighting a potentially intractable set of issues and concerns for international leaders.

H4: Leaders have a different incentive structure than their states and will prefer to continue unprofitable or unwinnable conflicts rather than accept a potential loss in their post-conflict security.

Hypothesis #4 builds on hypothesis #3 and suggests that leaders will prefer to continue unwinnable conflicts rather than end them and risk post-conflict punishment. For this hypothesis to be true, we would expect to see leaders refusing to end conflicts because of fears regarding their post-conflict security. In the terms of the above matrix, leader’s preferences are: Safe-End > Safe-Continue > Not Safe-Continue > Not Safe-End as compared to state-level preferences which are: Safe-End > Not Safe-End > Safe-Continue > Not Safe-Continue. Although both the leader and the state may benefit from a “Safe-End” the leader would prefer to continue unprofitable conflicts through delaying or gambling strategies rather than accept an ending that is not safe.

If true, this hypothesis should explain why leaders are unwilling to end unprofitable wars unless they can guarantee their post-conflict security. This dynamic may further
explain why wars may be continued despite the fact that a nation has little or nothing to gain from continued fighting.

Question#3. Why do some states fail to act as rational utility maximizers during the conflict-termination process?

_H5: Leaders are more interested in maintaining their post-conflict security than extracting the best possible systemic, domestic, or cultural conditions from their opponents._

Hypothesis #5 builds on hypothesis #1 and suggests that leaders will seek settlements that reflect their personal security goals rather than the best interests of their states. For this hypothesis to be true, we would expect to see leaders explicitly seeking settlements that maintain their own security but forgo expected systemic, domestic, or cultural gains. This test is ambitious because it suggests that leaders are so motivated by their personal security that they will purposely use their positions as a leader to accept a lesser deal that they could have reasonably expected in order to ensure their own survival. If true, this hypothesis helps answer the above question by suggesting that leaders not only alter their nations’ war aims, but willingly choose not to use their potential power to extract the best possible bargain from their opponents.
H6: Leaders may accept side payments that manipulate their desire for post-conflict security such as exile, immunity, or collaboration as an inducement for ending a conflict.

This final hypothesis tests the willingness of leaders to explore alternative means of ending conflicts that may be contrary to the best interests of their nations. In terms of the above matrix, this hypothesis further tests the willingness of leaders to accept “Safe-Ends” to conflicts. Again, these dealing strategies reflect private not public interests and may result in suboptimal bargains for the state that are not reflected by international relations theory. For this hypothesis to be true, we would expect to see leaders attempting to broker deals that provide side payments for them to end a conflict as a *quid pro quo* for ending a conflict in a manner that is contrary to the predictions of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories.

If true, this behavior would provide strong support for the theories of this work because it would represent an explicit manipulation of the conflict termination process by leaders specifically for the purposes of protecting their own security interests. Such behaviors could potentially explain why some settlements that do not represent the best interests of the defeated state by showing how and when leaders accept side payments for ending interstate wars.
1.4 Testing the Hypotheses with Case-Based Research

1.4.1 Criteria for Case Selection

Since one of the primary goals of this research is to address potential shortcomings of existing theories, this research purposely chooses cases that should fit well within existing systemic, domestic, and cultural models. To engage with systemic models, this research purposely chooses cases where leaders have powerful macro-level incentives from the international system. In such cases, leaders should be informed of the likely costs of continued fighting and have clear pressures from the international system to adopt policies that are in the best interests of their nations. In such cases, leaders should have the clear choice between revising their nations’ war aims downward to end the conflict, or maintaining higher war aims contrary to the incentives of the system. These incentives and the prediction of system-level theories are summarized in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1. Predictions of System-level Theories Broken Down by Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>1919-21</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1980-88</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Pilsudski</td>
<td>Petain</td>
<td>Hirohito</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Incentives for Continued Fighting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No/Mixed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of System-level Theories</td>
<td>Desire to End Fighting at or Above the Expected Equilibrium Point</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Aims Represent:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of Alternative Theory</td>
<td>Desire to Protect Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Aims Represent:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To engage with the domestic politics models, this research purposely investigates cases that present a wide range of regime types. The most relevant work on this subject is War and Punishment by Hein Goemans and for this reason, this work will address his claims directly. To test Goemans’ claims, this work will specifically examine all three of the regime types (mixed, democratic and autocratic) that Goemans predicts influence how a nation defines its war aims. By testing for the alteration of war aims across regime types, this work will examine this claim that domestic structures shape war aims and conflict termination outcomes. Of particular note is Goemans’ claim that mixed regimes are the most dangerous form of government because their narrow electorate fails to properly constrain leaders and also makes them more worried about their post-conflict security. To this end, this research will examine two cases of mixed regimes Poland and
Japan that should provide a best case for Goemans’ theory.38 If these dynamics vary across governmental types, this supports Goemans’ assertion that regime-types drive war aims. However, if these behaviors are present across regime types, then it calls into question the validity of such an approach by suggesting that some factor other than regime type is the primary driver of conflict termination. These incentives and the prediction of domestic theories are summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Predictions of Domestic-level Theories Broken Down by Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>1919-21</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1980-88</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Pilsudski</td>
<td>Petain</td>
<td>Hirohito</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime Type</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of State-level Theories</td>
<td>Interests of a Select Few</td>
<td>Interests of the Entire Citizenry</td>
<td>Interests of a Select Few</td>
<td>Interests of the Autocrat</td>
<td>Interests of the Autocrat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Prediction of Alternative Theory | Security interests of the Leader |}

38 The case of Japan during WWII is a particularly good fit for testing Goemans’ model because of the semi-exclusive nature of the regime which shared power between the military, the officially chosen candidates of the cabinet, and Emperor Hirohito. Despite these seemingly ideal conditions, Reiter and others have found little evidence to support Goemans’ theories as they relate to the case of Imperial Japan.

This research also chooses cases where leaders have strong cultural or normative incentives to guide their decisions and instead choose to pursue their security interests. This selection criterion is necessary to test the alternative cultural explanation, and may also help explain why wars produce results that do not reflect the values of their participants. Unlike systemic or domestic factors, cultural expectations for war aims are more difficult to quantify. Despite this difficulty, it is still possible to choose cases where leaders have had to choose between the cultural pressures and their own security. These choices may include the use of generally unacceptable tactics or weapons, the violation of international laws or norms, an unwillingness to cooperate with a traditional enemy, a cultural aversion to surrender, or religious and ethnic identities. To examine the potential impact of these cultural factors, this work will examine cases where leaders have been forced to choose between adhering to cultural logics of appropriateness or the potential consequences of not protecting their personal security. These incentives and the prediction of cultural theories are summarized in Table 1.3.
Table 1.3. Predictions of Cultural Theories Broken Down by Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>1919-21</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1980-88</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Pilsudski</td>
<td>Petain</td>
<td>Hirohito</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prediction of Cultural Theories</strong></td>
<td>Anti-Russian Feelings and the Spirit of National Revolution</td>
<td>Fears of German Occupation and the Patriotic Spirit of France</td>
<td>Ancient Japanese Warrior Code, a Refusal to Surrender and Reverence to Emperor Hirohito</td>
<td>Desire of Iraq to Maintain its Independence from Iran and Serve as an Example for Pan-Arabism</td>
<td>Desire of Iraq to Defy American Pressures and Unite Pan-Arab Movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prediction of Alternative Theory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Security interests of the Leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simply providing rigorous empirical tests for existing theories is not a sufficient criterion for case selection. It is also necessary to establish the causal relationship offered by this alternative theory by comparing cases with significant variation between the independent and dependent variables. Different threats to a leader’s perceived personal security should result in these leaders altering their nation’s war aims in different ways. To avoid selecting cases based on the dependent variable; this research selects cases with measurable variation of the independent variable of perceived threat to a leader’s personal security. Specifically, this work will look at three cases (Pilsudski during the Russo-Polish War and Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War) where the threat to the leader was high and three cases (Petain during WWII, Hirohito during WWII, and
Hussein during Gulf War I) where the threat was mixed or ambiguous. The hypothetical predictions of the alternate theories are summarized in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4. Predictions of Alternate Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland Year(s)</th>
<th>France Year(s)</th>
<th>Japan Year(s)</th>
<th>Iraq Year(s)</th>
<th>Iraq Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Pilsudski</td>
<td>Petain</td>
<td>Hirohito</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IV) Threat to Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DV) Alteration of War Aims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H1) Alteration of War Aims to Protect Post-Conflict Security</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H2) Leaders End Unprofitable Wars if Post-Conflict Security Assured</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H3) Leaders Place Lower Limit on Their Nation’s War Aims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H4) Leaders Prefer to Continue Unprofitable Wars Rather Than Risk Their Post-Conflict Security</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H5) Leaders May Accept Sub-optimal Conditions to Protect Their Security</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H6) Acceptance of Side Payment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4.2 Multiple Decision Points

While this variation on the dependent variable is essential for establishing causation, it alone does not necessarily help choose which cases are best to study. One way to maximize the empirical leverage of the selected cases is to look for multiple decision points within each case. These within case junctures have two primary benefits. First it
helps establish the robustness of causality by showing the different options presented to each leader and describing why they made various policy decisions. Second, analyzing multiple decisions within each case also allows for a greater number of tests of the predictions of existing theories and the alternative model presented in this research. This is as close as social science can come to a natural experiment, because it holds all other variables constant while changing the balance of power and the associated threat to the leader.

Within each of these cases, this research will conduct in-depth analysis to identify the factors that influenced changes in national war aims and the specifics of the conflict-termination process. To provide a fair analysis of these cases, this research will examine a wide range of sources. The secondary historical literature provides context for this investigation. By understanding the historical facts of the cases, it is possible to understand the range of options and alternatives available to these decision makers. Within this broad context, this research uses primary sources to show why a leader chose to adopt a certain political option. These sources include secret government reports, diaries, autobiographies, and personal interviews and are intended to illuminate the thought processes of these leaders. Such evidence is designed to explain why such a decision was made and why other options were not made. After examining the evidence, the research will attempt to compare the observed historical outcomes with the predictions of structural, domestic, and cultural theories as well as the alternative theory of this research.
In the case of Poland during the Russo-Polish War contains five key decision points that will be examined in the empirical section of this work: 1) the rejection of the Soviet peace overtures known as the Markhlevskii Missions; 2) the decision to ignore Allied peace offers and instead launch an offensive into Ukraine; 3) the series of military defeats and the military retreat towards Warsaw; 4) the rejection of a “final” Soviet peace offer in favor of a high stakes gamble for redemption at the outskirts of Warsaw; and 5) the subsequent “Miracle of the Vistula” and the resulting Peace of Riga. These decision points yield the changes in strategy as outlined in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5. Decision Points for Pilsudski

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Pilsudski’s Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markhlevskii Missions</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine Offensive</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat to Warsaw</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle of Warsaw</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace of Riga</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case of France during WWII played out over a shorter time period, but still has four distinct decision points: 1) the deadlock in the Reynaud government over the decision to continue the war from North Africa; 2) Marshall Petain’s ascension to power and his almost immediate call for an armistice; 3) the debate with the Nazis over peace conditions, most notably over the status of the French Fleet and the release of French prisoners of war; and 4) Petain’s subsequent collaboration with the Nazi regime as a means of protecting his status as ruler of Vichy. These decision points yield the changes
in strategy as outlined in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6. Decision Points for Petain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Reynaud/Petain’s Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadlock in Reynaud Government</td>
<td>Medium Delay (Reynaud)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petain’s rise to Power and Call for Armistice</td>
<td>Medium Deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate with the Nazis Regarding Status of French Fleet</td>
<td>Medium Deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petain’s Collaboration</td>
<td>Medium Deal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case of Japan during WWII contains six distinct decision points that will be examined in detail: 1) the gradual erosion of Japan’s military capability and the advance of Allied forces towards the Japanese home islands during the spring of 1945; 2) the Allied demand for the unconditional surrender of Japan with the so called Potsdam Declaration; 3) the Japanese reaction to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, 4) the Japanese reaction to the Soviet Declaration of War; 5) the Japanese reaction to atomic bombing of Nagasaki; and 6) the arrival of the “Byrnes letter” which provided assurances regarding Hirohito’s place in a post-war government, the factor that was decisive in convincing Japan to surrender. These decision points yield the changes in strategy as outlined in Table 1.7.
Table 1.7. Decision Points for Emperor Hirohito

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Hirohito’s Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gradual Loss of Japanese Military Strength</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potsdam Declaration</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroshima Bombing</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Declaration of War</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagasaki Bombing</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrnes Note</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the case of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf War I provide three decision points that will be examined in detail: 1) Hussein’s decision to seek peace with Iran after a successful Iranian spring 1982 offensive; 2) the acceptance of Soviet backed peace treaty prior to the Coalition ground offensive during Gulf War I; and 3) the subsequent acceptance of US cease fire that ended Gulf War I. In each of the cases, these decisions were preceded by changes in the battlefield situation during these conflicts and should have been expected to induce a change in the nation’s war aims. By examining the logic behind each of these decisions, this work will have multiple opportunities to test the validity of existing and alternate explanations for these events. These decision points yield the changes in strategy as outlined in Table 1.8.
Table 1.8. Decision Points for Hussein

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Hussein’s Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iranian Spring Offensive</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Deal to end Gulf War I</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Cease Fire</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Deal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to demonstrate the impact of the leaders in changing the war aims of their nations, it is also necessary to choose cases that display a wide range of outcomes. Here again, the cases of Poland, France, Japan, and Iraq prove ideal. In the case of Poland, there is significant variation of outcome that cleanly corresponds to variation of threat to the Polish leader, Joseph Pilsudski. Because he did not trust the Soviets, Pilsudski rejected repeated Soviet peace overtures and Allied mediation. Pilsudski initially adopted a delaying strategy, but as he recognized a Soviet military buildup on his Eastern border, Pilsudski rapidly shifted to a gambling strategy, first in a failed offensive into Ukraine and then in a final battle at the gates of Warsaw. Because Pilsudski was unwilling to lower Polish war aims to deal with the Soviets, Poland suffered great military and civilian losses, angered its potential allies, and received less land at the end of the Peace of Riga than it could have had two years before if it had accepted the initial Soviet peace offers.

The case of France differs greatly because the new French leader, Marshal Petain, adopted a dealing strategy and quickly signaled his desire for a rapid peace. Petain was able to quickly alter the nation’s war aims and overcome a significant portion of the French government who wanted to wage a protracted struggle from French bases in
Africa and Asia. The Nazis quickly accepted Petain’s willingness to end the fighting and empowered the French general to act as their puppet to govern France. The result produced a mixed reaction within the French population who simultaneously hated the Nazis but were increasingly war weary. This deal with the Nazis protected Petain and the majority of the French populace, but resulted in the deaths of countless Jews, gypsies, and political enemies of the Nazi regime.

In the case of Japan, Emperor Hirohito understood that Japan could not win the war from a relatively early point, but adopted a delaying strategy as the Allies slowly advanced towards the Japanese home islands. Although it appears that Hirohito and the Japanese military was willing to adopt a gambling strategy to inflict a maximum number of casualties on the Allies as possible, he was convinced to accept a deal with the Allies thanks to the adroit political manipulation of American under Secretary of State Joseph Grew and others. This guarantee of protection allowed Hirohito to twice break ties within the Japanese cabinet and lower the Japanese war aims. These revised expectations allowed Hirohito to end the war relatively quickly as well as remain Emperor after the fighting stopped.

Finally, the case of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and the first and Gulf War is also instructive. After his offensives during the Iran-Iraq war failed, Saddam Hussein quickly began to attempt a deal for a negotiated settlement with Iran. Despite his willingness to accept lower war aims, Hussein was forced to continue fighting because Iran insisted that Hussein’s death was the primary condition for an Iranian victory. Although Hussein had
already lowered Iraqi war aims, he would not allow his own death and instead bet that he could eventually outlast his Iranian foe. Ultimately, this attrition strategy combined with an increase in Iraqi military capabilities paid off for Hussein and he was able to force the Iranians back to the negotiating and terminate the unproductive conflict. During Gulf War I, Hussein initially adopted a delaying strategy but was quick to realize that his forces were no match for the Collation forces. Once the inferiority of the Iraqi military became clear, Hussein quickly shifted his strategy and attempted to broker a negotiated end the fighting. To this end, Hussein lowered the Iraqi war aims and accepted both the Soviet backed peace plan (which the Coalition rejected) and the subsequent US backed cease fire.

1.4.3 Revisiting Conventional Wisdom

One final reason for choosing these cases is that a detail examination of them may provide insight into existing historical debates. In the case of Poland, Pilsudski is frequently characterized by both Polish and Western scholars as an erratic national zealot who forged Poland out of his own strength of will and was blind to the tremendous risks associated with his actions. The debate regarding Petain’s legacy are much more nuanced and divisive. Popular opinion regarding Petain has waxed and waned between those who view him as a selfless servant of France to those who see him as an opportunistic pawn of the Nazi regime. The role of Emperor Hirohito has similarly polarized historical opinion.
and his role in the Japanese war effort, surrender, and post-war rebuilding.\textsuperscript{39} The debate over the role that the atomic bombs played in ending WWII in the Pacific is equally divided and has experienced similar flux in scholarly and public opinion. Finally, the historical legacy of Saddam Hussein is far from settled especially as new evidence emerges as to the inner workings of his regime. Without a doubt, questions regarding Hussein’s ability to rationally calculate threats and be deterred by force will continue for the foreseeable future. In sum, each of these cases may provide additional insight into these active debates.

1.5 Outline for the Remainder of the Work

The remainder of this work will test, evaluate and summarize the theory presented in this chapter. Chapter 2 analyzes the role of Josef Pilsudski in the Russo-Polish War. This chapter highlights Pilsudski’s multiple decisions regarding Polish war aims and examines in detail how the rapidly changing fortunes of war as well as Pilsudski’s distrust of the Soviets caused him to accept enormous risks as part of a gambling strategy. Ultimately Pilsudski’s alteration of Polish war aims protected his own security but caused Poland to end the war with a significantly worse outcome than it could have achieved at the

\textsuperscript{39} Perhaps no single scholar has done more to rekindle this debate as Herbert Bix who argues that Hirohito was significantly more involved in the Japanese decision making process than previously thought. See: Bix, Herbert P., \textit{Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan}. New York: Harper Collins, 2000.
negotiation table two year before. Chapter 3 concerns the French surrender of 1940 and the rapid alteration of the French democratic structure by Marshall Petain. In a shift in French war aims that is still contentious to this day, Petain willingly adopted a dealing strategy and engaged in direct collaboration with the Nazi regime as a means of ending the war quickly and protecting his individual security. Chapter 4 investigates Emperor Hirohito’s decision to surrender in 1945. This chapter examines the choice of Hirohito to break deep internal dissent within the Japanese government and force Japan to accept surrender with minimal conditions. In addition to examining the manipulation of Hirohito’s need for security, this chapter scrutinizes the cultural imperatives to continue fighting as well as the effects of the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war on the formation of Japanese war aims. Chapter 5 focuses on Saddam Hussein’s decision making in two different conflicts-The Iran-Iraq War and Gulf War I. This chapter discusses the varied threats to the Iraqi leader within each of these cases and shows how Hussein consistently altered the war aims of Iraq to promote his own security interests. Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion to the work. This final chapter summarizes the findings of the research, analyzes the validity of the work’s hypotheses, compares the findings of this work to existing theories, provides policy prescriptions, and provides directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: POLAND 1919-1921, REVOLUTION, UNCERTAINTY, AND SECURITY

SEEKING

No remedy has yet been found in war for the disease of absolute submission to the enemy’s will! -Marshall Joseph Pilsudski

Marshall Pilsudski then went on to say laughingly that he thought an agreement for the reduction of armaments would work just about as well as that other great American idea, the League of Nations – US Ambassador to Poland, Hugh Gibson

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2.1 The Case of Poland, 1919-1921

The Russo-Polish War is a conflict that has been largely ignored by international relations scholars despite its importance for shaping the politics of modern Europe. For the purposes of this work, this case is ideal because of the apparent failure of existing theories to explain how and why this war ended as it did. On the systemic level of analysis, this case is puzzling because the Polish nation appeared to act irrationally at multiple junctures when it failed to accept generous peace offers from its much stronger Soviet adversary and willingly alienated potential allies in Western Europe. As a result of these decisions, Poland was very nearly conquered and even after it achieved an improbable victory at the Battle of Warsaw, it received less territory and fewer political concession from the resulting Peace of Riga than it could have had a year before as part of the Soviet peace initiative. Although Poland was punished for acting in this manner, its very willingness to take such risks calls into question some of the fundamental assumptions of these systemic theories. In particular, Pilsudski’s unique distrust of the Russians made him unwilling to cooperate with his adversaries despite the increasingly unfavorable strategic balance. This personification of past actions goes far beyond

typical measures of credibility or calculation and is not adequately explained by system-level theories.\textsuperscript{4}

This case also provides many troubling issues for domestic theories. The Polish regime during this period was a mixed type that was nominally democratic but because increasingly nationalist and authoritarian as the war progressed. This small semi-repressive leadership cadre is precisely the type that is considered particularly dangerous by regime theorists such as Hein Goemans.\textsuperscript{5} On the surface, the evidence would appear to support such a regime-based explanation, but these domestic theories fail to answer why the Polish leader Joseph Pilsudski did not accept the initial Soviet peace offers and instead launched a preemptive attack into Ukraine, an act which ultimately led to his later gambles for redemption.

Culturally, this case is also interesting because the failure of the Poles to achieve peace with their Soviet adversaries ultimately threatened the very existence of the new Polish nation. Furthermore, strategic necessity caused the Poles to form an alliance of convenience with Ukrainian nationalist groups under the command of Atanman Petura who were almost as hated as the Russians. Although anti-Russian sentiments were


ultimately manipulated to stiffen Polish resistance, this war was never popular with the Polish people and was often considered contrary to the best interests of the nation. Despite this fickle public support, Pilsudski was able to continue a war that was not in the best interests of Polish nationalism and was incompatible with the Polish culture.

This chapter will argue that the Polish leader Joseph Pilsudski chose to ignore systemic, domestic, and cultural constraints on his power and instead committed Poland to a series of unproductive campaigns because he feared and mistrusted the Soviet regime. Although Pilsudski cared about the future of the Polish nation, he was frequently blinded by his own hatred of Russia and his suspicion of the Bolshevik government. This personal fear of the Soviets created a situation where Pilsudski believed that he could not negotiate in good faith and was forced to continue and later escalate the fighting. To this end, Pilsudski fought longer and more aggressively than many of his closest supporters believed that he could precisely because conflict was the only way he saw to provide for his private security interests. It is this fear and mistrust that would cause Pilsudski to reject a series of favorable peace offers, alienate potential allies in Western Europe, risk internal revolt from within Poland, and forge a nation only after he had protected his private security concerns.

By examining the military and diplomatic decisions and the revolutionary leadership of Marshall Joseph Pilsudski, this chapter will attempt to investigate the alternative hypotheses that leaders alter national war aims based on their own security needs rather than systemic, domestic, or cultural factors. Despite his public image as a revolutionary
zealot, Pilsudski was consistently willing to subvert his broad revolutionary aims in order to ensure his personal security. As this chapter will demonstrate, Pilsudski had multiple opportunities to choose between what was best for the fledgling Polish nation and what he believed would make him more secure. Consistent with the hypotheses of this research, Pilsudski choose to alter Polish war aims in a manner that best provided for his individual welfare at the cost of Poland and the revolutionary movement.

To examine this case in the proper context, the chapter will proceed by briefly analyzing the background of Joseph Pilsudski. His past activities are particularly important because they made him enduring enemies in both Russia and Germany, a fact that would later shape his perceptions of threats and greatly restrict his diplomatic options. The remainder of the chapter will test the hypothetical claims of the work by examining five critical decisions Pilsudski made regarding Polish war aims.

The first of decision that this chapter will analyze is Pilsudski’s rejection of the Soviet sponsored peace initiative know as the “Markhlevskii Missions” from June through December 1919. Despite the attractiveness of the Soviet offer, Pilsudski chose to reject the proposed peace in favor of continued skirmishing along the disputed Russo-Polish border. By not accepting this deal, Pilsudski was accepting a delaying strategy by default, contrary to the predictions of systemic, domestic, and cultural theories. System-level models, would have predicted that Pilsudski would have accepted this offer because it greatly expanded Polish territory, provided defensible borders, and averted a full-scale war with the much more powerful Soviets. Similarly, domestic theories would
have predicted that Pilsudski would have accepted this offer because it was a significant win for Poland and would allow the war-weary Poles to focus on building their new nation free from a Soviet threat. Finally, cultural models would predict an acceptance of this treaty as a means of protecting Poland from Soviet influence while ending a potentially threatening conflict.

The second decision examined by this chapter is Pilsudski’s rejection of renewed Soviet peace negotiations and in favor of the spring 1920 “Kiev Offensive.” By escalating the border skirmishes into an all out war, Pilsudski shifted his delaying strategy to a gambling strategy with the hope of defeating Soviet forces in Ukraine. In retrospect, this plan was overly ambitious and does not match the predictions of structural, domestic, and cultural theories. System-level theories would not have predicted that Poland would have escalated a war with a more powerful Soviet enemy when a favorable peace treaty was a viable option. Domestic theories would similarly claim that despite the desire of Pilsudski to retain the support of the Polish nation, that he would be ill advised to choose to invade the vast expanses of Ukraine without a clear domestic mandate or a pressing need to do so. Finally, cultural theories are similarly perplexed by this decision. Although Poland and Ukraine had many cultural disagreements, it is not obvious that Poland should have adopted such an aggressive and risky foreign policy based on these traditional antagonisms.

The third decision this chapter will investigate was Pilsudski’s refusal to alter Polish war aims in the face of an increasingly fierce Soviet resistance and a military reversal in
Ukraine. Even after a series of defeats, Pilsudski maintained his gambling strategy and refused to consider peace negotiations with the Soviets. Again, this decision appears to be at odds with the predictions of the major international relations theories. On a systemic level, the Soviet military victories should have demonstrated to Pilsudski that he could not defeat the Soviets with a surprise attack into Ukraine and should have caused him to lower his conditions for a peace settlement. On a domestic level, these military reversals created panic within the Polish population and should have pressured Pilsudski to seek peace with the Soviets as a means of quelling this domestic unrest. Culturally, it is also unclear why Pilsudski refused to negotiate while his forces were still outside of the traditional ethnographic borders of Poland. By yielding at this juncture, Pilsudski could have still had a considerable win in terms of land and national pride, pleased his domestic base, and spared the Polish nation the horrors of a Soviet advance across their homeland.

The fourth decision this chapter will discuss is Pilsudski’s decision to reject repeated Soviet peace overtures and risk the fate of Poland on a climactic battle at the outskirts of Warsaw in July and August, 1920. By accepting this gambling strategy, Pilsudski risked both his personal security as well as the future of Poland on the highly improbable outcome of the Battle of Warsaw. Although Pilsudski was ultimately rewarded with an unlikely military victory, this decision is contrary to the predictions of most international relations theories. Because of the long odds facing Pilsudski, system-level theory would predict that he should have accepted almost any deal offered by the
Soviets as a means of avoiding the total loss of bargaining power associated with a military defeat and the capture of the Polish capital. On a domestic level, Polish popular sentiment was largely defeatist as the Polish forces retreated towards Warsaw and even Pilsudski’s closest allies in the Polish government begged him to surrender. Although these pressures are consistent with the predictions of regime-type theorists such as Hein Goemans, it is unclear that Pilsudski’s decision to ignore the advice of the cartelized Polish government and seek redemption through combat had anything at all to do with the semi-exclusionary Polish-regime type. Culturally, this decision to risk the survival of the newly sovereign Polish nation is also highly questionable given the Soviet offers of an armistice could have spared Warsaw what appeared to be certain destruction.

The final decision that this chapter will study is Pilsudski’s acceptance of the Treaty of Riga in 1921. This dealing strategy ended the fighting, but resulted in peace terms that were worse for Poland than those initially offered by the Soviets over a year before. While Pilsudski’s decision to end the war appears consistent with the predictions of international relations theories, the end result was disastrous for Poland. In systemic terms, Poland could have avoided the high costs of war and retained a greater share of the contested land along its eastern border if it had accepted peace at any time prior to the Soviet incursion across the ethnographic borders of Poland. Similarly, Poland could have avoided the horrors and unrest of an extremely unpopular and unproductive war and instead focused its energies on building their new nation had they simply chosen to lower their demands prior to the Soviet invasion of Poland. Culturally as well, the Poles
could have avoided a dreadful chapter in their history and been able to still proudly stand up to their Soviet neighbors had they simply accepted peace at numerous other junctures. Much like the Russo-Polish War as a whole, the Peace of Riga represents a systemic, domestic, and cultural failure for Poland that is not adequately explained by many of the predominant theories in international relations.

2.2 Pilsudski’s Background

In terms of political power and influence, Joseph Pilsudski is the seminal figure during this period of Polish history. Pilsudski distinguishes himself from the myriad of Polish revolutionaries and elites during this period because he was able to act as a unitary agent in both the political and military realms.\(^6\) Although Pilsudski operated within a newly formed republican government which provided institutional checks to his power as well as vocal public criticism of his rule, he was able to transcend political divides and co-opt or intimidate political opponents. Because of a unique combination of his forceful personality as well as a series of crises that demanded swift action, Pilsudski dominated Polish decision making. Much like Hindenburg and Ludendorff in WWI Germany, Pilsudski fused the military and political realms and often operated outside of

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the legal mandate provided by his position as *de facto* leader of Poland. For this reason, this case should be an ideal case for testing the influence of regime type on war aims and conflict outcomes.7

While wielding this unusual individual influence, Pilsudski often broke with the advice of those around him and was thus able to similarly stretch the typical domestic and systemic restraints on his power and influence. According to the British Foreign Minister, Sir Horace Rumbold, Pilsudski was, “the biggest man in this part of Europe…the undisputed boss of his country…an interesting study, an anachronism, not a great man but a remarkable man who will control for some time the destinies of this nation [Poland].”8 In both in military and political roles, Pilsudski blurred the lines between military and political power and purposely conflated his interests with those of the new Polish nation. As this chapter will demonstrate, Pilsudski often subordinated the best interests of Poland and the revolutionary movement in favor of his own private ends – most particularly personal security.

Despite his central role during this period, Pilsudski is a very difficult figure to study. With Pilsudski, there is a great difficulty separating myth from reality as well as


the public Pilsudski from the private Pilsudski. He made few close friends and rarely sought the council of others when making his critical decisions. Pilsudski’s reclusiveness is exacerbated by a general lack of personal records or diplomatic papers. In fact, Pilsudski almost never wrote down his speeches or public statements and was careful to manipulate his public image to suit his broader purposes.

Pilsudski’s strong personality and flair for the dramatic polarized both his contemporaries’ as well as modern scholars’ opinions about him. His rough image and dedication to old fashioned Polish habits and customs caused many contemporary observers to caricature him as a wild militant, a radical nationalist, and an uncultivated peasant. Like many other charismatic leaders, Pilsudski portrayed a bold public face and used his larger than life image to great effect. During the course of his career,

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Pilsudski cast himself as a simple and rugged soldier who, like Napoleon, would endure the difficulties of the campaign with brave resignation to fate. This Napoleonic allusion was no accident. In fact, Pilsudski was fascinated by Napoleon’s image and studied the psychology and leadership style of the famous Corsican. When faced with either triumph or adversity, Pilsudski would hide his private fears and adopt this model of warrior image to great effect.\textsuperscript{13} Despite his bravado, a closer inspection of Pilsudski reveals a much more nuanced view of a figure that was actually aware of his own insecurity and retained a severe mistrust of dealing with his Soviet opponents.

A careful consideration of Pilsudski’s background is critical to understand why and how he personified the cause of Polish independence and why he believed that he could only rely on military victory to protect his personal security. His experiences prior to his rise to power formed in him deep mistrust of both the Russians and the Germans having suffered captivity in both nations prior to the Russo-Polish War. Similarly, his political and military adventurism marked him as a mistrusted foe by both of these nations, a fact that almost certainly caused him to be wary of negotiations with either these powers during his rule. Finally, Pilsudski’s storied background contributed to his popular image

\textsuperscript{13} One example of Pilsudski explicitly copying the leadership model of Napoleon was the personal attention to medals for bravery. Like Napoleon, Pilsudski carried medals with him and would frequently make personal awards to individual soldiers or leaders. This technique would be later copied by another student and imitator of Napoleon, General George S. Patton Jr. Jedrzejewicz, Waclaw. \textit{Pilsudski: A Life for Poland}. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982. p. 91.
as a fighter and as a figure that the Polish people could later rally around during the uncertain times where military defeat and political subversion appeared a virtual certainty.

Josef Klemens Pilsudski was born into an upper class Polish family on December 5, 1867 in the Russian controlled city of Zalavas. The young Pilsudski was raised on tales of military conquest and Polish national heroes. When he was not reading tales of martial glory, Pilsudski was creating games involved military themes. In addition to playing with his toy soldiers, Pilsudski’s favorite games involved commanding his brothers and sisters as his own personal army. Although it is tempting to read too great significance into these childhood distractions, it is worth noting that Pilsudski commanded his siblings to take great risks but rarely shared the risks that these commands entailed. According to a contemporary biographer:

He loved best of all those escapades which gave his own talents scope, but in which he himself did not take part. Secrecy and darkness must surround them. He offered a prize to any of his brothers who could succeed during the night, unseen, unheard, in snatching some book or ornament from his sleeping sisters’ room and bringing it [to] him in proof of a successful coup- a ‘quiet job.’ They were to hold their breath, stand on tiptoe, and creep among the sleeping girls. This game was christened ‘silent moving.’…But he seldom took part in these games; he
organized, invented, led. His daring lay in original conception; others were left to execute his schemes.\textsuperscript{14}

In many ways, Pilsudski was searching for a focus of his adventurous energy and dreams of military glory. To this end, he soon found that the Russian rulers of Poland were a natural enemy.

Pilsudski was raised from an early age to hate and mistrust Russia. During Pilsudski’s childhood, Russia occupied all ethnically Polish territories and treated Poles as culturally inferior to “Great Russians.” Pilsudski’s revulsion for Russia was solidified when he was forced to attend a Russian grammar school in 1874. It was during this formative period that Pilsudski first came to view himself as a victim of Russian power as well as a potential leader of a unified Poland. Pilsudski’s Russian school strictly enforced a prohibition on the Polish language and overtly taught biased history and literature as if Russia had always been the rightful owner of the ethnically Polish lands. This schooling appears to have had the unintended effect in hardening the young Pilsudski’s resentment of Russia, the Tsar, and all things Russian. Pilsudski often clashed with his Russian schoolteachers, experiences he would later use to refocus his

revolutionary energies.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, many years later Pilsudski would claim that, “[H]elpless rage would often nearly choke me; my nightmares even to-day[Sic] take the shape of Russian schoolmasters in Vilna.”\textsuperscript{16}

At age 18, Pilsudski left the despised Russian school and traveled to Charkow to study medicine. Pilsudski was unhappy with his new course of studies and after less than one year, he was expelled for various minor rule violations. After leaving medical school, Pilsudski returned to Vilna and became involved in various underground Polish socialist organizations. Although Pilsudski believed in the principles of socialism, he was frustrated by the general lack of action by the membership of these groups to actually achieve their grandiose principles.\textsuperscript{17}

While in Vilna, Russian agents arrested Pilsudski for his tangential connection to a plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. While Pilsudski had no knowledge of the plot and had never met any of its leaders, he was sentenced to 5 years hard labor in a prison camp in Eastern Siberia. Pilsudski considered this sentence extremely unjust and the resulting punishment was physically and mentally draining. While \textit{en route} to the prison camp,

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Pilsudski and his fellow prisoners attempted to disobey orders by not standing at attention when ordered to do so by their captors. A fistfight ensued between the prisoners and their guards in which Pilsudski were severely beaten with the guards’ rifle buts. Pilsudski was extremely weakened by this encounter and was a surprisingly complicit prisoner for the remainder of his five year sentence. For Pilsudski, this period of internment was transformative. This experience hardened his existing hatred of the Russians but also caused him to mature rapidly. After his beating from the guards, he decided that violence and rebellion for their own sake was counterproductive and that, he would have to act pragmatically to survive.

Pilsudski was released near the end of 1892 and journeyed back across Russia to his native Vilna. Here he revived his connections with the Polish socialist networks and in 1894 began to publish an underground socialist newspaper, *The Worker*. This was a potentially dangerous undertaking and from the beginning Pilsudski insisted on a series of strict security measures. Out of fear of being compromised, Pilsudski had only one editorial assistant to support his publishing operations and he himself did the majority of writing, editing, and layout operations for the paper. He printed the work in a secret room and at odd hours so as to avoid noise and suspicion. Scraps of copy paper were

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burned rather than thrown away, and Pilsudski’s wife Maria would often sing to cover up the sounds of the printing operations. To further protect his identity, Pilsudski adopted the *nom de plume* of “Viktor” and many of his closest friends and associates did not know his true name.\(^{20}\)

Despite these elaborate security measures, Pilsudski’s publishing operation was accidentally discovered on February 21, 1901 by a Russian cavalry captain and his patrol. Pilsudski was arrested and held in jail at Lodz, transferred to a higher security prison for political dissidents in the Warsaw Citadel and later to the Asylum of St. Nicholas in St. Petersburg. With the aid of a Polish doctor who served in the prison, Pilsudski was able to escape confinement in St. Petersburg. He fled to Kiev where his old paper, *The Worker*, was now being published. Although Pilsudski wanted to return to an active role in the paper, he knew that he was a wanted man and thus decided to leave Kiev after only one night. He continued his escape traveling westward to Galicia where he was smuggled illegally across the border into Austro-Hungary. Sensing that he was now in a safer position, Pilsudski began to rest and recuperate after his arduous escape. During his escape, Pilsudski had become somewhat of a hero for the Polish cause and his escape was greeted with adulation from various socialist movements. Capitalizing on his newfound popularity, Pilsudski kept traveling and made a series of


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stops to visit various branches of the Polish socialists around Europe.\textsuperscript{21} After his journey through Europe, Pilsudski returned to Cracow to resume his political career.

Although he traveled throughout Europe, Pilsudski kept a low profile. He rarely appeared in public and when he did it was only in mass rallies and party meetings where he would be certain of protection.\textsuperscript{22} During this period, Pilsudski first began to associate himself with the armed Polish resistance. Although he had no formal military training, Pilsudski dedicated himself to learning as much as he could about these irregular units. He recognized that the Polish paramilitary units were poorly equipped to fight the Russian army in open battle, so he made great efforts to formalize the organizational structure and training within the existing irregular militia units. At the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, he approached Japan in the hope of obtaining military aid, for the Polish paramilitary forces. The Japanese were unreceptive to Pilsudski’s requests, preferring instead to use their resources to confront the Russians in a conventional setting in East Asia.\textsuperscript{23} In the short term, Pilsudski’s dream of an independent Polish army would remain unfulfilled.\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{23} Pilsudski presented a memo dated July, 13, 1904 to the Japanese Foreign Ministry during a visit to Tokyo. In this memo, Pilsudski openly advocated for an anti-Russian alliance between Polish paramilitary
Pilsudski took the next step in creating a Polish army during the First World War. Many within Poland saw the outbreak of the Great War as an opportunity for Poland to separate itself from Russian rule. Capitalizing on his reputation as a militia organizer, on August 3, 1914, the rebel Polish “People’s Government” appointed Pilsudski to command their “army.” This command began with a mere 172 men-at-arms and its military value was largely symbolic. Technically, this Polish unit was to operate under the command of Austro-Hungary, but Pilsudski and the rest of the Polish fighters were weary of their Austrian allies and resisted their attempts to impose their authority over the Poles. This friction led to quarrels and even bloodshed between the Poles and their Austrian overlords, but despite various command and logistical failures, the Polish forces fought in a series of campaigns against Russia as an auxiliary force to the Austrian Army. In these efforts, Pilsudski displayed extraordinary leadership skills and was able to maintain and ultimately enlarge the size and lethality of his fighting force. Although Pilsudski’s unit was not the only ethnically Polish unit to fight against the

forces and Japan. According to Pilsudski, “only the Poles are able to start in Russia an open struggle…we consider it not only as the fulfillment of our cultural aspirations to an independent existence but also as a guarantee of its existence, as Russia deprived of her conquests will cease to be a menacing and dangerous neighbor to our country.” Komarnicki, Titus, Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-1920. London: William Heinemann, 1957. p. 109.

Russians during WWI, it was one of the more successful and prominently displayed Pilsudski’s military abilities and his commitment to the cause of Polish independence.  

Despite his military success, Pilsudski resigned his commission and officially ended his military career during the autumn of 1916 to represent Poland’s national interests in politics. By invitation of Germany and Austria, Pilsudski was appointed to the newly created Council of State. In his political role, Pilsudski lobbied hard to advance the cause of Polish independence. Pilsudski’s efforts appeared to pay off on November 5, 1916 when Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Franz Joseph of Austria proclaimed their support for Polish independence. This proclamation was in fact a calculated move by the Central Powers to make a meaningless promise in the hope of boosting military recruitment and public sympathy within the ethnographic borders of Poland. Sensing the futility of his political position, Pilsudski resigned his membership on the Council of State in July 1917.  


26 Years later, German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg would coldly describe Germany’s reasoning for the proclamation as: “To everyone who could think politically it was clear that if we were defeated the coveted Polish divisions, and indeed the whole country, would turn against us. I never had any illusions about that.” Quoted in: Landau, Rom. Pilsudski: Hero of Poland. Trans. Geoffrey Dunlop. London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1930. p. 115.
Whatever political allegiance may have existed between Imperial Germany and Pilsudski ended with the surrender of Tsarist Russia and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918. This treaty left Germany in possession of ethnically Polish territories that were formerly under Russian control. From Pilsudski’s perspective, this replaced one unwanted imperial power for another. Sensing the potential danger of armed Polish nationalists, Germany demanded that Pilsudski and his troops take loyalty oaths to the German and Austrian monarchies. In the wake of the proclamations guaranteeing Polish sovereignty after the war, Pilsudski and his men were unwilling to pledge their loyalties to their erstwhile allies. Sensing that this break with the German authorities was potentially risky, Pilsudski abandoned his troops in the field and fled to Warsaw using a fake passport. The German authorities soon learned of Pilsudski’s movements. On the morning of July 22, 1918 Pilsudski was arrested at his house on the charges of using falsified papers and spent over a year as a prisoner in Magdeburg, Germany. Pilsudski was released on November 8, 1918 during the final days of Imperial Germany.\textsuperscript{27} Much like his experiences as a prisoner in Russia, this experience solidified his mistrust and fear of his former captors.

After his release, Pilsudski returned to Poland to discover that in his absence he had been appointed to serve as the Minister of War of a fledgling Poland as well as the

General-in-Chief of the Polish Army.\textsuperscript{28} From this point until his resignation in 1923, Pilsudski was the leading figure in Polish politics. He would hold a wide variety of official titles, but all around him acknowledged that he was the driving figure in Polish politics and the one man ultimately responsible for Poland’s fate as a new nation.\textsuperscript{29}

As he began his work as the \textit{de facto} leader of a new Poland, Pilsudski’s task was anything but clear. In fact, the “nation” of Poland was very much in flux as it was still waiting for official sanction from the victorious Allied Powers who were attempting to negotiate the reemergence of Poland at the Versailles Peace Conference. Among the issues that they discussed were the proper borders of Poland, what to do with other non-Polish ethnic groups in the former Russian and German Empires, the problems of ethnic and political violence in Ukraine and East Galatia, and the Allied Intervention into the ongoing Russian Civil War.\textsuperscript{30}

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The Russo-Polish War was not a single coherent series of military operations conducted in a fixed theatre of operations. Rather, the Russo-Polish War was fought 

31 One reason why this campaign was characterized by movement and rapidly shifting positions was that the force to space ratios did not allow for trench warfare or static defenses. Just as in the Eastern Front
within a vast strategic landscape with a series of military units of uneven quality, organization, allegiances, and fighting power. Adding to these difficulties were the unique geographic realities of the theatre of operations. During this period, Poland did not have clearly defined borders and it was unclear to the various participants of the conflict exactly where one nation began and the other ended.\textsuperscript{32} Although many have described the plains of Eastern Europe as a “generals’ paradise,” the region’s expansive landscape and unforgiving climate have humbled many great generals of history such as Charles XII and Napoleon and continually caused tactical and logistical problems for both sides.\textsuperscript{33} In fact, the strategic situation during the first year of the war was so poorly understood by its participants that both sides failed to make necessary logistical and during WWI, both armies were able to move freely and could easily outflank prepared defenses. This let Pilsudski to eschew the value of trenches claiming, “The trench, I maintain, is no more than a grandiose fetish.” This belief in the futility of defensive war almost certainly contributed to Pilsudski’s decision to invade Ukraine in May 1920 and may have given him strength prior to his successful counterattack during the Battle of Warsaw. Pilsudski, Jozef. Year 1920 and its Climax Battle of Warsaw During the Polish-Soviet War, 1919-1920. New York: Pilsudski Institute of America, 1972. p. 114. On Pilsudski’s faith in the offensive, see also: Komarnicki, Titus, Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-1920. London: William Heinemann, 1957. p. 537.


military preparations needed for a war of this scale and importance. This was particularly true for the Soviets, who viewed the campaign against Poland as only a small part of a larger, historically-inevitable global revolution. To this end, Soviet policy towards Poland was a work of almost “daily improvisation.” Even on the comparatively better organized Polish side confusion reigned because of poor communications, spotty record keeping, and lack of standardization of military and governmental bureaucracies. Writing after the war, Pilsudski admitted that he could not provide an accurate estimate of his troop strength during critical phases of the campaign because, “disorder prevailed at that time in our organization that it was impossible even to consider sending under fire men who were fully equipped or ready to leave for the front.”

This ambiguity provided Pilsudski with many strategic problems as well as a broad freedom of action and a unique ability to direct the prosecution of both war and


diplomacy. From a research design prospective, this swirl of uncertainty and the shifting fortunes of war are ideal because it creates broad variation on the independent variable: perceived security prospects. In an uncertain political landscape, Pilsudski was able to exploit the evolving situation to suit his dual purposes of creating a strong Polish nation as well as providing him personal security from his Russian and German enemies. To this end, he would make decisions regarding Polish war aims that were often antithetical to the best interests of Poland and contrary to the predictions of existing international relations theory, but consistently provided perceived protection from Pilsudski’s external foes.

2.3 The Outbreak of the Russo-Polish War

The Russo-Polish War did not have a clear beginning date. The fighting began as a series of violent clashes in the disputed border territories of the former Russian Empire,

Ukraine and East Galicia.\textsuperscript{39} Although these battles created friction between Poland and Russia, they did not necessitate a full-scale war.\textsuperscript{40} Rather than attempt to resolve these relatively minor local disputes, Pilsudski used these clashes to take a firm position towards Russia. From the outset, Pilsudski’s policy was calculated to avoid the appearance of weakness along Poland’s Eastern border. This show of strength was part of a double game to deter Russian aggression as well as entice the Entente powers into aiding the Polish cause. Pilsudski underscored his conviction that Poland must act forcefully in a conversation with his friend Leon Wasilewski on February 6, 1919, “in the East we [the Poles] will be alone, and our eastern frontier will depend on our strength.”\textsuperscript{41} While Pilsudski was not willing to escalate the fighting at this point, he was willing to accept the \textit{status quo} as part of a delaying strategy. Unfortunately, this calculated show of strength did not achieve the desired results. Instead the use of force raised tensions with the Soviets and made war more likely while failing to win firm support from the Allied powers.


\textsuperscript{40} In retrospect, it is clear that the Soviets in particular were not committed to war with Poland and that a workable diplomatic agreement may have been reached during these early stages. Carroll, E. Malcolm, \textit{Soviet Communism and Western Opinion, 1919-1921}, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965. p. 49.

Although distracted by internal dissidence and civil war, Russia was not impressed by the Polish show of force. Furthermore, this action alienated the Entente powers because they misread these signals as crude use of militarism as statecraft. The border conflict between Poland and Russia continued to escalate beyond the control of either side. As the revolutionarily fervor of the Bolsheviks grew within Russia, they began to look increasingly critically at the unresolved border dispute with Poland. Although the Polish question was not as high as a priority as victory in the ongoing war with the Whites, the Soviets became increasingly wary of Pilsudski’s perceived nationalism. As the Bolsheviks increasingly fused the policies of their domestic revolution with their foreign policy, they sought peace in Poland as a necessary prelude to the eventual export of their workers revolution across Europe.\(^{42}\)

2.4 Decision #1: The Failure of the “Markhlevskii Missions” July 17, 1919-

December 13, 1919

Despite the rising tensions between Poland and the Bolsheviks in Russia, Pilsudski could have ended the fighting before a full-scale war broke out between these two nations. Instead, Pilsudski chose to adopt a delaying strategy because he felt that the

\(^{42}\) Blank, Stephen, "Soviet Nationality Policy and Soviet Foreign Policy: The Polish Case 1917-1921."

Russians posed a minimal threat in the short term. At this early stage, Pilsudski was uncertain about the outcome of the ongoing Russian Civil War and was unwilling to support either side. This desire to let both the Reds and the Whites continue their internal struggle was reinforced by Pilsudski’s personal distrust of both sides. As long as they were fighting each other, Pilsudski believed that this internal struggle helped the relative position of Poland and he was thus unwilling to make a peace agreement with either side. Recognizing the military, economic, and political chaos in Russia would make an agreement with either side tenuous, Pilsudski chose instead to use the ensuing power vacuum to solidify and expand Poland’s military and geographic position in the East.  

Although this decision was not fatal to Poland, it represents a missed opportunity for Poland and Russia to achieve an amicable and lasting peace.

At this juncture, the Soviets were desperate for a peaceful settlement along their western border and approached Pilsudski to offer favorable terms. The Soviet representative, Iulian Markhlevskii, arrived in Poland on July 17, 1919 and began a series of meetings with the Polish diplomats on July 29. From the very beginning of the discussions, Markhlevskii pushed for a rapid settlement declaring that, “Lenin had authorized him to carry out far-reaching negotiations on the issue of peace.”

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The Soviets offered Pilsudski an end to the skirmishing along the border as well as recognition of Polish independence. According to the Soviet proposal, the borders of the new Polish state would be drawn at the current lines occupied by the Polish irregular forces as demonstrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2.  Map of the Polish-Soviet Borders as Proposed by Markhlevskii, July- December, 1919
Despite this purportedly genuine offer, Pilsudski was extremely distrustful of the Soviets. This mistrust was magnified by unofficial yet provocative statements from the Soviet delegation, including Markhlevskii, who said that, “in five years all Europe will be Communist.” This rhetoric may have served to strengthen Pilsudski’s belief that the Soviets were acting in bad faith and must have nefarious long-term goals that would ultimately result in an attack on Poland by the Bolshevik revolutionaries.

To test the Soviets’ sincerity, Pilsudski demanded that they immediately release all Polish prisoners and hostages that they were currently holding. On this point, the Soviets refused because Pilsudski had made no assurances that he would free their captives. Despite this deadlock, the Soviets insisted that they would continue to negotiate until they could achieve an amicable settlement. The Soviets desired a ceasefire with Poland so they decided to drag out the already stalled peace talks as part of an ad hoc strategy to buy additional time.

Still further disagreements arose over the specifics of the proposed borders as well as the status of military garrisons in the contested areas between the two powers. Although there were some genuine areas of contention, Pilsudski was unwilling to compromise. Unless he could completely dictate the terms, Pilsudski was willing to delay any peace


deal. Just as with the issue of hostages, the Soviets played for time but nothing substantive resulted from the continued talks.

A frustrated Pilsudski expressed his views of the Markhlevskii Missions to the Polish negotiator Michal Kossakowski, “[the Bolsheviks] betray civilization, their own country, and one another…There can be no question of any diplomatic relations or negotiations because their fundamental condition is trust and discretion [but the Bolsheviks] do not deserve the former and do not know the latter.”

Failing to reach any breakthrough, Pilsudski and the Polish delegation formally suspended further negotiations on December 13, 1919. Ultimately, this round of peace talks failed because both sides did not fully trust each other and the Soviets could not convince Pilsudski of their benign intentions. From this series of diplomatic exchanges, Pilsudski inferred that the Soviet position was temporarily weaker than he had anticipated and that in the short term he had little to fear from Russia militarily. Because of this, Pilsudski was willing to walk away from an attractive peace offer from the Soviets and instead adopt a delaying strategy that left the Polish war aims unaltered.

From the perspective of existing international relations theory, this failure to reach a peace agreement is unusual. From a systemic standpoint, the Poles should have willingly


accepted these terms because they were probably as good as the Poles could reasonably
expect. Although the Soviets were distracted by other contingencies, they were much
more powerful than the Poles. The Soviet offer would have represented a vast gain of
land and resources for the new Polish nation and would have provided clear and
defensible borders should the Soviets threaten Poland in the future. As was
demonstrated later in the conflict, even a major Polish military victory would be unlikely
to gain much more territory than what was offered willingly by the Soviets. Pilsudski’s
mistrust and fear of the Soviets appears to have been the primary roadblock to peace,
and this critical variable is outside of the predictions of systemic theories.

Domestically, this offer should have appealed to the Polish people as well as their
local leaders because it peacefully expanded and secured the Polish eastern border.
However since these deliberations had been secret, most within the Polish government
as well as the vast majority of Polish citizens were excluded from the bargaining
process. Had they known more about these talks, it is probable that they would have
accepted these Russian offers to reestablish an independent Poland along the old
ethnographic borders proposed by Markhlevskii. Acting on his fear of all things
Russian, Pilsudski interrupted the Polish domestic political process, blocked the passage
of this agreement, and created an outcome that is not predicted by domestic-level
theories.

The cultural pressure is a bit more ambiguous, but it is probable that despite
traditional fears of Russia, the founding of a free and independent Poland along the
traditional ethnic borders would have been considered a major victory for the Polish people. Despite these pressures, Pilsudski chose to employ a delaying strategy during the Markhlevskii Missions because he did not believe that the Soviets were acting in good faith based upon his own experiences with the Russians. Pilsudski believed that he had little to lose by rejecting the Soviet terms and that peace with the Soviets posed a greater risk to his personal security than continued fighting.

2.5 Decision #2: The Failure of Continued Negotiations, Winter-Spring 1920

and the Invasion of Ukraine

The Soviets reopened peace negotiations with Poland at the end of December while simultaneously starting a propaganda campaign aimed at gaining sympathy from Western-European governments and labor movements. According to Soviet public statements, they were willing to immediately halt all military action and were willing to compromise on all military, territorial, and economic issues. The operative document in this renewed Soviet diplomatic effort was a note sent to Pilsudski from the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, dated December 22, 1919. This message read:

As early as April of last year the Russian Soviet government gave the representatives of the Polish Republic, Mr. Wieckowski, repeated assurances of its immutable desire to terminate the bloodshed between the peoples of Russia and Poland…Our proposals for peace received no reply and during the following
months the Polish army advanced into the territory of Soviet republics allied to
Soviet Russia...Wishing to set aside any misunderstandings, the Soviet
government repeats its earlier assurances of its firm desire to end the conflict
with Poland. The Soviet government formally proposes to begin negotiations as
soon as possible with a view to concluding a just and lasting peace. Peace
between Poland and Russia is a vital condition for the development and
prosperity of both countries...The Soviet government expresses the hope that the
peaceful intentions evidenced by the majority of the Polish people, will prevail
and will facilitate the termination of hostilities which only serve foreign interests.
The Soviet government proposes that the Polish government indicate the place
and time for negotiations to begin, with a view to the conclusion of a peace treaty
between the two republics.49

Despite their sincere desire for an end to the conflict, the Soviets were playing a double
game of proposing peace while preparing for the possibility of military action. Although
these vague offers were appealing to many labor groups and Western diplomats,
Pilsudski sensed that they were aimed primarily to weaken public opposition to the

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The situation of Poland vis-a-vis Soviet Russia really resolved itself into the basic question: Could Poland trust the Soviets when the World Revolution remained the chief plank in the Bolshevik platform? Poland lay right across the path of the World Revolution and the Poles suspected that the Soviet’s proposal was made to gain time.”\footnote{Machray, Robert. \textit{The Poland of Pilsudski}. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1936. p. 99.}

In fact, the Soviets were rapidly strengthening their forces in the Polish theater and were prepared for military action should the peace talks fail. Sensing the potential for danger, Pilsudski continued to stall for time by purposely delaying an official answer to the Soviet peace overtures.\footnote{Jedrzejewicz, Waclaw. \textit{Pilsudski: A Life for Poland}. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982. p. 101.}

Although Pilsudski was, in principle, open to the Bolshevik offers, he was extremely distrustful of their intentions particularly in regards to the Soviet military buildup on Poland’s borders. On February 28, 1920, in an interview with \textit{Le Petit Parisien}, Pilsudski specifically referenced the Soviet military buildup as a signal of their malign intentions and stated that he would choose to escalate the war before signing an
unfavorable peace treaty under military pressure.\textsuperscript{53} In this interview, Pilsudski explained the developing situation and his reasoning as:

Unfortunately, my impression of the Bolshevik behavior is that peace is out of the question. If someone puts a knife to my throat I have an unpleasant feeling. I am not a man to whom one can speak in such a manner. I know the Bolsheviks are concentrating their forces on our front. They are making a mistake, thinking they can frighten us and present us with an ultimatum. Our army is ready.\textsuperscript{54}

True to his word, Pilsudski escalated the war with Russia by launching a spring offensive into Ukraine rather than attempt to forge a peace treaty under a perceived military threat.

Pilsudski’s escalation of the war is significant for three reasons. First, it radically increased the size and scale of the Russo-Polish conflict. No longer would this be a simmering border conflict between rival revolutionary governments. Pilsudski’s decision to intensify the conflict guaranteed that the war would be fought on a much broader scale and that it would ultimately threaten his survival and that of Poland as


well.\textsuperscript{55} Although the Soviets had wanted to settle the border dispute with the Poles, it was only one of many issues that faced the Red Army in 1919. The invasion of Ukraine guaranteed that the Soviet Army would respond with massive military force, a fact that would appear contrary to the best interests of both Poland and Pilsudski.

Second, this decision was critical because many leaders would have been tempted to accept any reasonable peace with the larger and more powerful Soviet government. Pilsudski chose to reject this attractive option because he simply did not trust the Soviets to negotiate in good faith. Pilsudski believed that the Soviets posed an existential threat to the survival of Poland and as an extension, his personal security. Pilsudski’s rejection of the Soviet peace proposal made him feel as if he was “forced” to fight, a pressure that untimely led to his decision to invade Ukraine in April 1920.\textsuperscript{56}

Finally, Pilsudski’s refusal to continue negotiations and his invasion of Ukraine had the direct effect of alienating him from the generally sympathetic Western powers. Although Pilsudski believed that the Entente Powers were planning to use Poland as a buffer state between Germany and Poland, this cavalier rejection of Allied support isolated Poland from these major powers on the eve of a major escalation of the war. Pilsudski’s apparent unwillingness to work in conjunction with the Allied Powers also


led to his subsequent characterization of Pilsudski as a war hungry and irrational zealot. These prejudices appeared especially frequently from the British diplomats and military attaches, of which Major General Sir Percy Radcliff report of September 1920 is representative of British elite opinion:

Though endowed with considerable personality his intellectual capacity appears mediocre, while a nature originally almost oriental in its secretiveness has, through a life spent in conspiracy and imprisonment been hardened to a pitch which defies all attempts at gaining his confidence. A lonely figure, suspicious of even his friends and surrounded by enemies. Perhaps the most satisfactory feature about him, in the present crisis at least, is his bitter hatred of Russia.57 Although Pilsudski was not a highly educated man, he was not the wild Polish zealot portrayed by many Western observers. This caricature has its origins in the belief that Pilsudski’s actions were leading Poland to ruin because of his own personal fear and hatred of Russia. Such feelings bred distaste for Pilsudski within the European policy

57 Indeed even after Pilsudski’s victory at Warsaw, the British were dismissive of Pilsudski’s abilities. In an attempt to flatter his British hosts Polish Ambasador Eustachy Sapiieha claimed that, “Marshall Pilsudski’s principle foible is his conviction that he is a military genius of the first order.” Gasiorowski, Zygmunt J. "Joseph Pilsudski in the Light of American Reports, 1919-1922." Slavonic and East European Review 49:116 (July 1971): 425-436.
elite and fostered a general unwillingness to support him or the Polish cause.\textsuperscript{58} Rejection by the Allies ultimately ensured that Pilsudski would survive and triumph because of his own ability to fight and not because of aid from outside allies.\textsuperscript{59}

Despite the apparent disconnect between Pilsudski’s actions and the best interests of Poland, he believed that such actions were a military necessity. Pilsudski justified the spring 1920 offensive as a preventative action intended to, “slap Russia on the paws” before it became too strong.\textsuperscript{60} Pilsudski reasoned that the Bolsheviks were militarily weak in the aftermath of their war with the Whites and that a rapid thrust into Ukraine

\textsuperscript{58} Interestingly, the Soviets believed that Pilsudski was a tool of the imperialist Western Powers. Although this interpretation was consistent with Marxist doctrine, it represents a fundamental misreading of the true political situation by the Russian leaders. Davies, Norman. "The Missing Revolutionary War: The Polish Campaigns and the Retreat from Revolution in Soviet Russia, 1919-21." \textit{Soviet Studies}, 27:2 (April 1975): 178-195. p. 185.

\textsuperscript{59} The American policy elite were less suspicious of Pilsudski than their British counterparts, but nevertheless preferred Igancy Paderewski to Pilsudski. Paderewski was a world famous pianist turned diplomat and was far more urbane and sophisticated than the rough Pilsudski. Additionally, Paderewski had developed an intimate friendship with the director of the American Relief Association, Herbert Hoover. Biskupski, M. B., "Paderewski, Polish Politics, and the Battle of Warsaw, 1920," \textit{Slavic Review} 46:3-4 (Autum-Winter 1987): 503-512. See also: Gasiorowski, Zygmunt J. "Joseph Pilsudski in the Light of American Reports, 1919-1922." \textit{Slavonic and East European Review} 49:116 (July 1971): 425-436.

would deprive the Soviets of a critical source of grain production.\footnote{Jedrzejewicz, Waclaw. \textit{Pilsudski: A Life for Poland}. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982. p. 95 and Komarnicki, Titus. \textit{Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-1920}. London: William Heinemann, 1957. p. 109.} Barring such a preemptive action, Pilsudski feared that the Soviets would launch their own overwhelming attack against Poland within the next 18 months.\footnote{Jedrzejewicz, Waclaw. \textit{Pilsudski: A Life for Poland}. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982. p. 96.} This estimate was supported by Polish intelligence that reported a massive Soviet buildup in this theatre between January and April 1920.\footnote{According to Polish intelligence the running totals for Soviet forces in the Polish theatre of operations were:} Unlike the Soviets, Pilsudski could not mobilize equally large numbers. He quickly realized that time was not in his favor and the temporary 3 to 1 numerical advantage that the Poles enjoyed in the Ukrainian theatre

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l l l}
January 1 1920 & 4 Infantry Divisions & 1 Cavalry Brigade \\
February 1, 1920 & 5 Infantry Divisions & 5 Cavalry Brigades \\
March, 1 1920 & 8 Infantry Divisions & 4 Cavalry Brigades \\
April, 1 1920 & 14 Infantry Divisions & 3 Cavalry Brigades \\
April, 15 1920 & 16 Infantry Divisions & 3 Cavalry Brigades \\
April, 25 1920 & 20 Infantry Divisions & 5 Cavalry Brigades \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

was rapidly diminishing. In the face of these reports, Pilsudski believed that he had no choice but to strike the Soviet forces in Ukraine as soon as the weather was warm enough to permit offensive operations.

Attempting to justify this high risk gamble, Pilsudski reasoned that an offensive was necessary against Russia because, “in the war which we had to wage against the Soviets, the side which took the offensive energetically would always win the victory and break the screen or the line of the enemy at the chosen point.” One major flaw in Pilsudski’s logic was that he greatly underestimated the fighting abilities of his Russian foes. Prior to his invasion of Ukraine, Pilsudski bragged to the London Times, that the Russians, “were such bad soldiers. The Polish soldier is a far better man. We’ve alway [sic] beaten them…My opinion is that it is impossible for Poland to be defeated in this war. She

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cannot lose.\textsuperscript{67} While one must allow for Pilsudski’s pride in the Polish forces, these bold claims are inconsistent with the view that Polish war aims were directed as part of a rational utility maximizing strategy. Indeed, Pilsudski’s military gamble had almost no real chance of achieving a permanent expansion of Polish borders or the military defeat of Russia.

Almost as an afterthought, Pilsudski signed an alliance with Ukrainian nationalist leader, Ataman Petlura, in a desperate attempt to enlist local support for his invasion.\textsuperscript{68} Although this relationship would ultimately provide minimal strategic value for the Polish cause, it suggests that Pilsudski wanted an ally to help fight the Soviets even if it meant undermining many of the avowed goals of the Polish revolutionary movement. Clearly, a union with Ukrainian nationalists who would not support Polish territorial expansion into Ukraine or the broader cause of Polish nationalism was a play by Pilsudski for an immediate ally to balance against the Soviets.\textsuperscript{69} Apparently, Pilsudski


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{69} Even writers who are sympathetic to Pilsudski’s Ukrainian exploits note that Pilsudski had very good reasons to capture large tracts of land in Ukraine as a piece of his broad strategy to create a defense in depth. Despite the potential appeal of such “Fabian tactics,” Pilsudski did not believe that defense was an effective form of warfare. Because of this offensive mindset, Pilsudski misread both the political and}
wanted to use these local forces as cannon fodder to take some of the force out of the
Soviet steamroller.

Pilsudski launched the offensive into Ukraine on April 25, 1920. True to Pilsudski’s
belief in the primacy of offensive operations, this assault took the Russian forces
defending the region by surprise as the Polish forces made rapid headway into the
Ukrainian heartland. Although the Russian forces were soundly defeated along the entire
front, they maintained relatively good order and avoided large scale encirclement or
surrender. The Soviets were relying on the traditional Russian tactic of trading space
for time and luring their opponent away from their bases and sources of resupply. To
this end, the Soviets were successful in that while they yielded vast expanses of open


One exception to the generally orderly Soviet retreat was the mutiny of two of the three Galician
brigades that were serving in the region. These units had been forcibly recruited by the Soviets the
previous year and had always been of dubious quality and loyalty. These two units defected en masse to
the Polish representing a shift in approximately 11,000 men to the Polish side. Davies, Norman. White
land, they maintained their unit cohesion and deprived the Poles of an opportunity to destroy the Soviet army.\textsuperscript{71}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Maximum Line of the Polish Advance into Ukraine and the Capture of Kiev May 6, 1920}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{71} On the traditional Russian tactic of trading space for time in various historical contexts, see generally: Cooper, Leonard. \textit{Many Roads to Moscow: Three Historic Invasions}. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1968.
Although the Poles realized that these initial military victories were largely hollow, they did their best to praise their accomplishments. When Kiev fell on May 6, 1920, Pilsudski claimed that he and his army were liberators and installed Atanman Petura as the head of the newly independent government. On May 17, 1920 Pilsudski visited his Ukrainian ally in the city of Winnica where he made a speech urging for continued fighting. Pilsudski attempted to rouse the Ukrainian forces to fight the Soviets stating that, “a free Poland cannot be truly free so long as all around it still prevails slavish submission of national longings to the force of terror. Poland, having gained the greatest gift on earth, i.e., freedom, has decided to reject everything that threatens this freedom, even far from its borders.”

Ultimately, Petlura was unfit for the task of governing the Ukrainian people; his unpopular and corrupt government collapsed within less than six weeks. From Pilsudski’s perspective, this loss was unfortunate, but Petlura had served his purpose as an anti-Soviet pawn who relieved some pressure on him and his hard charging army.

From the perspective of international relations theory, Pilsudski’s decision to escalate the fighting and invade Ukraine is very puzzling. While Pilsudski justified this action as a necessary preemptive strike, it is by no means clear that such an attack was in

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the best interests of Poland. From a systemic point of view this attack is curious because Poland was significantly outnumbered by the Soviets and the attack was clearly contrary to the wishes of Poland’s Western allies. Rather than expand Polish war aims to accept such a high risk gamble, systemic theory would predict that Poland would do everything possible to avoid such escalation of the fighting and alienation of critical allies. This expansion of Polish war aims was imprudent and ultimately failed because Poland did not have the military or political power to achieve Pilsudski’s ambitious aims. Although Poland was ultimately punished by the system for its actions, they must be considered illogical from the standpoint of systemic theory. Rather than expand the war in such a high-risk manner, such theories would suggest that Pilsudski should have either sought a peace with Russia or, at a minimum, accepted the relatively calm status quo.

Similarly, domestic and cultural models would have also predicted Polish restraint. Although Pilsudski was able to create an atmosphere of both fear and nationalistic pride, this should not have been enough to support a radical expansion of Polish war aims. Pilsudski consistently ignored members of his own government who cautioned against the Ukrainian expedition. The two most notable critics of this escalation were Roman Dmowski and Ignacy Paderewski who opposed Pilsudski’s decision believing that Poland could not win and would only anger its allies. Although there is no opinion polling to directly measure public sentiment, it is difficult to imagine that the majority of Poles would have supported such a bold venture beyond the traditional ethnic borders of Poland. On a cultural level, there is no evidence that even the most fervent Polish
nationalists had any interests in the liberation of their traditional Ukrainian enemies from Soviet rule or that even the typically anti-Russian attitudes of the Polish culture required a poorly planned attack beyond the borders of Poland. Much like the systemic model, these domestic and cultural theories would suggest that Pilsudski should have lowered his expectations and made peace rather than expanding the war in such a manner. The fact remains, that Pilsudski did expand Polish war aims in such a manner largely because he believed that the Soviets could never be trusted and that despite the enormous risks, that the time was right to invade Ukraine.

2.6 Decision #3: The Failure of the Ukraine Campaign, Summer, 1920

While the Polish offensive had captured vast areas of territory, this operation did not result in a decisive victory or any permanent security gains, primarily because it had failed to destroy the Soviet army. In the face of Pilsudski’s preemptive assault, the Red Army had retreated in relatively good order and had maintained its unit cohesiveness. Pilsudski’s offensive was thus a, “thrust into emptiness” that did not yield the intended results of preempting the ability of the Soviets to strike at Poland.\footnote{Garlicki, Andrzej. \textit{Jozef Pilsudski, 1867-1935}. Ed. and Trans. John Coutouvidis. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1995. p. 99.}
These failures were exacerbated by the fact that this advance had angered many previously neutral citizens within Ukraine. The angry Ukrainian reaction was a product of a genuine fear and resentment of the Polish military occupation as well as the belief that the pro-Polish Ukrainian nationalist forces under the command of General Petlura were corrupt and opportunistic militants who did not represent the will of the local population.\textsuperscript{75} The Soviets realized that the Polish invasion was broadly unpopular and used the Polish advance as a propaganda tool to rally new recruits to their cause. Although a strict reading of Marxist-Leninism would have forbidden this reversion to nationalism as a recruiting tool, the Soviets were pragmatic in the recruitment of Russian and Ukrainian troops. To this end, the Soviets were quite successful and were able to use local forces in conjunction with newly arrived reinforcements from other fronts to reconstitute their forces within the region in rapid order.\textsuperscript{76}

This shift in the balance of forces in the region signaled an end to the Polish offensive in Ukraine and would soon result in a direct military threat to Pilsudski and his army. At this point, Pilsudski would have been wise to reconsider his actions and lower Polish war aims to account for the failure of the Ukrainian invasion. Rather, there is no evidence that Pilsudski even considered such an option. Pilsudski would still have been


in a relatively strong position to bargain because he still retained possession of large areas of Ukrainian land. Although he could not reasonably expect to hold these territories, Pilsudski may have used them as a bargaining chip with the Soviets. Despite the potential advantages of negotiating before a Soviet counterattack, Pilsudski refused to lower Polish war aims because he did not believe that any discussions with the Soviets would be productive.

Regaining the strategic initiative, the Soviets launched a counteroffensive on May 27, 1920. Although the initial Soviet attacks were blunted by Polish defensive positions, on June 5 the Soviets broke through the Polish lines in several places. The Soviets exploited this initial breakthrough, wrecking havoc in the Polish rear and spreading confusion and panic throughout the ranks. Of particular note was the massacre of some 600 wounded Poles and their accompanying Red Cross nurses in a raid on a Polish hospital on June 7, 1920. Atrocities such as this were disturbingly common and underscore the savage nature of the fighting as well as the general unwillingness of the Soviets to take prisoners or show mercy on a defenseless foe.77

77 On the issue of Soviet savagery, the diary of Soviet officer Isaac Babel is particularly graphic. Throughout his work, Babel matter of factly notes the frequency of Soviet war crimes such as murder, rape, and anti-Jewish pogroms. His diary entry of June 3 describes a pogrom as: “there was a pogrom, they cut off beards, that’s usual assembled 45 Jews in the marketplace, led them to the slaughteryard, torturers, cut out tongues, wails heard all over the square…they machine-gunned those who tried to rescue people…I feel happy, enormous faces, hooked noses, black beards with a sprinkling of gray, I think about
These Soviet attacks had a massive psychological effect on the Polish defenders who almost immediately lost their willingness to stand and fight.\textsuperscript{78} In the face of these attacks, the Poles were forced to withdraw and regroup. Reluctantly, the Polish forces abandoned Kiev with minimal resistance. The Polish retreat continued for the next ten weeks with the Soviets repeatedly turning the flanks of Polish rearguard units and forcing them back towards the pre-war Polish borders.\textsuperscript{79} One Polish sergeant described the Soviet onslaught as:

The fighting had an insidious quality, since there were no trenches in which to take up positions. One had to expect an attack from any quarter, and in consequence the fighting was bloodthirsty, as you either won or perished—our men were just as cruel as the Bolsheviks. Human life lost all value…We knew that death was waiting for us at every turn, because the Bolsheviks either killed outright, or drew out the torture as long as they could.\textsuperscript{80}


Indeed the savage nature of the fighting left soldiers and leaders on both sides fearful of capture and reprisal yet determined to continue the fighting.

As the Polish strategic situation worsened, there was increased pressure on Pilsudski to end the fighting. From the standpoint of systemic theory, Pilsudski would have been wise to end the largely one-sided slaughter of Polish soldiers and civilians and negotiate peace before the Polish situation worsened further. Had Pilsudski been conforming to the predictions of system-level theories, he would have likely responded to this military reversal with an effort to secure a negotiated peace. At this juncture, negotiation should have been attractive to Pilsudski because it may have allowed him to stop the Soviet advance while he was still in possession of Ukrainian territory and bargained from a position of relative strength. By negotiating at this juncture, Pilsudski could have avoided the string of military defeats that pushed him back to Warsaw and threatened the survival of the new Polish nation. Instead of locking in some of his hard won gains, Pilsudski chose to accept an extremely risky gamble. This failure to seek peace is in stark contrast to the expectations of system-level theories and would have profound consequences for Poland and Pilsudski.

Domestically, the collapse of Polish military morale coincided with an increased sense of fatalism among the Polish population. Although the Poles feared Soviet reprisals, they were similarly worried about the inability of their army to halt the Russian advance. Although the Polish government and Polish people were pleased by the rapid advance into Ukraine, they were never fully in support of this risky military
operation. As Pilsudski’s military fortunes soured, he should have been attuned to the eroding domestic support for this ambitious invasion. By failing to attempt to end the fighting while he was still in Ukrainian territory, Pilsudski risked a loss of domestic support for the Polish cause just when he needed it the most. While a successful peace treaty at this juncture would have been a major accomplishment for Pilsudski, it is unclear what continued fighting against a more powerful opponent could possibly achieve with Pilsudski’s domestic base.

Culturally, there was also pressure on Pilsudski to end the fighting as quickly and spare the newly formed Poland the horrors of war and the likely incorporation back into a Russian sphere of influence. While the Poles harbored a deep prejudice against their Russian neighbors, they had no love for Ukraine either. Because of this cultural dynamic, Poland should have been willing to surrender much of the Ukrainian lands in their possession back to the Russians as a inducement for peace. Rather than doing this, the Pilsudski risked everything that the Polish nation had fought for, a decision that nearly cost Poland its hard-fought independence.

All of these factors should have pressured Pilsudski to lower Polish War aims and seek a negotiated peace. Despite this, Pilsudski continued to believe that he could only provide security for himself and Poland with the military defeat of the Soviets. This belief caused him to continue to act in a manner that was contrary to the expectations of systemic, domestic, and cultural theories and ultimately forced him to gamble for redemption at the gates of Warsaw.
Despite Pilsudski’s best efforts, panic and fear continued to spread within the Polish ranks. Sensing the increasingly dire strategic situation, the Polish leadership convened a meeting on the conduct of the war on July 2, 1920 at the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw. Here Pilsudski and the senior Polish leaders discussed in surprisingly candid terms their pessimistic views on the war. The most notable of the dissenters within the Polish military was General Szeptycki, the commander of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front. Szeptycki claimed that the war was unwinnable and that for the greater good of Poland that Pilsudski should surrender or resign. Szeptycki claimed to speak for the erstwhile silent Polish government as well as the Polish people as he urged Pilsudski to lower Polish war aims and terminate the conflict. Despite this pessimism, Szeptycki stated that he believed that the Bolsheviks might halt their advance at the so-called ethnographic border of Poland on the Bug and San Rivers. Pilsudski was wary of this perceived defeatism, but he authorized General Szeptycki to withdraw his forces at his own

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discretion to a more tenable defensive position south of the Dvina River known as the “German Trench Line.””\textsuperscript{83}

The Poles were rapidly driven from the “German Trench Line” and Pilsudski was again pressured by Szeptycki and other generals to ask the Soviets for armistice terms before they crossed the ethnographic border of Poland. From systemic, domestic and cultural standpoints, this suggestion would have appeared sound, but Pilsudski believed that he would be unable to secure favorable terms from the hated Soviets. Pilsudski rejected the demands for peace from his generals, stating, “this reasoning did not convince me and I rejected the idea of peace at any price.”\textsuperscript{84} Although Pilsudski did not know exactly what the Soviets would demand if he asked for terms, he had apparently convinced himself that the Soviets would seek absolute victory and his own death unless they were decisively defeated on the field of battle. According to Pilsudski, “[n]o remedy has yet been found in war for the disease of absolute submission to the enemy’s will!”\textsuperscript{85}

The next day, July 3, 1920, Pilsudski issued two official proclamations under the name of the Council of Defense. The first of these declarations invoked images of Asian


invaders advancing on Poland and called on all able-bodied Polish males to enlist in the army. Pilsudski claimed, “[L]ike a uniform, impenetrable wall, we have to rise in opposition to them [the Soviets].”\(^{86}\) The second of Pilsudski’s declarations was an appeal to the members of the Polish armed forces to continue to make sacrifices in the cause of Polish freedom claiming that the Polish forces would choose, “whether Poland was to become a powerful and free nation or a weak second-rate country ruled by the enemy.”\(^{87}\) The public responded to Pilsudski’s exhortations and on July 4, 1920, the Polish volunteer army was formed. Although the volunteer force was originally intended to act as an independent force under the command of General Jozef Haller, it was quickly decided that these new units would be used to augment existing Polish regular army units and only a single “volunteer” division was ever deployed as a tactical unit.\(^{88}\)

On July 4, 1920 the Soviet commander Mikhail Tukhachevsky renewed his offensive operations with a well-coordinated drive against outnumbered Polish forces guarding the northeastern front. To all observers, it would appear that the Soviets were poised for a final, successful advance to the Polish capital, the defeat of Pilsudski, and

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the end of Poland as a nation. In orders to his troops, Tukhachevsky boldly expressed the Soviet intentions to finish Poland with one final blow:

The time of reckoning has come. The army of the Red Banner and the army of the predatory White Eagle face each other in mortal combat. Over the dead body of White Poland shines the road to world wide conflagration. On our bayonets we bring happiness and peace to the people toiling by the sweat of their brow. To the West! Our time has come. To Wilno [Vilna], Minsk, and Warsaw! March!

The two Polish armies in the northern sector could not withstand the superior numbers of the Soviet offensive coupled with a brilliantly executed cavalry attack on their flanks and rapidly began a disorganized retreat to the west. Although Pilsudski issued orders for a full-scale counteroffensive on July 9, the Polish army was trying desperately to remain as a cohesive fighting force and was unable to execute any type of offensive

89 What many contemporary observers did not know was that the supply situation within the Red Army had become increasingly desperate a fact that was exacerbated by purposely divergent axes of attack that left vital gaps in the Soviet lines during this critical phase of the campaign. Although these command flaws are clear in retrospect, they were not apparent to Pilsudski as he made his fateful decisions to stay and fight. Davies, Norman. “The Soviet Command and the Battle of Warsaw, 1920.” *Soviet Studies* 23:4 (1971-1972): 573-585.

operations. By mid-July, the Poles were forced out of their defensive positions at the “Old German Trench Line” and a total collapse along the entire length of the Polish front appeared a real possibility.\textsuperscript{91} This retreat continued at an alarmingly rapid pace and was described by Lenin as, “a furious acceleration of the advance on Poland.”\textsuperscript{92} As they retreated, the Poles struggled to retain some order within their ranks while they continued to be relentlessly pushed back by the Soviets. On July 11, Minsk was abandoned and on July 14, the city of Vilna surrendered to Soviet cavalry forces without resistance.\textsuperscript{93}

In the wake of this stunning military reversal, Pilsudski faced enormous domestic pressure to end the war or resign.\textsuperscript{94} At the Council of National Defense meetings on July 13 and 19, 1920, Pilsudski expressed his willingness to resign if the national government desired, but he stated that such a move would likely induce further defeatism within Poland and would accelerate the military collapse of the nation. When facing removal on July 19, Pilsudski cited Napoleon’s maxim that three-quarters of victory depends on the


moral strength of the army and the people. Pilsudski then expressed his disgust at the attacks he had received from those within the Polish government and then stormed out of the meeting. With this maneuver, Pilsudski effectively ended internal dissent by casting his detractors as unpatriotic. Sensing that Pilsudski’s dismissal would only weaken the Polish cause, the Council of National Defense voted on July 19 to publically express full confidence in their leader.95

In effect, Pilsudski had called the bluff of his political opponents and forced them to back down. Although this move did not end internal dissent and distrust of Pilsudski, it did retain him as the key player in Polish politics and ensured that his broader political and military policies would continue unabated. Now that Pilsudski had preserved his domestic position through bureaucratic maneuvering, he would have to rely on his martial skills to produce a battlefield victory that would save Poland and his life.

Poland’s strategic situation continued to erode as the Soviets used their superior numbers and brilliant flanking movements to push the Poles further back, past the ethnographic border of Poland. Strategically, this continued loss of defensible territory, men, and equipment should have caused Pilsudski to lower Polish war aims. Instead, Pilsudski manipulated the threat to the Polish homeland to inspire a flood of Polish patriotism. Polish soldiers and civilians alike rallied to the popular cry of, “fatherland

under threat” and willingly granted their support to Pilsudski’s defensive efforts.96 Despite this brave public face, both Pilsudski and the citizens of Warsaw were afraid of the pending battle and knew that in the words of Pilsudski, “neither our troops nor our command had been able to overcome the victorious enemy.”97 Likewise, they feared, “that Warsaw might not be able to hold out.”98

In addition to mobilizing their domestic base, the Poles also reached out to the Entente powers with a series of increasingly desperate diplomatic cables on July 24, 1920. On July 25, diplomatic representatives from the Entente arrived in Poland and began to discuss the military and political options with Pilsudski.99 Although the French representative to Poland, General Weygand promised the Poles arms and military assistance, it was unclear if this desperately needed aid would arrive in time to save Poland from the Soviet advance.100 Nevertheless, this attempt to reach out to the recently


spurned allies represents the Pilsudski believed that Poland had few options left to avoid complete defeat.

On August 1, the Soviets sent emissaries to Pilsudski seeking to end the war before their final push towards Warsaw. Pilsudski was so suspicious of the Soviet motives that he actually instructed the Polish emissaries, “in case the Bolsheviks indicate a desire to conclude peace at once, the delegation should leave.”\textsuperscript{101} Although the Soviet Politburo was actually desperate to end the fighting, it could not convince Pilsudski of its sincerity. In any event, it is unlikely that Pilsudski would have trusted the hated Russians especially given their outwardly dominant military position.\textsuperscript{102} Pilsudski described his reasoning behind the rejection of the Soviet peace overtures as:

Let us imagine for a moment that I have concluded peace with them. I must demobilize the army…and then I will become powerless at the border. Lenin will be able to do what he wants because he will not hesitate to break even the most solemn word.\textsuperscript{103}


In this seemingly desperate situation, Pilsudski felt as if he was forced to gamble on a plan that accepted the highest degree of both risk and reward.\textsuperscript{104} By rejecting yet another possibility to end the fighting, Pilsudski accepted the long odds of battle rather than the uncertainties of negotiation with the hated Russians.

Pilsudski chose a plan that weakened the center of the Polish lines and exposed Warsaw to attack while the Polish forces were freed to attack on both of the Soviet flanks in the Northern and Southern sectors. His hope was that the Soviets would be overextended and that the threat of a double envelopment would force the Soviets to choose between encirclement or retreat.\textsuperscript{105} Needless to say, Pilsudski was gambling with his own life as well as the future of Poland but he believed that there were only two options: victory or death. Given these stark choices, Pilsudski choose to face these


prospects with as brave a public face as possible and even claim that he believed that numerology had already predicted a victory on or near the 13th of August. Although he may have taken comfort in his belief that cosmic signs favored his forces, Pilsudski was fully aware of the stakes involved in the coming battle.106

Despite this bravado, Pilsudski had private doubts about the continue fighting. The military situation was dire and he remained under intense political pressure to end the war and save Warsaw from the Soviet Army. Pilsudski made his final decision to

106 Oddly, Pilsudski was a devout believer in the power and significance of numerology. Since his youth, he was convinced that patterns of numbers and symbols guided and informed his life. According to a contemporary biographer, Rom Landau: “Pilsudski felt that his life had been dogged by repetitions; each a series of events had built its climax. He could discover connections and parallels which strengthened his dim, intuitive faith…He was certain that the number thirteen had played a decisive part in his life, and had influenced it most critical junctures…the turning points in his destiny had had some connection with thirteen, or, in any case, a number very near it: there had been thirteen prisoners on the eventful convoy to Siberia; the first number of The Worker had appeared on the eve of the 13th, on July 12th, 1894; he escaped from the asylum at St. Petersburg on May 13th 1899; November 13th, 1904, was the date of the bloody demonstration on the Place Grzybowski in Warsaw, his first open battle with Russia; on the 12th of August, 1920, the plan of a victorious attack against the Russians had been declared and so made a reality; the 13th of June, two months earlier, had seen the evacuation of Kiev, which had began the whole great northern campaign.” Landau, Rom. Pilsudski: Hero of Poland. Trans. Geoffrey Dunlop. London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1930. pp. 217-218. and Garlicki, Andrzei. Jozef Pilsudski, 1867-1935. Ed. and Trans. John Coutouvidis. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1995. p. 103.
continue fighting on the night of August 5-6. After the war, Pilsudski described his thought process on the night of August 5-6 1920:

“It was a terrible night. I will never forget it. I pondered the terrible situation we were in, and did not know what to do. I considered various plans and found them all lacking. I rejected them all, made new ones and rejected those as well. I suffered dreadfully, but did not find a solution. Nothing and still nothing…but finally I found a solution and, after a terrible night, extricated myself from this predicament; I knew what to do and was able to make a decision. The most difficult task fell to the one who, being weak, had to give strength, and the one who, in defiance to common sense, had to play a decisive role. I decided in advance that, since I was unable to ask any of my subordinates to take this nonsense on his shoulders, and since, as commander in chief, I had to accept the nonsense in principle, I also had to accept the most nonsensical part. That is why from the beginning I stuck to the idea that, whether it be weak or strong, I had to command the attacking group myself.”\(^{107}\)

As Pilsudski wrestled with the decision to fight he was reminded of Napoleon’s maxim that when generals were making battle plans that they were in the same mental state as

women in childbirth. Pilsudski decided that he had no other option but to continue to fight. Pilsudski would later claim that he had strange visions and dreams of the furious sounds of an upcoming battle during those nights, but he realized that:

The shame that I had felt at my terror before the monstrous nightmare, which I had began to think of as a terrible phantasmagoria, was not entirely baseless and irrational. The enemy really existed, and the proof was the battle music from the north.

Although Pilsudski may have been in a fragile mental state, he clearly did believe that his fate was directly tied to the upcoming battle.

Before they launched what they thought would be the final thrust towards Warsaw, the Bolsheviks presented their final terms for a cease fire on August 8. The Soviets demanded an immediate demobilization of the Polish army, a dismemberment of the

Polish armament industry, railroad access rights through Polish territory, and a border settlement that would disproportionately benefit the Soviet Union. On the surface these terms appear extreme, but in fact they accurately represented the strategic peril facing Poland. Although Pilsudski was pressured by his advisors to accept these terms, he refused. Pilsudski believed that such an agreement would ultimately imperil his own security.\textsuperscript{111} Poland and Pilsudski had retreated as far as they could and the risks of battle still seemed less dangerous that the acceptance of peace with the Soviets.\textsuperscript{112}

Given this final failure in the peace process, the fate of both Poland and Pilsudski would be settled by the approaching battle of Warsaw. In his August 15 operational orders, Pilsudski reiterated that the stakes for Poland, “All troops have to understand that this battle decides the fate of the war in the country and can bring the desired results only with the greatest effort and force of will on the part of every individual soldier and officer.”\textsuperscript{113}

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The Battle of Warsaw began on August 12 with a Soviet attack on the weakened Polish center. Although the Poles were forced back, they stabilized their defensive front and were able to grind down the momentum of the Soviet assault and wreak havoc on Tukachevsky’s command and control by harassing the Soviet flanks. Sensing that the attack was overextended and the Soviet flanks were exposed, the Poles counterattacked...
and surrounded the bulk of the Soviet forces which were still attempting to drive on the Polish center. In a scene reminiscent to Hannibal’s victory at Cannae, the trapped Soviets were cut off from their reinforcements and supplies and rapidly lost their organization and fighting effectiveness. In order to save the remainder of their forces, the Soviets were forced to order a general retreat on August 21.\textsuperscript{114} Bolshevik casualties were massive, totaling approximately 25,000 killed or wounded with an additional 66,000 men captured.\textsuperscript{115} The Soviets were also forced to abandon a significant portion of their supplies and heavy weapons as well with 231 artillery pieces and over 1,000 machine guns, all of which fell into Polish hands.\textsuperscript{116} Despite the odds, Pilsudski had risked his fate on the unlikely outcome of this battle and won.

In both a military and political sense, the results of the Battle of Warsaw were shocking. Both the Poles and the western press quickly dubbed the victory the “Miracle


\textsuperscript{115} Some Polish sources vastly inflate these numbers to almost unbelievable proportions claiming that the Soviets lost killed or captured, “more than half of their ranks.” Although Soviet losses were very high such figures appear to have been created for their propaganda value and not their literal verity. Quote from: Kaden-Bandrowski, Julius, \textit{The Great Battle on the Vistula}. Trans. Kennedy, Harriet. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd., 1921. p. 23.

of the Vistula.” Out of the jaws of certain defeat, the Poles had snatched an unlikely victory that saved the capital from immediate capture and gave the Polish cause renewed life.\textsuperscript{117} While it is easy to point to the exposed Soviet flanks and overextended supply lines as fatal flaws, the Polish victory was far from preordained. As historian Norman Davies notes, the majority opinion in both Poland and Western Europe was that Pilsudski was acting foolishly and that he would destroy Poland in the process of seeking military victory:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{117} In some respects this battle is unique for battles during the decades prior to the outbreak of WWII because it produced decisive military and political results unlike much of the recent fighting during the Great War. American military historian Robert Citino dubbed the Polish victory at Warsaw as, “one of the highest achievements of the operational art” during the period prior to WWII and credits Pilsudski for achieving victory amongst chaos. Citino, Robert M. \textit{Quest for Decisive Victory: From Stalemate to Blitzkrieg in Europe, 1899-1940}. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2002. p. xvii. This same notion that the battle was uniquely decisive is reflected in the poplar contemporary work by D'Abernon, \textit{The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World: Warsaw, 1920}. In his work, D’Abernon likens the battle to the battles of Salamis, Tours, Lepanto, or Vienna in its decisiveness and importance. According to D'Abernon, “Apart from the dire peril which it warded off, there is second reason which imparts interest and attraction to the Battle of Warsaw. In few other campaigns have the great principles of strategy been brought into such clear relief as in the battle which was fought in the central districts of Poland in August 1920…Daring strategy determined the fate of the forces immediately engaged and sealed at one stroke the issue of the whole campaign.” D'Abernon, Viscount, \textit{The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World: Warsaw, 1920}. London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1931. pp. 13-14.
\end{quote}
The generally accepted version of the Battle of Warsaw is so far from the truth that one is tempted to attribute it to deliberate and conscious falsification. Yet calculated lies could hardly have been so effective. One is faced in fact with a classic case of universal self-delusion. It is essential to recognize that popular opinion throughout Europe was preconditioned to discount Pilsudski’s success. For as long as his name was known, Pilsudski had been associated with failure and treachery. In 1920, he had none of the prestige which later accrued to him. As a prewar revolutionary, he led his party into faction and strife; as a World War general, he led his Legions into internment and proscription; as a self-appointed marshal, he led his army into Kiev and Wilno [Vilna], both of which now had been lost. He had abandoned the Polish Socialist Party; he had deserted Germany; he had defied the Entente. In England and France, he was seen as a treacherous ally leading Poland to ruin, in Russia, as a false servant of the Allies, leading imperialism to destruction. No one outside Poland saw him as a single-minded patriot battling with changing circumstance. Everyone from Lenin to Lloyd George, from Pravda to the Morning Post regarded him as a military incompetent and a political disgrace. In August 1920, the overwhelming weight of opinion had predicted that Pilsudski’s career of disaster would be crowned by the fall of Warsaw.¹¹⁸

Pilsudski was ultimately able to triumph over such adversities in no small part because of his iron will to survive and his ability to use his personality to motivate the Poles to prevail despite their desperate circumstances.\textsuperscript{119}

Despite the heroic portrayal of Pilsudski, it is important to look critically at this victory. The spectacular military reversal achieved at the Battle of Warsaw is called the “Miracle on the Vistula” for a simple reason – few believed that it would happen. The unlikely nature of this victory should not hide the fact that the decision to fight was made contrary to the advice of most contemporary observers as well as the expectations of international relations theories.

Pilsudski had systemic incentives to avoid battle and spare Poland the costs of a probable Soviet military victory. Because the overwhelming military opinion was that the Polish position was hopeless, a rationally calculating figure would be expected to end the war and save the Polish capital and its citizens from fruitless destruction. Had Pilsudski been acting in accordance with the expectations of systemic theories, he should have been inclined to accept the Soviet offer of August 1. Although this proposal was harsh, it could have spared significant Polish losses and would probably have been

more generous than the term the Soviets would have demanded after they conquered all of Poland.

This decision is similarly unexpected by domestic-level theories. Prior to the Battle of Warsaw, Pilsudski’s decision to fight was opposed by a majority of Polish citizens and a majority of the Polish governmental officials. Although the acceptance of a gambling strategy would appear to support the assertions of Goemans and other regime-type theorists, Pilsudski’s choice appear to have little to do with the nature of the Polish regime. Even within the small and committed group of Polish revolutionary leaders, Pilsudski’s decisions were not widely supported and he had to result to intimidation, bluff, and deception to maintain his position as Polish leader. Precisely because Pilsudski refused to heed the warnings of the small semi-repressive group of government officials and advisors around him, he was able to flaunt their wishes and continue to fight. These leaders had as much to fear from losing their positions as Pilsudski did and must have been fearful of Soviet reprisals. In spite of these pressures, the majority of Polish leaders were prepared to accept a negotiated settlement with the Soviets had Pilsudski not preempted their actions by blocking the Soviet peace offers before they could be discussed by the Polish government.

Despite the fact the Pilsudski’s victory would make him a popular hero, the Polish domestic base opposed Pilsudski for the majority of the period prior to the Battle of Warsaw. Although there was a mass popular mobilization of Polish civilians in the days immediately prior to the battle, this occurred only after Pilsudski had passed the point of
no return and rejected the final Soviet peace offers on August 1. Because Pilsudski could not have known for certain that this nationalist fervor was going to aid his cause, his decision to reject the Soviet offers cannot be seen as a broadly supported policy but rather a highly uncertain gamble. By choosing to fight, Pilsudski was thus violating the wishes of the Polish people and the Polish government. Even within the mixed regime type of Poland, this ability to so blatantly break with the wishes of the people and the government is not predicted by existing international relations theories. Culturally as well, this gamble with the fate of Poland does not appear to represent the best interests of maintaining the viability of a newly independent Poland. By risking the fate of Poland on the unlikely outcome of the Battle of Warsaw, Pilsudski could have likely led to the subjugation of the Polish culture he was trying to revive. Although it is possible to argue that the Polish cause was worth accepting great risks in the minds of some, it is difficult to argue that Pilsudski’s consistent refusal to negotiate with the Soviets actually represented the cultural desire to create a Polish nation. No matter how strong anti-Russian attitudes were, they would be ultimately self-defeating for the Polish cause if some compromise with the enemy could not be reached.

2.8 Decision #5: the Treaty of Riga, 1921

Despite the fact that the Battle of Warsaw was a “miracle” victory for Poland, it did not end the war or remove the Soviet threat. In fact, the immediate Soviet reaction to the
reversal was to mobilize additional reserves for a second attempt to capture Warsaw. Most contemporary observers remained pessimistic on the Polish prospects for survival. Even the anti-Soviet British Prime Minister David Lloyd George predicted on August 22, 1920, “if Russia wants to crush Poland, she can do so whenever she wants.” Given these difficult prospects, Poland was under intense pressure to negotiate with the Soviets. Bolstered by their victory, the Poles sensed that the Soviet army was vulnerable and continued to exploit their initiative to press their retreating foes.

Before a new round of negotiations could begin, the Poles solidified their short-term position by winning another surprising victory at the Battle of Niemen from September 15-25, 1920. Here, the Poles broke through a series of Soviet defensive positions in a series of swirling offensive maneuvers, inflicting massively disproportionate losses on their disorganized foe. This battle was decisive because it defeated the Soviet forces and eliminated their ability to immediately threaten Pilsudski’s position in Warsaw. Sensing that their prospects for rapid victory had been checked, the Soviets reluctantly ordered a general retreat from Polish territory and maneuvered to secure a peace settlement as rapidly as possible.

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Finally, Pilsudski had removed the threat to his security and could negotiate peace with the Soviets.\textsuperscript{121} Even while the negotiations were underway, Pilsudski urged his troops to push forward and take as much land from the Soviets as possible reasoning that, “[M]arching a kilometer is synonymous with increasing the borders of our Country by one kilometer.”\textsuperscript{122}

The Polish advance ended with an armistice that was signed on October 12, 1920 and went into effect on October 18. This cease fire agreement was formalized with the Peace of Riga which was signed on March 18, 1921. Although not the broad revision of the Polish-Soviet relations that Pilsudski had wanted, the Peace of Riga did provide Poland with defined natural borders that were more easily defended than the ambiguous boundaries of 1919.\textsuperscript{123}

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The need for defensible borders as a means for protecting Pilsudski’s security was underscored by a brief war scare with Germany during the early stages of the Riga Peace negotiations. Although this crisis ultimately was resolved without bloodshed, it put additional pressure on the Poles to conclude their deal with the Soviets as rapidly as
possible and to ensure that Poland had defensible borders. This issue of defensible natural boundaries is of critical importance because most contemporary observers did not believe that the peace would long remain. In fact, both Poland and the Soviet Union would remain suspicious of each other until the subsequent Soviet invasion nearly two decades later during WWII.

While the successful conclusion of the Peace of Riga may have preserved Pilsudski’s position as well as Poland’s immediate security, the results do not match the predictions of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories. The Russo-Polish War certainly cost the Polish nation far more than it gained. In both material and diplomatic terms, Pilsudski’s

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military adventurism and security seeking behaviors resulted in a significantly worse outcome than could have been achieved through direct negotiations with the Soviets in 1919, as demonstrated below in Figure 2.6.

![Map Showing the Difference (Shaded in Red) in Territory Offered by the Soviets in 1919 Compared with the Actual Polish Borders Established by the 1921 Peace of Riga](image)

**Figure 2.6.** Map Showing the Difference (Shaded in Red) in Territory Offered by the Soviets in 1919 Compared with the Actual Polish Borders Established by the 1921 Peace of Riga
In terms of blood, Poland suffered heavy casualties with as many as 200,000-250,000 killed or wounded. Soviet losses during the campaign were also very high with the total dead and wounded ranging from 100,000-150,000 men. Diplomatically, Poland alienated the Western Entente Powers as well as the populations of Byelorussia and Ukraine. Geographically, Poland also harmed itself losing territory on both the eastern and western frontiers that had been proposed at Versailles in 1919 and as part of the failed Markhlevskii Missions. This refusal to demand the status quo ante suggests that Pilsudski was less concerned with maximizing the amount of territory gained by the war and was more concerned with creating a stable and secure post-war settlement. Finally, the war exacerbated Poland’s existing economic problems which in turn created further social unrest and infiltration by radical Polish worker’s movements.

125 The heavy Polish losses during this war would contribute to decades of fear and mistrust between Poland and the Soviet Union that would be further exacerbated by the horrors of WWII. Wandycz, Piotr S., Soviet-Polish Relations, 1917-1921. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969.p. 290.
Polish-public opinion following the Peace of Riga generally accepted the fact that while they had been delivered from destruction by the “Miracle on the Vistula” that they had “won the war but lost the peace.” In Moscow, Lenin had a similar view of the war claiming that the conflict had resulted in, “an extremely heavy defeat” but the peace was an “outstanding victory.” Pilsudski claimed that he was not allowed a total victory because of the “moral weakness of the nation” but this claim ignores that spontaneous popular support that rallied around Pilsudski during the battle of Warsaw and is at best a poor excuse for military stalemate. Once Pilsudski had won against great odds, he did not wish to risk repeating his initial mistake of attacking a militarily superior Russia. In the end, the Russo-Polish War and the resulting Peace of Riga failed to produce any clear victor and Poland emerged from fighting having lost more than it gained. Although Pilsudski was ultimately successful in protecting his own personal security, he achieved this at the expense of Poland.


2.9 Conclusion

The case of Pilsudski in the Russo-Polish War fits well within the alternative theory of this work and supports the first five of the six alternative hypotheses. From the historical record, it is clear that Pilsudski altered Polish war aims to protect his own personal security (H1). To this end, Pilsudski moved rapidly to end the Russo-Polish War as soon as he had won redemption at the Battle of Warsaw and was able to negotiate a peace that protected his own security (H2). Pilsudski had previously rejected seemingly reasonable peace offers from the Soviets, because he believed that these offers could not guarantee his security and were therefore below his personal lower limit for conflict termination (H3). This lower limit reflected a divergent incentive structure between Pilsudski and the Poland which he ruled and resulted in an outcome that was not predicted by existing theories (H4). This outcome was sub-optimal for Poland precisely because this divergent incentive structure created a situation where Pilsudski was unwilling to extract the best possible systemic, domestic, or cultural conditions from his Soviet adversaries (H5). Because Pilsudski was not offered a side payment, it is impossible to know precisely if he was willing to make a deal regarding his own security but his consistent hatred of all things Russian would have made any Soviet offer difficult to credibly communicate (H6).

Throughout this period, Pilsudski had a unique ability to break with systemic, domestic, and cultural pressures and to pursue his own interests. If Pilsudski was
motivated by systemic or domestic pressures, he should have preferred a negotiated end to the Russo-Polish War as early as 1919. This would have allowed Pilsudski to protect the new Polish nation by avoiding a risky war with its more powerful Russian neighbor. Rather than attempt to preempt a Soviet military buildup in Ukraine, Pilsudski should have again bowed to systemic and domestic pressures and sought peace on favorable terms with the Soviets. After the failed invasion of Ukraine, Pilsudski should have been further compelled to lower Polish war aims when the Soviets offered favorable peace terms that would have guaranteed the continued existence of Poland and an end to the unproductive fighting. Pilsudski risked the existence of Poland as an independent state, the collapse of Polish domestic freedoms, and the further subjugation of the Polish culture for his own security interests. While this outcome is unexpected from the standpoint of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories, it is entirely consistent with the predictions of the alternative theory presented in this work.

One popular alternative explanation is that Pilsudski was a uniquely militaristic leader. Many of Pilsudski’s contemporaries perpetuated this conception as they caricatured him as a bloodthirsty and barbaric nationalist. Despite Pilsudski’s willing to resort to violence, this stereotype is flawed at best. True, Pilsudski was a fighter by nature, but the majority of his actions were calculated measures of a security seeking individual not those of military fanatic or a nationalistic zealot. This misrepresentation of Pilsudski was largely a creation of the Western Allies who were frustrated by
Pilsudski’s unwillingness to negotiate with the Soviets during the initial fighting in July 1919.

Because Pilsudski so distrusted the Russians, he was unwilling to make a deal with either the Reds or Whites and was actually willing to risk war rather than negotiate. Given Pilsudski’s personal history as an unwilling pupil in the Russian school system, a captive inside of various Russian prison camps, a political dissident, and a military leader against the Tsarist forces, this unwillingness to work with or trust the Russians is understandable and unfortunate. Because Pilsudski could not trust the Soviets, he was unwilling to alter Polish war aims to accommodate their reasonable and apparently genuine peace offers.

Pilsudski’s flaw was that he conflated his fear and mistrust of the Russians with the perceived best interests of Poland. This reasoning was simple, if Pilsudski could not trust the Soviets, neither should Poland. Pilsudski’s anti-Russian bias clearly affected how he defined the Soviet threat as well as Polish war aims. Pilsudski believed that he had no choice but to fight and thus his personal security needs produced a suboptimal outcome for his beloved Poland. As Lenin would later remark, “We went somewhat farther than was necessary – to the gates of Warsaw…[yet] the war ended in a more favorable peace for us than which we offered to Poland in April.”

Pilsudski’s willingness to shape Polish war aims to protect his own security rather than the best interests of Poland is best summarized by the British historian Norman Davies who claimed that “His[Pilsudski’s] natural warrior instinct told him to fight his way out of an intolerable corner…to fight and go down fighting. The military considerations were more comprehensible to him than the political.” This inability to trust the Soviets produced a perfect storm in which the Polish nation was unable to efficiently alter its wars aims and was committed to a high-risk gambling strategy as a means of protecting Pilsudski’s personal security.

CHAPTER 3: FRANCE 1940, COLLAPSE, COLLABORATION, AND SURVIVAL

The Republic has been sacrificed from July 1940 to 1944 because of the Petain government’s remarkable treason.¹ -Georges Bouly

The highwayman does not say to his victim, “It’s your blood I am after;” he offers him a choice-“Your money or your life.” Similarly, when an aggressor nation sets out to oppress its neighbor it says: “Either abdicate your liberty or take the consequence of massacre”…They whispered-I have heard them-that Hitler was not nearly so black as he was painted; that the nation would save itself a great deal of suffering by opening its gates to the enemy, instead of setting itself to oppose invasion by force of arms. How, I

wonder, do these noble apostles feel to-day in that occupied zone which lies in starvation beneath the jack-boot of tyranny? – Marc Bloch

3.1 The Case of France, 1940

On the surface, the French surrender to Nazi Germany in World War II appears to be adequately explained by the existing international relations literature. From a systemic perspective, it could be argued that the French surrender accurately reflected a rational calculation of the prospects for achieving French war aims. According to this logic, the French were clearly defeated and at best could hope for a fighting retreat towards the ports in the south of France followed by a protracted struggle from their bases in North Africa. A rapid surrender, therefore, can be viewed as a logical way to ensure that a bad strategic situation did not become worse as well as a means of extracting a limited set of concessions such as the protection of the French fleet from the victorious Germans.

Domestic theories would claim that as a democracy, French war aims should directly reflect the desires of the French people and democratic leaders would seek to accommodate the desires of their constituents. Although there was no opinion polling at

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the time, the rapid surrender of the newly formed Petain government was initially accepted by a sizable portion of the French population. This general acceptance of defeat suggests that the armistice roughly represented the desires of the people and was, on the surface, generally consistent with the predictions of domestic-level theories.

Culturally, some have claimed that the French nation had suffered significant moral and intellectual decline prior to the German invasion. According to this theory, the legacy of the Great War as well as internal strife during the interwar years weakened France’s willingness to sacrifice and contributed to its rapid demise.\(^3\) If one accepts such a thesis, then lack of French resistance appears consistent with the predictions of cultural theories as well.

Because of the apparent validity of these existing theories, the case of France poses a rigorous challenge for this work’s alternative theory. This chapter argues that while all of the existing theories contain some element of truth, no single theory or combination of theories can explain the particulars of the French surrender as well as an examination

\[^3\] Although this thesis has been advanced by many including, Petain himself, the most famous and enduring of these works are the writings of French academic and resistance fighter, Marc Bloch. Although Bloch criticized a wide range of cultural, industrial, and military factors, he also was critical of Petain who he saw as endemic of this broad societal decay. According to Bloch the French leadership was physically and morally decrepit, “If a leader is to stand firm against the onset of events, he needs, above all else, a healthy mind in a sound body.” Bloch, Marc. *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*. Trans. Gerard Hopkins New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968. p. 112.
of the security concerns of the French leader, Marshal Philippe Pétain. To test the validity of the existing and alternative theories, this work will examine four decision points where French leaders were forced to reevaluate national war aims will test how the predictions of these theories match with the observed outcome.

First, this chapter will track the opening weeks of the campaign and the military and diplomatic decisions of the French government under the leadership of Paul Reynaud. While the campaign was lost in rapid fashion, the majority of the French cabinet, including Reynaud, were dedicated to continued resistance against the Nazis.\(^4\) To achieve this goal, the Reynaud government seriously debated both an evacuation of the French mainland and a temporary union with Great Britain. Although this government would dissolve in institutional deadlock, the majority of government leaders were committed to the prospect of continuing the war from foreign shores up until the moment it was dissolved on the evening of June 16, 1940.

The perseverance of the Reynaud government in the face of disaster is explained well by existing structural, domestic, and cultural theories. From a systemic level of analysis, the strong desire to resist suggests that there was an expected value to continued fighting a protracted struggle from the safety of French bases in North Africa. Similarly, the Reynaud government refusal to surrender indicates that they retained

significant support from the French domestic base and were not pressured by the public to end the conflict. Although it is worth noting that the Reynaud government did collapse, this was a product of bureaucratic formality and does not necessarily reflect the wishes of the French people. Culturally, the resilience of the French leadership in the presence of military defeat harkens back to the traditions of defiant élan that had sustained France during the dark days of WWI. Had Petain not succeeded Reynaud, it is probable that the French government would have continued to commit itself to its delaying strategy by conducting an evacuation of the French homeland and an extended resistance with its 2.5 million man colonial army from the relative safety of North Africa.⁵

Second, this chapter will examine the emergence of Petain as the new ruler of France and his rapid series of moves to end the fighting in a manner that protected his personal security. Within hours of Reynaud’s fall from power, Petain had already appointed a cabinet of loyal cronies who supported his decision to end the fighting. In surprisingly short order, Petain was able to flip the war aims of the French government and began to move towards an Armistice with the Germans.

A close inspection of these events does not fully match the predictions of structural, domestic, or cultural theories. Although it may be reasonable to expect that the Petain

government wanted to change the war aims of the Reynaud government, the implementation of these new goals are not predicted by existing theories. If Petain was already committed to altering French war aims, he still should not have so overtly advertized his desire to seek an immediate armistice with the Nazis. From a systemic standpoint, this admission weakened the French bargaining position by signaling weakness and suggesting that France would be unwilling to use their residual force or the threat of an extended struggle to extract the greatest possible concessions from the Germans. Petain’s public announcements regarding his desire to surrender appeared to have created a crisis of morale within the French armed forces as well as a sense of defeatism within the French civilian population. This wave of defeatism may have helped Petain to sign the subsequent armistice with the Nazis but there is no evidence that Petain altered French war aims because of public pressure or cultural malaise.

Petain’s rapid reversal of French war aims suggests that he had already decided on this course of action before he ascended to the head of the French government. Consistent with his previous statements regarding the futility of continued resistance, Petain moved to end the war as soon as possible because he believed that a rapid termination of hostilities would best serve the interests of France as well as his own need for personal security. Although his venal motivations were unclear initially, they became increasingly obvious as Petain negotiated the terms of the French armistice and then moved towards direct collaboration with the Nazi regime.
Third, this chapter will examine the conditions surrounding the brief period of negotiations between the French and the Germans before the signing of the Armistice on June 22, 1940. Although the Armistice was initially intended to serve as a temporary agreement prior to a formal and permanent peace treaty, it remained in effect for the remainder of the Nazi occupation of France. In the Armistice, the Germans gained possession of $\frac{3}{5}$ of the French homeland, retained 1.6 million French POW’s, and received 400 million Francs per day for occupation costs (approximately 60% of the French national budget). These measures combined with German appropriation of French food and clothing supplies caused almost immediate hardships on the French people and would elicit bitter memories for years to come. As an inducement to sign the Armistice, the French were allowed to retain their navy, a token army, their colonial possessions, and Petain was allowed to govern a quasi-independent rump state from the resort town of Vichy. The armistice with Germany would be the definitive event in the short history of the regime, and would dominate the small nation’s foreign policy.

In theory, the French surrender appears consistent with the predictions of structural, domestic, and cultural models. The French received a hard deal, but may have expected

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worse had they continued fighting the Germans. The Armistice terms represented both the German mastery of Western Europe but also their inability and unwillingness to strike French colonial possessions in Africa and Asia. From the German perspective, rapid victory was superior to total victory and the French could claim that the German concessions regarding their navy and colonies were admirable terms that provided some measure of power and security. Domestically, many Frenchmen believed that after they surrendered that Great Britain would rapidly follow suit and that the war would quickly be over. Once the war was over, many French citizens believed that their POW’s would return home and Germany would lift the costs of military occupation. In fact, Marshal Petain realized very quickly that he probably could not secure the release of French prisoners through these efforts and that the daily life of these captives was no better than that of other Allied captives.\textsuperscript{8} Culturally, this surrender must have been difficult to accept, but may have been justified as the best possible deal to avoid further damage to the French nation and culture. Petain and others would claim that this defeat was a necessary wake-up call to the French people and the painful first step to the renewal of traditional French values.

On closer inspection, the Armistice signed by Petain reflects a curious set of assumptions regarding the intentions of the Nazis and the best interests of the French nation. The theoretical logic of these models became increasingly strained as the Germans extracted a high cost from France. Almost from day one, the Nazis disproved many of the favorable assumptions of the French leaders as the looted and dismantled France. As a result of the Nazi horrors, the Armistice became an increasingly unpopular and unprofitable arrangement for France and would become increasingly linked to Petain’s Vichy regime.

The particulars of Petain’s actions are best explained by an examination of Petain’s desire to protect his personal security and the need for the Nazis to have a subservient puppet ruler for the French empire. Petain’s offer to enforce law and order in a rump state played into the German desire to avoid a messy campaign in North Africa or to actively suppress French resistance. Because of these factors, the Germans were more than willing to deal with Petain and to protect the personal security of their willing accomplice. The German desire to work with Petain was such that they even allowed him to retain the French fleet and maintain a sizable personal security force of over 110,000 troops despite the fact that such military assets could have theoretically threatened German forces. These inducements allowed Petain to implement a dealing strategy to end the war while protecting his personal security.
Finally, this chapter will examine the period after the signing of the Armistice on June 22, 1940 where the expedient peace evolved into overt collaboration between Petain and the Nazi regime. During this period, Petain met with numerous Nazi officials, including Hitler, and initially tried to maintain a degree of independence and sovereignty for his regime. Petain also attempted to secure the release of French prisoners of war and slave laborers being held by Germany, but was ultimately unsuccessful. In the face of continued pressure from the Nazis, Petain was forced to accept collaboration with his enemies as a means of preserving his personal security. As part of this collaboration, Petain willingly exported Jews, French clergy, and captured resistance fighters to the horrors of the Nazi prison system. Similarly, Petain was forced to provide military resistance against the British and their American allies as they landed in French held Morocco and Algeria as a sign of his support for the Axis campaign in North Africa. Although this cooperation was disgraceful for Petain, he

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9 The two exceptions to this was the fact that the Germans did release policemen and railroad workers so that the typical functions of daily life could resume as quickly as possible. The remainder of the French prisoners would remain in German possession for the rest of the war and would provide the German significant leverage of Petain and the French leaders. Hytier, Adrienne Doris. Two Years of French Foreign Policy: Vichy, 1940-1942, Paris: Librairie Minard, 1958. pp.118-119.
accepted it because of his desire to appease his Nazi overlords and protect his delicate political position.  

On the issue of collaboration, systemic, domestic, and cultural theories are of mixed value. While systemic theory would predict that the militarily weak Vichy government would not wish to incur the ire of the Nazi regime, it would fail to predict the extent of the collaboration and the apparent vigor at which Petain implemented his collaborationist programs. More importantly, the Vichy regime should not have actively resisted the Allied forces as they attempted to fight against the Germans in North Africa because one of their expressed war aims was the liberation of France and the restoration of the *status quo ante*.

Domestically, this collaboration is also curious, particularly because it was led by Petain. Although Petain was very conservative in his personal politics, he was commonly viewed as a political moderate whose primary goal was to strengthen France against the possibility of another German attack. During the interwar period, he had worked in a series of appointed positions for administrations on both sides of the political divide to strengthen the French military and consistently eschewed suggestions that he run for higher office. While Petain deeply distrusted socialist politicians such as Leon Blum, it would be too hasty to conclude that he chose to collaborate simply to

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eliminate his old political rivals.\textsuperscript{11} While there was still lingering anti-Semitism in French society, it is difficult to believe that the majority of the French public wished for the expulsion and destruction of nearly all of France’s Jewish population.\textsuperscript{12} If Petain was sensitive to public pressures, it appears unlikely that he would have cooperated


\textsuperscript{12} In fact, the prevailing wisdom in France was that the Dreyfus Affair had actually helped rid France of anti-Semitism by exposing hidden prejudices to public scrutiny. In the words of the pro-Jewish newspaper, \textit{Univers Israelite} the Dreyfus Affair, “had particularly fortunate results for our coreligionists, for in giving birth to the Dreyfus Affair, antisemitism [sic] has died.” Hyman, Paula E. \textit{The Jews of Modern France}. Berkley: University of California Press, 1998. p. 113. According to historian John F. Sweets, what anti-Semitism that remained in the Vichy Regime was largely a “homegrown” product of its senior leaders who were unwilling or unable to protect the Jews from the Nazis. Indeed, “only with the most tortured logic can one find in Vichy policy a desire to protect Jewish interests.” Sweets, John F. \textit{Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation}. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 118. Petain, for his part, was attached to the French General Staff during the Dreyfus Affair but did his best to avoid taking a strong position on either side of the debate. While there is significant reason to believe that Petain had his private doubts regarding Dreyfus’ guilt, he did not voice these concerns in public and remained loyal to the French Army hierarchy. Williams, Charles. \textit{Petain: How the Hero of France Became a Convicted Traitor and Changed the Course of History}. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. pp. 28-35.
with the unpopular German government in ways that were so overtly against the best interests of the French people.

Culturally, it also appears odd that a once-proud war hero such as Petain would choose to collaborate with his old enemies except under extreme duress. Although Petain stressed the need for the French people to undergo, “an intellectual and moral renewal” the conservative social policies of the Petain regime did not require collaboration with the Nazis.\(^{13}\) Even before the horrors of the Nazi regime became fully apparent, Petain’s complicity caused a cultural shock which has resonated to the present day in French popular culture and historiography.

Instead of adhering to the predictions of these existing theories, Petain chose to work with the Germans as part of a strategy to protect his own personal security. While Petain would claim that his actions protected France from additional suffering, these claims do not withstand closer inspection. The fact is that Petain harmed France while aiding Germany, contrary to the predictions of systemic theories. Petain did not represent the best interests or desires of the French public contrary to the predictions of domestic theories. Finally, Petain disgraced himself and eschewed the proud spirit of the French nation contrary to the predictions of cultural theories. In each of these examples, Petain’s desire to protect his personal security is a better explanation of why

France adopted a given policy than systemic, domestic, or cultural theories. In each of these decisions, Petain was an essential figure in understanding the alteration of French war aims as well as the particulars of the resulting peace. While it is unfair to criticize Petain for the early series of military defeats, he was the crucial figure for ending French resistance in such a rapid manner and collaborating with the Germans after the war was over.

Petain was the critical figure in the French surrender for a number of reasons. First, Petain was able break the internal deadlock within the outgoing Reynaud government regarding French war aims. Second, Petain undercut French bargaining leverage by immediately announcing his desire to end the war to the French public. Third, Petain agreed to a peace with the Nazis that was relatively harsh for the majority of French citizens, yet established him as the leader of the newly created Vichy regime. Finally, after the French surrender, Petain chose to collaborate with the Nazi government as part of a strategy to appease his potentially threatening neighbors. The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate how Petain’s quest for personal security drove the decisions regarding conflict termination from both the French and Nazi sides.
3.2 Decision Point #1: From Blitzkrieg to the Fall of the Reynaud Government

On May 10, 1940, Germany launched a coordinated offensive against France and the Low Countries and within days had achieved critical breakthroughs at Sedan along the Muse River line.\textsuperscript{14} German forces rapidly exploited these breakthroughs and within hours cut off and surrounded large British and French contingents that had advanced into Belgium. Recognizing the tenuous nature of this encirclement, the Allied forces attempted several breakthroughs to relieve their trapped forces but were ultimately unable to reach their besieged troops.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} For the definitive military history of the German breakthrough at Sedan and the Meuse River crossings, see: Doughty, Robert A. The Breaking Point: Sedan and the Fall of France. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1990.

\textsuperscript{15} Interestingly, Petain had inadvertently contributed to the ill conceived French strategy. In 1921, Petain was serving as the Inspector General of the French Army when he released a report that advocated the establishment of defensive fortifications along the border with Germany and a forward advance into Belgium in the event of war. According to Petain’s report, “It [France] can only be defended from inside Belgium.” Later in 1934, when Petain was serving as the War Minister, he helped acquire funding for the Maginot Line in partial fulfillment of his plan to fortify the border with Germany. These defensive positions allowed the Allies to deploy the majority of their forces in the Belgian sector and led to their encirclement and capture in 1940. Kemp, Anthony. The Maginot Line: Myth and Reality. London: Frederick Warne, 1981. pp. 17, 21, 59, 83.
These rapid military defeats had a shocking effect on French military and civilian leadership because they overturned the generally held assumption that the French army was equal to the German threat. French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud sensed incompetence within the French high command and began sacking many upper echelon military commanders and civilian defense ministers as the German victories mounted. Although Reynaud was shocked by the initial French defeats, he believed that the situation was recoverable and that France would once again achieve salvation as it had at the Marne on 1914.

In this uncertain time, Reynaud felt the need to appoint an established military hero to a prominent position reasoning that such a figure would provide stability and inspiration for the continued defense of France. To this end, Reynaud asked the aging Great War General, Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain, to serve as the new Vice-Premier on May 18. Initially, Petain attempted to avoid this new role but reluctantly accepted only after Reynaud’s insistence. It is almost universally recognized that Petain was an unwilling leader and did not solicit this opportunity to govern. In the words of French General Hering, “The Marechal entered into political activates never at his own

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16 In fact, according to British Major General Sir Edward Spears who worked closely with the Reynaud government, Petain was apparently convinced of the futility of the French cause from almost the moment he was appointed to serve in the Reynaud government. Spears, Edward. Assignment to Catastrophe: Volume II, The Fall of France, June 1940. New York: A.A. Wyn, Inc., 1955. p. 126.
suggestion but only in answer to the entreaties addressed to him by men of every shade of political belief…in May 1940 he became a member of M. Paul Reynaud’s War Cabinet; and finally, on 16 June 1940 he became head of the government…I repeat once more that he never did solicit them.”

Despite Petain’s reluctance, Reynaud hailed him as, “[T]he Victor of Verdun, Marshal Petain. [Reynaud continued] He will now be at my side…putting all his wisdom and all his force in the service of his country. He will remain there until victory is won.” The French press was initially very supportive of this appointment, and the French public imagination was similarly captivated by the belief that Petain’s experience and prestige would strengthen the morale and fighting spirit of the French military. Within the government, the attitudes towards Petain were significantly more tepid, and many believed that his combination of age and his distance from tactical and strategic realities made him unfit to hold such a high office. Despite public adulation,

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19 Despite this early praise from the press, once he was the leader of France, Petain was quick to censor the news media. Sweets, John F. Choices in Vichy France: The French Under Nazi Occupation. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 137
Petain quickly realized that his role was primarily that of a figurehead for the Reynaud
government. Because of his limited role, Petain rapidly became frustrated with his
inability to manipulate military or domestic policy and he chose to take a detached role
within the French cabinet.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite the shuffling of senior leadership within the French high command and
civilian government, the military situation continued to worsen for the Allies. The
Germans expanded their breakthroughs and continued their rapid encirclements of the
Allied forces that were cut off from the French forces in the south and trapped with their
backs to the English Channel. As an act of desperation, the British launched \textit{Operation
Dynamo} on May 26 to evacuate as many of these trapped forces as possible from the
Channel port of Dunkirk. Although the Dunkirk operations were unexpectedly
successful, rescuing 338,226 troops, they were at best an avoidance of greater losses
that benefited the British disproportionately.\textsuperscript{21} In fact, the Dunkirk evacuations deprived
the French of significant combat power on the continent at this critical moment and


\textsuperscript{21}On the broader failures of the Dunkirk withdrawal and its subsequent use as a tool of Allied
propaganda, see generally: Harman, Nicholas. \textit{Dunkirk: The Patriotic Myth}. New York: Simon and
Schuster, 1980. It is worth nothing that after the Dunkirk evacuation, the British Army still had six
divisions that continued to fight in the region south of the Somme. Karslake, Basil. \textit{1940, The Last Act:
resulted in a major British strategic withdrawal from the European mainland.\textsuperscript{22} Even the stoic Winston Churchill commented on the mixed blessing of \textit{Operation Dynamo} claiming, “wars are not won by evacuations.”\textsuperscript{23}

In response to this defeat, Reynaud relieved fifteen top French generals, and reiterated his position that France would continue to resist the German invasion to the bitter end. This decision upset Petain and much of the remaining French cabinet.\textsuperscript{24} Petain was particularly critical of Reynaud’s insistence that France would continue to actively resist regardless of the cost. Petain complained to Reynaud’s Deputy Secretary of State, Paul Baudouin, “[I]t is easy, but also stupid, to talk of fighting to the last man: it is also criminal, in view of our losses in the last war and of our low birth-rate.”\textsuperscript{25} By

\textsuperscript{25} Bruce, Robert B. \textit{Petain: Verdun to Vichy}. Washington: Potomac Books, Inc. 2008. p. 93. The issue of French birth-rate had a powerful impact on French grand strategy. Reeling from the losses of the First World War, France had suffered a population gap during the interwar period. This gap in manpower, particularly after 1935, necessitated a series of responses from French leaders. Of these measures, the most politically contentious decision was that to extend enlistment terms for French draftees from one
this point Petain had convinced himself that French defeat was inevitable and began to advocate the position that the best possible course of action was to immediately seek a negotiated peace with the Nazis. In terms of his own personal position, Petain did not believe that he was a particular target at this juncture because of his relatively insignificant political position. To quell potential critics, Petain also began suggesting that he would work to rebuild France after the war despite the, “awful circumstances” of the French defeat. Despite Petain’s dissent, the Reynaud government continued to insist that the war was winnable and that the best strategy was that of continued resistance.

The strategic situation continued to deteriorate for the French when the Germans renewed their offensive operations in the Somme region on June 5. The German forces made rapid headway, and quickly threatened Paris. Sensing the danger, the French government hastily fled Paris on June 10, first to Briare and ultimately to Bordeaux on

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June 14.\textsuperscript{27} That same day, Italy also declared war on France and launched an uncoordinated and largely ineffective attack across the mountainous French-Italian border.\textsuperscript{28} Although the Italian attack captured little ground and was a tactical victory for the French, it placed further strains on the French reserves which could have been used to protect the front around Paris and plug critical gaps in the rapidly faltering defensive lines.

During June 11-13, the Allied Supreme War Council held a series of meetings to discuss the continuation of the war. The French leadership was generally pessimistic regarding the prospects for a successful defense of France, but was not at the point of advocating an end to the war. An informal polling of the Reynaud cabinet indicated that despite the general sense of hopelessness, a majority of the cabinet members were


\textsuperscript{28} The Axis powers were particularly uncoordinated in their efforts to attack France. This resulted from Hitler purposely keeping the details of his planned attack on France secret from his ally Mussolini. The Italians were surprised by the timing of Hitler’s invasion and clamored to launch their own attack on France to capture some of the spoils. This rushed operational planning combined with the material weakness of the Italian military and the rough mountain terrain resulted in poor results for Italy. DiNardo Richard L. \textit{Germany and the Axis Powers: From Coalition to Collapse}. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2005. pp. 35-37.
against seeking an armistice with the Nazis.\textsuperscript{29} The British ministers headed by Winston Churchill insisted that the British Expeditionary Force could continue to fight and support their remaining four divisions with the possibility of adding an additional twenty to twenty five divisions at an unspecified future date.\textsuperscript{30} The French leadership was generally unimpressed by the British guarantees and debate then shifted to the preservation of the French imperial holdings and the French fleet.

Reynaud advocated for protracted resistance against the Germans continuing, “war from bases in the Empire.” Although there were no definite plans for such a contingency, the French leadership could have expected to preserve a large portion of the French army and government in this type of operation. Such a plan would involve a fighting retreat across the rest of France, an evacuation from one or more of the ports in the south, and a reorganization of the French army and government at bases in North Africa. From there, the French could use their substantial naval forces to harass Axis shipping and deny critical portions of the Mediterranean to the enemy. Ultimately, the


\textsuperscript{30} Churchill’s claim was well intended, but almost certainly exaggerated. For comparison, more than three years later during the Normandy campaign, the British could only land and sustain 14 divisions and even this feat greatly stressed their available manpower and logistics. Hastings, Max. \textit{Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy}. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984. p. 46.
French forces could use these Mediterranean bases to launch an invasion of the continent and the liberation of the French mainland. This hard-line suggestion was quickly voted down by the cabinet, most notably Marshal Petain and General Weygand who believed that such a plan would have a minimal military impact and would only protract an unwinnable conflict and result in reparations against the French polity.\footnote{Kecskemeti, Pual. *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958. pp. 37-40.}

On June 15, 1940 at a cabinet meeting held in Bordeaux, the Reynaud government first officially discussed the possibility of surrender, although Reynaud was committed to continued fighting.\footnote{After the war British Prime Minister Anthony Eden would claim that, “My impression was always that Reynaud wanted to go on with the fight.” Ophuls, Marcel. *The Sorrow and the Pity: Chronicle of a French City under German Occupation*. Trans. Mireille Johnston St. Albans, UK: Paladin Frogmore, 1975. pp. 16-17.} Vice-Premier Camille Chautemps suggested that if the French government were going to choose between continued fighting from bases in North Africa or surrender, then the ministers of France needed to know what terms the Germans were willing to accept.\footnote{In later years Reynaud would point to this as evidence that some in his cabinet were defeatist stating, “We see this was, indeed, a question of asking for an armistice, for is not asking for an armistice, strictly speaking, asking for terms of an armistice?” Reynaud, Paul. *In the Thick of the Fight, 1930-1945*. Trans. James D. Lambert. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955. p. 519.} Because of the uncertainty as to what the German...
terms would be, Chautemps claimed that the best course of action was to ask the Germans in an open-ended manner, “what conditions it would attach to the cessation of hostilities.”34 The suggestion of seeking a separate peace with the Nazis created an even split within the Reynaud cabinet with six ministers, including Petain, supporting this proposal and another six objecting.35

One critical objection was that the French leaders did not want to alienate their British allies by conducting secret negotiations with the Nazis even as the British struggled to defend France.36 Failing to reach a consensus, the cabinet adjourned in division. To gauge the potential reaction to the possibility of surrender, the French forwarded their proposal for open-ended peace feeler to the British. At the same time,

36 Despite the French desire to remain loyal to their British ally, the worsening fortunes of war exacerbated fissures and mistrust within the alliance. After a meeting on June 11, General Weygand warned Reynaud that, “This country will never forgive you if, in order to remain faithful to the English, you refused the possibility of peace.” Quoted in: Shlaim, Avi. “Prelude to Downfall: The British Offer of Union to France, June 1940.” Journal of Contemporary History 9:3 (July 1974): 27-63.
the French also sent a telegram to American President Franklin Roosevelt asking for military assistance and underscoring the critical nature of the French situation.\textsuperscript{37}

The French cabinet met again on the morning of June 16 to reconsider the best course of action for either continuing or terminating the war. At the same time that the French government was meeting the Gestapo arrived in the newly occupied Paris and began rounding up political enemies, confiscating radios, and enforcing strict rationing and curfews.\textsuperscript{38} Convinced that the German army was unstoppable, frustrated by the government’s deadlock, and attempting to avoid further responsibility, Petain offered his resignation from his position of Vice-Premier. Sensing that Petain’s departure would further fracture the French government, Reynaud persuaded Petain to postpone his resignation until word arrived from the British and American delegations regarding their positions vis-à-vis the French situation. Shortly thereafter, the French received a telegram response from the United States President Franklin Roosevelt which was


Later that morning, the British answer to the French proposal for seeking potential armistice terms arrived. In this message, Prime Minister Churchill stated that the British government would be unwilling to accept any French peace overtures unless the French transferred their fleet to British ports and would promise to obtain British endorsement of any final armistice offer. This offer was met with considerable indignation from the Reynaud cabinet. Reynaud, in particular, believed this request was untenable because it required the French to surrender to the British the very same fleet that they would need to stage continued resistance from bases in North Africa.\footnote{Chapman, Guy. \textit{Why France Fell: The Defeat of the French Army in 1940}. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968. p. 311.}
Constitutionally, Reynaud could not move the government to bases in North Africa, until he had received formal approval from the President of the Senate and the President of the Chamber. At eleven o’clock in the morning, Reynaud formerly asked these two leaders for their formal permission to move the French government outside the French national borders, a request which they quickly granted. Both the President of the Senate, Jules Jeanneney and the President of the Chamber, Edouard Herriot responded to this request in defiant terms that underscored their belief that this decision was a matter of life or death. Jeanneney replied, “you can count on me for any action that can save the honor of France” while Herriot was even more pointed claiming, “I’d rather be shot by the Boches than despised by France.” With this administrative formality out of the way, Reynaud and his supporters refocused their energies on how they might be able to move the French government to North Africa and continue the struggle.

Churchill sent a second cable that afternoon to the French cabinet where he made an unusual proposal for the creation of a federal alliance between France and Britain. The British suggestion for a federal union was ambiguous and hastily

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considered at best.\textsuperscript{43} The crux of this proposal was a partial unification of the British and French governments for the duration of the war. As part of this proposed union, the British pledged that they would commit their troops to a continued war effort so long as the French would avoid seeking and armistice with the Nazis.\textsuperscript{44} Reynaud presented this offer to the French cabinet during their afternoon session. He reasoned that the choice for France was, “between union or certain slavery under the German jackboot.”\textsuperscript{45} Despite Reynaud’s openness to the union the majority of the French cabinet was unwilling to seriously consider the British plan.\textsuperscript{46}

The union plan met strident resistance from a group of ministers who believed that it was a ploy by the British to make France a second-rate power subservient to Britain. The union plan thus had the unintended effect of straining Anglo-French relations during this critical period. The French leadership distrusted the British and had


for months suspected their conduct of the war was a product of British interests and thus tangential to the protection of France. The British evacuation at Dunkirk further confirmed the French fears of abandonment and effectively doomed any serious plan of union.\textsuperscript{47} Despite their evacuation, the British insisted it was, “unthinkable” that, “France should be the only one to give up the struggle, when she possessed an intact Empire second only to our own and a Fleet whole and entire, the strongest after ours in Europe.”\textsuperscript{48}

Petain was the most vocal of the union plan’s critics claiming that the British, “want to make us into another Dominion.”\textsuperscript{49} After further debate Petain further insisted that the union plan was, “a marriage with a corpse” and that it was, “better to be a Nazi province…at least we know what that means!”\textsuperscript{50} Sensing that the discussion of the union plan had ceased to be productive, Chautemps then attempted to renew the previous day’s discussion of asking the Germans about their proposed terms, but he was


blocked by Reynaud who instead brought the union plan to a vote. On an official vote, the union plan was soundly defeated.\textsuperscript{51}

Reeling from this defeat, Reynaud officially resigned as the head of the French government and recommended that Marshal Philippe Petain be appointed as his successor.\textsuperscript{52} In accordance with French custom, the Presidents of the Chamber and the Senate were consulted regarding the appointment of Petain and both voiced their misgivings about the selection and their strong preference for Reynaud to continue as Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{53} Despite these objections, Reynaud stood by his decision to resign and

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\item \textsuperscript{52} Ironically, when Reynaud later defended his decision to promote Petain over Chautemps he said that he believed that since Petain was an honorable man that he would not accept “dishonorable” armistice terms and would not surrender the French fleet to the Nazis. Kecskemeti, Pual. \textit{Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat}. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958. p. 44.
\end{itemize}
Petain was appointed as the next Prime Minister of France.\textsuperscript{54} Reynaud was convinced that Petain would be unable to achieve a rapid settlement with Hitler and that he could rapidly return to power and continue the fight against the Nazis.\textsuperscript{55} Reynaud was wrong. With Petain’s ascension to power, the debate within the French government over the British union plan and continuation of the war was effectively ended.

The fall of the Reynaud government promised to bring an immediate change in strategy for France. Rather than continue Reynaud’s delaying strategy, Petain would quickly move to end the war and make a deal with the Nazis. Although both Reynaud and Petain’s plans contained their own unique risks and opportunities, the sudden collapse of the Reynaud government helped to spread panic within the French ranks. According to Leon Blum, the panic within the French leadership was almost instantaneous:

There is the space of two days, I saw men change and go rotten before my very eyes, as if they had been plunged into an acid bath. What was affecting them was fear… fear of the Germans who had reached Moulins…And the


rumor going the rounds was: ‘Those who don’t vote [for peace] won’t sleep in their beds tonight.’

In this panicked and fearful state, many rallied to Petain simply because they believed that the aging war hero would stop the bloodshed. In the words of Reynaud:

Being only men, their nerves were broken by the sight of the exodus of refugees and by reason of tragic character of the events which were taking place. In this state of prostration, which, unfortunately, it must be admitted was common to almost all the nation, they were susceptible to the pressure which Petain and Weygand, our two ‘glorious military leaders,’ were putting on them…the confusion of ideas, which the pace of events had increased during the last days, was having its effect. There were certainly, acts of treachery and deliberate desertion, but there were also examples of errors of judgment…Certainly, men who remained unbroken by the events taking place were then rare.

Although the French strategic situation was worsening, it did not necessitate such panic or a rapid change in strategy. From the perspective of systemic theory, if a

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fighting retreat was a viable option under the Reynaud government, there is no reason to believe that it would not have been a valid strategy for Petain. Similarly, there is little reason to believe that the public opinion changed that rapidly or that the proud culture of France defiance was suddenly broken. Without this change in government, it appears likely that Reynaud would have continued to lead the French resistance in a delaying action across France and then from the safety of the colonies in North Africa. With this change in government, Petain would completely reverse the national policies of his predecessor.\footnote{It is worth noting that despite Petain later actions, his assent to power was perfectly legal. In the words of the French Ambassador to Spain, Francois Pietri, “It is sheer trickery to have claimed afterwards that …the transfer of full powers to the Marechal had been the work of some clique and the result of intrigue.” “Ambassador in Madrid” in: France During the German Occupation, 1940-1944: A Collection of 292 Statements on the Government of Maréchal Petain and Pierre Laval, Vol. #2, Trans. and Ed. Phillip W. Whitcomb. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957. p. 665.} 

### 3.3 Decision Point #2: The Rise of Petain and the End of French Resistance

Upon his ascension to power, Petain made it clear that despite pressures from Reynaud and the hawkish members of his cabinet, he strongly favored an armistice with Germany. Petain had not wanted this new role as he felt that he was being forced to act
as a scapegoat for French defeat.\textsuperscript{59} Petain described his uncomfortable position thus, “I asked for nothing and wanted nothing. I was begged to come; I came. I thus became the heir to a catastrophe for which I was not responsible, while those who were responsible sheltered behind me to escape the wrath of the people.”\textsuperscript{60} According to Petain, the primary issue for the incoming French government was now how to manage the surrender in a manner that best served French interests.

Just minutes of assuming office, Petain formed a new government from a list that he had been carrying in his pocket.\textsuperscript{61} This list was comprised only of politicians that shared Petain’s views regarding surrender and who were unlikely to provide resistance to this radical shift in policy.\textsuperscript{62} Those who witnessed this administrative gambit were

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\textsuperscript{59} One psychological theory for Petain’s acceptance of this unwanted role was that he had a deeply masochistic personality which created a need for public recognition and martyrdom. See: Szaluta, Jacques. “The Correspondence between Maréchal and Madame Pétain, 1913 to 1949: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation.” \textit{American Imago} 47:2 (1990 Summer): 169-196.


\end{flushright}
surprised by Petain’s actions but had few doubts that this move signaled Petain’s desire to seek a rapid peace. In the words of a former President of the French Senate, Albert Lebrun, “I must say that however sad that moment was for me, I nonetheless felt a certain relief. I remembered during my eight years of office those difficult attempts to form a government which…used to last three or four days…now I had my government at once.”

After appointing this new cabinet, Petain wasted no time in enacting his planned surrender. Late on the evening of June 16, Petain asked the Spanish Ambassador Lequerica to convey the French request for terms to the German government. Even Petain’s admirers such as the right-wing exile Georges Bernanos believed that, “it was a real leader that the country was hoping for, and the panic-stricken politicians, pending their return to the scene, have placed power in nothing but a liquidator.”

Unbeknownst to Petain, the Germans were also angling for a rapid termination of the conflict and were willing to make a deal with the French government as a whole.

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and Petain in particular, to achieve the rapid victory that they desired. Although there was a general agreement within the French government that the war was lost, there was still broad disagreement on what was the best course of action to pursue. Pride and fear clouded the French decision making process and, in this broad area of contestation, Petain was able to exert an uncommon amount of influence during the proceedings. Petain used his position as the newly appointed leader of France to produce an armistice agreement that served Petain’s personal security interests and was in many ways divergent from the best interests of France.

Within hours of approaching the Spanish ambassador, word of Petain’s request for peace terms had leaked out and spread rapidly through the French nation.66 Rumors swirled that Reynaud and Georges Mandel were planning to launch an assassination or coup attempt against Petain. Petain responded by accepting a private bodyguard detail, placing armed guards around Bordeaux and the surrounding countryside, and ordering the arrest of Mandel. Petain quickly realized that these rumors were baseless hearsay and that they were actually increasing an already tense situation. As a result, Petain ordered Mandel released the next day.67

Petain’s first public statement as Prime Minister was delivered to the nation via radio at 12:30 am on June 17, 1940. In this speech, Petain asserted his legal authority over the French people and confirmed the growing rumors of an armistice by asserting his belief that French should seek an immediate armistice. This speech read:

At the request of the President of the Republic, I assume the leadership of the government of France starting today. Certain of the affection of our admirable army, which has fought with a heroism worthy of its long military traditions against an enemy superior in numbers and in arms. Certain that it has thought its magnificent resistance fulfilled our duties towards our allies; certain of the support of the war veterans whom I had the honor to command; certain of the confidence of the entire French people…It is with a heavy heart that I say to you today that it is necessary to cease fighting. I have this evening approached the enemy to ask if he is ready to try to find, between soldiers, with the struggle over and in honor, the means to put an end to hostilities.\(^{68}\)

Although French newspapers changed the official text of the statement to make it appear less defeatist in print than it had sounded on the radio, this statement clearly

revealed Petain’s willingness to terminate hostilities provided that he could obtain minimally acceptable armistice conditions.⁶⁹

Although there was no opinion polling on this speech or the public views of the war, it is fair to say that French public sentiment was decidedly mixed regarding this statement and the prospects for France more generally.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, this ill-advised

⁶⁹ Most importantly, the words “cease fighting” were changed to read, “try to cease fighting.” Jackson, Julian. The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 143. Petain was also incorrect that the French forces had been defeated by, “an enemy superior in numbers and in arms.” In truth, the Allied forces enjoyed significant numerical and qualitative advantages in almost every significant military category. For a superb discussion of the material superiority of the French and British forces during the French campaign as well as an excellent discussion of the seemingly unlikely nature of the German victory, see: May, Ernest R. Strange Victory: Hitler’s Conquest of France. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000. For an overview of the dysfunction within the French upper echelon of command, see: Gunsburg, Jeffery A. Divided and Conquered: The French High Command and the Defeat of the West, 1940. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.

⁷⁰ This lack of opinion polling is somewhat unusual because the French were particularly enamored with polls and social data. In a typical year between 1938 and 1977, approximately 500 major public opinion studies were conducted in France. Given this strong quantitative background, the lack of firm data in this case is probably best seen as a result of the pressures of war and the necessities of the moment rather than a lack of public involvement in the plight of France. See: Cowans, Jon. “Fear and Loathing in Paris: The Reception of Opinion Polling in France, 1938-1977.” Social Science History 26:1 (Spring 2002): 71-104. One group that was very pleased with the Marshal’s remarks was the Germans who used this speech for
proclamation accurately revealed the preferences of Petain to end the fighting as quickly as possible.\textsuperscript{71} The fact that Petain wrote the entire text of this declaration himself is significant because it clearly signaled that Petain was unwilling to commit himself to fighting a delaying action across France and from bases in Africa.

In response to the perceived defeatism of Petain’s radio address, morale collapsed in many French units. In the words of French General Andre Beaure, this speech, “while perhaps reassuring for the multitude of civilian refugees, sounded the deathknell of any organized resistance.”\textsuperscript{72} Mass surrenders became a significant problem for the French army with as many as 750,000 troops surrendering between the June 17 radio address and the armistice on June 22.\textsuperscript{73} On June 18, the French propaganda purposes. Shirer, William L. \textit{The Collapse of the Third Republic: An Inquiry into the Fall of France in 1940}. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969. p. 855, 872.


\textsuperscript{73} Paxton, Robert O. \textit{Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps Under Marshal Petain}. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966. p. 4. According to Rommel’s diary accounting of the events of June 17, 1941: “We now came across small groups of French troops all along the route, whom we had no difficulty making our prisoners. Among them were several carloads of French officers, one of whom spoke German and was accordingly now used as an interpreter…The French captain declared that
government exacerbated this defeatism by declaring that all urban areas with a population over 20,000 people were officially “open cities” that would not resist the German advance. While it was clear that the French strategic position was dire, these mass surrenders significantly eroded the French bargaining position before the French even began their negotiations with the German terms. This rapid military collapse clearly indicated that the French were unwilling to maintain an effective fighting retreat as a means of inflicting the greatest possible cost upon the advancing Germans. Given the rapidly deteriorating strategic situation of France, Petain felt increased pressure to quickly strike a deal with the Nazi government.

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Marshall Petain had made an armistice proposal to Germany and had instructed the French troops to lay down their arms. I had the French captain informed, through our interpreter, that we had heard nothing of the armistice and that I had orders to march on. I added that we would not open fire on any French troops who surrendered and laid down their arms… We now drove past the French column, which stood on the road with its guns and anti-tank guns still limbered up. The French captain looked a trifle disconcerted as we passed, but his men seemed quite satisfied with the solution. We met more French troops behind this column and beckoned to them with white handkerchiefs, calling out that the war was over for them.” Ed. Liddel-Hart, B.H. *The Rommel Papers*. Trans. Findley, Paul. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1953. p. 69.

This rapid move toward surrender was vocally opposed by many prominent French politicians, including many from the old Reynaud government. Petain was clearly frustrated by this free expression of opposing views, because he believed that it threatened his political legitimacy. To silence potential dissent within the French government, Petain ordered the arrest of several key domestic opponents who were attempting to flee France aboard the passenger liner *Massilia*.\(^{75}\) Petain also threatened Leon Blum with arrest if he actively opposed his planned peace with the Nazis.\(^{76}\) Petain later arrested Blum as well as former Prime Minister Edouard Daladier and charged them with, “breaches in the fulfillment of their governmental offices.” Blum and Daladier were never tried for these crimes, but they were held in Vichy and later Nazi prisons for the remainder of the war.\(^{77}\) These unconstitutional acts speak volumes about Petain and his willingness to break the law in order to preserve his control over the French government. These arrests were not widely known at the time but as details of these unlawful acts became known after the war, they caused many to question the purity

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of Petain’s motives and were later a key piece of evidence used in his trial for treason. Clearly, Petain was not above subverting the democratic process to achieve his ends.

Petain and the French leadership were convinced that a rapid German advance was inevitable, and therefore the best possible course of action was to ensure the greatest measure of autonomy and security possible. A political ally of Petain described their analysis as:

We thought that…the Wehrmacht would have crossed Spain within a week, got a foothold in Spanish Morocco, destroyed our North African divisions overnight, and rounded up our Senegalese troops in six more weeks. All these ‘redoubts’ would have disintegrated in the hurricane one after another.\(^78\)

Although such statements appear apocryphal in retrospect, Petain and the French leaders actually believed that a rapid German advance was inevitable.

Although Petain was probably unaware of the horrific nature of the Nazi occupation that lay ahead, he believed that he could glean valuable insight from the case of neighboring Belgium. Because of the rapid collapse of Belgium, King Leopold III could not act fast enough to secure a negotiated peace and he was forced to accept terms

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dictated by the Nazis. Leopold was allowed to remain under an uncertain house arrest in the royal palace, and had no power or autonomy. In all practical terms, Leopold was subject to the benevolence of the German occupiers. Petain saw this and interpreted it as a sign that the Germans would most likely not punish French civilian rulers if they accommodated the Nazis, and that if he were to push for a position of power in the post war order, he would be best served if he did so before all of France’s land was occupied.

Even accepting that the war was probably lost, Petain’s actions up to this point do not match with the predictions of existing international relations theories. From a system-level perspective, Petain was acting in a manner that appeared unconcerned with obtaining the best possible conflict termination outcome for France. By signaling his

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80 Leopold’s surrender known in Allied circles as the “Belgian treason” would haunt him for the remainder of his life. After the war, he fled to Switzerland and self imposed exile, but was recalled by a vote of the people in 1950. Less than two weeks after he returned he was forced out of office by tens of thousands of angry protesters who marched on the royal residence. Under this new pressure, Leopold abdicated in favor of his son, Baudouin, on August 1, 1950. Shirer, William L. *The Collapse of the Third Republic: An Inquiry into the Fall of France in 1940*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969. p. 743.

intention to surrender with minimal conditions, Petain undercut whatever potential bargaining leverage he may have had with the Germans. If he were to follow that logic, what Petain should have done to maximize his bargaining position is to signal that he was prepared to fight as long as possible to protect France. Such a bluff may have been very effective with the Germans because of their desire to end the fighting as quickly as possible and the extreme difficulties they would have faced mounting a combined operations strike against North Africa. From a domestic perspective, Petain’s actions are also curious. Because of the rapidity of Petain’s switch in policies, it is unclear that French public opinion supported these actions and it is entirely possible that Petain did not even care about the domestic reaction to his lowered war aims. Culturally as well, the reasoning behind Petain’s rapid call for an armistice does not clearly match the prevailing norms in France at the time. Much like public opinion, it would appear that Petain had already made up his mind to ask the Germans for armistice terms and he did not take the time or effort to investigate the deeper cultural significance of this decision.

3.4 Decision Point #3: Petain’s Minimal Armistice Negotiations

One of the most unusual elements of the Armistice between France and Germany is that they were very minimal negotiations regarding the conditions that either side would accept. For their own reasons, both Petain and Hitler wanted to end the war quickly. Petain was willing to accept almost any peace conditions as long as he could maintain his own security and a place within the new regime. Hitler wanted to end the fighting on the Western Front quickly so that he could start a bigger war on the Eastern Front. This willingness by both the French and Germans to accept almost any reasonable offer suggests that neither side was attempting to extract the greatest possible set of concessions from the other. As a result, the peace negotiations were a rapid, ad hoc affair that was completed with surprising speed and almost no disagreements.

When the Germans received the French request for terms on the evening of June 16, 1940, they were simultaneously elated and surprised.\(^8\) This surprise combined with

\(^8\) After the war, General Walter Warlimont, former aid to the OKW, described the mood in the German high command as: “First of all I would like to stress the fact that at least at German headquarters, nobody expected such a quick and total victory. We soldiers, unlike Hitler, were convinced that we would find the same opponent as in the First World War.” Ophuls, Marcel. The Sorrow and the Pity: Chronicle of a French City under German Occupation. Trans. Mireille Johnston St. Albans, UK: Paladin Frogmore, 1975. p. 12.
Hitler’ desire to delay the German response resulted in a delayed response to the French request. At approximately 6:00 am on June 19, 1940 the French received the terms from the Germans. It was clear from these terms that the Germans wanted to achieve hegemony over Western Europe but were uninterested in the daily operations of the French nation.

According to the German terms: France would be split into two districts—an occupied zone in the North and an unoccupied zone in the South [later Vichy] roughly corresponding with the line of the German advance. Within this unoccupied zone, Petain would be allowed to continue to govern the rump French state with a high degree of autonomy. The French army would be demobilized except for a lightly armed force of 110,000 troops used to maintain internal order within the French controlled zones. The French navy would be demobilized and kept in French home ports with the understanding that the Germans would not appropriate it for their own use. The rump


86 Petain would later attempted to get this number raised to 120,000 men in March 1942 but was unsuccessful. For a primary source description of the size, organization and deployment of this force, see the “Statement of French General Georges Revers dated 8 November, 1954” in: France During the German Occupation, 1940-1944: A Collection of 292 Statements on the Government of Maréchal Petain
French government would pay for the costs associated with maintaining the German occupation of the Northern zone, a total set at the greatly inflated price of 400 million Francs per day. French prisoners of war would be held under German control in the Northern occupied zone until the cessation of hostilities. Finally, the Germans were allowed to execute any person found resisting the occupation or aiding the Free French forces.

For Petain, the German offer was quite attractive because it explicitly allowed him to maintain his personal security and authority over a semi-autonomous state where he would have an 110,000 man security force to legitimize and protect his fiefdom. A key selling point for the rapid acceptance of the German armistice terms was the proposal to draw the demarcation lines between occupied France and the Vichy

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According to the detailed analysis of Peter Liberman, the Germans reaped significant benefits from their occupation of France. Because of its large size and relative wealth, France routinely led all of the occupied nations of Western Europe in almost every measure of wealth, productivity, and human capital exported to or exploited by Nazi Germany. Liberman, Peter. *Does Conquest Pay?: The Exploitation of Occupied Industrial Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. pp. 36-68.

government at the perimeter of the German army’s advance.\textsuperscript{89} Given that the Allies were in rapid retreat, Petain reasoned that the faster that he acted, the greater his own territory would be. While life would be marginally better for the French citizens under Vichy rule than Nazi occupation, this perverse incentive structure did not encourage Petain to ask for additional terms from the Germans.

Petain and the French leadership had apparently convinced themselves that Hitler had offered unnecessarily generous peace terms to Petain and that they should accept the German offer before Hitler realized that he had blundered.\textsuperscript{90} When Petain’s new Interior Minister, Marcel Peyrouton, questioned him regarding the wisdom of accepting the German offer, an impatient Petain momentarily broke down and replied, “[I]f you go on annoying me, I’ll leave you with a France in revolt and go off to Africa.”\textsuperscript{91} This statement is revealing because it clearly demonstrates that despite his public courage that Petain was under considerable pressure to end the war and had considered an escape to North Africa if he could not achieve a peace that served his interests. Despite

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these private fears, Petain continued to frame the armistice in terms of personal self-sacrifice and duty to France. In a style that he would employ until his death, Petain defended his actions by referencing his past services to France and focusing on the rapidly deteriorating military situation facing France, “In 1917 I put an end to mutiny. In 1940 I put an end to rout.”

Petain believed that he needed a rapid peace and justified his actions as serving the best interests of France.

There remained a few details to clarify so Petain then asked the assembled government officials for volunteers to act as an interlocutor with the Germans. Because no one wanted to serve in this inglorious capacity, Petain appointed General Charles Huntziger to serve as the lead French delegate for the armistice negotiations. Petain instructed Huntziger to see if he could obtain additional concessions but to accept the German offer as long as he could also secure peace terms from Italy.


93 This argument that Petain secured a better deal for France than it could have otherwise managed has endured to the present day and is a common theme for Petain revisionists and apologists. According to one early revisionist work, France needed both Petain and De Gaulle to survive the German conquest and that as years pass, Petain’s reputation will likely rise in status. Huddleston, Sisley. Petain: Patriot or Traitor? London: Andrew Dakers Limited, 1951.

Interestingly, the Nazi leaders were atypically sensitive to the personal security needs of Petain and were particularly adroit at manipulating Petain to serve their sinister purposes. Hitler first received word of Petain’s willingness to seek a rapid peace with Germany on June 17 when he was given the text of Petain’s national radio address while he was en route to meet with Mussolini. Although Hitler and Mussolini discussed the annexation and division of France and her empire in grandiose terms, Hitler was largely humoring his bombastic Italian ally.\footnote{Kershaw, Ian. \textit{Fateful Choices; Ten Decisions that Changed the World, 1940-41}. New York: Penguin Press, 2007. pp. 159-160.}

Hitler wanted a rapid settlement with both France and England and he apparently believed that Petain was just the figure he needed.\footnote{Langer, William L., \textit{Our Vichy Gamble}. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947. pp. 46-49.} Hitler was willing to accept a less than total victory because he was afraid that the German war economy was unsustainable and he wanted to focus his limited resources on a climactic battle against the Soviet Union.\footnote{For an excellent account of the German economy during the Nazi period, see: Tooze, Adam J. \textit{The Wages of Destruction: the Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy}. New York: Viking, 2006. It has been widely noted that the German military developed a tradition of waging rapid and decisive military operations precisely because of the historic poverty of the German nation, its unfavorable geographic position in central Europe, and its lack of natural resources. For an excellent discussion of this thesis, see:}
high priority for Hitler. In fact, many within the German high command believed that relatively modest peace terms with France would serve as an inducement for getting Britain to similarly terminate hostilities.\(^98\)

In terms of his grand-strategy, Hitler’s primary opposition to France was his fear that the French would threaten his ambitious plans for expansion and racial cleansing in Eastern Europe. Although Hitler believed that the French people had been an impediment to German nationalism ever since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, his primary goal in the French campaign was to guard his Western flank, not to punish France *per se*.\(^99\) For his plan to work, France and Great Britain would need to be economically and politically subservient to the Reich, but he did not wish to exterminate their non-Jewish populations as long as they were not a threat to his broader plans for world conquest. Regardless of the peculiar political views of Adolf Hitler, it would appear that in the case of France and Great Britain, that grand-strategic considerations took priority over his personal vendettas or racial ideology.

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The German breakthrough at Sedan and the success of the *Sichelschnitt* plan under command of General Eric von Manstein surprised many even within the German high command. The very speed of the German victory thus forced Hitler and the Nazi leaders to make policy regarding the French surrender on an *ad hoc* basis. The fact that the Germans apparently did not have a clear plan for the post-war settlement with France is indeed puzzling, but it allowed Petain the opportunity to secure a peace with the Nazis that met his particular needs.

Interestingly, it was Hitler who insisted on the more lenient armistice terms with Petain. As an inducement to Petain, Hitler overruled his generals and diplomats and allowed the French to retain both their colonial possessions and their navy. Here it would seem that Hitler’s political judgment was particularly pragmatic. Although it is difficult for contemporary scholars to credit Hitler with an adroit and dovish

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100 For an excellent account of the struggles and pessimism within the German high command during the planning phases of the French Campaign, see: Frieser, Karl-Heinz. *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West*. Trans. John T. Greenwood. Annapolis: The Naval Institute Press, 2005. esp. pp. 54-99. According to Frieser, many within the German high command believed that the campaign in France would end in a disastrous war of attrition similar to WWI. Even after major revisions to the German plans, many were pessimistic as to its prospects for success. When France was finally defeated in a mere six weeks, this prompted many Germans to dub the campaign the “Miracle of 1940.” See also: Mearsheimer, John J. *Conventional Deterrence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. pp. 99-133.

management of the peace with France, the fact is that he was willing to break with his advisors and accept a less than total victory as a means of achieving his desired ends. According to one noted analyst of Hitler’s approach to the question of the surrender of France:

Hitler’s political thinking was a curious mixture of uncanny political insight and immature adolescent fantasy. He knew that victory was not the only thing that mattered in war, and particularly in a war unleashed in cold blood. What mattered was the cost of victory and the stability of the peace founded on military success. His real interest was in German

102 This view of Hitler as a rational and at times brilliant political actor has been particularly common in a series of new revisionist histories. According to one of the more prominent accounts by military historian John Mosier, “The early victories of the Wehrmacht did not happen because of a purely military superiority. In large measure they came about because of Hitler’s evil genius…The fact that Hitler was a supremely wicked man should not blind us to the fact that his judgments were generally shrewd, and nowhere more so than in foreign policy and military strategy. This observation contradicts the cherished belief of many biographers…Hitler was both more rational and far shrewder than is generally allowed. Many people, I think, will find this idea hard to swallow. Reflection, however, suggests that my portrait makes him considerably more evil than the conventional depictions of him. Madmen are generally thought to be less accountable for their actions than the sane.” For a broader discussion regarding the role of Hitler in German rearmament and militarism, see: Mosier, John. Cross of Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German War Machine, 1918-1945. New York: Macmillan, 2006. p. 5.
domestic policy, i.e., in the establishment of his own image as the infallible leader and sole arbiter in all matters. With his real instinct for the realities of political power, he knew that the best way to achieve his supreme ambition was to offer the Germans victory and domination at little cost (emphasis in the original).  

To the end, Hitler was particularly successful at mitigating the costs of the German victory.  

The only major sticking point during the negotiation process was the status of the French fleet. According to the initial German offer of June 19, the post-war status of

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104 In total ‘only’ about 27,000 German soldiers were killed during the six week campaign to conquer France, a figure that compared favorably to the 13,000 deaths suffered during the Polish campaign and was a mere third of the infamous WWI Battle of Verdun. Ronald E. Powaski, Lightning War: Blitzkrieg in the West, 1940. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003. pp. 335-336. and Horne, Alistair. To Lose a Battle: France 1940. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969. p. 584.

105 Some have even claimed that Petain used the negotiations over the French fleet as a tactic to distract the French public from their plan to collaborate with the Nazi regime. According to the French journalist André Géraud writing under the pen name, Pertinax: “Yet, in reality, this whole business was intended merely to pull the wool over people’s eyes. Here is the bitter truth: the real policy was an unshakable determination to yield to Hitler, provided only that he would leave intact some scrap of our home
the French fleet was somewhat ambiguous. While the French Navy would be demobilized, it would remain in French ports and could potentially be captured by the Germans. During the negotiation process, Petain was under strong pressure from his British allies as well as dissident groups within the French Navy not to surrender the fleet to the Nazis. The British feared that the Axis powers would use the French fleet to swing the naval balance in the Mediterranean to their favor and cut off valuable Allied outposts in North Africa and the Middle East. Although Petain wanted to preserve the French fleet, he knew that he would have to be careful to keep this asset without provoking threatening responses from either the British or the Germans.

The Germans understood that the British were attempting to block the transfer of French naval assets and were exerting significant pressure on Petain and the French leadership to avoid surrendering their fleet. Hitler realized that allowing Petain to save face and retain nominal control over the fleet was an expedient way of getting Petain to move on an already tempting peace deal. To this end, Hitler ignored the opinions of his advisors and chose to allow the French to retain their naval forces and further pledged not to use these forces in exchange for a rapid and negotiated victory. Article VII of the

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armistice was thus slightly altered to clarify the status of the French Navy, a direct product of Hitler’s personal intervention. Article VII read:

The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it intends to make no use for its own ends of the French war fleet stationed in ports under German control, save for units necessary for coastal patrol and minesweeping operations. Furthermore, the German Government makes the solemn and formal declaration that it does not intend to present any claims regarding the French war fleet at the conclusion of peace.  

Although Hitler has often been criticized regarding his neglect of naval issues, in this instance his disinterest in acquiring naval power served him and the German nation well.  

Although the Germans pledged to respect the independence of the French fleet, and initially made no moves threaten French bases, the mere possibility of a German

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108 If anything, Hitler could have asked for more from Petain regarding the French fleet, because Petain had already signaled that he was willing to negotiate and the rapid erosion of the French Army was quickly undermining Petain’s already weak bargaining position. Martel, Francis. Petain: Verdun to Vichy. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1943. p. 167.
takeover threatened the British. The British leadership again demanded that the French hand over their fleet, and again the newly surrendered French refused. The British believed that the French were acting in bad faith and were simply parroting the desires of the Nazis. Ultimately, Churchill and the British leadership ordered the Royal Navy to sail to the French base at Mers-el-Kebir and sink the French fleet. Churchill later described this act as, “a hateful decision, the most unnatural and painful in which I have ever been concerned.” Regardless of the outcome, the critical fact is that the French fleet was an example of Germany allowing Petain and the French government to exercise an added measure of autonomy as a means of securing a rapid victory at an acceptable cost.


110 In his speech on July 4, 1940, Churchill further explained the difficulty of this decision, “I have never in my experience seen discussed in a Cabinet so grim and somber a question as to what we were to do about the French Fleet.” Quoted in: Langer, William L., Our Vichy Gamble. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947. p. 58.

Petain received the final German terms on June 22, 1940, at approximately 1:00 am. With the exception of minor clarifications regarding the status of the French fleet, the terms were identical to those offered two days earlier. Although some within the Petain cabinet claimed that these terms were, “totally unacceptable” Petain acceded to them.\footnote{Schoenbrun, David. Soldiers of the Night: The Story of the French Resistance. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980. p. 47.} Petain instructed his delegates to officially sign the armistice but he himself was conspicuously absent from the surrender ceremony. The French delegation led by General Huntziger met the Nazis and the forest of Compiègne, a location specifically picked by the Nazis because it was where twenty-two years before the German delegation signed the Armistice ending WWI. Before signing the Armistice, Huntziger asked the German delegation if it was possible to get any better terms through negotiation. The Germans curtly replied, “no” and asked for the French signatures. At 6:50 PM the French delegation signed the armistice as instructed by Petain. Under the terms of the Armistice, all hostilities would officially end at 12:35 AM on June 25, 1940.\footnote{Horne, Alistair. To Lose a Battle: France 1940. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969. p. 583.} In an anti-climactic move, the French signed an official armistice with Italy on June 24 that similarly became effective on June 25, 1940.\footnote{Jackson, Julian. France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. p. 128.}
Although Petain had quickly ended the war, his choice to do so with only minimal negotiation is not satisfactorily explained by systemic, domestic, or cultural theories. Contrary to the predictions of systemic theory, Petain made no effort to secure the best possible deal for France. In the words of Marc Bloch, Petain erred, “on 17 June, of ‘asking for a cessation of hostilities’ before, well before, he even knew the terms on which such a request would be granted.”\textsuperscript{115} This was exacerbated by the fact that Petain did not attempt to bargain with the Germans over any issue except for the status of the French fleet and even this issue was not a deal breaker for Petain as evidenced by the fact that he had already instructed Huntziger to accept the German conditions provided that he could also secure peace with Italy. This indicates Petain was less concerned with maximizing the expected French gains than he was at achieving a rapid peace and securing his post-war status.

Unlike the predictions of domestic theories, the peace signed by the Petain government did not reflect the desires of the French domestic base. Anyone outside of Petain’s immediate circle had no influence on the bargain process and the masses were purposely kept ignorant of the French bargaining. Furthermore, Petain did not ask for any concessions regarding the physical, financial, or political welfare of France’s citizens. Because of they were so excluded from the discussion regarding the armistice,\textsuperscript{115} Bloch, Marc. \textit{Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940.} Trans. Gerard Hopkins New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968. p. 111.
the typical response of the French population was shock and surprise, not acceptance of Petain’s policies.116

Culturally, as well, this hasty bargain did not reflect the interests of France, but instead made the French people subservient to the despised Nazi government. Petain recognized that this peace agreement would offend the honor of the French public and immediately began to claim that he would restore a sense of honor and decency within France. In his first speech to the French people after the armistice, Petain claimed that that, “at least honor was saved” by ending the war.117 Despite the Marshal’s claims, there appears to have been little though to honor during the decisions regarding French peace terms. Rather, the idea of honor was a post hoc justification for a shameful period in French history.118 At Petain’s trial for treason, Leon Blum described Petain’s appropriation of the term “honor” as:

In June 1940 I saw a country…which was dazed and bewildered by its defeat and the vast, brutal, incomprehensible nature of that defeat…The people were


dumfounded, utterly crestfallen, prostrate with stupor and despair. And they were told, ‘No you are wrong. The Armistice we are proposing, which dishonors you and delivers you into the enemy’s hands, is not a shameful act, but a natural act in conformity with the country’s interests’ And the people of that country, not knowing the terms of the Armistice, believed what they were told because the man who told them these things spoke in the name of his victorious past, in the name of glory and victory, in the name of the Army, in the name of honor.\footnote{Roy, Jules. \textit{The Trial of Marshal Petain}. Trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. p. 64-65.}

What this peace process did achieve was the retention of Petain’s personal power and security within his limited fiefdom and the ability of the Germans to pursue their other wicked ends. In the words of historian Philippe Burrin, this was a peace agreement:

\begin{quote}
[P]rompted and more and more constricted by concern for the regime itself. In the last analysis, faced with a choice between state power, which would have meant opting for the Anglo-Saxon camp, and political survival, which
tied it to the occupying power, Vichy chose the latter, even if the price to be paid was vassaldom.\textsuperscript{120}

While France could have possibly done better with either continued negotiations or continued fighting, the peace that they accepted had achieved Marshal Petain’s most important goal, the protection of his post-war security through a dealing strategy.

### 3.5 Decision #4 The Armistice and Petain’s Move towards Collaboration

Petain formerly announced the terms of the two armistice agreements to the French people on June 25. Petain was purposely vague concerning the specific terms of the French surrender, and spoke only in broad generalities.\textsuperscript{121} Of particular note, Petain specifically avoided mention of the German annexation of Alsace and Lorraine to the German Reich for fear that such news might have encouraged resistance and disorder.\textsuperscript{122} With an eye towards solidifying his rule over the French populace, Petain


stated that defeat had occurred because a “spirit of enjoyment” had prevailed over a “spirit of sacrifice.”

Petain continued by insisting that he was a uniquely moral figure and that he would lead France in the creation of a “new order... an intellectual and moral renewal.”

This rhetoric of self-sacrifice may have reassured some, but even then it appeared largely hypocritical. Because Petain was unwilling to risk his own security, he strengthened his own internal security regime and collaborated with the Nazi government. In the months that followed, Petain consolidated his hold on power and created the “new order” by co-opting key members of the French clergy, systematically eliminating constitutional checks on his authority, and empowering opportunistic cronies such as Pierre Laval to prominent posts within his regime. This new regime made its “temporary” headquarters in the French spa town of Vichy, and this semi-autonomous zone would become forever known as Vichy France.

Even to contemporary observers, the new Vichy state was, “little more than a German Protectorate” that took its limited legitimacy, “from the personality of Petain,

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admittedly a solid prop, [but to]...a certain limited section of society, the Government is supported by nothing at all.”  

126 Petain used his power to limit political dissent against his regime and the Nazi government through a strict censorship of the press, suppression of public speech, and suppression of local groups such as the Freemasons who may have helped organize resistance. In enforcing these measures, Petain was particularly ruthless leading to the popular, if somewhat exaggerated, claim that, “Marechal would have prepared his gas chambers and his deportation camps for those who refused to swear fidelity to him.”  

127 Although Petain did his best to cast his regime as a government of national unity and preservation, he never truly achieved this goal.  

One of Petain’s continuing fears was his foreign relations with Germany. Although Petain may not have wanted a German victory, he knew that he needed to be exceedingly careful in his foreign relations if he was going to survive as the leader of a


German puppet regime. According to General Jacques Campet, who was responsible for providing Petain’s daily military briefings, “It was not a matter of knowing whether the Marechal desired the victory of the Allies or the Germans, but of knowing who was going to win the war so that it would be possible to cling to the victor and to profit by his victory.”

To this end, Petain maintained a peaceful coexistence with the Hitler and the Nazi regime primarily through collaborating with the Germans and avoiding any appearance of working with the Allies or the Free French forces. This desire to maintain the continued security of the Vichy regime caused Petain to adopt a particularly accommodating relationship with the Nazi regime that far exceeded the requirements of the Armistice agreement. While Petain would later claim that he maintained good relationships with the German as a means of protecting France, this claim is somewhat dubious because of the sycophantic nature of Petain’s relationship with the Nazi regime and the extent of the French collaboration.

Petain was eager to meet Hitler and on October 24, 1940, ironically the twenty-fourth anniversary of the recapture of Fort Douaumont during the Battle of Verdun, he got his chance. Although Petain lobbied Hitler for the immediate release of French

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prisoners of war, Hitler demurred by blaming England for the continuation of the war in Europe and reminding Petain that the terms of the Armistice allowed German to retain possession of these captured troops until the end of the war. Hitler then suggested that France should officially join Germany as an ally against Great Britain as a means of securing the release of the prisoners more rapidly, but Petain refused claiming that the small Vichy army was already stretched too thinly defending Vichy and its colonial outposts. Sensing that he needed to provide an additional inducement to Hitler to ensure favorable treatment, Petain then promised that he would make a formal statement to the French people asking them to collaborate with the Nazis. Although Hitler and Petain then discussed a wide range of administrative issues, the message to Petain was clear. Germany would not tolerate French dissent and Petain must keep the

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130 The subject of a formal French alliance would be later brought to Hitler’s attention by none other than General Erwin Rommel. According to his son, Manfred, Rommel asked Hitler to enlist Vichy forces in the North African campaign on several occasions but, “Hitler refused, although the French-according to my father’s information—would not have looked unkindly on such a solution in 1941 or 1942. The Fuehrer gave as the reason for his view the difficulties which a German-French military alliance would cause with Spain and Italy, as both of these countries were out to annex large areas of France’s North African possessions.” Liddel-Hart, B.H. ed. The Rommel Papers. Trans. Findley, Paul. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.1953. p. 443.

Nazis happy. To publically solidify their cooperation, Petain and Hitler shook hands for pictures that become an infamous sign of a dark chapter in the history of France.¹³²

Petain quickly made good on his promise to Hitler and urged the French people to, “enter into the way of collaboration” with the German authorities. The term “collaboration” soon took on a particularly significant meaning for the French as it rapidly became associated with the deportation of French Jews and Gypsies, the conscription of French youth into forced labor battalions, the use of French railroads, and the removal of French natural resources and raw materials. These sacrifices were above and beyond the requirements of the Armistice and served to further the nefarious plans of the Nazis while permanently ruining the reputation of Petain and exposing him to criminal prosecution after the war.¹³³ In total, approximately 76,000 French Jews died in the hands of the Nazi regime and some 600,000 French citizens were forcibly removed to work as forced laborers in German industries.¹³⁴ While Petain pretended


that the sovereign rights of Vichy France would prevent future abuses, it was all too obvious that he and his rump nation existed to further the interests of Nazi Germany.\footnote{Bruce, Robert B. Petain: Verdun to Vichy. Washington: Potomac Books, Inc. 2008. p. 106.}

shortly thereafter as the French garrisons followed Darlan’s lead and refused to obey Petain’s dictates. While this incident was relatively insignificant in the grand scheme of WWII, this military resistance is curious.

Much like the rest of Petain’s collaboration, this act is not properly explained by existing international relations theories and appears to have been contrary to the best interests of France. On the systemic level, this attack slowed down the advance of the Allied powers whose express purpose was to defeat the Nazis and to liberate France. Domestically as well, this new conflict enjoyed little if any support from the French population who were suffering the effects of a Nazi occupation of France and domination of Vichy. Culturally, these acts must have been humiliating as well as evidenced by American reports that French morale was low and that despite their large force that resistance was surprisingly light. In sum, the French resistance to the American landings was yet another unusual ploy by Petain to appease the German leaders and to maintain Petain’s personal security.

138 After the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, Petain declared that Vichy would remain neutral. This move was dictated by the Nazis who wanted to maintain law and order in their rear areas. Gordon, Bertram M. Collaborationism in France during the Second World War. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1980. p. 304.
3.6 Conclusion

The case of Petain during WWII fits reasonably well within the alternative theory of this work and supports all of its alternative hypotheses except hypothesis # 4 (H4). Clearly, Petain lowered French war aims and moved towards a rapid surrender in a manner that was consistent with the preservation of his own personal security (H1). To this end, he moved rapidly to end the war and negotiate an armistice that protected his own security and afforded him considerable powers under the new order (H2). Despite his rhetoric of self-sacrifice, there is no evidence that Petain was ever in immediate danger and the Nazis made it clear in their peace negotiations that Petain would have a place in the post-war order (H3). While Petain and France clearly had divergent interests, Petain had no need to perpetuate the fighting because he was already protected as a condition of the peace agreement. Because of this, this research neither supports nor refutes the proposition that Petain would have perpetuated the unprofitable conflict to protect his private security interests (H4). However, the outcome of the Armistice and subsequent collaboration was defiantly sub-optimal for France precisely because Petain wanted to make as rapid of a deal with the Nazis as possible and willingly gave up his bargaining leverage by announcing his intentions to surrender after he had only been in power a few hours (H5). Petain was offered the rule of the rump Vichy state as
a side payment, an offer which he accepted as a *quid pro quo* to end the war and collaborate with the Nazis (H6).

Petain had a unique ability to break with systemic, domestic, and cultural pressures and to pursue his own interests. From a systemic perspective, Petain’s actions are questionable at best. While France was clearly defeated on the battlefield, the particulars of Petain’s diplomatic maneuvering are inadequately explained by systemic theories. If Petain was concerned about extracting the greatest possible concessions at the negotiating table, his decision to announce his intention to immediately surrender is unusual. This public statement revealed an unwillingness to fight any longer than necessary, induced mass surrenders within the French military, and signaled that Petain was not willing to threaten a continuation of the war to secure better terms from the Nazis. Furthermore, Petain chose to end the war and make peace with the Germans despite the presence of a viable alternative—a continuation of the war from North Africa. Although this option would contain its own unique risks and rewards, it could have provided France the opportunity to use its sizable navy as well as the 200,000 man-strong army stationed in North Africa. While victory would not have been assured, the Nazi weakness in terms of naval and amphibious assault capabilities would have provided the French ample opportunities to strengthen their positions and may have further exacerbated Hitler’s desire to conclude a rapid peace with his Western European enemies.
This outcome should also be particularly troubling for proponents of domestic models, because it demonstrates a case where a leader who was empowered by a legitimate democratic process was able to promote his narrow security interests over that of the common good. Rather than reflecting the desires of the French people, Petain chose to alter French war aims to ensure his post-war survival. Throughout his rule, Petain claimed to be acting in the best interests of the French people, but given the harsh toll that the Nazis extracted from France this claim is quite dubious. This pattern of behavior became even more pronounced after the fighting ended and Petain and his Vichy regime became increasingly involved in enabling the Nazi domination of Europe. Indeed, Petain’s active collaboration with his Nazi overlords forced him to act as, “a prisoner who speaks under the menace of constraint” and gave speeches, “dictated by the enemy” simply to appease the Germans and maintain his own position.\textsuperscript{139}

Although one could argue that, once elected, Petain effectively ruled as an authoritarian leader with a small inner circle of political cronies, the observed outcome still does not fit the predictions of domestic theories. If Petain was the leader of such a regime, domestic-level theories predict that he would have raised not lowered his war aims as part of a gamble for redemption. This simply did not happen. In fact, as soon as Petain came into power he lowered French war aims by announcing his desire to

surrender and rapidly accepted a dealing strategy with the Nazis once it became apparent that he would be protected in the post-war settlement.\textsuperscript{140} In any event, if we understand Petain as either the leader of a democratic or mixed regime, his actions more closely match the predictions of the alternative theory presented here than existing domestic theories.

Petain’s surrender and collaboration is also difficult to comprehend from a cultural perspective. Although this is the least specified of the theoretical alternatives, cultural theories would not have predicted such a rapid collapse, surrender, and collaboration. Even if one accept that France was a deeply divided nation by the start of WWII, it is difficult to believe that cultural ferment alone directed Petain to surrender to and collaborate with the Nazis. While many in France believed that the Great War was a colossal waste of French lives and national energies, few on either side of the political and cultural divide questioned the need for national defense. The debate in France

during the interwar period was not if France should be vigorously defended against a resurgent Germany, but how best to achieve this goal.\footnote{In general, this divide corresponded to forces on the right who advocated for a smaller but more professionalized army with longer service terms and those on the left who wanted a larger conscript force comprised of shorter term draftees. See: Kier, Elizabeth. Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. pp. 56-88.}

Had Petain not been given the opportunity to safely surrender, the alternative theory predicts that he would have lead a fighting retreat across the remainder of French territory and would have attempted to escape to North Africa. Perhaps if Petain could not have secured such favorable terms from the Germans, he would have remembered as the “martyr of Marseilles” and not the treacherous collaborator from Vichy. Here again, this counterfactual recognizes that Petain was calculating what was in his best interest as it related to his prospects for survival. Had Hitler not adroitly manipulated Petain for his own purposes, Petain would have likely chosen to continue his delaying strategy as long as possible. As it turned out, the tired war hero from the Great War, was compelled to choose surrender and humiliation in WWII because lowering French war aims to accept a dealing strategy was the single best way to ensure his personal well being. Because of his desire to remain secure, Petain made himself:

the model of a willing loser, became the eager friend of the conqueror,

the bitter enemy of his erstwhile allies, and a leader who scrupled not to
snatch personal victory from the ruins of his country’s disaster, more at home in the camp of the conquerors than with his defeated people who still dreamed obstinately of liberty and of the past and future of free France.\textsuperscript{142}

Consistent with the predictions of this research, Petain was willing to give up everything that he and France had stood for to protect his own person. In historical perspective, Petain’s moves are particularly troubling because Petain would appear to have been an unlikely figure to act in such an opportunistic manner. First, as a national war hero, Petain may have been expected to act honorably or defiantly, but he did not. Next, as the leader of a democratic regime, Petain may have been restrained by the domestic structure, but he was able to act in exactly the self-interested manner that democratic institutions are designed to prevent. Finally, on normative grounds, it would be unthinkable to cooperate with a regime as wretched as the Nazis, but Petain did just that for the next four years. Indeed, it is impossible to fully comprehend this unique case of manipulation and collaboration without recognizing the powerful motivation of individual security. There are many ways in which Petain may have been constrained by systemic, domestic, and cultural forces, but instead he used his agency to protect his personal security.

CHAPTER 4: EMPEROR HIROHITO AND THE JAPANESE ENDFGAME

“With a faith born of eternal loyalty as our inspiration, we shall…prosecute the war to the bitter end in order to uphold the national polity, protect the imperial land, and accomplish the objectives for which we went to war” – June 8, 1945 document adopted by the Imperial Conference titled, “The Fundamental Policy to Be Followed Henceforth in the Conduct of the War”

“Now is the time to bear the unbearable” – Emperor Hirohito (attributed) to the Japanese Cabinet, August 10, 1945


4.1 The Case of Imperial Japan in WWII

The end of WWII in the Pacific is a topic that has been debated for six and a half decades. Despite the intensity of this debate, there is no consensus as to why the war ended as it did. Because of this lack of academic and popular agreement, an examination of Japanese war aims during the final months of WWII is an ideal case for reexamining existing international relations theories as well as testing alternative models. This work will begin by examining the predictions of systemic, domestic, and cultural theories as well as popular arguments regarding the importance of the atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration of war in ending the conflict. After discussing the strengths and weakness of these models, this work will also test the alternative theory regarding the security seeking behaviors of national leaders.

Consistent with the predictions of this alternative theory, this chapter argues that the end of the Pacific War occurred as it did because the United States was able to recognize and manipulate the desire of Emperor Hirohito and the senior Japanese leadership to protect the post-war security of the emperor. Under pressure from American diplomats, most notably Joseph Grew and Henry Stimson, President Truman was able to disregard the Potsdam Declaration clauses which demanded unconditional surrender and was able to induce Japan to capitulate by guaranteeing the post-war
security of Emperor Hirohito.\(^3\) This pragmatism regarding the status of the emperor was the most important factor in shaping the observed conflict termination. Conversely, had the United States not made these commitments, it is likely that neither Hirohito nor the Japanese government would have been willing to accept defeat and the war probably would have continued considerably longer and cost many more lives.

From the standpoint of system-level theory, the case of Japan is troubling because it represents a horrifically inefficient case of conflict termination. In the very simplest terms, Japan’s strategic timing could hardly have been worse because it failed to end the conflict once the military balance had clearly swung in the Allies’ favor or fully commit to an attrition strategy. Although the vast majority of Japanese military and political leaders recognized that the war was lost months before the end of the war, most believed that an early, negotiated peace was not in Japan’s best interests.\(^4\) Rather than

\(^3\) It is worth noting that despite his pragmatism regarding the retention of Emperor Hirohito, Henry Stimson was also fully in support of using the atomic bombs on major Japanese cities as a means of shortening the war and saving as many as, “a million casualties to American forces alone.” Quoted in: Walker, J. Samuel. Prompt & Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. p. 2.

\(^4\) According to historian H.P. Willmott, the Japanese prospects for victory were dealt a fatal blow at the Battle of Midway in June 1942. According to Willmott, “There is nothing new in the observation that wars are invariably fought long after the outcome can be discerned by the parties to the conflict...The war’s outcome could be predicted with absolute certainty at least fifteen months before Japan’s defeat...
negotiate while the Allies were still thousands of miles from the Japanese home islands and their military forces were relatively strong, most Japanese planners believed that Japan should fight a protracted defensive struggle culminating with a decisive battle on their home islands.\textsuperscript{5} According to this logic, the Japanese commitment to the war combined with their ability to inflict casualties would convince the Allies that the subjugation of Japan was not worth the price. Although risky, such a plan may have allowed Japan to achieve more favorable surrender terms than it ultimately received. The problem was that Japan paid all of the costs of such a delaying strategy, only to surrender a few months before the potentially decisive battle on their home islands was to begin.

After the military and political situation had deteriorated to such a state, it is very surprising that Japan did not play the one card it had left to potentially avoid occupation and total defeat—the ability to inflict damage on its opponent. Indeed, as Robert Pape notes, “Japan’s surrender represents a rare instance of a great power surrendering its entire national territory to an opponent that had not captured any significant portion of

it… what matters is not the exact date of Japan’s surrender, but the fact that it surrendered without offering last ditch resistance."

Had Japan chosen to fully commit to such a strategy it is possible that it could have exhausted the casualty tolerance of the Allies and forced a settlement that would have achieved a greater share of the post-war benefits than it ultimately received.

This reality was reflected by the Allies who believed that despite the massive military imbalance in the Pacific, an invasion of Japan would be needed to achieve a Japanese surrender. A War Department Military Intelligence Division report presented to General George Marshall on August 12, 1945 (after the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war) underscores the ability of the Japanese to inflict massive casualties on the Allies and to demand better conditions for surrender. This document claimed that the Japanese, “have a considerable capacity for inflicting damage on Allied transports and naval craft” and that their “large, well disciplined, well armed, undefeated ground forces have a capacity to offer stubborn fanatic resistance to Allied ground operations in the home land and may inflict heavy Allied casualties.” The report continues by claiming that the Japanese were willing to, “drag out negotiations for the purpose of

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obtaining more favorable terms” and that the atomic bombs, “will not have a decisive effect in the next 30 days.”

Despite the fact that the high-risk, high-reward approach appeared a foregone conclusion, the Japanese government did not carry out such an attrition strategy. If the Japanese nation had been primarily motivated by maximizing its relative position in the international system or perpetuating its national survival, this change in strategy appears highly illogical. By refusing to either surrender early or fight to the finish, Japan suffered immense losses, weakened its bargaining position, jeopardized its national survival, and ultimately accepted a surrender that was nearly unconditional. Although Japan was lucky to have benefited from a relatively benign American occupation, its unconditional surrender left it potentially vulnerable to severe punishment from the victorious Allies.

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This clumsy bargaining was exacerbated by the Allied demand that the Japanese surrender must be unconditional. Although this policy had the advantage of moral clarity, it was not in keeping with the incentives of system-level theory. The repeated Allied demands for unconditional surrender limited the ability to negotiate by creating

As early as January 1943, some critics of Franklin Roosevelt had questioned his demand for unconditional surrender. In his defense, Roosevelt later claimed that he made this statement by accident. According to Roosevelt prior to a meeting with the press at the Casablanca Conference, he had helped two French generals settle an argument which he thought was, “as difficult as arranging the meeting of Grant and Lee. “[S]uddenly the press conference was on, and Winston and I had not time to prepare for it, and the thought popped into my mind that they had called Grant ‘Old Unconditional Surrender’ and the next thing I knew, I had said it.” In fact, Allied policy regarding the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers was much more prepared than Roosevelt claimed. Eight months prior to the Casablanca conference Roosevelt had agreed with the State Department that the Allies would accept only unconditional surrender from Germany and Japan. Prior to his departure to the conference, Roosevelt briefed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he also intended to seek a pledge for unconditional surrender from the British and Soviet allies. Although the Allied demand for unconditional surrender may have been ill advised, it was not unplanned. Maddox, Robert James. Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years Later. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995. p. 6-7. See also: Sherwood, Robert E., Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948. p. 696.; and Skates, John Ray. The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. p. 15-16. For a related look at American unconditional surrender policy vis-à-vis Nazi Germany, see: Armstrong, Anne. Unconditional Surrender: The Impact of the Casablanca Policy upon World War II. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961.
an inflexible set of war aims that reinforced Japanese fears of harsh peace and stiffened their resolve to resist. While the Allies were confident in their ability to win, they were quite concerned regarding the costs of their victory. According to the commander of the 3rd Marine Division, Major General Graves B. Erskine, “[V]ictory was never in doubt. Its cost was…What was in doubt, in all our minds, was whether there would be any of us left to dedicate our cemetery at the end, or whether the last Marine would die knocking out the last Japanese gun and gunner.” ¹⁰

From the perspective of systemic theories, this “mutual suicide pact” between Japan and the Allies would likely result in a suboptimal outcome for both sides because of both sides’ failure to lower their respective war aims and agree to end the fighting.¹¹ According to the predictions of system-level theories, both Japan and the United States would suffer unneeded punishment because of their unwillingness to alter their war aims in a manner that maximized the expected payoffs for their respective nations. Despite the clear predictions of system-level theories there is much that these models cannot tell us about how and why the Pacific war ended as it did.


The observed war termination is similarly puzzling from the perspective of domestic theories. The domestic structure of Japan during the period was a curious hybrid of a moderately repressive monarchy with a small but powerful electorate much like Imperial Germany during WWI. According to regime theorists such as Hein Goemans, this regime type should have been uniquely willing to raise war aims in the face of military setbacks. If the Japanese were unable to achieve a military victory or a favorable settlement, Goemans and other regime theorists suggest that such a regime will fight to the bitter end as part of a gamble for redemption. Contrary to this prediction, the Japanese government never raised its war aims in the face of mounting defeats and was able to avoid a high-cost gamble for redemption. In fact, the opposite

14 The one possible exception to this in the Japanese case is that in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Okinawa, Emperor Hirohito briefly claimed that he wanted to engage in a new offensive operation in Yunnan Province in China. This desire to seek redemption in China may have been nothing more than a fleeting whim or quip as the Japanese never conducted any subsequent offensive operation in the Chinese theatre and the Japanese army continued to redeploy from China to the Japanese home islands. Walker, J. Samuel. Prompt & Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan. Chapel Hill:
actually occurred because Japan accepted a peace that had only a single condition, the preservation of Emperor Hirohito.

The role of Hirohito in this mixed regime is complex. Technically, the emperor was the supreme ruler in Japanese society, and had the power to rule on any military or civil matter.\textsuperscript{15} In practice, Hirohito chose to take a more passive role in forming government policy and in most cases voiced only approval or disapproval of government decisions that were brought to him for official endorsement.\textsuperscript{16} Even in this restrained form, Hirohito had more power than other constitutional monarchs and it is clear that despite ideological differences among other senior Japanese leaders, Hirohito was able to transcend divides between political rivals.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite the traditional Japanese veneration of the imperial dynasty, this \textit{quid pro quo} of ending the war in exchange for Hirohito’s private security is curious. By only

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protecting the emperor, this peace agreement excluded powerful domestic interests and exposed the Japanese populace to an uncertain military occupation. Although there was precedent for previous emperors abdicating or being deposed by rival military leaders, the institution on the emperor had always remained unchanged. In contrast to these past examples, the acceptance of defeat and American occupation radically changed the role of Emperor Hirohito and effectively ended the traditional imperial institution. Rather than retaining Hirohito as a god-like figure, the new Japanese constitution relegated Hirohito as a powerless figurehead who toured the nation and met with private citizens. Had Hirohito and the senior Japanese leadership been primarily concerned with the retention of a strong imperial regime, it is unclear that this reduced capacity actually served their interests better than continued fighting. In short, the decision to accept such a radical disruption of the Japanese domestic system without a gamble for redemption is contrary to the predictions of domestic theories and is worthy of additional investigation.


Cultural theories are also imperfect at predicting or describing the Japanese war termination. According to these models, Japan’s culture was uniquely adverse to surrender and occupation and would have been expected to fight to the last man to avoid the ignominy of defeat. Traditionally, Japan had a warrior ethos that emphasized honor and considered surrender an unacceptable and shameful act.\(^{20}\)

Unlike the fanatical nationalism of Nazi Germany, the Japanese warrior culture was primarily focused on the personal bonds between an individual warrior and their family and peer group rather than loyalty to the nation or a political ideology.\(^{21}\) For most Japanese soldiers, courage was a highly personal affair and their thoughts in battle and in death were typically focused on upholding personal and familial honor.\(^{22}\) Despite the private nature of these beliefs, they produced a very powerful strategic culture in the

\(^{20}\) Although it is difficult to read too much into Japanese folklore, the warrior ethos in Japan has a long and proud tradition. Of these traditional Japanese tales, the story of the 47 Ronin is the most famous example of this spirit of self-sacrifice commonly known to Western audiences. See: Mitford, A.B. Tales of Old Japan. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1966. pp. 15-41.


aggregate.\textsuperscript{23} Much like a tree composed of many interconnected fibers, the traditional beliefs of the Japanese people were brought together to produce an almost unbreakable whole. Although these traditional beliefs, “cannot be explained by self-interest alone” they were very strongly entrenched in the Japanese way of life centuries before the outbreak of World War II.\textsuperscript{24}

These beliefs were manipulated by the Japanese government through a systematic control of the media and the public education system which began in 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education. This act formally required that Japanese school children be indoctrinated in the practices of a strict samurai code which specifically demanded worship of the Japanese emperor as a god on earth.\textsuperscript{25} This act had the effect of strengthening existing attitudes of cultural and moral superiority among the Japanese population and creating two generations of Japanese who were unquestionably

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dedicated to protecting their emperor. This indoctrination into the ways of the samurai, created an ethos within Japanese society of both a warrior code and an unquestioned allegiance to the emperor. During WWII, the prevailing belief in Japan was that war was in fact glorious and that, “devotion to the emperor and obedience to his commands were imperatives that went beyond traditional obligations to family, clan, and village.” Japanese leaders, led their troops into action with calls to, “dispel all the anxieties of your Emperor…demonstrate your respect for His Imperial benevolence…[and] to die for the Emperor.” This reverence for the emperor created a highly obedient group of soldiers who, “will fight unhesitatingly, even with nothing...

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27 Ralston, David A. Importing the European Army: The Introduction of European Military Techniques and Institutions into the Extra-European World, 1600-1914. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. p. 166. According to Ralston, the popularization of such warrior beliefs in the Japanese masses was a product of both the military and educational reforms during the Meiji Period. Because of the need for larger Western-style armed forces, the Japanese were forced to end their reliance on the Samurai elites. Despite this infusion of Western military organization and education, the ideal of a loyal and honorable Japanese fighter along the ancient model endured.

more than bamboo poles, if the Emperor so decrees” or, “[T]hey would stop just as quickly if he so decreed.”

Although these newly exploited values would never completely supplant the more personal loyalties in Japanese culture, they would produce a level of unit cohesion and ferocity that would come to epitomize the Pacific war and would create an unusual cultural dynamic during the conflict-termination process.

This refusal to surrender turned the typical casualty rates on their heads. For example, of the approximately 170,000 Japanese defenders on Okinawa, only about 10,000 were captured and many of these were severely wounded or had been knocked unconscious. During the entire Pacific campaign, the United States only captured 38,666 Japanese prisoners because most Japanese soldiers chose to fight until death despite the hopelessness of their situation. In addition to inspiring fear in their opponents, this resilience had a positive effect on Japanese unit cohesion. Whereas in the European theatre, a unit which sustained 25% casualties in a given battle was considered combat ineffective and would often surrender en masse, Japanese units would typically fight to the last man rather than accept defeat.

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This determination was further strengthened by the uniquely savage nature of the fighting in the Pacific theatre.\textsuperscript{31} Because of this savagery, many participants on both the Japanese and Allied sides viewed that Pacific conflict as a racial and cultural war to eliminate the other side. In the words of American Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey, after the Americans were finished, “the only place where Japanese would be spoken was in hell.”\textsuperscript{32} These racial tensions and visceral combat experiences appeared to have a mutually reinforcing effect on one another fueling fear and mistrust on both sides. According to American historian J. Samuel Walker:

The unwillingness of Japanese soldiers to surrender in a lost cause reflected in part their samurai code, devotion to the emperor, and a belief that death in battle ensured a glorious destination for their spirits. But their refusal to surrender was also motivated by more mundane considerations, particularly


their conviction that death was preferable to the treatment they would suffer at
the hands of their American captors.  

This sense of desperation continued to grow as the Allied forces neared the Japanese
home islands.

As a response to the invasion of the Philippines in October 1944, the Japanese
began to implement suicide aircraft known as *kamikazes* to attack Allied ships and
bombers. Inspired by the historic typhoons that destroyed the Mongol invasion in the
thirteenth century; these special units were manned by volunteers who willingly crashed
their planes into Allied targets as an act of supreme self-sacrifice. By summer 1945,
the Japanese people had begun preparation to repel an Allied invasion by whatever
means necessary including the use of mass-suicide tactics and a civilian defense force
known as the Home Guard. From all appearances, the Japanese were culturally prepared
to sacrifice everything to avoid defeat. Even after the atomic bombs and the Soviet
entry into the war, the majority of civilians did not believe that surrender was a

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legitimate option and many appeared willing to sacrifice for the defense of the Japanese culture. Admiral Onishoi Tikijiro expressed the sentiment by claiming that, “If we are prepared to sacrifice 20,000,000 Japanese lives in a special attack effort, victory shall be ours.”

Despite this powerful cultural aversion to surrender and commitment to continued fighting, Japan ultimately accepted defeat without a final climactic battle on the Japanese home islands. This decision shocked the Japanese people, who were preparing for continued sacrifice and were not expecting a rapid and almost unconditional surrender. Although the Japanese people did not expect this outcome, this does not necessarily mean that the surrender was contrary to Japanese cultural incentives. In this case, the dual nature of the Japanese strategic culture leads to different predictions. The first element of the Japanese culture, the warrior ethos and the shame associated with surrender, suggests that Japan should not have surrendered and instead should have

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36 As Kazutoshi Hando described first hearing the news of surrender as a young schoolboy, “Thus my feelings, that mid-August noon, were a mixture of sorrow and anger, coupled with a sense of hopeless futility, for we had been told that with the occupation of Japan, we would be forced to lead the lives of slaves...Young as I was, there seemed to be too little time left to me-and yet I took no pleasure in anything I did.” The Pacific War Research Society. Japan’s Longest Day. London: The Souvenir Press, 1968. p. 12.
committed to the final battle on the Japanese home islands. In contrast, the protection of
the emperor and strict obedience to royal commands suggest that once the Japanese
believed that Hirohito’s post-war fate was secure, they should have accepted defeat, no
matter how dishonorable, as a means of protecting their venerated leader. Because of
the differing predictions of this cultural model, it is necessary to analyze both of these
alternatives and to see which variable (warrior ethos, or dedication to the emperor) best
explains the observed conflict termination in this case. While this method of analysis is
an imperfect test of cultural models, it is the only way to fully account for the
complexity of the Japanese culture and its impact on the conflict termination process.

Several alternative explanations have been advanced to explain the defeat of Japan.
Of these, the most enduring explanation is that the atomic weapons shocked Japan into
a rapid surrender because it demonstrated the potential costs of continued fighting.
Similarly, others claim that the Soviet entry into the war on August 8, 1945 was an
equally shocking development that forced the Japanese to recalculate their prospects for
victory and accept a rapid peace settlement. Although the atomic attacks and the Soviet
entry into the war closely correlate with the timing of the Japanese surrender, it is
difficult to prove or disprove causation of any one factor or alternative explanation.37

37 On the difficulty of proving any single alternative explanation, see: Miller, Edward S., War Plan
Even before the war ended, many different branches of the American military were already claiming credit for the defeat of Japan. The presumptive commander of an Allied invasion, Douglas MacArthur was purposely providing low casualty estimates for the upcoming amphibious invasion of Japan. Similarly, the United States Navy was claiming that the naval blockade would end the war in short order. Perhaps the most obvious example of this bureaucratic maneuvering was that of the Army Air Corps. Because the advocates of airpower wanted to perpetuate the notion of aircraft as war winning weapons, they purposely inflated the purported effectiveness of their strategic bombing claiming that it would bring about the collapse of Japan through conventional bombing alone by fall, 1945. This pro-airpower bias was perpetuated after the war with the publication of the Strategic Bombing Survey. The Survey claimed, somewhat dubiously, “Japan’s acceptance of defeat without invasion, while still possessed of 2 ½ million combat troops and 9,000 kamikaze airplanes in the home islands, reveals how persuasively the consequences of our operations were translated into political results.” The Survey continues claiming that, “Certainly before 31 December 1945 and in all probability before 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.”

This debate continued after the war and has profoundly influenced the academic debate on the subject. The most common claims in the academic debate focus on the willingness of Japan to surrender before the two atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war in August 1945. While a close inspection of the documentary record clearly shows that by early 1945 Emperor Hirohito and the Japanese leaders believed that Japan could not defeat the Allies, this recognition did not cause them to revise their war aims or make any definitive moves towards peace. Only after the atomic bombs were dropped and the Soviets had declared war did the Japanese formally approach the Allies with their demands for surrender.  

This chapter argues that the critical element in

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39 These explanations have created a fierce debate with the academic community that continues to this day. For an excellent and evenhanded review and critique of these different arguments, see: "Introducing the Interpretive Problems of Japan’s 1945 Surrender: A Historiography Essay on Recent Literature in the West" by Barton J. Bernstein. "Introducing the Interpretive Problems of Japan’s 1945 Surrender: A Historiographical Essay on Recent Literature in the West." in Hasegawa, Tsuyoshi ed. The End of the Pacific War: Reappraisals. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. pp. 9-64. It is also worth noting the Robert Pape has advanced another alternative theory that claims that the naval blockade against Japanese supply lines was the critical factor for compelling Japan to surrender because it exposed Japan’s military vulnerability. While Pape downplays the importance of Emperor Hirohito’s intervention, he does concede that had the emperor remained silent that the war may have ended weeks later, “or not at all; we cannot know.” Pape, Robert A. Bombing to Win: Airpower and Coercion in War. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996. pp. 87-136, quote p. 133 and Pape, Robert A. "Why Japan Surrendered." International  

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explaining the timing of the Japanese surrender was the decision to retain Emperor Hirohito in a reduced capacity as a quid pro quo for ending the fighting. Consistent with the predictions of this works’ alternative theory, the preservation of Emperor Hirohito was non-negotiable for the Japanese. Despite the systemic, domestic, and cultural incentives and increased costs of the atomic attacks and the Soviet victories in Manchuria, the Japanese were willing to continue the war if this condition was not met. The Allied willingness to protect the emperor was critical because it provided Hirohito with necessary reassurance regarding his post-conflict security. This guarantee allowed Hirohito to act as the key agent in the conflict termination process by breaking with precedent and ending the deadlock within the Japanese cabinet. Although the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war were clear signs of the future costs of continued fighting, they appear to have had at best a secondary effect on the Japanese war aims. The Japanese cabinet was already considering surrender before either of the atomic bombings or the Soviet entry into the war, but they were deadlocked on what conditions the Japanese should demand from the Allies. The one condition that all of the Japanese cabinet members could agree upon was the preservation of Emperor Hirohito’s post-war security. The positions of the various factions within the Japanese government remained unchanged during their internal debates prior to these new developments and remained unchanged during their internal debates prior to these new developments and remained

unaltered after the atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration of war.⁴⁰ Although this alternative theory does overlap with the cultural explanation that the Japanese were concerned with preserving Hirohito and the imperial line of succession, it claims that Hirohito was still a necessary figure in this story because of his unique ability to break with systemic, domestic, and cultural pressures and force the Japanese nation to accept his decisions.

In this atmosphere of gridlock, Emperor Hirohito exercised his agency at six critical decision points and produced outcomes that would not have been clearly predicted by existing theories. First, as Japanese military power rapidly eroded during the spring of 1945, Hirohito began to reevaluate the Japanese delaying strategy and instructed the Japanese ministers that they should accept any peace that preserved his imperial power. Second, Hirohito and the Japanese leaders chose to ignore the Potsdam Declaration which called for the unconditional surrender of Japan in favor of continued delay. Third, after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Hirohito was unable to end the war because of concerns regarding his post-war fate. Although the Japanese government agreed that they should ask the Allies for a clarification of their terms, surrender without the protection of Hirohito was not considered as an option. This institutional deadlock continued after the fourth decision point, the Soviet declaration of war, as well

as fifth decision point, the atomic bombing of Nagasaki again because of the lack of clarity regarding Hirohito’s post-war fate. This deadlock was finally broken with the American response to the Japanese request for clarification of surrender terms which was known as the “Byrnes Note.” The Byrnes Note reassured Hirohito and allowed him to make his sixth and final decision, the decision to surrender. Hirohito used this assurance of security to break the deadlock within the Japanese cabinet and finally forced the Japanese to surrender.

4.2 Decision #1: The Erosion of Japanese Military Capabilities, Spring 1945

By spring 1945, the war in the Pacific had turned decisively against Japan. Critical defeats in the Philippine Islands, Burma, and at Iwo Jima had brought the advancing Allies within striking range of the Japanese home islands and broken the ability of Japan to project naval and air power. As the Allies closed in on Japan, they rapidly intensified their naval blockade and strategic bombing campaigns destroying Japanese cities and industrial centers with minimal opposition. According to most international relations theories, this erosion of Japanese military capabilities should have caused them to reassess and alter their war aims accordingly. System-level

theories would claim that these clear losses should have caused the Japanese to lower their war aims to account for their weakened status. Conversely, domestic theories such as those advanced by Goemans would suggest that the Japanese regime would actually raise its war aims as part of an all or nothing bid for redemption through battle. Cultural theories would predict that the Japanese warrior tradition and aversion to surrender would cause them to wage a defiant battle for national honor and the protection of Emperor Hirohito. What is interesting is that the Japanese strategy and war aims remained remarkably unchanged despite the worsening tactical and strategic prospects.

Following the Allied invasion of Okinawa in April 1945, Prime Minister Kuniaki Koiso’s government collapsed and was replaced with new civilian leadership under the control of a retired admiral, Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki. One of Suzuki’s first acts was to order a review of Japanese prospects for continuing the war. This report was compiled by Suzuki’s trusted Chief Cabinet Secretary Hisatsune Sakomizu and was remarkably frank and pessimistic in its findings. Sakomizu concluded that Japan was in a dire economic and military position and that production and commerce would soon grind to a halt and that the Japanese civilian population would soon be faced with severe food shortages.42 Although the report highlighted the high morale of the

42 The issue of food shortages in Imperial Japan has received renewed attention in recent years. The notion that Japan was facing imminent starvation is largely a product of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey but this has been questioned by contemporary historians who claim that the dire
Japanese people, it concluded that it was becoming, “increasingly difficult to meet the requirements of total war.”

Despite this report, Suzuki believed that Japan could continue to fight for the foreseeable future, but that Japan should privately discuss more peaceful options. In Suzuki’s opinion, Japan could use its latent power and the threat of continued fighting to negotiate favorable terms from the Allies. Suzuki’s position caused some in the military to believe that he was weak and defeatist, but in fact his views did not represent a significant break with the existing Japanese strategy. Although Suzuki was keenly aware of the long odds facing Japan, he refused to alter Japanese grand strategy and, with the backing of Emperor Hirohito, chose to perpetuate the Japanese delaying strategy.

Despite the increasingly unfavorable military balance, Japanese war aims and strategy remained unchanged. The unofficial name for the Japanese plan to defend their home islands was Ketsu Go. Although this policy recognized that Japan could never predictions of primary sources such as the USSBS are in fact overblown and that a distinction should be made between food shortages and imminent starvation. See: Giangreco, D.M. Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009. p. 117.


conquer the Allied powers, it was based on the belief that Japan and its leaders were not in immediate danger and that a combination of suicide tactics, defensive preparations and the enlistment of Japanese civilians would be able to repel or deter an Allied invasion. The Japanese leadership was confident that Japan’s commitment to continued fighting and its remaining military force of over 3 million men could achieve an effective attrition-based defense.45 Because of the confidence in Ketsu Go, the Japanese leaders did not seriously reevaluate their strategy in the early months of 1945.46

Even after the start of the American firebombing campaign on March 10, 1945, and the defeat of Nazi Germany in May, the majority of Japanese leaders favored continuation of the conflict. While the Japanese leadership was not monolithic in their views, they attempted to present a strong and united front for continuation of the status quo. On June 8, 1945 the Japanese military reaffirmed their willingness to continue the war with the release of a document titled, “The Fundamental Policy to Be Followed


46 Japanese military planners also blamed many of their previous defeats on lack of time to prepare adequate defensive positions. This was less of a concern to Japanese planners who believed that they would have significant time to improve the static defenses of the Japanese home islands a task greatly simplified by their shorter supply lines and the availability of a civilian labor force. Wood, James B. Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable? Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007. p. 113.
Henceforth in the Conduct of the War.” 47 Here, the Japanese military promised to fight, “to the bitter end in order to uphold the national polity, protect the imperial land, and accomplish the objectives for which we went to war.” 48 Hirohito supported this decision to delay any consideration of surrender until the military had achieved a major military victory over the Allies. Hirohito rationalized this decision claiming that surrender would be, “very difficult unless we make one more military gain.” 49

Japan’s military position was dealt yet another blow on June 22, with their final defeat at the battle of Okinawa. This battle cost Japan in excess of 220,000 military and civilian lives, but despite this loss, military resistance was stubborn and domestic opinion appeared to harden. 50 Although few doubted the immense martial potential of the Allied onslaught, many senior military officials believed that Japan could still inflict


sufficient casualties to cause the Allies to quit fighting or to make peace on terms more suitable to Japan’s wishes.\textsuperscript{51}

During this time, Emperor Hirohito purposely took an outwardly detached role from policymaking.\textsuperscript{52} Privately, however, Hirohito expressed his belief that diplomacy may be a better course than continued fighting.\textsuperscript{53} While Hirohito had expressed pessimism regarding the outcome of the war as far back as February 1942, by early-1945 he was completely convinced that Japan could not prevail.\textsuperscript{54} Hirohito frequently


\textsuperscript{52} Some have claimed that Hirohito would later capitalize on this detachment by disavowing responsibility for the war and implicitly blaming others for the instigation and continuation of the war. Roy, Denny. The Pacific War and Its Political Legacies. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009. p. 103.


expressed his doubts regarding the wisdom of continued fighting to his attendants in the Imperial Palace, but stopped short of taking direct action to end the war.  

On February 14, 1945 Hirohito met with Prince Konoe to discuss Japanese options. At this meeting, Konoe warned Hirohito that if Japan continued to fight, that he would face both internal and external threats to his security. They then discussed the topic of the Allied demand for unconditional surrender and Hirohito specifically asked if Konoe believed the Allies would protect the imperial dynasty. Konoe replied that, “[E]ven if we surrender unconditionally, I feel that in America’s case she would not go so far as to reform Japan’s kokutai [national polity] or abolish the imperial house.”

At another, unspecified date during early-1945 Hirohito discussed the progress of the war with his brother, Prince Takamatsu. According to Takamatsu, Hirohito wanted to abdicate as a means of possibly ending the war, but could not force himself to follow through with his convictions. Hirohito explained his unwillingness to abdicate in terms of what this inaction had already cost Japan stating that, “the present difficulties


of the country were due to my lack of virtue.”

After the war was over, Hirohito would again consider abdication and assumption of responsibility for various war crimes, but again he chose to retain his power and avoid punishment for his actions.

These conversations clearly indicate that Hirohito realized that Japan was losing the war and that he believed that his personal security was in jeopardy. It is also clear that Hirohito thought that his post-war security and the best interests of Japan may be mutually exclusive and struggled with these conflicting interests. At this juncture, Hirohito chose to delay making any definite decision regarding Japanese war aims. For the immediate future, Hirohito was relatively safe and was apparently comfortable to accept a delaying strategy by default. Even though Hirohito’s palace contained a bomb-proof shelter and was heavily guarded by a force of over 10,000 soldiers and emergency response personnel, it was not officially targeted by Allied bombers and it remained a safe haven for the emperor. More importantly, no Allied military forces could

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58 The one deliberate, yet unofficial, attack on Hirohito’s palace was a solo effort by the crew of the B-29 Straight Flush on July 20, 1945. This attack missed its target and the crew was severely reprimanded when it returned to its base on Tinian. Allen, Thomas B. and Polmar, Norman. Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan-and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. p. 88.
immediately be dispatched to threaten his person or control of the Japanese government and the Allies never attempted an assassination or coup against Hirohito.

The defeat at Okinawa, the last staging point on the road to Japan, appears to have changed these feelings of detachment somewhat. After the fall of Okinawa, Hirohito became increasingly worried by the imminence of the Allied advance. Sensing that the next logical step was an Allied invasion of the Japanese home islands, Hirohito made his first unofficial moves towards ending the conflict through a dealing strategy. Initially, Hirohito limited these moves to discussions within his inner circle, but they are the first indication that Hirohito believed that he should personally intervene to terminate the conflict.

On June 8 (the same day as the military hardliners pledged to fight to the bitter end), Hirohito suggested that Japan should consider third-party mediation with the Soviet Union as a means of negotiating a suitable peace with the Allies.59 On July 7, 1945, Hirohito officially sanctioned a diplomatic mission to Moscow and gave his representative, Prince Konoe, free reign to accept any termination of the war short of unconditional surrender and the punishment of the emperor.60 Although this Japanese


“peace feeler” was promptly rebuffed, it does provide insight into Japanese willingness to accept a negotiated settlement provided that it met a series of conditions, most notably, the post-war security of the Emperor. Despite this willingness to adopt a dealing strategy, the Japanese were rebuffed by the Soviets who were unwilling to broker a deal and by the Allies who were unwilling to alter their pledge to accept nothing but unconditional surrender.

Despite the fact that the Allies had inflicted a series of staggering military defeats on their foe, they faced significant impediments as they advanced on Japan during the spring of 1945. Although the United States was the undisputed leader of the Allied coalition, it was faced with a series of highly complex military and political dilemmas, most notably a growing casualty aversion and desire to end the war quickly.\textsuperscript{61} Even though the United States had suffered far lower casualty rates than any of the other

\textsuperscript{61} The desire to end the war quickly was particularly strong within the American military. According to a US Army opinion poll, 66% of American troops in the southwest Pacific believed that once a soldier had served 18 months that they should be entitled to return home. Although the desire to return home is common among many soldiers throughout history, the American military was particularly worried about troop shortages and a potential collapse in morale. Spector, Ronald H. \textit{Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan}. New York: The Free Press, 1985. p. 545.
major combatants, there was a definite desire to minimize losses and to bring American troops home quickly.\(^\text{62}\)

While opinion was divided as to the best strategy for compelling the Japanese to surrender, few doubted in the wake of bloody battles such as Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa that the Japanese remained a lethal opponent.\(^\text{63}\) Publicly, the United States and the rest of the Allies remained committed to the 1943 Cairo Declaration which called for the unconditional surrender of Japan, but some diplomats questioned the wisdom of pushing for such expansive terms.\(^\text{64}\) The fear raised by Under Secretary of State Joseph Grew was that Japan would be unwilling to risk the security of the Emperor or the


\(^{63}\) Indeed, Iwo Jima was the first and only battle of the Pacific war where US casualties actually exceeded Japanese losses. Walker, Paul D. *Truman’s Dilemma: Invasion or Bomb*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2003. p. 131. These increased American losses appear to have been the result in a shift in Japanese tactics. Rather that attempt to defend the entirety of a given island base, the Japanese instead chose to fight in only the most defensible portions of the islands. In addition to this, the Japanese forces stopped wasting their troops in unproductive “banzai charges” and chose to keep them hidden in a complex series of defensive positions that were often impervious to American indirect fire. Sledge, E.B. *With the Old Breed: at Peleliu and Okinawa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. p. 53, 70.

cultural humiliation of unconditional surrender and that an insistence on such terms
would stiffen Japanese resistance and cost many additional American lives.

In many respects, Joseph Grew was in the right place at the right time. Grew was of
the few senior diplomats on the Allied side that had extensive experience with Japan.
Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Grew had worked as the US ambassador to Japan
and had made an extraordinary effort to interact with and learn from the Japanese
culture. He had met the emperor on numerous occasions and Hirohito was comfortable
enough with Grew that he would even ask him about his family dog, Sambo. After the
outbreak of war, Grew returned to the United States and was dismayed at the American
ignorance of their Japanese foe. Grew wrote a series of books and articles and traveled
around the country giving lectures and meeting with academics and senior officials all
in order to impart some additional measure of understanding into the public debate. One
issue that was particularly troubling to Grew was the notion that the Japanese were easy
foes compared to the Nazis and could easily be “mopped up.” One of the major points
Grew stressed was the Japanese cultural belief of kokutai or loyalty to the Emperor.

Years before the war ended, Grew had identified the role that the Emperor would play

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in any future peace negotiations and had doggedly tried to inform American policy makers of its future importance.\textsuperscript{66}

Acting on these convictions, Grew attempted, as early as April 1944, to alter American peace conditions in a memo to then Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Grew lobbied for the retention of the Emperor as a figurehead to maintain order and limit Japanese military resistance to American occupation stating that:

If after final victory, we wish to avail ourselves-as common sense would dictate-of any assets that we find in Japan which can be used for the maintenance of order as distinguished from the maintenance of the military cult, we would, in my judgment, simply be handicapping the pursuit of our ultimate aims by any attempts to scrap or by-pass the institution of the Throne. Should we insist on so doing, I can only see chaos emerging from such a decision.\textsuperscript{67}


Initially, Grew’s ideas would find few adherents other than Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. Some within the administration considered Grew too weak or too enamored with the Japanese culture to be fully trusted. Despite this early dismissal, these ideas would keep coming up in discussions regarding how best to obtain a rapid and workable termination of conflict with Japan.

The primary impediments to Grew’s proposals within the United States government were twofold. First, there was a general skepticism as to their likely effectiveness of inducing a Japanese surrender by offering to protect the Emperor. Second, most America policymakers believed that it was necessary to maintain a firm public posture for future military and diplomatic action, and that if such an offer was refused that it would weaken American credibility in future negotiations. Among more public audiences, Grew’s suggestions received even less support. Sun Fo’s influential 1944 *Foreign Affairs* article titled, “The Mikado Must Go” directly attacked Grew’s proposals as soft on Hirohito and claiming that, “the Mikado must go because the imperial idea is the essence of Japanese aggression…[and if Hirohito survived the war] legend would pass like wildfire that the God-Emperor, although surrounded by enemies on all sides, was so powerful that, under the cloak of divine protection, his enemies could do him no harm or diminish his power.”

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Further complicating these calculations was a desire to minimize Soviet influence and expansion in post-war Asia. Although the Allies were officially allied with the Soviets and would solicit their assistance in defeating Japan, mistrust and friction had been fermenting between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union over a variety of military and political issues. This friction has caused some revisionist historians to claim that the United States purposely delayed the end of the Pacific war specifically to use the atomic bombs and gain future leverage with the Soviet Union. Of these revisionist works, the most influential is *Atomic Diplomacy* by Gar Alperovitz. Alperovitz claims that the United States could have compelled Japan to surrender by either lowering their demand for unconditional surrender or informing the Japanese of the impending Soviet attack. According to this argument, the Truman administration knew that either of these options would have likely ended the war but deliberately chose not to as a means of strengthening their position vis-à-vis the Soviets.\(^69\) Anti-Soviet

\(^69\) Alperovitz, Gar. *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam; the Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power, Revised Edition*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985. pp. 22-27. For better or worse, Alperovitz’s claims have directed the academic discourse regarding the decision to use the atomic bombs. One of Alperovitz’s most vocal critics is Robert James Maddox who calls Alperovitz the “Godfather of Hiroshima Revisionism” and claims that his work is a “travesty of scholarship.” Maddox even claims that Alperovitz used, “the crudest of devices to make the evidence appear to support his theses” such as shortening direct quotations to alter their meaning and quoting sources out of context. See: Maddox, Robert James. ed. *Hiroshima in History: The Myths of Revisionism*. 257
tensions were exacerbated with the defeat of Nazi Germany and the Soviet military domination of Eastern Europe. Despite their willingness to have the Soviet Union as an active partner against Japan, the Allies were afraid that the Soviets would be able to obtain territory in Manchuria and the Japanese home islands and could potentially threaten the fragile balance of the post-war world.⁷⁰

Despite these tangible geopolitical interests in ending the war quickly, the American public and many national leaders harbored a desire for retribution for Pearl Harbor, the Bataan Death March, and a host of other war crimes.⁷¹ In addition to widespread racism and xenophobia, the American people wanted Japanese leaders to be

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held accountable for their actions and punished for their crimes. Chief among these leaders in the American public imagination was Emperor Hirohito. According to a June 1945 Gallop poll published by the *Washington Post*, the American public consistently advocated harsher punishment for Japan than Nazi Germany. When asked, “Which country do you think we can get along better with after the war—Germany or Japan?” 67% chose Germany while only 8% preferred Japan. Similarly, when asked “If you had your say, how would we treat the people who live in Germany [or Japan] after the war?” 65% preferred leniency towards the German population, but not the German leaders whereas only 40% of Americans supported leniency towards the Japanese population, but not their leaders. In regards to the post-war fate of Emperor Hirohito, most Americans also wanted strict punishment. 33% of the American population favored summary execution, 17% wanted him placed on trial, 11% thought that he should be imprisoned, and 9% preferred exile. In stark contrast, only 4% of Americans believed that nothing should be done to Emperor Hirohito on the grounds that he was merely a figurehead and only 3% believed that he should be retained as a political puppet to manage Japan after the war.72

This desire to punish Japan and its leaders made even the most dovish members of the American foreign policy establishment fearful of backing off of the public call for unconditional surrender out of fear of appearing soft on Japan. Recognizing this popular pressure, President Truman reaffirmed his commitment to the unconditional surrender of Japan just four days into his presidency in his first address to Congress on April 16, 1945.\textsuperscript{73} Truman declared, “Our demand has been, and it \textit{remains}—Unconditional Surrender! (emphasis in the original)”\textsuperscript{74} According to Truman when he made this proclamation, “I was applauded frequently…and when I reaffirmed the policy of unconditional surrender, the chamber rose to its feet.”\textsuperscript{75} The message to American leaders was clear; any peace settlement short of unconditional surrender would be politically impossible to accept.

This pressure made it difficult to communicate to the Japanese that Hirohito could expect to maintain his personal security if he accepted the Allied demand for unconditional surrender. This uncertainty combined with the fact that Hirohito had not been directly threatened caused Hirohito and the Japanese leadership to continue their


delaying strategy despite the fact that Japan’s military power was steadily eroding. This demand for unconditional surrender which was formally restated a few weeks later as part of the Potsdam Declaration had the unintended effect of prolonging the war because it was below the minimum set of conditions that Emperor Hirohito and the Japanese leaders were willing to accept.\textsuperscript{76}

4.3 Decision #2: Potsdam and Unconditional Surrender

After the defeat of Nazi Germany, the Allied leaders met in Potsdam to discuss the fate of post-war Europe and to coordinate their efforts against Japan. The issue of partitioning Nazi Germany and dividing Europe into political spheres of influence was highly contentious and consumed much of the Allies’ time and attention. On the issue of Japan, however, Allied opinion was relatively unified. Consistent with the Cairo Declaration of 1943, the Allied leadership agreed to reiterate their demand for the unconditional surrender of Japan and to shift their military efforts towards achieving that end. Although many within the United States’ government were wary of the Soviets, Truman made a concerted effort to ensure Soviet military intervention against

Japan, and as an inducement to enter the war even dropped hints regarding the existence of the American nuclear weapons program.\textsuperscript{77}

In order to make their war aims clear to Japan, the Allied leaders believed that a formal and public declaration of their intentions and surrender conditions was needed. To this end, the Allied powers that were currently fighting Japan began drafting what became known as the Potsdam Declaration. Although the prevailing sentiment within the Allied delegations at Potsdam was that they should be unequivocal in their demands for unconditional surrender, some Allied diplomats, most notably Under Secretary of State Joseph Grew and Secretary of War Henry Stimson, again argued for a more...

pragmatic approach with Japan, claiming that a guarantee to protect Hirohito would shorten the war.\footnote{Despite their belief in the merit of negotiating with Emperor Hirohito, both Grew and Stimson believed that their plan faced many potential pitfalls. In the words of an internal memo dated June 29, 1945 the most difficult task would be to negotiate a settlement, “which might be acceptable to Japan and still satisfactory to us (emphasis in the original).” The memo continued and highlighted critical tensions: “a. Shall we play up our intention to punish war criminals, and please (in theory at least) the US public, or play it down and tempt the Japanese leaders? b. Shall we state a flat intention to allow the Japanese to retain the structure of a constitutional monarchy, and tempt the Japanese public, or state the opposite intention and please (again in theory) the US public, or leave the matter vague and impress neither side, probably?” Maddox, Robert James. 


Grew and Stimson argued that the Japanese would be unwilling to surrender if they believed that Emperor Hirohito was in danger and that the Allies should alter their surrender demands to indicate a willingness to ensure Hirohito’s security.\footnote{Grew and Stimson’s beliefs were confirmed by an unusual source, Japanese Navy Captain, Okino Matao. Matao was the third highest ranking Japanese officers captured by the Allies and was surprisingly cooperative with his captors. In numerous interrogations with American intelligence officers, he claimed that the best way for the Allies to obtain surrender from Japan would be to guarantee the survival of the emperor. Straus, Ulrich. \textit{The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POWs of World War II.} Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003. pp. 158-163. This conclusion was endorsed by a July 1944 OSS report which stated, “the desirability of eliminating the present Emperor is questionable; it is possible that he inclines}
would pointedly remind President Truman, retention of Hirohito was necessary, “in order to save us from a score of bloody Iwo Jimas and Okinawas all over China and the New Netherlands [Indonesia].” Both Grew and Stimson clearly recognized the fact that the Emperor’s individual security was a means of shortening the war and would work together to encourage the United States to adopt a more pragmatic approach to ending WWII in the Pacific, even if it meant the retention of Emperor Hirohito. After consulting with Grew, who was in Washington serving as the acting Secretary of State, Stimson began to lobby Allied leaders at Potsdam to make a public commitment to preserve the Japanese throne or to clarify that unconditional surrender, “does not mean extermination or enslavement of the Japanese people.”


Despite intense and sustained internal lobbying efforts, this proposal was initially blocked by Secretary of State James Byrnes and dismissed by President Truman.\textsuperscript{82} Frustrated with their attempts to alter the opinions of Byrnes or Truman, Stimson took the proposal to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on July 17. Churchill’s initial reaction was quite receptive, but when he broached the topic with President Truman later that day, he was quickly rebuffed and subsequently dropped the matter altogether. The primary factor in Churchill’s decision appears to have been a strong aversion to additional British casualties and a belief that such actions would bring the war to a prompt conclusion.\textsuperscript{83} Churchill later claimed that he was motivated by, “the tremendous cost in American and to a smaller extent British life” that would be necessary to force Japan to surrender unconditionally and that “they [the Japanese] had something


[Emperor Hirohito] for which they were willing to face certain death in very large numbers, and this might not be so important to us as it was to them.”

Ultimately, these efforts to modify the official Allied war aims at the Potsdam Conference were in vain, a victim of domestic political considerations and coalition politics. Although such a moderate course of action would later be tacitly adopted by President Truman as a *quid pro quo* for ending the fighting, this revision of Allied war aims would not be included as part of the Potsdam Declaration. The final version of the Potsdam Declaration was announced on July 26, 1945 (5:00 AM on July 27 Tokyo Time) and it was at best vague regarding the post war fate of the Emperor, a compromise that was helpful for obtaining Allied solidarity but was unhelpful at reassuring Hirohito. The declaration read:

1. We—the President of the United States, the President of the National Government of the Republic of China, and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, representing the hundreds of millions of our countrymen, have conferred and agree that Japan shall be given an opportunity to end this war.

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2. The prodigious land, sea and air forces of the United States, the British Empire and of China, many times reinforced by their armies and air fleets from the west, are poised to strike the final blows upon Japan. This military power is sustained and inspired by the determination of all the Allied Nations to prosecute the war against Japan until she ceases to resist.

3. The result of the futile and senseless German resistance to the might of the aroused free peoples of the world stands forth in awful clarity as an example to the people of Japan. The might that now converges on Japan is immeasurably greater than that which, when applied to the resisting Nazis, necessarily laid waste to the lands, the industry and the method of life of the whole German people. The full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland.

4. The time has come for Japan to decide whether she will continue to be controlled by those self-willed militaristic advisers whose unintelligent calculations have brought the Empire of Japan to the threshold of annihilation, or whether she will follow the path of reason.
5. Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.

6. There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world.

7. Until such a new order is established and until there is convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.

8. The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine.

9. The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.
10. We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.

11. Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy and permit the exaction of just reparations in kind, but not those which would enable her to re-arm for war. To this end, access to, as distinguished from control of, raw materials shall be permitted. Eventual Japanese participation in world trade relations shall be permitted.

12. The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.

13. We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide
proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The
alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.\textsuperscript{86}

Despite Allied belief that this position was clear and relatively generous, it would
ultimately fail to compel the Japanese to surrender. Much of this failure was due to the
fact that the Japanese believed that this statement was neither clear nor generous—
particularly in respect to Emperor Hirohito’s post-war status. In regards to the post-war
security of Hirohito, the Potsdam Declaration was viewed as vague at best and
potentially threatening at worst. From the Japanese perspective, the terms of the
Potsdam Declaration were little different than the demand for unconditional surrender
announced at the Cairo Summit.\textsuperscript{87} As a result, the Japanese leadership chose to take no
new action in light of these Allied demands. The Japanese had no way of appreciating
the coalition politics that shaped the drafting of this document or that significant
factions within the American and British delegations had actually advocated a
compromise declaration that would have granted assurances for Emperor Hirohito’s
security. Similarly, the Japanese could not have known that the atomic bombs would
soon be dropped or that just a few days after that the Soviets would enter the war on the

\textsuperscript{86} Giangreco, D.M. \textit{Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947}. Annapolis:

\textsuperscript{87} Maddox, Robert James. \textit{Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years Later}. Columbia:
Allied side. Given this lack of information, the Japanese were predictably wary of the Allied demands, and were willing to avoid making an official response and play for time. Furthermore, Japanese diplomats were still hoping to obtain Soviet mediation and they did not consider the Potsdam Declaration as significantly altering their diplomatic efforts with the Soviet Union.

Foreign Minister Tōgō’s initial reaction was that the Potsdam Declaration was vague in reference to the, “eventual form of the Japanese Government” and predicted that “complications” could arise out of, “language relating to disarmament and war criminals.” On the morning of July 27, Tōgō had an audience with Hirohito and advocated a noncommittal approach that would simultaneously ask for clarification on specific phrases such as the Allied occupation policy and the fate of the Emperor while also attempting to restart third party mediation with the Soviets. For both Tōgō and Hirohito, the Potsdam Declaration did not represent a significant change in Allied war aims and thus did not merit an official response.

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At a meeting with the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War (the “Big Six”) and Cabinet meetings later the same day Tōgō presented this position and again counseled for clarification and patience. The Japanese ministers agreed to delay publication and response to the Allied demands, but as word of the Potsdam Declaration became rumored to the public, military hardliners began to push for a formal rejection on the grounds that doing nothing would weaken morale. The next morning, Japanese newspapers ran the text of the Potsdam Declaration but with the purposeful elimination of the phrases regarding the disarmament of Japanese armed forces as well as those that promised not to enslave or destroy the Japanese polity.\footnote{Sigal, Leon V. Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988. pp. 148-151.} These editorial omissions may have been a purposeful attempt to enflame public opinion and to force a rejection of the Potsdam Declaration, but whatever their intent, the Japanese leaders decided to continue to ignore the Allied demands and hope for Soviet assistance in the peace process.\footnote{Tsuyoshi Hasegawa “The Soviet Factor in Ending the Pacific War: From the Neutrality Pact to the Soviet Entry into the War in August 1945” in: Hasegawa, Tsuyoshi ed. The End of the Pacific War: Reappraisals. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. p. 218.}

Much like his cabinet, Emperor Hirohito appeared particularly unconcerned regarding the Potsdam Declaration. Instead of attempting to force the Japanese government to negotiate with the Allies, Hirohito instead continued a project which he
started on June 25—working to ensure the safety of the imperial regalia from Allied attacks or capture. The imperial regalia consisted of a sacred collection of objects consisting most notably of a sacred mirror and a small jeweled sword which had been passed down by his ancestors for over a thousand years. Despite the cultural and ceremonial importance of these items, they could not protect the Emperor. Although some have claimed that decisive action on the part of Hirohito could have persuaded the Japanese to surrender, Hirohito chose to do nothing. This purposeful refusal to act indicates that Hirohito did not believe that the Potsdam Declaration represented a major alteration of Allied policy or an additional threat to his personal security.

Based on this belief that the situation remained unaltered, Hirohito and the Japanese government were dubiously silent on the issue, an informal policy that went by the Japanese name mokusatsu, meaning “take no notice of it” or “treat with silent contempt.” The only public statement regarding the Potsdam Declaration was


provided by Prime Minister Suzuki who claimed, “The government does not regard it [the Potsdam Declaration] as a thing of any great value. We will press forward to carry the war to a successful conclusion.”

Allied leaders misperceived the Japanese lack of response as an official unwillingness to surrender rather than what it was, an attempt to stall for time. As a result, Allied leaders chose to continue their military effort against Japan with all deliberate speed and to step up their deployment of nuclear weapons for use against strategic targets in Japan. Had more complete information been available, Allied leaders may have recognized that this noncommittal response was the product of uncertainty regarding Allied intentions specifically in regards to the post-war status of the Emperor.


98 According to Richard Frank, this failure to immediately respond to the Potsdam Declaration was a critical failure by the Japanese and resulted in the further breakdown of diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States which directly resulted in the dropping of the two atomic bombs. Frank, Richard B. Downfall: The End of Imperial Japanese Empire. New York: Random House, 1999. p. 234.

Instead, the Allies equated the Japanese silence with an unwillingness to surrender, and missed a potential opportunity to peacefully resolve the conflict. While it is impossible to definitively know if a guarantee of Emperor Hirohito’s security would have been sufficient to end the conflict at this early juncture, this thesis has been advanced by some historians, most notably Gar Alperovitz and Barton Bernstein, who argue that the atomic bombs were unnecessary to induce the Japanese to surrender.\textsuperscript{100} According to this revisionist logic, the Japanese knew that they had been defeated and were already looking for an opportunity to end the war while preserving Emperor Hirohito’s post-war status.

While this thesis appears to be generally supported by the willingness of the Japanese cabinet to consider surrender as an option, it is impossible to fully prove this counterfactual. What is definitely clear is the Japanese ordering of preferences. Although Japanese leaders disagreed about the likelihood of victory or the best strategy to employ, from this point forward, they all agreed that the preservation of the emperor was their primary goal. Before the atomic bombs were dropped, Emperor Hirohito and the Japanese government expressed their wish to end the war provided that they could

protect Emperor Hirohito. After the first and second atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration of war, the Japanese asked for surrender with the one of the primary conditions being the protection of Emperor Hirohito. Finally, when the recommendations of Grew and Stimson were later implemented via the “Byrnes Note” which assured the protection of the imperial dynasty, Emperor Hirohito responded in short order to the guarantee and forced the Japanese government to end the war.\textsuperscript{101}

Although this ordering of preferences is unusual from a strictly materialist perspective, it would have a profound impact on the conflict termination process. From a system-level perspective, this unusual set of preferences would create an inefficient set of bargaining conditions for the Japanese leaders. Contrary to the predictions of these theories, these preferences would inflict enormous costs on Japan and would cause it to risk the very survival of the nation by prioritizing the needs of the Emperor over the macro-level interests of the state. From the perspective of regime-type theories, these preferences would ultimately cause the Japanese to lower their national war aims to only the protection of the emperor. Rather than expand their war aims and gamble for redemption, the Japanese regime lowered its war aims and accepted a nearly total defeat that preserved the imperial dynasty as a powerless figurehead. Culturally, this prioritization of Hirohito’s survival created a disconnect between two competing

elements within the Japanese society—the warrior ethos and loyalty to the Emperor. Although the Japanese esteem for their emperor would ultimately prevail over the samurai tradition, this strict ordering of preferences ultimately forced Japan to accept the shame of surrender despite strong cultural incentives to the contrary. As Hirohito attempted to navigate between these various pressures, the Americans were preparing to force another round of decision by introducing atomic weapons into the conflict.

### 4.4 Decision #3: Hiroshima

On the morning of August 6, 1945 the American B-29 bomber *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima killing 70,000 people outright, and thousands more over the next few weeks.\(^{102}\) For various reasons, news of this attack and the specific detail of the bomb’s damage took some time to reach the

\(^{102}\) The official post-war Japanese estimate for Japanese civilian deaths caused by the Hiroshima bombing was 110,000 killed. This figure does not include Japanese military personnel or foreign nationals which may have added tens of thousands to the death toll. For the definitive account of the damage caused by the atomic bombs, see: The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*. Trans. Ishekawa, Eisei, and Swain, David L. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981. pp. 366-367.
Japanese leaders in Tokyo. The report from the Air Defense Commander for the Jure Naval Base, Commander Hiroki is representative of these fragmentary early reports:

About fifteen minutes ago there was a terrible flash over Hiroshima. Immediately afterward a tremendous mushroom-like cloud rose into the sky over the city. Many of the people here heard a heavy roar, something like distant thunder. I don’t know what happened there but from the flash and the cloud it must have been something big.

Regardless of this localizing dynamic, Japanese leaders did take note of the bomb’s effects but none of the Big Six or the Japanese Cabinet decided to change their positions regarding ending the conflict. This fact is puzzling because it does not appear to fit with existing theories of why the war ended, most notably the conventional wisdom that the atomic bombs produced the Japanese surrender.

Instead of altering their strategy in response to the nuclear attack, the Japanese leaders agreed to continue to pursue third-party negotiations with the Soviet Union in the naive belief that they could enlist them to serve as a mediator. Despite the massive destructive power of the atomic attack, there was considerable doubt within the Japanese leadership that the attack was in fact an atomic bomb or that the damage was

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as extensive as originally reported.\textsuperscript{105} While it has been claimed that the incendiary bombing of Tokyo and other major cities had desensitized the Japanese to the effects of the atomic bombs, this point of debate was largely irrelevant to the Japanese decision makers.\textsuperscript{106} Both before and after the Hiroshima attack, the primary goal of the peace negotiations was the continued safety of Hirohito, and despite its destructive shock, the atomic bombs did nothing to alter this preexisting ordering of preferences.

The next day, August 7, President Truman discussed the attack on Hiroshima during a radio address that was designed to inform the American people and make American intentions clear to Japan. Truman said, “It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe.” Then, Truman directly addressed the Japanese people:

“If they [the Japanese people] do not accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and


power as they have not yet seen, and with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.”

Despite the clarity of Truman’s “rain of ruin” warning, it was not immediately acted upon by the Japanese. If the Japanese had more time to interpret and discuss this warning it is uncertain that they would have altered their approach to end the fighting because they were trying to preserve the security of the throne and they still believed that the Soviet Union could serve their interests by acting as a neutral third party.

On August 8, Foreign Minister Tōgō met with Emperor Hirohito to discuss the bomb’s impact on future Japanese strategy. Hirohito and Tōgō agreed that the best course of action was to continue to explore the possibilities for a conditional peace settlement, but they did not believe that there was any great immediacy to the peace process. Both believed that there was still an opportunity to obtain acceptable terms through negotiations and that unconditional surrender was not a viable option. As a result, the Japanese war aims remained essentially unchanged in the hours immediately following the Hiroshima attacks. Although it is possible that Hirohito would have reevaluated this decision over the coming days, he apparently still believed that a

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delaying strategy was preferable to unconditional surrender and that the Soviets may still be willing to help broker an acceptable agreement.

4.5 Decision #4: The Soviet Declaration of War

Two minutes after midnight on August 9, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and began a massive armored and infantry thrust into Manchuria. The Soviet forces pushed rapidly into Japanese territory and achieved lopsided victories over a surprised and outgunned foe.109 Although this development did not immediately threaten the safety of the Emperor, it was critical because it removed any possibility of achieving conditional peace through third-party negotiations with the Soviets. The removal of this hope for Soviet mediation necessitated a new round of discussions within the Japanese leadership on how best to proceed.110

In the early morning of August 9, the Big Six met to revaluate their positions in light of the Soviet declaration of war. Prime Minister Suzuki opened the meeting with


the explicit statement that the Japanese should consider accepting the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. After a long silence, Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai asked the assembled leaders, “If we accept the Potsdam Declaration, should we accept it unconditionally or should we attach certain conditions?” Yonai then outlined four conditions that he thought were necessary to ensure Japanese compliance: protection of Emperor Hirohito, limited disarmament, assurances regarding the prosecution of Japanese war criminals, and limiting the scope of an Allied occupation.¹¹¹

Foreign Minister Tōgō responded to Yonai by stressing the seriousness of the military situation and suggesting that given Japan’s deteriorating position more limited conditions might be needed.¹¹² To this end, Tōgō advocated that Japan limit its demands strictly to the preservation of the Emperor. Tōgō reasoned that:

[S]ince the present situation was so critical as to preclude all hope of victory, I felt it essential to sue for peace and accept the Potsdam Declaration immediately; that since the welfare of the Imperial family must be secured at all costs, we must obtain a guarantee in that respect; but that, since the recent attitude of the United States, Great Britain,

China, and the USSR indicated that they would reject our proposals outright and refuse to negotiate further if we attempted to exact a large number of concessions, we should reduce our conditions to a bare minimum.\(^{113}\)

Despite his initial insistence on multiple conditions, Admiral Yonai quickly seconded Tōgō’s position that the protection of the Emperor should be the highest national priority.\(^{114}\)

War Minister Korechika Anami and the other military service chiefs rejected this position and insisted that other conditions be added to Tōgō’s proposal. General Yoshijiro Umezu was particularly insistent on the need to limit the size and scope of the Allied occupation and both Umezu and Anami raised objections to Allied led war crime trials. Naval Chief of Staff Soemu Toyoda added his concern that the disarmament of the Japanese armed forces would be problematic because of command and control problems within the military services and possible resistance from hardline elements. Tōgō argued against each of these various points, but was ultimately unable to create a consensus opinion. In Tōgō’s words the Big Six meeting, “was an extremely heated

\(^{113}\) Statements IV No. 50304

\(^{114}\) Statements IV No. 5030
discussion, but it accomplished nothing.”\textsuperscript{115} Despite the divisions within the Japanese government in regards to the possibility of seeking additional conditions, there was no member of the Big Six, the Japanese Cabinet, or the Supreme War Council who would dare consider a peace that did not protect their Emperor.

As it was before the atomic bombings and the Soviet declaration of war, the Japanese government was deadlocked not on the willingness to acknowledge defeat, but the conditions that they would accept. Had the Soviet entry into the war caused a change in Japanese decision-making, one would expect that the institutional deadlock would have been broken and some consensus reached. By default, the Japanese delaying strategy would continue because the Japanese leaders did not believe that the Allies would back down from their pledge to accept only unconditional surrender and there was no obvious alternative that would protect Hirohito’s personal security.

4.6 Decision #5: Nagasaki

At 11:02 AM, while the Big Six were still meeting, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki killing 38,000 people outright.\textsuperscript{116} Word of the Nagasaki attack arrived that afternoon while the Big Six were still in session. According to the accounts of this meeting, the news of this second nuclear attack did nothing to alter the respective positions of these various ministers and did not get any of these leaders to switch their vote to break the deadlock. After an additional two hours of discussion, the Big Six adjourned in deadlock so that 4 of them could attend a cabinet meeting scheduled for later that day.\textsuperscript{117}

After the meeting had adjourned, Hirohito met with his most trusted advisor, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Kindo Koichi. Like the cabinet, Koichi acknowledged

\textsuperscript{116} Total Japanese civilian deaths for the Nagasaki bombing are estimated between 60,000-70,000. Military deaths were lower than in Hiroshima with approximately 150 military personnel killed. Similarly, foreign national deaths were significantly lower with the largest component being the 1,500-2,000 Korean workers who were killed in the attack. See: The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs, \textit{Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings}. Trans. Ishekawa, Eisei, and Swain, David L. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981. p. 367.

that Japan was beaten and counseled Hirohito to end the war on with the only condition being a guarantee of Hirohito’s post-war security. Hirohito listened but did not immediately act upon this advice although he would later claim that he was waiting for the right moment to exert his influence and secure such a peace agreement.  

The cabinet meeting that afternoon was similarly unproductive. Much like the Big Six meeting of earlier that day, Tōgō and Yonai argued without result with Anami over the same positions without either side yielding. The meeting was quickly deadlocked in what Tōgō described as “a repeat performance.” At 10:00 PM Prime Minister Suzuki called for a vote. Suzuki, Tōgō, and Yonai were joined by the ministers of agriculture, transportation, munitions, and commerce who voted to end the war with the sole condition being the safety of Emperor Hirohito. Anami was joined by two other ministers who insisted on securing Anami’s four broader conditions as a requirement for surrender. Citing various concerns and objections, five other ministers abstained thus perpetuating the deadlock. This continued deadlock suggests that the atomic bombs, although shocking did not alter the war termination calculus of the Japanese leaders. Those who had been open to peace before the bombs remained open after they

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were dropped and those opposed to surrender remained opposed despite of the death and horror these weapons produced.

Suzuki and Tōgō agreed to personally deliver the news of the cabinet’s deadlock to the Emperor. By custom, the cabinet was required to resign after announcing a formal deadlock to the Emperor, but instead Prime Minister Suzuki refused to dissolve the government and instead stalled for time. In a similarly unprecedented measure, Suzuki convinced the Big Six to petition for a formal conference with the Emperor to discuss these developments. While practice dictated that the Big Six must reach a decision before convening an official meeting with the Emperor, all of the ministers agreed to break with tradition and expedite the decision making process. Despite the lateness of the hour, it was agreed that the meeting should be scheduled for midnight of that same evening.\(^{120}\)

The Big Six met with the Emperor at midnight and Prime Minister Suzuki started the meeting with a review of the day’s deliberations. The Privy Council President Kiichiro Hiranuma responded to Suzuki’s synopsis with a long series of questions regarding the failure of the Soviet Peace feelers, the Soviet entry into the war, and about potential internal disruptions that could potentially result from a Japanese surrender. After listening to these answers, Hiranuma stated that he agreed with Tōgō’s

position that the conflict should be ended with the only condition being the protection of Emperor Hirohito. Hiranuma then discussed the constitutional requirement for the protection of imperial sovereignty and stated that the Potsdam declaration should be clarified in a manner that explicitly provided for Hirohito’s security. Feeling that he had been left out of the discussions, Navy Chief of Staff Toyoda next reasserted his support for the broader set of conditions endorsed by the armed forces. Prime Minister Suzuki then apologized that the Big Six had failed to reach a consensus and then approached the throne to ask Emperor Hirohito for his opinion. It was at this moment that Hirohito had the opportunity to profoundly influence the future of Japan by directly altering Japan’s war aims.

Shortly after 2:00AM on August 10, 1945, Emperor Hirohito rose to address the Big Six. He voiced his support for conditional peace that provided for his own security and the retention of the monarchy stating, “I agree with the proposal of the Foreign Minister [regarding a conditional peace agreement].” He continued by expressing the inaccuracy with previous military appraisals and his ongoing doubts regarding the long-term defense of the Japanese home islands. Hirohito then addressed the concerns of the dissenting ministers and claimed that the Japanese military would be loyal to him even

when faced with the prospect of an Allied occupation of the Japanese mainland. Before he withdrew, Hirohito concluded by saying that the ministers should support a peace on only the single condition of maintaining his personal safety, allegedly stating, “now is the time to bear the unbearable.”¹²³ Although Hirohito was willing to ask the Japanese nation to sacrifice, it is worth noting that he made this decision on the understanding that his personal security would be the primary condition of any peace agreement.

Because the final decision was still in the hands of the cabinet, Prime Minister Suzuki announced that the ministers should reconvene at his official residence at 3:00 AM. Although the hawks in the government could have blocked the peace process by dissolving the government, they chose not to obstruct the peace process and to follow the will of the Emperor. In a little over an hour, all of the Big Six leaders had signed a preliminary peace motion that read, “[B]ased on the Imperial desire, it is hereby decided

¹²³ The credulity of this now famous phrase is very much in doubt, since there were no official records of this statement in the historical record. This “quote” is based on a single source, Marquis Kido who four years after the fact claimed that Emperor Hirohito spoke in these specific words. According to historian Richard Frank, “This is the first of a series of incidents over the next tumultuous days where postwar evidence offered by Kido and others that places the Emperor in a favorable light lacks contemporary confirmation in circumstances where it might be expected to exist. Thus it is not clear that the Emperor spoke in such dramatic and decisive terms at this juncture.” Frank, Richard B. Downfall: The End of Imperial Japanese Empire. New York: Random House, 1999. p. 272.
that the Potsdam Declaration be accepted on the one condition.”¹²⁴ At this meeting, it took a little over an hour for the ministers to agree to the motion: “Based on the Imperial desire, it is hereby decided that the Potsdam Declaration will be accepted on the one condition.”¹²⁵

After the motion for peace was approved, Tōgō rushed to the Foreign Ministry to notify the Allies of Japan’s desire for peace provided that the Allies ensured the safety of Hirohito. The Japanese sent this message to the Allies as a diplomatic cable through Swiss and Swedish intermediaries. This cable read:

…The Japanese Government are ready to accept the terms enumerated in the joint declaration which was issued at Potsdam on July 26th, 1945 by the heads of the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, and China, and later subscribed by the Soviet Government, with the understanding that the said declaration does not compromise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler…The Japanese Government sincerely hope[s] that this

understanding is warranted and desire keenly that an explicit indication to this effect will be speedily forthcoming.\textsuperscript{126}

Here, the Japanese reveled that they were willing to end the fighting but were asking for a critical concession that the Allies were not willing to provide publicly.

From the perspective on international relations theory, this decision is puzzling. By revealing their desire to surrender with only this one condition, the Japanese were purposely eroding their bargaining position by signaling their minimum conditions for peace, contrary to the predictions of systemic theories. Similarly, the Japanese domestic incentives appear equally distorted. The decision to surrender was made contrary to the established rules of the Japanese government and resulted in lower war aims not an expansive gamble for political redemption. Culturally as well, this decision represented an odd tradeoff between protecting the imperial tradition while simultaneously accepting an unprecedented and humiliating surrender. The one thing that Hirohito and the Japanese cabinet were unequivocal about was the personal security of Hirohito as the only remaining Japanese war aim.

\textsuperscript{126} FRUS VI 627.
4.7 Decision #6: The “Byrnes Note”

The Americans received this Japanese peace offering in the early morning of August 10. President Truman rapidly convened his most trusted foreign policy advisors, Byrnes, Stimson, Leahy, and Forrestall, to the Oval Office for a 9:00AM meeting. All of these advisors except Secretary of State James F. Byrnes agreed that the United States should allow the Japanese to keep Emperor Hirohito as a figurehead but were unwilling to explicitly give into Japanese requests out of a fear of domestic repercussions.\textsuperscript{127} Rumors of a compromise peace abounded and some interpreted the cancellation of strategic bombing on August 10 because of adverse weather conditions as a temporary ceasefire.\textsuperscript{128} While he wanted to end the fighting as quickly as possible, President Truman was under intense domestic pressure to reject any peace conditions from the Japanese government and to accept only unconditional surrender. Overnight, Truman had received 170 unsolicited telegrams, 153 of which advised him to accept only unconditional surrender.\textsuperscript{129} Given such domestic pressures, the Allied leadership would


need to be particularly careful to not appear like they were conceding to Japanese demands while also not inadvertently playing into the hands of the Japanese.

At a lunch meeting on August 11, Truman and Byrnes meet to discuss the potential wording of their reply to the Japanese. Although carefully worded, this version was intentionally vague as to the specifics of Hirohito’s post-war fate. This draft was at first firm on the position of the Emperor as subject to the judgment of the occupying Allies:

From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms.

However, later in the document, the Americans appeared to soften their position regarding Emperor Hirohito:

The Emperor and the Japanese High Command will be required to sign the surrender terms necessary to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration, to issue orders to all armed forces of Japan to cease hostilities and to surrender their arms, and to issue other orders as the Supreme Commander may require to give effect to the surrender terms…the ultimate form of government of Japan shall, in accordance
with the Potsdam Declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people.¹³⁰

Despite their attempts to stake a firm but accommodating position, the initial draft of the American response was far from clear. Under pressure from the British, the Americans softened and clarified the wording of their reply regarding the status of the Emperor. The phrase that was originally written as, “The Emperor and the Japanese High Command will be required to sign the surrender terms necessary to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration” was altered to read “[T]he Emperor will be required to authorize and ensure the signature by the Government of Japan and the Japanese Imperial Headquarters.” The Allied counteroffer fell short of the explicit guarantee desired by the Japanese, but the American and British leaders hoped that it was enough to keep the Japanese involved in the negotiating process. Despite their desire to keep these negotiation channels open, the Americans intensified their conventional bombing of Japanese strategic and tactical targets making it clear that there was no impromptu ceasefire in effect.¹³¹


The Japanese received Byrnes’ reply which became unofficially known as the “Byrnes Note” via Allied radio shortly after midnight on August 12. Although Byrnes was skeptical as to the effect of this message, he claimed that the note was designed, “so that the threat of utter destruction if Japan resisted was offset with the hope of a just, though stern, peace if she surrendered.” The Japanese hurriedly translated this broadcast into an unofficial copy and distributed it to ranking government officials. The initial response to the unofficial translation was pessimistic within the Foreign Ministry Office. This cynicism emerged precisely because the prevailing opinion among the Foreign Ministry Officials was that the Allied response was unacceptable because it did not explicitly guarantee the safety of the Emperor and would inadvertently play into the hands of Japanese hardliners. Sensing that the wording of Byrnes’ response was of critical importance, Foreign Minister Tōgō had Foreign Ministry linguists soften some of the critical passages within the unofficial translation. Of these, translation changes, the most critical specifically regarded the post-conflict fate of the Emperor. Rather than have the Emperor be, “subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers” the

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132 It is interesting to note that despite the fact that history refers to this diplomatic overture as the “Byrnes note” James F. Byrnes was privately against delivering such a message and was dubious as to its likely effect of the Japanese. Byrnes, James F. Speaking Frankly. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947. p. 207, 209. See also: Butow, Robert, J. C. Japan’s Decision to Surrender. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954. pp. 190-193.
official translation restated this phrase to read that the Emperor would operate “under the limitation of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers [emphasis added].”

Despite the Foreign Ministry’s attempts to finesse the official wording of the American reply, the Imperial General Headquarters had already obtained a copy of the unofficial translation and was strongly opposed to accepting a peace agreement along such terms. The Japanese military service chiefs were so upset by this failure to explicitly protect the Emperor that they dashed off to the Imperial Palace to obtain an audience with Hirohito without first contacting their respective deputies and civilian ministers. Hirohito granted these military hardliners an audience, but his mood was aloof and non-committal.

In terms of his own security, Hirohito assured the service chiefs that, “no formal Allied answer [had] come yet” and that if uncertainty still remained Japan could “probably make another inquiry over these points still in doubt.” These statements clearly indicate that the Emperor was concerned for his personal welfare and was considering subordinating Japanese war aims to protect his own security. In this highly

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charged political atmosphere, rumors of plots and coups abounded and many within the Japanese diplomatic and military ranks feared that violent internal unrest was imminent.

Under extreme internal and external pressure the Japanese Cabinet met later that day to officially discuss the terms offered by Secretary of State Byrnes. The debate quickly turned to the challenge of preserving the Emperor while not inciting rebellion from the military hardliners. To this end, Foreign Minister Tōgō admitted that the Allied overtures were not, “entirely reassuring” but, if the Allies were negotiating in good faith, that the continued integrity of the monarchy would be preserved. Seizing on Potsdam Declaration’s promise to allow the Japanese people to determine their future system of government, Tōgō claimed that, “it was impossible to conceive that the overwhelming loyal majority of our people would not wish to preserve our traditional system.”¹³⁵ Despite Tōgō’s assertion that acceptance of the “Byrnes Note” was the best course of action, War Minister Anami and Prime Minister Suzuki moved to block acceptance of the Allied position. Fearful that an official Japanese rejection of the surrender terms would cause further delay and may worsen the Japanese bargaining position, Tōgō quickly adjourned the meeting on procedural grounds claiming that the

Cabinet had only received the Allied answer via radio rather than through proper diplomatic channels.\textsuperscript{136}

After adjourning the meeting, the ministers continued to debate the proper course of action as well as the precise meaning of the Allied response. Although ministers on both sides threatened resignation, none dared to follow through with their threats because they realized that dissolving the government would not promote either side’s goals of obtaining a rapid settlement or preserving the \textit{status quo}. When the official Allied response was passed through the Japanese embassies in Berne and Stockholm, Vice-Foreign Minister Matsumoto arranged to have these cables post-dated as a means of stalling for additional time for the ministers to break their deadlock. Matsumoto personally delivered the official messages to Prime Minister Suzuki’s residence at 1:00 AM on August 13. The Japanese diplomatic corps interpreted these cables as evidence that the Allies were under pressure to secure a rapid peace before Allied public opinion demanded even harsher surrender terms.

The Big Six again met on the morning of August 13, but adjourned their meeting similarly deadlocked, with Suzuki, Yonai, and Tōgō favoring surrender conditional on only the protection of the Emperor, and Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda opposed. The Cabinet met that afternoon to resume its discussions but also remained

deadlocked with eight ministers in favor of peace, three opposed, one undecided, and one deferring his decision to Prime Minister Suzuki. Constitutionally, the government was obliged to dissolve itself, but again the cabinet members appeared unwilling to break off their internal debate. The Cabinet again adjourned without reaching a decision or dissolving on August 13. Shortly thereafter, Chief Cabinet Secretary Sakomizu began to petition for signatures for a request to convene yet another imperial conference.

Toyoda, Umezu, and Anami signed the appeal for an imperial conference with the understanding that this meeting would be delayed for two more days.\textsuperscript{137} Although the imperial court intervened and moved up the date of this meeting in response to the dropping of American propaganda leaflets across Japan, this delay indicates that the Japanese were initially in no hurry to make a decision regarding the Byrnes Note. These propaganda leaflets were a direct appeal to the Japanese people to petition their leaders for peace, but they appear to have deeply divided the Japanese populace and increased the popular desire to continue fighting. Among the Japanese leaders, these propaganda leaflets had the unintended effect of rising fears of a military coup against the Emperor. This increased pressure thus caused Hirohito and the Japanese leadership to move faster than they had originally intended to protect the security of the Emperor and to alter Japanese war aims.

At 11:00 AM on August 14, the cabinet ministers, chiefs of staff, the members of the royal court, and various other high-ranking officials met Emperor Hirohito in an underground conference room in the Imperial Palace. Prime Minister Suzuki began the meeting with a summation of the debates and deadlock within the Big Six and cabinet. Suzuki continued by reiterating Tōgō’s position that Japan would be best served by an immediate surrender and then invited the leading opponents of surrender, Umezu, Toyoda, and Anami to express their reasons for continued fighting.

Emperor Hirohito listened silently to this debate. After hearing these various debates Hirohito said, “I have listened carefully to the various views expressed in opposition but my decision, as given previously remains unchanged. After careful study of the world situation and conditions at home, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is pointless to continue the war any longer.” Again, Hirohito had broken with tradition to forge consensus within the Japanese government and push for peace and again he did this on the belief that his post-war security would be protected as part of the proposed-peace agreement.

Hirohito then moved to calm the fears of leaders such as Toyoda and Anami who were worried about the emperor’s post-conflict security and the potential for coups and revolts within the military. To this end, Hirohito expressed his belief that he would be secure from both the conquering Allies as well as the Japanese people. Hirohito

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explicitly endorsed Tōgō’s position that the Allied response to the Japanese surrender conditions left him sufficient reason to believe that he would be protected after the war and that his fate would ultimately be decided by the generally sympathetic Japanese populace. Hirohito claimed, “On the question of the national polity I am aware that there remains considerable doubt in your minds; but reading between the lines I interpret this reply [from the Allies] to mean that they are quite sympathetic. Your suspicions about their attitude may be justified, but I for one do not wish to entertain such doubts.”

Hirohito then moved on to the issue of assuring military compliance with his decision by asking the ranking ministers to help stating that, “undoubtedly it will be difficult to keep them under control, but I should like the War and Navy Ministers to understand fully how I feel and to cooperate and see to it that everything is settled smoothly.” Then in yet another breach of imperial decorum, Hirohito then offered to publicly announce his decision to the Japanese people. Hirohito concluded by stating that, “[S]ince it will be necessary to issue an Imperial Rescript on this occasion, I should like to have the government draft it at once. These are my feelings.” Having

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made his intentions clear, the emperor withdrew. In the wake of this unusual and highly
charged meeting, the cabinet decided to take a one-hour recess and to reconvene to
formally consider Hirohito’s decision.\textsuperscript{141}

When the cabinet reconvened an hour later, it was clear that Hirohito’s insistence on
surrender had achieved the desired effect. Minister Anami quickly ended his opposition
and the rest of the cabinet quickly followed his lead. In all, fifteen members signed a
memo declaring their intent to accept the Allied surrender terms. Foreign Minister Tōgō
then ordered Vice-Minister Matsumoto to draft a short but formal surrender document.
Although there was some minor debate within the Japanese ministers regarding the
precise wording of the draft surrender, it was broadly accepted without major
opposition. In addition to the document detailing the acceptance of the Allied surrender
terms, the Japanese also drafted a note providing specific details on how the Japanese
thought the Allies should manage the specific details of the surrender. In regards to
Hirohito, this document warned that the Allied should approach the “most delicate task”
of occupation and disarmament in “the most effective method” which was “under the

\textsuperscript{141} Sigal, Leon V. \textit{Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan,}
command of His Majesty the Emperor.”

At approximately 11:00 PM, the ministers signed these documents, sent word to the emperor, and adjourned having formally approved Hirohito’s decision to terminate the conflict.

Later that evening, Emperor Hirohito recorded an announcement to the Japanese people declaring the Japanese decision to surrender. This message was broadcast at noon on the next day. Although Hirohito had briefly entertained the idea of appearing in public after this announcement, he instead decided to remain in seclusion. When the Japanese heard the Emperor’s voice, many initially assumed that Hirohito was asking them to make greater sacrifices for the Japanese war effort rather than to accept defeat.

The Japanese passed word of their surrender through their Swiss emissary at 6:00 PM Washington time and within an hour President Truman had acknowledged its

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receipt. Fearful of negative American public opinion, Truman made the surrender appear more “unconditional” than it actually was claiming, “I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration which specifies the unconditional surrender of Japan. In the reply there is no qualification.”\textsuperscript{146} This official Allied position ignores the fact that the Japanese were allowed breathing room on the one condition that they held most dear, Emperor Hirohito’s personal security, and that this condition directly contributed to the lowering of Japanese surrender demands and the cessation of hostilities. In the years that followed Hirohito would remain as a figurehead over Japan but would not exercise any real power over the political process.\textsuperscript{147} This diminished role does not change the fact that Hirohito profoundly impacted the course of WWII. In protecting his own security, Hirohito ended the war in a rapid manner that was not predicted by either the majority of contemporary observers or later by international relations theories.\textsuperscript{148}


\textsuperscript{148} Interestingly, Hirohito’s survival, immunity from prosecution, and subsequent role as a figurehead has actually made him a more difficult figure to accurately study. Barton J. Bernstein. “The Interpretive Dialogue, 1989-2005, and Various Proposals for Understanding the Ending of the War and Why and How
4.8 Conclusion

The case of Japan strongly supports all six of the hypothetical claims of this work’s alternative theory while also dispelling many myths and misconceptions regarding the end of WWII in the Pacific. Despite strong systemic, domestic, and cultural incentives to the contrary, Emperor Hirohito was able to manipulate Japanese war aims to specifically protect his own personal security (H1). To this end Hirohito moved rapidly to end the fighting and twice broke deadlocks within the Japanese cabinet to end the war once the Allies provided reasonable guarantees regarding his own post-war security (H2). A guarantee of Hirohito’s security was the lower limit that Hirohito or any of the ministers within the Japanese government were willing to accept and the emperor exploited this fact to ensure that he would be protected in the event of a Japanese surrender (H3). The pressures of the Allied unconditional surrender demand combined with the need to ensure that this lower security limit was met caused Hirohito to commit Japan to a purposeful delaying strategy despite the increasingly bleak strategic prospects and the use of atomic weapons against Japan (H4). Although Japan had an active duty military of over 3 million troops, Hirohito did not attempt to use this residual strength as a means of extracting greater concessions from the Allies and was

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instead focused on guaranteeing his own welfare rather than extracting additional concessions from the Allies (H5). Finally, Hirohito willingly accepted a reduced role as a figurehead for Japan’s post-war government as a *quid pro quo* for his continued security, a side payment that allowed for a rapid termination of the Pacific war (H6).

When compared to existing international relations models, this alternative theory appears to more accurately explain the observed behavior. From a systemic perspective, this peace was significantly worse than Japan may have expected had it continued to fight. Instead of adhering to its existing attrition strategy, Japan altered its policy at the worst possible moment. By delaying surrender for months after its leaders recognized that they could not win outright, the Japanese leaders had committed Japan to forcing battle on their home islands as a means of exhausting the Allies’ casualty tolerance. By changing their strategy and surrendering when they did, the Japanese paid the heavy costs of continued fighting but reaped none of the benefits that a climactic battle may have produced. By doing this Japan undercut its bargaining position and, as a result, suffered material punishment in stark contrast to the incentives of the international system. Unless one believes that the Japanese leaders were acting irrationally or were blind to the realities of their strategic scenario, something else must have led to this sudden shift in strategy. After analyzing the text of their meetings, it is clear that the Japanese leaders directed their strategy not to maximize their expected material payoffs.
as predicted my system-level theories, but to protect the personal security of Emperor Hirohito. Similarly, the predictions of domestic theories are equally problematic when compared to the existing evidence. Although Hirohito was the leader of a semi-exclusionary regime and was highly incentivized to preserve the continued existence of the imperial institutions, he did not gamble for redemption. In fact, Hirohito actually lowered the Japanese war aims as he was faced with increasingly bleak strategic prospects. While Hirohito was often silent when it came to policy formation, he exerted critical leverage during the conflict termination process to break internal divisions within his government and to force an end to the war. In contrast to the predictions of domestic-level theories, Hirohito altered Japanese war aims in a manner that specifically protected his own survival.

The predictions of cultural theories are mixed in the case because of the two leading cultural imperatives, a refusal to surrender and the protection of the emperor, were mutually exclusive. This creates a problem for testing cultural theories because it is difficult to know which norm or belief will trump the other. In one respect, Hirohito broke with cultural conventions and willingly accepted a shameful peace, in stark contrast to a deeply entrenched cultural norm. On the other hand, by surrendering, Hirohito preserved the most treasured Japanese institution and upheld the predictions of cultural models. This inability to discern which of these powerful incentives drove the
observed outcome is problematic, but does not merit a complete rejection of cultural models. This issue is further complicated by the fact that the culture desire to preserve the imperial institution is highly correlated with alternative explanation that Hirohito was motivated to protect his own security. Given this overlap, it is impossible to definitively confirm or reject these different approaches because the evidence actually supports both explanations.149

Chief among alternative explanations for the observed outcome is the theory that the Japanese surrendered in response to the use of atomic weapons and/or the Soviet entry into the war. When examined under a closer light, the atomic bombs and Soviet declaration of war correlate with the timing of the Japanese surrender but do not appear to have had a causal effect. The fact is that the Big Six and the Japanese cabinet were already deadlocked regarding what conditions the Japanese could reasonably expect from the Allies before either the nuclear attacks or the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. Although the atomic attacks and the Soviet declaration of war caused the Japanese to revaluate their position, they ultimately did not alter war aims. Despite the shock value of these weapons, what was ultimately needed to end the conflict was not increased

destruction of Japan or the slow erosion of Japanese military capabilities, but a guarantee by the Allies to protect Hirohito after the war.

This guarantee in the form of the “Byrnes Note” allowed Hirohito to profoundly alter to course of the Pacific war. Feeling that he would be safe if he quickly accepted the Allied offer, Hirohito manipulated the structure of his government to suit his own personal ends and broke the institutional deadlock within the Japanese government.

While this observed outcome supports the alternative theory of this work, it is important to recognize the role that diplomacy and luck played into this process. Diplomacy has traditionally been a strong suit of the United States and in this case, America was lucky to have a pragmatic and dedicated expert in the person of Joseph Grew. Because of his extensive knowledge of Japan, Grew was able to manipulate Emperor Hirohito’s desire for personal security and the cultural role of the emperor in Japanese society to promote the national interests of the United States. Contrary to the wartime stereotypes, Grew realized that Hirohito could be induced to surrender prior to an invasion of the Japanese home islands provided that credible assurances for his post-war security could be made. With the aid of Secretary of War Henry Stimson, Grew was able to convince the United States leadership that the potential payoff was worth
the potential loss of credibility and moral crerity. In the words of Stephen Ambrose and Brian Villa:

Stimson and Grew’s strategy worked better than most plans of men. Without a strong display of statesmanship on Hirohito’s part, it might never have worked. There was a large element of good fortune along with the horrible loss of life that marked the path to the termination of the war. How much was chance and how much was the product of calculation will long be debated, but the general strategy worked.

These diplomatic efforts, combined with Emperor Hirohito’s desire for individual security, allowed the Pacific War to end despite the strength of the Japanese defensive network and the resolve of its people.

Interestingly, despite his pragmatism, Grew did not believe that the Japanese were ready for democracy after the war. Grew believed that, even as a figurehead, Hirohito was an impediment to the Japanese transition to liberal democracy and in 1946 even claimed that, “Hirohito will have to go.”


Ambrose and Villa also draw a stark contrast between the diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis Japan compared to that of Nazi Germany. Stephen E. Amborse and Brian Loring Villa. “Racism, the Atomic Bomb, and
Although this outcome was surprising to most contemporary observers, it is entirely logical when viewed from the perspective of individual security needs.\(^{153}\) As long as Hirohito’s post-war security was in doubt, he was willing to perpetuate the conflict, but as soon as he was promised personal security, he chose to use his role as the sovereign of Japan to force the Japanese to surrender despite systemic, domestic, and cultural incentives to the contrary. In doing this, Hirohito not only preserved his own security but ended the most destructive conflict in history—not with a bang—but with a whimper.

\(^{153}\) Indeed, the conventional wisdom in the Allied diplomatic and military circles was that despite the two atomic bombs that the Japanese would continue to fight for quite some time. This sentiment was accurately (if somewhat crudely) captured by a colonel in the American Army high command who claimed, “When the Japanese surrendered it caught the whole goddamn administrative machinery with their pants down.” Spector, Ronald H. *In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia*. New York: Random House, 2007. p. 3. On the issue of surprise among Allied war planners, see also: Miller, Edward S., *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991. p. 368. One final, implicit, indication of surprise by Allied war planners was the fact that of the eve of the planned invasion of Japan the United States had ordered an additional 500,000 Purple Heart decorations in anticipation of continued high casualty rates. Walker, Paul D. *Truman’s Dilemma: Invasion or Bomb*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2003. p. 160-161.
“When I was a child, a man walked through my village without carrying a weapon. An old man came up to him and said, ‘Why are you asking for trouble?’ He said, ‘What do you mean?’ The old man replied, ‘By walking without a weapon, you are asking people to attack you. Carry a weapon so that blood will not be spilled.’” – Saddam Hussein¹

“Saddam is Iraq and Iraq is Saddam.” – Saddam Hussein²


5.1 The Case of Saddam Hussein

The Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein is a fascinating test case for students of international relations because of his repeated willingness to engage in seemingly defiant and risky behaviors. Hussein has been responsible for instigating and perpetuating several of the largest and most destructive conventional conflicts of the post-WWII era and his behaviors have consistently surprised and frustrated many expert observers. Each of Hussein’s wars clearly demonstrates this willingness to defy macro-level incentives and to pursue his own particular and frequently self-defeating goals. This repeated defiance of the theoretical constraints of systemic, domestic, and cultural theories is useful for the purposes of this research. Hussein is a rare example of a leader who has fought and lost multiple interstate conflicts that directly threatened his personal security. This defiant repetition provides a natural experiment to test the existing theories against the alternative theory of this work and may help explain some of the motivations behind these conflicts.

This chapter will proceed by briefly examining the three decision points where Hussein was forced to reevaluate his military and political strategy because of changes

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in his perceived personal security. This chapter will first examine the Iraqi response to the success of the 1982 Iranian spring offensive during the Iran-Iraq War. In this first decision point, Hussein reacted to the success of the Iranian offensive and lowered his war aims to accept a dealing strategy with Iran. Despite repeated attempts to negotiate a peace settlement with Iran, Hussein failed because Ayatollah Khomeini had explicitly made the death of Hussein and the destruction of his regime Iran’s primary war aim. Fearing an Iranian drive into central Iraq, Hussein became desperate for a negotiated end to the conflict. Hussein attempted to enlist the UN in this effort and even took the unusual step of providing the Iraqi order of battle to the Iranians in an attempt to cultivate goodwill but all of these efforts were in vain. This failure to reach a peace agreement after the 1982 spring offensives is both tragic and puzzling.⁴ Because of this failure to secure a negotiated settlement, Hussein was forced to adopt a delaying strategy by default. As part of this delaying strategy, Hussein withdrew his forces into a series of prepared defensive lines and perpetuated a bloody, protracted, and unwinnable conflict as a means of avoiding the promised punishment from Iran.

⁴ According to prominent British military historian, Brian Bond, “It is hard to explain why the war dragged on for so long, particularly after the status quo had been restored in 1982. Iran with her superior resources of wealth and manpower seemed more capable of victory, but Iraq was prepared to make the greater effort by mobilizing a much higher proportion of her manpower and keeping her forces better equipped and trained.” Bond, Brian. The Pursuit of Victory: From Napoleon to Saddam Hussein. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 193.
Next, this chapter will examine two cases from Gulf War I, the Iraqi acceptance of the failed Soviet Peace deal of February 22, 1991, and the Iraqi acceptance of the successful ceasefire on February 28. This section will begin with a brief explanation of how Saddam Hussein miscalculated American intentions prior to his invasion of Kuwait in 1990 as well as underestimating American combat power prior to the beginning of the war in 1991. Once the massive imbalance in power between Coalition and Iraqi forces became apparent, Hussein rapidly altered his strategy from a delaying strategy to a dealing strategy.

In the face of this massive military imbalance, Hussein’s first decision was to negotiate and accept a Soviet-negotiated ceasefire agreement on February 22, 1991. Although the United States ultimately refused this proposal, it proposed its own ceasefire after only a 100-hour ground campaign on February 28. This presented Hussein with his second decision point. Because Hussein’s primary motivation was to survive, his dealing strategy remained unaltered and he quickly accepted this offer before the Coalition forces could advance closer to Baghdad, fully engage his prized Republican Guard divisions, or foment domestic unrest. This cease-fire was acceptable to Hussein precisely because it allowed him to remain in power and preserved his best military units that were critical to maintaining his post-war survival. Although, this reprieve was largely a product of the elder Bush administration’s unwillingness to continue a lopsided war, it provided Hussein with the one thing he most wanted—continued security.
In each of these cases, it is also worth considering two related claims regarding Saddam Hussein. The first of these claims is that Hussein was atypically reckless and risk acceptant in his personal decision making. The second is that he was incapable of making rational calculations regarding military and political decisions. Indeed, many of Hussein’s actions would appear to disprove the hypotheses that leaders are rational, security-seeking agents.\(^5\) Because of this popular image of Hussein as a reckless madman, this chapter will also consider the additional alternative hypothesis that Hussein was a uniquely risk-acceptant figure or that his perception of reality was so flawed that he could not make decisions in a predictable or logical manner.

This chapter addresses this point by claiming that, despite his willingness to defy the macro-level incentives of the international system, Hussein consistently prioritized his own micro-level security and went to great lengths to insure his own survival. True, Hussein often misperceived and miscalculated the realities of his strategic environment, but he was able to survive the consequences of these mistakes precisely because he ruthlessly protected his own personal security. Despite losing all of the conflicts

\(^5\) One of the more bizarre incidents during Hussein’s unusual rule is his belief that the Japanese cartoon and trading card franchise Pokemon was part of a Zionist plot against Iraq. This incident and many others have caused many to question Hussein’s grip on reality, but as this chapter will attempt to demonstrate, whatever his personal eccentricities, Hussein was keenly aware of issues pertaining to his personal security. Woods, Kevin M. with Pease, Michael R., Stout, Mark E., Murray, Williamson, and Lacey, James G. *The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official Joint Forces Command Report*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006. p. 5.
presented in this study, Hussein was consistently able to separate his fate from that of Iraq precisely because of the extensive security apparatus that Hussein had created and his willingness to use harsh methods where needed to protect his grip on power. Even after Gulf War II where Hussein was ultimately captured and punished, he was able to survive and recruit supporters for months after the fall of his government and was executing a survival strategy.

While Hussein was not skilled at choosing how and when he fought wars, he was very adept at surviving their consequences. Although this chapter will highlight some of Hussein’s more serious errors in judgment, it claims that in spite of these miscalculations, Hussein’s most basic desire was to protect his personal security and that despite his personal eccentricities, Hussein fits well into the alternative model presented by this work.

Ultimately, this chapter concludes that despite his propensity to miscalculate and engage in unproductive wars, Hussein is a figure who routinely sought survival and security over other concerns. To this end, Hussein was repeatedly willing to exercise considerable agency and ruthless determination to break with systemic pressures. By acting in a way that perpetuated his own interests over those of Iraq and the international system Hussein was a uniquely influential and destructive figure in contemporary international politics. Through consideration of these cases, readers will gain new insight into these destructive conflicts while also gaining an understanding of
the critical role that one man’s personality and statesmanship played in creating such a negative political outcome.

5.2 The Iran-Iraq War: Hussein’s First and Most Destructive War

After only a year in power as the official head of the Iraqi government, Saddam Hussein instigated a major war with Iran. The Iran-Iraq War lasted eight years and caused cataclysmic military and economic damage to both nations. Because of its protracted and unproductive nature, this conflict illuminates many interesting issues regarding conflict termination and personal security which are useful for testing various theories regarding war aims and conflict termination. Despite an initial series of Iraqi victories, this conflict would directly threaten Hussein’s personal security and would cause him to make a series of difficult decisions in order to preserve his individual security.


This section will examine Hussein’s decisions after the Iraqi defeats at the battles of Dezful and Khorramshahr in the spring of 1982. As this section demonstrates, Hussein’s peace offerings were refused by the Iranian government who explicitly demanded the death of Hussein as their primary condition for ending the war. These terms were obviously unacceptable for Hussein and thus guaranteed that the war would continue until either total defeat was achieved or a more moderate set of peace terms were proposed.

Hussein attacked Iran on September 22, 1980, believing that he could achieve a rapid victory. Capitalizing on the internal disarray caused by the Iranian Revolution, Hussein attempted to quickly seize territories within a disputed border area between the two nations, most notably access to the Shatt al-Arab waterway and the oil fields of the Khūzestān (aka Arabistan) Province. Hussein believed that control of these areas would secure Iraqi access to the Persian Gulf and provide an additional source of income for Iraq, thus strengthening his hold on the region. The latent military and economic power of Iran was deeply threatening to Hussein and he believed that the Iranians could topple his regime at will. Hussein’s suspicions were supported by increasing unrest across the disputed frontier, including 540 border incursions in the

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months prior to the war, 249 of which were armed attacks. Of these attacks, the ones that most frightened Hussein were the failed Iranian assassination attempts of Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and Minister of Culture and Information Latif Nayyif Jasim. If the Iranian borders were so porous and the attackers so bold, Hussein reasoned that they represented a tangible threat to his personal security. These border incidents combined with the increased radicalism of the Iranian revolution convinced Hussein that launching a military operation against Iran would provide increased stability and security. If successful, a thrust into Khūzestān Province could simultaneously end the dispute over the proper borders, create a more defensible strategic position, and establish Iraq as the military and political leader of a new pan-Arab movement.

Hussein’s dream of creating a new pan-Arab movement was fanciful at best and this belief in an Arab rising against Persia acted as a substitute for serious military planning. Indeed, the military objectives were vague and poorly planned and as a result began to

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9 Declassified version of FBI interview with Saddam Hussein titled “Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI: Twenty Interviews and Five Conversations with ‘High Value Detainee # 1’ in 2004” (Hereafter “FBI Interview #2”). FBI Interview #2, p 3.


break down almost immediately. Hussein would later defend this attack as having the modest goal of stopping attacks across the disputed border region and not an attempt to depose the Iranian regime. According to Hussein, he believed that the scope of his attacks clearly signaled his limited goals, “[I]f we went deep inside Iran, they [the Iranians] would think that we wanted something else.” Clearly, Hussein miscalculated when he assumed that the Iranians would understand his limited aims and not perceive the attack as a direct threat to their regime. On the contrary, the Iranians believed that Hussein’s attacks into Khūzestān Province represented an existential threat to their security and responded swiftly and powerfully to the invasion.

As the surprise of the initial attacks wore off, the Iraqi advance bogged down and it became increasingly clear that Hussein would not achieve the rapid victory he had planned. Similarly, it became increasingly clear that the pan-Arab military support that Hussein had counted on receiving would be timid at best and would not restart his stalled offensive. Iranian resistance became increasingly fierce as Khomeini toured the nation recruiting hundreds of thousands of volunteers to resist the Iraqi invasion. Rather

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14 *FBI Interview #2*. p. 3

than toppling the Khomeini regime, Hussein’s invasion actually strengthened it by silencing internal dissent and strengthening Khomeini’s hold on power. Iraqi casualties mounted as the fighting devolved into a bloody stalemate. The Iraqi offensive halted by March 1981 and the front remained relatively stable for the next year as the Iraqis were too weak to continue their assault and the Iranians were too weak to force them back. Although this period of the war was relatively calm, it was clear that Saddam Hussein could not achieve the rapid blitzkrieg victory that he had intended. In this period of stalemate, Hussein accepted that he could not win, but also feared the consequences of defeat. Because of this, Hussein accepted a delaying strategy by default, a policy that remained largely unaltered for the next year.

5.2.1 Decision Point #1: Hussein Reacts to the Iranian Spring Offensives

The war continued along these static lines until mid-March 1982, when Iran launched a major strategic offensive aimed at expelling Iraq from Iranian territory.

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16 Because of the massive resource advantages of Iran, Hussein needed a rapid victory against Iran. In population alone, Iraq was outnumbered more than three-to-one by Iran and even with great national efforts could match Iranian numbers on the battlefield. Although Iraq compensated for this with superior combat efficiency, it could ill afford a long and protracted war. For this reason, the fact that Hussein did not achieve a rapid victory is extremely important for understanding the pressures on the Hussein regime.

These attacks broke the stalemate at the front and radically altered the complexion of the war. Capitalizing on their surprise, the Iranians attacked overextended Iraqi positions and forced the Iraqis back in a series of bloody assaults along the entire front. On March 22, 1982, at the Second Battle of Dezful, Iranian forces surrounded and destroyed several Iraqi brigades that were attempting to hold an exposed salient. The Iraqi forces lost up to half of their effective combat forces in the sector and were forced to retreat in disarray. Iran launched a second attack on the Southern Front on April 30 aimed at the port city of Khorramshahr. At the ensuing Battle of Khorramshahr, the Iranians surrounded and recaptured the port city and captured two Iraqi army brigades and three brigades of the Ba’ath Popular Army, a total of 20,000 men in all.

These defeats represented a low point for Iraqi morale and necessitated a reappraisal of the Iraqi strategy. Although entrenched Iraqi units inflicted heavy casualties on the

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19 Apparently, the vast majority of Iraqi troops were never enthusiastic supporters of the war. Iraqi morale did improve, however, as they were pushed back across the Iraq borders in the wake of Iran’s 1982 spring
Iranian attackers, they could not halt their advance. Hussein even deployed his prized air force in a ground attack role to support the Iraq army, but these sorties were largely ineffective and resulted in unacceptably high loss rates.\textsuperscript{20} By late June, Iraq had withdrawn back across its original borders with Iran and continued to be pushed back towards central Iraq. In this moment of crisis, many believed that the Iraqi army was on the verge of total collapse. Clearly, Hussein’s delaying strategy was in jeopardy as the Iraqi army appeared incapable of holding back the Iranian advance.

Sensing this military vulnerability in the wake of these military reversals, Hussein altered his strategy.\textsuperscript{21} Now rather than try to win outright, Hussein believed that a dealing strategy was the best way to preserve his position. On June 2, 1982, Iraqi state radio announced that Hussein was asking for a ceasefire and a return to the \textit{status quo ante bellum} with Iran.\textsuperscript{22} At this same time Iraqi national radio began broadcasting propaganda that was designed to sway public opinion towards accepting peace with Iran.


and dissociate Hussein with the unpopular war. While it is still unclear exactly how Hussein made this decision, it is revealing because it indicates that Hussein recognized the tenuous nature of his military and political position and was willing to forgo possible military gains to avoid the possibility of punishment. Despite the sincerity of this offer, Iran rejected this offer and claimed that it would not accept any peace with Iraq unless Hussein was removed from power and killed. With the help of Saudi Arabia, Hussein further sweetened the deal for Iran by offering to pay $70 billion in war reparations to Iran. Again, Khomeini rejected this offer and insisted in the death of Hussein as a condition for peace.

To signal his benign intentions and shorten his defensive lines, Hussein even withdrew his military forces from all of the Iranian territory he currently possessed. This fundamental shift in strategy surprised many and left no doubt as to the desire of Hussein to end the war quickly. While Hussein would later attempt to claim that this retreat was part of a planned withdrawal from Iranian territory to provide time and space for negotiations, this is not the case. In fact, the Iraqi army was decisively beaten for the first time during the war, and it was out of fear of military collapse and

25 FBI Interview #2. p. 5
not out of humanitarianism or altruism that Hussein attempted to alter his strategy and stop the fighting.

Iran responded to Hussein’s peace overtures by demanding the removal and death of Hussein, the forcible return of 100,000 ethnic Shiites to Iran, and war reparations totaling $150 billion. To underscore their seriousness and capitalize on their military superiority, the Iranians launched a new drive across the Iraqi border, pushing towards the port city of Basra. This caused further panic within the Iraqi ranks and caused Hussein to make additional peace overtures to Iran.

To signal his peaceful intent, Hussein repeatedly stated that Iraq had no further territorial ambitions and that it was merely fighting to preserve its own security. When these measures proved unsuccessful, Hussein sent letters to Iran claiming that he could not be forcibly removed from Iranian soil, but he remained willing to negotiate peace. To illustrate his sincerity on both points Hussein took the extremely unusual step of outlining Iraqi troop positions and strengths to the Iranian leaders. The fact that Hussein revealed such sensitive military information to his opponent suggests that he was so desperate to end the fighting that he would risk the lives of his military to attempt to win favor with his enemy. Although Hussein was apparently willing to accept any reasonable peace offer from Iran, Khomeini and the Iranian leadership did

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27 FBI Interview #2. p. 2.
not take this offer seriously and continued to insist on the death of Hussein as a primary condition for any peace settlement.

Despite these conciliatory measures by Hussein and the Iraqi government, the Iranian regime blocked all attempts to end hostilities and reasserted that it was fighting to kill Hussein, topple the secular Ba’athist government, and establish a Shiite theocracy. While it was clear to Hussein, that peace was in his and Iraq’s best, Khomeini and the Iranian hardliners made it clear that they would not accept any peace agreement unless Hussein was dead. On the issue of a truce with Iraq, Khomeini was unequivocal claiming, "There are no conditions. The only condition is that the regime in Baghdad must fall and must be replaced by an Islamic Republic." The Iranian demand for Hussein’s life presented a divergent incentive structure for Iraq and its leader. In the words of a report issued by The Institute of National Strategic studies at National Defense University, “while Saddam was looking for a cheap, easy victory, the Persians


were looking to accomplish the complete overthrow of Saddam’s regime.”30 While Iraq desperately wanted to end the fighting, for obvious reasons, these conditions were unacceptable to Hussein and an impediment to peace.

This failure to reach a negotiated settlement intensified the personal conflict between Hussein and Khomeini as both adopted increasingly harsh rhetoric and called for the destruction of the other.31 By demonizing their opponents, each of these leaders hoped to unite divides within their own nation and to encourage their peoples to accept additional sacrifices.32 In addition to the religious and political divide between the two leaders, Ayatollah Khomeini’s disdain for Saddam Hussein appears to have a uniquely personal element. Khomeini blamed Hussein for his removal and deportation from the Shia shrine in Iraqi city of Najaf, where he had been residing in exile from the Iranian government since the mid-1960’s.33 In the months prior to the fall of the Shah, Hussein


31 Interestingly, both of these leaders believed that the war could help strengthen their hold on power, but this war nearly cost both of these leaders their own security and their grip on power. Hiro, Dilip. Neighbors, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran After the Gulf Wars. London: Routledge, 2001. p. 16.


33 Hussein, himself made reference to this source of grievance in a February 8, 2004 interview with FBI agent, George L. Piro. Hussein claimed that Khomeini was a symbol for the Iranian people and that he was in violation of the 1975 Algiers agreement where Khomeini agreed not to interfere with the internal
systematically deported any political or religious figure that appeared to support the Iranian revolutionary movement.\textsuperscript{34} Hussein appears to have been motivated by feelings of personal insecurity and a desire to rid his nation of potentially radical and subversive elements rather than by loyalty to the Shah. Whatever Hussein’s reasons, Khomeini bore a particular animosity towards him that may have contributed to his overt targeting of the Iraqi leader as a condition for peace.\textsuperscript{35}

This price was unacceptable for Hussein, and an ongoing impediment for further negotiation. In a July 1982 interview that appeared in \textit{Time Magazine}, Hussein blamed Khomeini for this impasse claiming, “Khomeini is superficial…he has no logic…Peace is possible to achieve when Iran realizes [that it is possible to achieve it].”\textsuperscript{36} Hussein could not win his war, but he also would not surrender his life to appease Iran. Despite his mistrust of the United Nations, Hussein even attempted to get the UN to intervene and stop the war.\textsuperscript{37} To this end Hussein was unsuccessful, a fact that would apparently


\textsuperscript{37} \textit{FBI Interview} \#2. p. 5.
reinforce his bitterness and mistrust of the UN in the decades to come. In later years Hussein would complain that the UN was content to “watch” the Iran-Iraq War “without concern,” an act which he considered “dishonorable” given the purportedly peaceful mission of the organization.  

Having failed at both unilateral and multilateral negotiations, Hussein was faced with the grim prospect of continuing an unwinnable conflict as a means of protecting his personal security. In the wake of his failed, dealing strategy, Hussein was forced to accept a return to his previous delaying strategy by default. Although this delaying strategy was initially designed to slow down the Iranian offensive, Iran’s attack eventually lost striking power and the war ground down into a bloody trench warfare stalemate reminiscent of WWI. After the front had stabilized in November 1982, Hussein accurately summed up his willingness to continue fighting to avoid punishment as, “I am staying even if [the war] lasts another ten years. I consider the condition [set by Iran] as silly and should be trampled under my foot.”

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39 The trench warfare style of fighting during the Iran-Iraq War had the unintended effect of coloring Hussein’s strategic calculations prior to the 1991 Gulf War. In this next war, Hussein believed that he could create a stalemate just as he had for the better part of eight years with Iran. As history would prove, he was greatly mistaken. Woods, Kevin M. The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein’s Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008. p. 174.

Hussein’s peace offers, Iran missed its last best chance for a limited victory and condemned both sides to the fruitless continuation of an unproductive conflict.\footnote{Chubin, Shahram and Tripp, Charles. \textit{Iran and Iraq at War}. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988. p. 251.} A UN sanctioned peace would only come in 1988 after both sides had suffered through six more years of war and the further escalation of the violence by Saddam Hussein.

Despite the importance of this case, international relations theory cannot accurately predict or explain this outcome. According to system level theory, Iraq would act as a security maximizer and should have been able to reach some deal with Iran that roughly matched the expected value of continued fighting for both sides. In such models, the security of Hussein and his regime should have been of little importance to Iraq or Iran and should not have been an impediment to a rational negotiation process. While both Iraq and Iran were punished for this inefficient bargaining, the reduction of national war aims to the welfare of a single leader is an outcome that is well beyond the predictions of existing systemic theories. This disjuncture between the macro-level interests of Iraq and the micro-level interests of Hussein is accurately summarized by Chubin and Tripp who claim, “The evident discontinuity between personal power and state power, and their uneven rates of development, suggest that war, while it has strengthened Saddam Hussein in the short term, may have weakened his regime in the long run.” \footnote{Chubin, Shahram and Tripp, Charles. \textit{Iran and Iraq at War}. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988. p. 244.}
A final element that is not predicted by systemic theories is the particulars of Hussein’s strategy for survival, most notably his willingness to convey sensitive military information to Iran in the hope of obtaining goodwill. This decision clearly indicated Hussein’s desperation to end the war quickly even at the cost of risking military defeat and systemic punishment. In sum, systemic theories fail in this case because they analyze macro-level trends based on the character of the system and do not properly account for the private security demands of the key actors in this conflict.

Domestic theories are considerably more helpful for predicting the observed outcome in this case. Such theories would predict that as an autocrat, Hussein would seek to do everything possible to avoid a large military loss that would threaten his personal security. Hussein’s willingness to end the fighting and make considerable concessions to Iran appears to support the claim that autocrats seek to avoid fighting unprofitable wars, but such a theory cannot explain Hussein’s inability of Hussein to achieve his desired ends. The fact remains that while Hussein desperately wanted to end the fighting, he was unable to do this because of the Iranian demand for his punishment. Here, the desire to end the conflict and the desire to survive appear so interlinked that it was impossible to separate the two. In such a case, both issues involve Hussein’s desire to avoid punishment and it is unclear if the fact that Hussein was the head of an autocratic regime actually drove his decision to prolong the war as a means of avoiding death. If anything, the Iraqi domestic supported Hussein’s resistance because they were similarly afraid of Iranian rule.
Culturally as well, the observed outcomes of this case do not match the predictions of existing theories. Although Iraq received financial support from its Arab neighbors, this war never allowed Hussein to achieve his ambitious goals of creating a new pan-Arab movement. The simple fact is that Hussein’s expected Arab uprising never occurred. Hussein’s Arab nationalist rhetoric became particularly shrill in the weeks following the 1982 defeats as he extolled his neighbors to join him in his war with Iran. Despite this propaganda and legitimate fears of Iranian domination of the region, there was no mass mobilization of Arab fighters and few wanted to accept additional sacrifices for the Iraqi cause. Similarly, some have also claimed that the city of Khorramshahr holds unique cultural value to the Iraqi people, because it was given to Iran by the British as part of the 1920’s mandate. Whatever the imperial legacy of the British partition, it is unlikely that this was a compelling enough reason within the Iraqi popular culture to continue fighting this unproductive conflict.

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44 As Hussein’s forces were pushed back into Iraqi territory, there was an increase in their morale, but this is generally interpreted as a desire to protect their homes and not a broad acceptance of pan-Arab rhetoric. Chubin, Shahram and Tripp, Charles. *Iran and Iraq at War*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988. p. 95.


46 For an interesting look at how the British partition of the Middle East directed the politics of the post-World War I Middle East, see: Catherwood, Christopher. *Churchill’s Folly: How Winston Churchill*
cultural factors that may have driven this conflict, this unpopular struggle between predominantly Shiite countries suggests that something other than the cultural preferences of their populations was perpetuating this conflict. Although Hussein frequently adopted nationalist and religious rhetoric in this struggle with Iran, it does not appear that such propaganda actually changed the prevailing cultural norms within Iraq or the region in such a manner as to drive Iraqi war aims.

The alternative hypothesis of this work does appear to accurately predict and explain this observed outcome. According to this logic, the military defeats at Dezful and Khorramshahr were a wake-up call to Hussein because they broke the stalemate and presented him with a new threat to his security. Sensing this vulnerability, Hussein made his first major change in strategy and attempted a bargaining strategy with Iran. When the Iranians rejected this offer and insisted on the death of Hussein as a condition for peace, Hussein refused and instead chose to adopt a delaying strategy by default. As part of this strategy, Hussein attempted to keep Iran’s military forces as far away from central Iraq as possible while also inflicting the maximum number of casualties possible. To this end, Hussein was largely successful and was able to maintain an

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uneasy stalemate for the next five years.\textsuperscript{48} Ultimately, Hussein’s military exhausted Iran and was able to achieve a hollow military victory that allowed him to remain the leader of Iraq.

5.3 Gulf War I: War by Miscalculation

For good reason, most political analyses of Saddam Hussein during the First Gulf War focus on his exceedingly poor military and political calculation and often risk devolving into caricature. The fact is that while Hussein was poor at making military and political calculations, he was not insensitive to his personal security and in fact believed that his actions would not provoke an international military response.\textsuperscript{49} This


\textsuperscript{49} In a particularly pointed list of Hussein’s many misjudgments prior to and during the war, Rick Atkinson wrote: “Saddam’s subsequent miscalculations were legion. He had attacked when world oil supplies were plentiful—thus weakening his economic leverage—and when relations between world powers were better than any time since the Congress of Vienna, in 1815. In confronting the United States, he picked a fight with a nation that had fifteen times the population of Iraq and eighty times its gross national product, on the apparent assumption that Washington would display no more staying power in the Middle East than it had after the U.S. Marine Corps barracks was bombed in Beirut in 1983. Saddam had failed to reassure Fahd of his benign intentions towards Saudi Arabia, thus pushing Riyadh into Washington’s arms. He forfeited any hope of world sympathy by seizing thousands of Western hostages
section will briefly address Hussein’s two primary strategic errors prior to the start of Gulf War I: first his belief that the United States would not object to an invasion of Kuwait and second, his belief that static defenses and attrition tactics could deter a casualty adverse coalition from advancing into Iraq.

After examining the miscalculations that led Iraq to war, the majority of this section will examine Hussein’s attempts to accept a dealing strategy once the superiority of the Coalition forces became apparent. First, after a month of harassment from the air, Hussein agreed to the Soviet-backed cease-fire agreement of February 22, 1991 that would have allowed him to avoid a ground war and retain a sizable portion of his fighting force. Second, after a 100-hour ground campaign, Hussein agreed to a Coalition-sponsored cease-fire agreement on February 28 as a means of keeping enemy forces outside of central Iraq and preserving his position as Iraqi ruler. In both of these cases, Hussein recognized that Iraq could not stop the American-led attacks and he moved quickly to avoid greater defeats. Because of his adroit ability to accept defeat, Hussein was able to negotiate a deal that allowed him to retain his power and personal

security. This section will examine both of these critical decisions Hussein made during Gulf War I and will demonstrate that while he consistently misread tactical and strategic realities, Hussein was very protective of his personal security and consistently made choices that he believed would help him survive.

5.3.1 Hussein’s Misjudgments

In retrospect, it is clear that Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait was a catastrophic misjudgment of the strategic situation.\footnote{Despite the catastrophic outcome of Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, he may have gotten away with this as a \textit{fait accompli} had he timed this act more carefully. According to two prominent observers of this conflict, “Saddam was unfortunate to pick a unique period in international affairs. Had he invaded Kuwait a few years earlier, such a wide-ranging collaboration would have been inconceivable.” Freedman, Lawrence and Karsh, Efraim. \textit{The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in a New World Order}. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. p. 438.} Despite this flawed reading of the political and military realities, Hussein believed that an invasion of Iraqi’s diminutive neighbor was a safe undertaking that would aid his relative position rather than threaten it.\footnote{As was often the case with Hussein, he believed that his signals were much clearer to outside observers that they in fact were. This reoccurring tendency to improperly evaluate the effect the one nation’s actions have on other actors in the international system is best described by Robert Jervis who claim that “[B]ecause statesmen believe that others will interpret their behavior as they intend it and will share their view of their own state’s policy, they are led astray in two reinforcing ways. First, their understanding of the impact of their own state’s policy if often inadequate-i.e. differs from the views of disinterested observers.} Prior to his
invasion of Kuwait, Hussein believed that he had clearly informed American Ambassador April Glaspie of his desire to seek a military resolution to the ongoing border dispute and debt relief crisis with Kuwait. In this now infamous meeting on July 25, 1990, Glaspie told Hussein that the United States had “no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.” Apparently this statement had a critical effect on Hussein’s judgment and he interpreted this statement as a clear indication that the United States would not intervene if he invaded Kuwait. Clearly, observers-and, second, they fail to realize that other states’ perceptions are also skewed.” Jervis, Robert. Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. pp. 69-70.


Hussein miscalculated and underestimated how such an aggressive act would appear as a major strategic threat to America and its allies.\textsuperscript{55}

Indeed, Hussein appeared to have been genuinely surprised by the decisive multinational response to the Kuwaiti invasion. This rapid response had the unintended effect of fueling Hussein’s paranoia and played on his existing fears that the rest of the world was against him and could not be trusted.\textsuperscript{56} Because of this, Hussein would react to this international pressure much like he would in future cases by claiming that he was a helpless victim of a US led conspiracy to punish him and Iraq. Describing his personal sense of victimization during both Gulf Wars, Hussein would later tell his captors,\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
“America had a plan with Kuwait to invade Iraq. We had a copy of the plan in our hands…I wish the United States did not have the intention to attack Iraq.”

Although there was no international conspiracy against Hussein, the Allied Coalition did move forward with their plans to enforce the UN mandate with military operations against Hussein. During this period, Hussein continued to make a series of misjudgments, mixing bellicose rhetoric with statements that indicated his perceived victimhood. The primary mistake that Hussein made during this period was to fundamentally underestimate the resolve of the American-led Coalition. Hussein simply could not believe that such a diverse and multinational group could agree to commit itself to removing his battle-hardened army from Kuwait. Up until the moment when the war began, Hussein vacillated between believing that the Coalition was a conspiracy to target him personally or a high-stakes bluff designed to test his resolve. Given these uncertain feelings, Hussein convinced himself that resistance to the Coalition was the best way to maintain his security.

Despite his willingness to accept war, Hussein was not blind to the need for diplomacy. In fact, on the eve of war, Hussein dispatched Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz to the Geneva Peace Conference to attempt to either stop or delay war. Here, Aziz met with Coalition leaders including American Secretary of State, James Baker. In an apparent attempt to deter the allies from invading Iraq, Aziz stated Hussein’s belief that any attack on Iraq would provoke a massive and deadly Arab response:

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57 FBI Interview #4. pp. 5-6.
[W]hen a war breaks out between an Arab and Muslim country on the one hand, and foreign powers such as the United States, Britain, and other foreign nations, on the other, combatants will not keep in mind that they will be fighting to vindicate UN resolutions... The soldier in our region does not fight only when ordered to do so. Indeed he fights out of convictions... I would like to tell you in all sincerity that if you initiate military action against an Arab country, you will be faced with hostile sentiment in the region, and in many Muslim states as well.  

Although Aziz’s warnings did not deter Baker or any of the Coalition partners, they do underscore the confused strategic mindset of Saddam Hussein prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Despite his defiant posture, Hussein felt as if he had no good options to avoid conflict. Even though Hussein believed that war was being forced upon him, he was confident that he would probably survive any showdown with the Coalition. If war did come, Hussein believed that he would probably be able to survive by breaking the will of his opponents, fracturing the coalition, and inflicting unacceptable losses on his opponents through an attrition-based strategy.  

As the impending ground war loomed,


Hussein believed that he could potentially force a favorable ceasefire on his casualty-adverse opponents.\textsuperscript{60} This belief was premised by Hussein’s belief that his army could absorb massive amounts of casualties while inflicting an untenable amount of damage on his purportedly soft enemies.\textsuperscript{61} “To Saddam, war was about warriors willing to die for their country, not about killing the enemy.”\textsuperscript{62}

When the much-anticipated war did begin on January 17, 1991, Hussein was publicly defiant and poised. During the opening weeks of the war, Iraqi military assets were relentlessly pounded from the air by Coalition aircraft and Hussein could do little


\textsuperscript{62} According to the authors of the Iraqi Perspectives Report, Hussein’s thinking about war was the exact reverse of General George S. Patton’s famous aphorism, “No bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country.” By showing an ability to tolerate casualties far in excess of their opponents, Hussein believed that his armies could prevail. Woods, Kevin M. with Pease, Michael R., Stout, Mark E., Murray, Williamson, and Lacey, James G. The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official Joint Forces Command Report. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006. p. vii.
to retaliate. Despite this martial confidence, Hussein continued to have his Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz search for diplomatic mediation to the conflict. Because the traditional Iraqi ally France was part of the Coalition, Hussein was forced to turn to the Soviet Union for help. On February 17, Tariq Aziz arrived in Moscow with instructions from Hussein to accept any reasonable offer that would end the conflict before the Coalition could launch their ground offensive.

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63 Because of the limited role of airpower in the Iran-Iraq War, Hussein fundamentally underestimated the importance of Coalition air dominance in Gulf War I. During the Iran-Iraq War, Hussein’s forces won, “air superiority by default” but were not so lucky when they fought the better prepared and equipped Collation. Pollack, Kenneth M., Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991. Lincoln: Bison Books, 2004. p. 213. Although some have overstated the role that airpower played in winning the conflict, Hussein’s forces were pounded from the air and were unable to prevent severe attrition at the hands of Allied airpower. Woods, Kevin M. The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein’s Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008. pp. 163, 189 and Hallion, Richard P. Storm Over Iraq: Air Power and the Gulf War. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.


5.3.2 Decision Point #2: Accepting the Soviet Cease Fire Proposal

On February 18, 1991, Tariq Aziz was meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev. In this meeting, the Soviet leader said to Aziz, “ask Saddam to agree to [UN Security Council] Resolution 660 and to announce Iraq’s willingness to withdraw from Kuwait and not to raise the issue of Palestine. Leave this issue to me. I will push for an international conference [on Palestinian issues] immediately after the end of this conflict.” Aziz agreed to pressure Hussein to accept this arrangement and end the conflict and flew immediately back to Iraq to meet with Hussein.

According to Aziz, Hussein was willing to make a deal to avoid further continuation of the war. In Aziz’s words:

His Excellency said to me, ‘Alright, we agree to Resolution 660,’ and he told me to go back to Moscow and meet Gorbachev; he said you must agree with him about the issue of withdrawal, and he [Saddam] told me about the details and timetable for withdrawal…taking into consideration our circumstances, because we have a large military force, etc.  

On February 19 Aziz was again in Moscow and again met with Gorbachev. After their meeting, they publicly announced that they were negotiating an Iraqi withdrawal.

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from Kuwait that conformed to the demands of UNSC 660. Under the terms of this agreement, Hussein would begin withdrawing his forces from Kuwait immediately and would be completely out in twenty-one days. Once this was complete, both sides would release all of their prisoners and Iraq would be relieved from UN punitive sanctions.

Sensing that the Soviet offer was his last best chance to save himself from an invasion of Iraq, Hussein quickly accepted the proposed deal on February 21, 1991. During this entire process, Gorbachev and his “personal emissary,” Yevgeny Primakov, were surprised by Hussein’s relaxed, self-confident demeanor although they suspected that it was purposeful posturing for a wider global audience. Primakov had several private audiences with Hussein and was struck by his lack of posturing as well as the practical nature of the Iraqi dictator’s questions. Of Hussein’s questions, the most

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pressing was, “in the event of withdrawal, would retreat Iraqis be shot in the back?”

This private humility combined with the acceptance of the Soviet offer suggests that Hussein was acting rationally and was concerned with ending the war in a rapid manner and protecting his personal security.

Despite Hussein’s willingness to end the fighting before the beginning of major ground operations, the United States and its coalition partners were deeply skeptical of this Soviet-backed ceasefire plan. Because this proposal would have allowed Hussein six weeks to remove his forces from Kuwait, there was a broadly-held opinion within the Coalition that the deal was overly favorable to the Iraqi dictator. Six weeks would have allowed Hussein to extract all of his combat personnel as well as the bulk of their heavy equipment and prepositioned stores. Such an orderly withdrawal would thus allow Hussein to retain the bulk of his fighting power and would not remove him as a potential threat to the region. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Hussein was negotiating in bad faith, there were additional concerns that Iraq could use this period to obtain a much-needed respite from Allied attacks and to strengthen his military positions in Kuwait.

For the same reasons the Soviet sponsored ceasefire proposal was very attractive to Hussein, it was considered unacceptable to the Allied Coalition. As one Coalition official said, “The Soviet-Iraqi plan wouldn’t only have saved Saddam, it would also

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have him dictate his own terms for defeat. That was unacceptable."73 Because the Coalition did not trust Hussein and wanted to destroy his offensive capabilities, it rejected this proposal in short order.74 This decision, by the Coalition, put a temporary halt to Hussein’s dealing strategy. Despite the fact that he did not want to risk his army or subject Iraq to invasion, Hussein was forced to continue fighting the Coalition and maintain his delaying strategy. Although some in the Western media criticized this decision, attention quickly shifted to the impending ground war, a new phase of the fighting that would further threaten Hussein’s personal security.75


75 These failed peace overtures stuck many as an odd play by the Soviet Union, suggesting both naivety and a desperate play to reassert Russian relevance. Apparently, Russia did not appreciate the zero sum nature of the conflict in American policy makers minds, if Iraq and the Soviets got there way, then American would be an international loser by default. “Gorbachev did not understand that, having started the operation, the US would not step back from the initial plan until Saddam was punished. Despite this failure, this Russian mission was seen as a critical part of Russia’s post-Cold War identity and untimely, “the main aim of the mission was not a political rescue of Saddam but bringing Moscow back into the Middle East.” Nosenko, Vladimir. “Soviet Policy in the Conflict.” in Danchev, Alex and Keohane, Dan. ed. International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990-91. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994. pp. 136-144.
5.3.3 Decision Point #3: 100 Hours of Ground Combat and the Acceptance of the Coalition Ceasefire

Despite his military’s poor showing during the air campaign and the fighting around Al-Khafji, Hussein continued to be relatively confident about his prospects for the ground war. Despite significant evidence to the contrary, Hussein continued to believe that his military could slow down any ground assault and inflict an intolerable number of casualties on his soft opponents. As the key element of his delaying strategy, Hussein employed a defense in depth, relying on his poorer quality frontline troops to blunt any attack through the use of layered static defenses.\(^{76}\) Iraqi’s best forces, most notably the elite Republican Guard divisions were purposely stationed away from the Iraqi front lines.\(^{77}\) This served two purposes that were critical to Hussein’s plan for survival. First, these higher quality formations would serve as a rapid response force to counterattack any Coalition forces that broke through the forward defenses. Second, by placing these


\(^{77}\) Since their creation during the Iran-Iraq War, the Republican Guards were the only organized military force that Hussein allowed within 100 miles of Baghdad. Because of their elite status and unquestioned loyalty, these units were able to act as Hussein’s Praetorian Guard and were a key element of his internal and external security apparatus. Aburish, Said K. Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000. p. 234. Woods, Kevin M. The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein’s Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008. p. 125.
forces out of the way of a first attack, it was believed that these forces would survive the war and act as an elite private security force dedicated to protecting Hussein. Although this strategic planning underestimated the ability of Allied air strikes to inflict significant damage on Iraqi rear echelon troops, it ultimately did protect these elite units and provides clear evidence that Hussein saw these units as vital for his personal security.

Once the ground war started on February 24, 1991, the Iraqi military situation rapidly deteriorated, further revealing the military miscalculations of Saddam Hussein.

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78 FBI Interview #4. p.3.

79 The failure of the Allies to destroy these Republican Guard units has generated much criticism in the American military and popular press. Two prominent examples of this criticism are *The General’s War* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor and *Warriors Rage* by Douglas McGregor. According to Gordon and Trainor, the failure to eliminate the Republican Guard units was a direct consequence of the famed “left hook” maneuver taking too long to reach the Iraqi rear areas and a series of political decisions by a risk averse Coalition leadership that resulted in the termination of the ground campaign after a mere 100 hours. McGregor focuses his attention on the one direct encounter between the Republican Guard and American forces at the Battle of 73 Easting and concludes that the successes of the junior level officers and enlisted men was undermined by the overly cautious deployment of General Franks’ VII Corps and an unwillingness to properly destroy the defeated Republican Guard divisions after the initial meeting engagement at 73 Easting. See: Gordon, Michael R., and Trainor, Bernard E., *The General’s War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1995. and McGregor, Douglas. *Warrior’s Rage: The Great Tank Battle of 73 Easting*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009.
Allied forces meant to hold the Iraqis in place drove rapidly across the border into Kuwait, pushing the Iraqi forces back, while the main Allied attack simultaneously moved around the Iraqi right flank and began to advance virtually unopposed across open desert toward the Iraqi interior. The speed of this assault even surprised many of the Coalition commanders and it rapidly became apparent to all observers that Hussein’s forces were hopelessly outmaneuvered and outclassed.

While the Iraqi frontline forces crumbled, Hussein desperately rallied his most loyal Republican Guard units and prepared to turn Baghdad into a fortified city. Despite the continued series of military defeats, Hussein clung to the hope that the Coalition would stop short of toppling his regime or that he could fend off their assault on the Iraqi capital. Here, Hussein guessed correctly. Political and military considerations rapidly eroded the American-backed Coalition’s willingness to continue the drive towards Baghdad and after a mere 100 hours, American President George H.W. Bush called for a “cessation of hostilities,” effective 8 AM on February 28. This halted the Allied advance and at least temporarily removed direct military pressure on Hussein. Sensing that he had an opportunity to secure a deal with the Allies that would ensure his continued survival, Hussein rapidly moved to end the fighting.

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The Coalition and Iraqi leaders met on March 3, 1991 in a tent at the village of Safwan, Iraq to formalize the terms of the ceasefire. In many respects, despite American commander Norman Schwarzkopf’s flair for the dramatic, this historic meeting was remarkably anti-climactic. The Iraqi delegation was led by two relatively junior Lieutenant Generals (Hussein was conspicuously and purposely absent) and was tasked to work out the relatively mundane details of prisoner exchange, troop positions, and Iraqi troop movements.\footnote{FBI Interview #4. p. 3.} The only item that significantly impaired the continued ability of Saddam Hussein to rule Iraq as he chose was the imposition of no-fly zones on Iraqi airspace, but even this was mitigated by an exception granted by Schwarzkopf allowing Iraq to use armed military helicopters across their entire country.\footnote{Atkinson, Rick. Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. pp. 1-10.}

Despite the public disgrace of accepting the Coalition terms, this outcome was quite acceptable for Saddam Hussein. Although the fight had resulted in the death of tens of thousands of Iraqi troops and the further ruin of the Iraqi economy, Hussein successfully survived “the mother of all battles” with the overpowering might of the US-led Coalition.\footnote{For the complete text of Hussein’s speech announcing his withdrawal from Kuwait, see: Bengio, Ofra. ed. Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis: A Collection of Documents Tel-Aviv, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1992. pp. 207-212.} While this conflict is properly viewed as a destructive series of
miscalculations by the Iraqi leader, he luckily avoided personal punishment and would continue to rule Iraq for another twelve years.

When allowances are made for Hussein’s strategic miscalculations, his strategy for ending Gulf War I closely matches the predictions of existing international relations theories. From the perspective of system-level theory, Hussein’s decision to accept both of the proposed peace deals is logical because they allowed Hussein to maintain Iraqi power and security in the post-war settlement despite Iraq’s clear military inferiority. Domestic theories would also predict Hussein’s willingness to accept these agreements are because they allowed Hussein to end unproductive fighting against an external foe and instead focus his attention on suppressing domestic threats to his power. Hussein’s acceptance of these peace offers is also consistent with the predictions of cultural theories. While the admission of defeat was contrary to Hussein’s defiant public image, he was able to regain some of his social status by claiming that he stood up to the world’s only superpower and demonstrated its weaknesses and casualty aversion. Although this surrender signaled the end to Hussein’s dream of pan-Arabism, it spared Iraq conquest from an outside invader and the demoralizing effects of total defeat. While each of these existing theories must acknowledge Hussein clearly miscalculated, they all do a good job of explaining why Hussein chose to lower his war aims and accept the two different ceasefire proposals.

Although this work acknowledges the validity of these existing models, it claims that the alternative model is better at explaining the specific reasons why Hussein chose
to accept these two peace offers. According to this alternative theory, Hussein was primarily concerned with maintaining his personal security and took the first and second offers that served this interest. The fact that Hussein’s need for security and the best interests of Iraq were so closely intertwined is largely coincidental. Had the offers for peace been more akin to the Iranian demands during the Iran-Iraq War, it is unlikely that Hussein would have accepted them. In such a case, Hussein would have likely continued his delaying strategy for as long as possible and then risked everything on a desperate gamble for salvation. Fortunately, for Hussein, the Collation lacked Khomeini’s commitment to continued fighting and a deal was reached that avoided such an outcome.

The fact the Hussein did not use chemical weapons to defend Iraq from the Allied assault as he did with Iran just a few years before surprised many observers especially since he had significantly improved his chemical weapons capabilities prior to the outbreak of Gulf War I.\(^4\) Despite the common belief that Hussein would use these weapons to defend himself, he apparently believed that he had no reason to do so during Gulf War I. For Hussein, the use of chemical weapons was only a last resort measure to be saved for the unlikely scenario where Coalition forces directly threatened his

safety. After his capture in 2003, Hussein was questioned why he did not use chemical weapons against Coalition forces during the First Gulf War. Hussein replied that he used chemical weapons versus Iran because he believed that Iraqi sovereignty and his regime were threatened, but he did use them during the First Gulf War because he believed that he was not at risk.

This further supports the notion that Hussein felt directly threatened by the later stages of his war with Iran but felt secure during the course of Gulf War I. Had the US led Collation continued their drive to Baghdad, Hussein’s comments strongly suggest that he would have used these weapons, but ultimately he was able to avoid this outcome by accepting a humbling ceasefire agreement that halted the advance and preserved his personal security.

Consistent with the predictions of this work, Hussein made choices regarding Iraqi war aims that he thought best protected his own security. As Iraqi forces were pounded during the Allied air campaign, Hussein brokered a deal with the Soviets that would have allowed him to end the war and retain the bulk of his army. When this deal was

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rejected by the Coalition, Hussein continued the fight because he believed that his forces could successfully delay any advance into Iraq. To this end, Hussein deployed a defense in depth that would best protect his elite military formations from the Allied attacks.\footnote{FBI Interview #4, p. 3.} Finally, when Hussein was offered a less favorable peace after the initial successes of the Coalition ground campaign, he rapidly accepted this deal as a means of protecting his grip on power.

While all of this appears coldly Machiavellian as well as frequently erratic, it does demonstrate the consistent value that Hussein placed on guaranteeing his continued survival. In the twelve-year period between the end of Gulf War I and the beginning of Gulf War II, Hussein would continue to exhibit behaviors that would both puzzle and confound outside observers. Again, despite the unusual appearance of these actions, they were consistently made to perpetuate his personal security. Hussein maintained the illusion of having an active WMD program as a means of quelling both internal and external pressures. Interestingly, Hussein believed that Iran was a more pressing threat to Iraqi security than The United States or its allies. Even in captivity he would later insist that the illusion of such a WMD capability was needed to deter Iran.\footnote{FBI Interview, Casual Conversation #3, pp. 1-2 and Baram, Amatzia. \textit{Building toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Papers #47.} Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998. p. 4.} While these Potemkin programs frequently attracted the scrutiny of the international community,
Hussein was able to achieve a delicate balance between open defiance and admitting weakness to the outside world. Of particular note was his acceptance of UN Resolution 986. Despite Hussein’s mistrust and animosity towards the United Nations, he ultimately agreed to the terms of the “Oil for Food” Program specifically to avoid economic collapse in Iraq and to protect his personal security.\textsuperscript{89} During this interwar period, Hussein also was forced to confront defections within his own family, and at least three serious coup attempts. Despite these internal threats, Hussein continued to expand his personal security apparatus through the creation of the Fedayeen-Saddam paramilitary unit, the frequent humiliation, interrogation, reassignment, and murder of his top generals, as well as the construction of numerous additional presidential palaces, armored bunkers, and underground command posts.\textsuperscript{90}


The case of Gulf War II is interesting because it provides further examples of how Hussein’s drive for personal security was consistently undermined by a series of miscalculations and personal eccentricities. Although Hussein had numerous chances to avoid the war that ultimately resulted in his own death, he chose policies that he believed best provided for his own security even when they risked escalating the crises. This section will briefly examine the major miscalculations made by Hussein prior to the outbreak of the war that directly affected his private security, most notably his refusal to admit that he did not possess chemical, nuclear, or biological weapons, even when doing so could have prevented the outbreak of war. Apparently, Hussein refused to openly disclose his lack of WMD because he believed that the United States knew he did not possess these weapons and because of this knowledge would not attempt a full-scale invasion of Iraq. He also calculated that a resurgent Iran was a greater threat than an American-led invasion and that the threat of chemical attacks on Iranian cities would deter aggressive action towards Iraq.91

5.4 Hussein’s Miscalculations prior to Gulf War II

On first glance, Hussein’s actions prior to the outbreak of Gulf War II would appear to demonstrate that Hussein was not concerned with his own security. A closer inspection reveals a more interesting story that broadly supports the theories of this broader work. Much like the previous Gulf War, Hussein again miscalculated the severity of the threats against him and missed numerous opportunities to avoid his ultimate destruction. This does not mean that he was insensitive to his personal security. In the months prior to the outbreak of war, Hussein was faced with repeated demands to uncover his alleged weapons of mass destruction programs and to submit to a series of US and UN demands placed upon his regime. Hussein repeatedly refused these demands because he believed that the United States knew that he did not have these

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92 For an excellent analysis of Hussein’s actions during the period 1991-2000, see: Byman, Daniel L. and Waxman, Matthew C. Confronting Iraq: U.S. Policy and the Use of Force Since the Gulf War. Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000. p. 20. While this report notes that Hussein’s long-terms goals include an ambitious desire for regional hegemony, it is unequivocal that his immediate priority is and has always been personal survival. This ambition combined with Hussein’s erratic personality and his pension for miscalculation, makes Hussein a tricky foe, but according to these authors, Hussein could be managed if properly because, “Saddam tends to compromise in the short-term, however, when necessary to achieve his immediate aims.” Hussein’s willingness to back down under pressure combined with the weakness of Iraq due to the sanctions regime was imperfect, but did help maintain a fragile peace in the aftermath of Gulf War I.
weapons, he believed that the response of the United States would be more limited than it in fact was, and that even if faced with a potential attack from the United States and its allies that the illusion of having active WMD programs was necessary to deter a rising Iran. Although Hussein would ultimately be proven wrong on each of these points, Hussein’s strategic decisions were internally consistent and reflected his own desire to maintain his own security even at the expense of the Iraqi nation and the international system.

In his own mind, Hussein believed that he was being as forthright as possible regarding his WMD programs. Iraq had effectively ended its weapons programs during the mid-1990’s and was never close to procuring the nuclear or biological capabilities that many analysts feared. Hussein believed that if he did make any mistakes in regards to his WMD program, it was to dismantle them secretly and without UN observation. This covert destruction inadvertently led to further suspicion regarding

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93 A 1996 memo from Hussein to the Iraqi Intelligence Service instructed them to, “insure that there is no equipment, materials, research, studies, or books related to manufacturing of the prohibited weapons (chemical, biological, nuclear, and missiles) in your site” This memo combined with traces of the dismembered WMD programs convinced UN inspectors and US intelligence officials that Hussein had an active program despite the fact that it actually indicated the opposite. Woods, Kevin M. with Pease, Michael R., Stout, Mark E., Murray, Williamson, and Lacey, James G. The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official Joint Forces Command Report. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006. p. 93.


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Hussein’s credibility and intentions and made it almost impossible for Hussein to convince outside inspectors that he was actually telling the truth. Hussein apparently never kept WMD materials in any of the presidential palaces later claiming that, “the Iraqi leadership would have been at risk” if he brought such weapons into his own homes. Hussein reasoned that if American intelligence did believe that he possessed weapons of mass destruction that they would be unwilling to mass their forces in Kuwait and other nearby nations for fear that such concentrations would be particularly vulnerable to attacks from chemical, biological, nuclear devices. Although his reasoning would ultimately be proven wrong, Hussein thought that he had no reason to publicly admit what he thought was obvious to informed observers regarding his weapons programs. By playing this double game, Hussein hoped to maximize his political and military security at a minimal cost, not endanger it unnecessarily.

95 Hussein’s desire to convince the outside world that he had dismantled his WMD capabilities was also not aided by the 12,000 page report to the UN regarding the Iraqi weapons programs. Although very long, this report was lacking in critical details and provided no documentation or hard evidence to support its claim that Iraq had ended its program shortly after the end of Gulf War I. This had the unintended consequence of stoking existing suspicions regarding Iraqi WMD claims. Pauly, Robert J. and Lansford, Tom. Strategic Preemption: US Foreign Policy and the Second Iraq War. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004. p. 77.

96 FBI Casual Conversation #2. p. 1.

97 FBI Interview #4. p. 2.
A critical part of Hussein’s calculations prior to the war was premised on the flawed assumption that the American intelligence knew more than it actually did. Even after his eventual capture, Hussein believed that the United States knew that the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs had been effectively halted and that Iraq had few if any ties to the Al-Qaeda terrorists who planned the September 11 attacks. Hussein’s paranoia fueled his belief that the American intelligence was quasi-omnipotent and that the public reports of intelligence regarding active Iraqi WMD programs were merely political propaganda of an opponent that was, “looking for a reason to do something.”

According to such logic, Hussein was in a “catch-22” and any further disclosure of the Iraqi WMD program would have little effect on avoiding an American attack on Iraq.

Similarly, Hussein did not believe that the United States or its allies would commit to a full-scale invasion of Iraq or the deposition of his regime. In interviews with FBI, Hussein repeatedly stated that he thought that the United States was bluffing and would not attempt to overthrow his regime. In the event of an attack, Hussein believed that he would be able to successfully survive any military action that would

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98 FBI Interview #4. p. 4.
result and could return to business as normal just as he had after the 1991 Gulf War. Hussein vastly underestimated the scale of the effort in 2003 and apparently believed that if an attack were made, it was likely to be on the scale of the 1998 Desert Fox Campaign and not a major effort designed to topple his regime. According to Tariq Aziz, “He thought that this war [Gulf War II] would not lead to this ending.” Hussein drew heavily on analogies to past American actions directed against Iraq and a belief that the United States would be unwilling to pay the costs of occupying Iraq and reconstructing its government and infrastructure. Because of this fundamental underestimation of American strategic intentions, Hussein did not heed American warnings as he should have and as a result convinced himself that such as threat was

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unlikely to risk his personal security. Indeed, “[F]rom Saddam’s point of view, the idea that the Americans would attack all the way to Baghdad appeared ludicrous.”

Given this underestimation of American goals, it is reasonable to believe that Hussein calculated that maintaining the fictitious posture of having active weapons programs was a valuable tool for deterring potential threats from Iran. In post-war interviews with the FBI, Hussein repeatedly asserted that he was more afraid of an invasion from Iran than an attack from the United States. According to Hussein the greatest fear among Iraqi military planners in the wake of the first Gulf War was that a resurgent Iran would want to settle the unfinished business of the Iran-Iraq War and that the defeat in 1991 and the subsequent UN sanctions made such a threat a very real possibility. This perception of vulnerability towards Iran drove Iraqi military planning

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103 In addition to Operation Desert Fox, Hussein also believed that the lack of American public commitment to the Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo operations signaled that the United States would not commit to toppling his regime. Woods, Kevin M. with Pease, Michael R., Stout, Mark E., Murray, Williamson, and Lacey, James G. The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official Joint Forces Command Report. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006. p. viii.


and became an obsession with Saddam Hussein and caused him to underestimate the more pressing threat to his regime.

Even as the United States sent increasingly threatening signals to Hussein, he continued to believe that Iran, not a US-led coalition, was the most likely threat to his continued security. In this convoluted logic, maintaining the public ruse of having WMD would provide him with a deterrent to Iran. Hussein reasoned that the Iranians would fear attacks from these weapons because they had experienced them first hand during the Iran-Iraq war. Even given the possibility of a United States attack on Iraq, this additional leverage versus Iran was worth the risk. When combined with the previous beliefs that the United States knew that Iraq did not possess these weapons and was unlikely to launch a full-scale invasion of Iraq, it is clear why Hussein acted as he did during the months prior to the outbreak of war. While historical events would prove Hussein wrong on nearly all of these suppositions, he believed that he was acting in a rational manner to preserve his own safety not as the cruel and reckless dictator who was vilified and mistrusted by the outside world.

Throughout the war, Hussein kept a relatively low profile and as the Coalition forces neared Baghdad, he fled the capital and went into hiding. He would evade capture for the next eight months until his apprehension on December 15, 2003. Hussein gave up all of the splendor of his palaces and the trappings of power to live in a series of remote safe houses and primitive “spider holes,” an ultimate and desperate sign of his willingness to avoid capture and punishment. While Hussein was quite surprised
by the allied invasion, once Operation Iraqi Freedom began he went to great efforts to try to avoid capture and survive.

5.5 Conclusion

In sum, the three cases of Saddam Hussein fit reasonably well within the alternative theory of this work and supports all of its alternative hypotheses. When faced with defeat in both the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf War I, Hussein lowered Iraqi war aims and moved towards a rapid surrender in a manner that was consistent with the preservation of his own personal security (H1). In both of these cases, he moved rapidly to end the war and negotiate an armistice that protected his own security and allowed him to retain his hold on power (H2). In the case of each of these wars, Hussein made his survival the central component of any peace deal (H3). Particularly in the case of the Iran-Iraq War, Hussein and Iraq clearly had divergent interests yet Hussein chose to perpetuate the fighting because the Iranian regime had made his death their primary condition for ending the war. (H4). In each of these cases, Hussein appeared to be more concerned with maintaining his own survival than extracting the greatest possible set of concessions from his opponents as evidenced by his willingness to accept almost any offer to end these conflicts, and in the case of the Iran-Iraq War, even risking the survival of his military to demonstrate his good will to Iran (H5). While there is some evidence to suggest that Hussein may have been willing to accept exile as a quid pro

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to prevent the Second Gulf War and avoid the consequences of an Allied invasion, this evidence is at best fragmentary, and is insufficient to fully back this claim (H6).

Ultimately, any observer of Saddam Hussein must conclude that despite his volatile personality and military adventurism, he was an actor who prioritized his individual security interests over any other consideration. In each of the three cases presented in this study, Hussein was willing to act in a manner that defied the macro-level incentives of the international system, the Gulf region, and the Iraqi polity. In the Iran-Iraq War, he initially fought a contest for limited aims. When the course of the fighting turned against Iraq and Iranian forces began to invade Iraq, he quickly moved to offer a cease fire because of fears regarding his own security. He continued this unprofitable conflict only because Khomeini and the Iranians insisted on his death as a condition for peace, a condition that was obviously unacceptable to Hussein. During the First Gulf War, Hussein resisted the systemic pressures of the international community and his former allies in the region and insisted on instigating a major international conflict. Although Hussein clearly miscalculated the resolve and fighting power of the Allied Coalition, he apparently did not believe that he was risking his personal security through fighting. After the ground campaign started and it because increasingly clear that the Iraqi army could not withstand their advance, Hussein willing accepted outside mediation by the Soviet Union as a means of protecting his rapidly eroding security and quickly accepted the Collation backed cease fire. Prior to the Second Gulf War Hussein again defied the world community and chose to again risk an unwinnable war but it is clear in retrospect
that Hussein miscalculated the seriousness of the American threat and apparently believed that the prospect of admitting that his nuclear program was largely dismantled was a bigger threat to his security than the possibility of war with America. Although it is indisputable that Hussein often made poor macro-level decisions, Hussein exercised a great degree of individual agency over systemic, domestic, and cultural structures sought to constrain his actions.

Although these various actions are understandable from Hussein’s perspective, they do not comport with traditional international relations notions of structural constraint on individual actors. All three of these conflicts surprised many contemporary observers and do not fit well within traditional international relations theories. While each of these conflicts was exacerbated by the peculiarities of Hussein’s personality and his proclivity to miscalculate and underestimate his opponents, these behaviors can be examined in a systematic manner. Indeed, to understand the particulars of each of these conflicts, it is critical to examine the security-seeking behaviors of Saddam Hussein and how these motivated him to alter the course of history. In his pursuit of personal security, Hussein was a critical figure in international relations because he created and perpetuated a series of conflicts in his destructive image. Despite his idiosyncratic and confusing political persona, Hussein fits well into the predictions of this research and a better understanding of his actions in these conflicts can be achieved by examining his
particular responses to external security threats. Unfortunately for the world, “Saddam defined losing in simple and personal terms-being removed from power.”106

Perhaps the best summary of the disconnect between Hussein’s logic during these three failed wars and the typical understanding within the Western world is best described by the opening lines of the Iraqi Perspectives Report:

Iraq’s response to the Coalition’s military threat was dictated by the nature of the regime and by Saddam Hussein himself. While to Western eyes the choices Iraq made may appear dysfunctional or even absurd, the regime’s responses to the threat and then invasion were logical within the Iraqi political framework, even if later proven to be counterproductive. Saddam may have been, to a large extent, ignorant of the external world; he was, however, a student of his own nation’s history and culture. Thus, the Iraqi response to threats and the invasion of Coalition forces was a function of how Saddam and his minions understood their own world, a world that looked nothing like the assessments of Western analysts.107


For Hussein, his own security was his primary motivation, a fact that led him to fight unproductive wars contrary to the expectations of most military analysts and the predictions of international relations theory.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

“And make me die a good old man!
That is the butt end of a mother’s blessing”

— Richard, III Act 2, Scene 2

If he is crazy, he doesn’t perceive the risk. If he is coldly Machiavellian, he sees that in
desperate circumstances he personally may risk less by going to war than by submitting
to the threats of foreign governments…What is quite certain is that threatening them
with war…or making war upon them, even with collective bombing force, will not
achieve what is desired. — Aldous Huxley, on deterring a potential dictator

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1 Shakespeare, William. The Tragedy of Richard, III, Folger Shakespeare Library Ed. New York:
6.1 Answering Questions and Analyzing Hypothesis

This work has attempted to analyze the impact of human agency on the conflict termination process. To that end, it has asked three questions regarding conflict termination. First, why do some states surrender when they still have latent military capabilities? Second, why do some states continue fighting when they have little if any hope of achieving their war aims? Finally, why do some states fail to act as rational-utility maximizers during the conflict-termination process?

To answer these questions, this work has sought guidance from existing theories and has also created a theoretical alternative. This alternative theory focuses on the personal survival incentives of leaders and compares them with the potentially divergent incentives of their nations. This theory claims that individuals may have a profound impact on national war aims because leaders typically choose to prioritize their private security interests over the public security interests of their states. Assuming that leaders are security seekers, they should attempt to avoid outcomes that result in their own punishment. This lower bargaining limit for individuals may create a disconnect between the acceptable war aims for an individual and the war aims of a nation. Because leaders may not bargain under the same set of incentives as their nations, the alternative theory predicts that a series of six hypothetical outcomes may result.
H1: Leaders alter their nations’ war aims during interstate wars to protect their post-conflict security.

Table 6.1. Hypothesis 1 Applied to Six Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>1919-21</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1980-88</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Pilsudski</td>
<td>Petain</td>
<td>Hirohito</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IV) Threat to Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DV) Alteration of War Aims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H1) Alteration of War Aims to Protect Post-Conflict Security</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 1 is premised on the assumption that if leaders are primarily motivated by the need to protect their personal security, then they should alter their nations’ war aims to maximize their expected security rather than systemic, domestic, or cultural payoffs. In each of the cases studied here, leaders exhibited a clear preference for preserving their own security and were willing to alter their nations’ war aims to achieve this end. The war aims that these leaders chose were consistent with the hypothesized order of preferences of this alternative theory: Safe-End (Dealing Strategy) > Safe-Continue (Delaying Strategy) > Not Safe-Continue (Gambling Strategy) > Not Safe-End (Self-Sacrifice Strategy).

Although this is the simplest of the theory’s hypotheses, it has three potentially profound implications on international politics. First, it suggests that leaders use their states to achieve their own ends. Second, leaders may be less concerned with systemic,
domestic, or cultural incentives than they are about protecting their own security. Third, leaders may be relatively insensitive to macro-level costs of war if they prioritize their security to such a degree that they are willing to continue unprofitable wars (Delaying Strategy) or incur additional risks (Gambling Strategy) to achieve this end.

This finding helps to partially answer the first question of this work— why do some states surrender when they still have latent military capabilities? If leaders alter national war aims to promote their own security, then they should be less concerned with how much military power they have at the conclusion of a war but rather with how much personal security they have at the conclusion of a war. In this respect, this finding provides a twist on the neo-realist observation that security is preferable to raw power by applying this observation to an individual, rather than the state.

*H2: Leaders will move to end unprofitable wars once they can credibly guarantee their post-conflict security.*

**Table 6.2. Hypothesis 2 Applied to Six Case Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
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<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>1919-21</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Pilsudski</td>
<td>Petain</td>
<td>Hirohito</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IV) Threat to Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DV) Alteration of War Aims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H2) Leaders End Unprofitable Wars if Post-Conflict Security Assured</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis 2 builds upon hypothesis 1 and proposes that leaders end unprofitable wars once they have guaranteed their own security. In every case, leaders avoided losses in their security by ending unprofitable conflicts as soon as they secured credible guarantees regarding their post-conflict security. In all of the other cases, leaders accepted a sub-optimal “Safe-Ends” because they believed that lowering national war aims was the best way to promote their primary goal of survival. For international politics, the lesson is simple. Leaders will end wars that are unproductive or unpopular, but only if they can retain their post-war security.

When combined with the previous hypothesis, the second hypothesis forms a more complete description of why leaders often end wars while they still have significant military capabilities. Because leaders desire to maintain their own security, when they are faced with an unprofitable war, they actively seek Safe-Ends and actively avoid Safe-Continues, Not Safe-Continues, and especially Not Safe-Ends. Not Safe-Ends are the worst possible outcome for the leader because of their double finality. While leaders will occasionally fight to the bitter end in a losing cause, they would prefer to avoid punishment while preserving some of their military capabilities for future use.

H3: Leaders place a lower limit on their conditions for peace and will not willingly accept an outcome that results in their own death, capture, punishment, or any other threat to their personal security.
Hypothesis 3 claims that leaders place a lower limit on their nations’ war aims and will not accept outcomes that threaten their continued security. Each of the cases studied in this work strongly supports this hypothesis because each of these leaders refused to accept an outcome that resulted in their own punishment. Despite systemic, domestic, or cultural incentives to accept a different bargain, these leaders chose to fight rather than accept a deal which threatened their security. In each of these cases, leaders only adopted dealing strategies when they could achieve Safe-Ends to conflicts. Rather than negotiating a self-sacrificing Not Safe-End, leaders in each of these cases adopted delaying or gambling strategies as a means of avoiding punishment for as long as possible.

This hypothesis supports the alternative theory by demonstrating that leaders are unwilling to lower their nations’ war aims and accept the possibility of punishment. This refusal to lower national war aims may result in the continuation of wars for the sole purpose of protecting an individual leader despite the fact that a nation has little to gain from continued fighting. Because leaders place a lower limit on the conditions
which they will accept, they create a bargaining problem where their security creates an intractable impediment for conflict termination. This helps to answer the second major question of this research— why do some states continue fighting when they have little if any hope of achieving their war aims?

**H4**: Leaders have a different incentive structure than their states and will prefer to continue unprofitable or unwinnable conflicts rather than accept a potential loss in their post-conflict security.

### Table 6.4. Hypothesis 4 Applied to Six Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Hirohito</td>
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<td>Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IV) Threat to Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Mixed</td>
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<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DV) Alteration of War Aims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H4) Leaders Prefer to Continue Unprofitable Wars Rather Than Risk Their Post-Conflict Security</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 4 is an expanded version of hypothesis 3 and claims that leaders will continue unwinnable conflicts rather than end them and face post-conflict punishment. In each of the cases analyzed by this research, the leaders refused to end conflicts when they had reasonable doubts regarding their post-conflict security. Even when ending the conflict would have benefited their nations, these leaders chose to act in their own best interest and preserve their personal security.
Because leaders and their nations operate under divergent incentive structures, both are faced with a bargaining problem which is particularly severe during unprofitable wars. In the terms of the alternative theory, each of these leaders’ preferences were: Safe-End > Safe-Continue > Not Safe-Continue > Not Safe-End, as compared to the preferences of their states which were: Safe-End > Not Safe-End > Safe-Continue > Not Safe-Continue. Although both the leader and the state may have benefited from “Safe-Ends,” leaders in this study did not accept unsafe outcomes such as Not-Safe Ends which may have provided a greater benefit to the nation as a whole. Rather than choose an unsafe end, leaders perpetuated conflicts even if this is antithetical to the best interests of the nation. This dynamic explains why leaders are often unwilling to end unprofitable wars. Unless leaders can secure a safe end to a conflict, they will continue to perpetuate a conflict even if their nation has little or nothing to gain from continued fighting.

H5: Leaders are more interested in maintaining their post-conflict security than extracting the best possible systemic, domestic, or cultural conditions from their opponents.
Table 6.5. Hypothesis 5 Applied to Six Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
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<tr>
<td>(IV) Threat to Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DV) Alteration of War Aims</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H5) Leaders May Accept Sub-optimal Conditions to Protect Their Security</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 5 extends the logic of divergent incentive structures outlined in hypotheses 3 and 4 and claims that leaders will seek settlements that reflect their personal security goals rather than the best interests of their states. In each of this work’s case studies, the observed outcomes support this hypothesis. Despite systemic, domestic, and cultural incentives leaders chose to ignore these payoffs and explicitly sought settlements that would maintain their own security. This finding is significant because, consistent with hypothesis 1, it suggests that leaders’ primary motivations are personal security and that leaders often act differently than the predictions of existing theories.

As this research suggests, in certain circumstances, micro-level interests trump macro-level payoffs. Although this choice is completely rational from the perspective of an individual leader, it does not meet the expectations of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories. This finding highlights the levels of analysis problem in international relations theory and helps answer the third major question of this research—why do some states fail to act as rational-utility maximizers during the conflict-termination process?
H6: Leaders may accept side payments that manipulate their desire for post-conflict security such as exile, immunity, or collaboration as an inducement for ending a conflict.

Table 6.6. Hypothesis 6 Applied to Six Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
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<td>Year(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(IV) Threat to Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DV) Alteration of War Aims</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H6) Acceptance of Side Payment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This final hypothesis tests the willingness of leaders to explore alternative means of ending conflicts that may be contrary to the incentives of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories. In the terms of the alternative theory of this work, this hypothesis tests the willingness of leaders to accept specific types of “Safe-Ends” such as exile, immunity from prosecution, and collaboration. Despite the consistent logic of this hypothesis, there is not enough evidence in the case studies to fully support this claim. The fact is that such explicit offers of side-payment appear rare in modern history and because of this scarcity, it is impossible to prove that the few cases that involve these payoffs are not historical outliers.

Of the six cases studied here, two such offers were made and accepted (Petain 1940 and Hirohito 1945). In the other three cases (Pilsudski 1919-21, Hussein 1982, and Hussein 1991), there is little if any evidence that such an offer was made and thus these
conflicts ended without a side payment. Although there is some evidence that leaders attempt to accept side payments as a *quid pro quo* for ending a conflict in a manner that is contrary to the predictions of systemic, domestic, or cultural theories, it would be too hasty to claim that this hypothesis would hold in all cases. If more of these behaviors can be identified, then they may provide additional support to this work’s alternative theory while highlighting another way in which leaders may not conform to the predictions of macro-level utility maximization. However, until such data is available, it is impossible to fully support this intriguing possibility.

6.2 Implications and Recommendations

6.2.1 Recognize that Existing Theories Have a Potentially Dangerous Blind Spot

From the beginning, this work was designed to underscore some of the dangers of discounting human agency in international relations theory. Although systemic, domestic, and cultural models are very useful for predicting broad trends in international politics, these theories are much less useful at predicting more specific behaviors. This work has attempted to demonstrate that these shortcomings are a consequence of discounting human agency.

As Richard Samuels notes, most theories begin their investigation of world politics by modeling the constraints placed on human choice. Working from this
assumption, these theories create broad predictive theories which assume that individual agents are less important than the incentives of the systemic, domestic, or cultural environment around them.\textsuperscript{3} Because such theories attempt to demonstrate why individuals do not matter, they have a serious theoretical blind spot—the leaders who choose not to conform to the “constraints” on their agency.

While the reduction of human choice may be a necessary tradeoff for creating predictive theories that are applicable across the greatest range of conditions, it is unclear that this level of abstraction is useful for providing anything more than vague pattern recognition. In fact, this reduction of human agency may be dangerous if it causes practitioners to discount the disruptive effects of those individuals who defy systemic, domestic, or cultural constraints. The cases presented here attempt to demonstrate how individual security concerns may provide a powerful and consistent motivation for leaders to break with the theoretical constraints on their actions. While this is not the only possible motivation for leaders, it is one that may have a profound impact on the conflict termination process and may explain some of the more extreme deviations from typical state behavior.

6.2.2 Recognize that Individual Security Needs Present an Opportunity for Policymakers

Although human beings are quirky, fickle, and often unpredictable, this work suggests that individuals generally act in a particular way with regards to their own security. While this work has focused primarily on the negative effects of these security needs, it is possible that these desires may be manipulated to produce positive outcomes. This first and most important lesson to be learned is that great care must be used when applying force in international relations. While force is often necessary to change an opponent’s behavior, too much force may be counterproductive, especially if it threatens to undermine a leader’s personal security because it may leave them no option but to continue fighting. More covert uses of force such as targeted killings or funding local opposition groups may produce similar unintended consequences. In short, force may work, but for it to be effective, it must clearly distinguish between targeting a nation’s military and economic power and targeting a nation’s leader. Even then, nations should clearly state why they are using force, what they expect to gain from it, and how a leader may avoid further threats to their own security.

The second, and related, lesson that this research underscores is the importance of diplomacy. Diplomacy may take many forms but may be more effective than force in producing desired outcomes. When applied to individual security, the goal of diplomacy should be to convince an opponent that they do not have to continue fighting to preserve
their security. If credible guarantees can be made regarding an opponent’s post-war security, diplomacy may mitigate the effects of the divergent incentives of leaders and their states. By creating conflict termination conditions which are acceptable to both sides, it may be possible to end conflicts as soon as the likely winner is determined and avoid protracted delaying strategies or costly gambling strategies. Two examples of successful diplomacy are examined in this work’s case studies. Joseph Grew provided for the security needs of Hirohito while Hitler was strikingly pragmatic in manipulating the security needs of his old nemesis, Marshal Petain. In both of these cases, diplomacy was specifically aimed at providing the opposing leaders the post-war security that they desired. The result was that lopsided conflicts were dramatically shortened and the best interests of leaders on both sides were achieved.

6.2.3 Recognize that Justice and Moral Clarity May be Counterproductive

One potentially unsettling implication of this research is that moral clarity and justice may be counterproductive to achieving conflict termination. While it may be tempting to subject certain leaders to war crimes trials or other forms of post-conflict punishment, demands for retribution may discourage leaders from accepting negotiated settlements. This dynamic may be particularly common in the decades following WWII, where the rhetoric of “never again” has appeared frequently in the international political discourse.
While there may be a rhetorical advantage to claiming moral superiority, such statements introduce an additional credibility problem to the conflict termination process. Any nation that purports to act in such an explicitly moral manner has effectively trapped itself and must choose either to act on its claims or risk losing credibility and moral authority by backing down. In addition, such claims send a very clear signal to the opposing leader that their opponent is willing to risk its international reputation to achieve their moral purpose. This signaling, in turn, could make future negotiations and conflict termination much more difficult by making each side mistrustful of the other’s motivations. The unsettling implication of this logic is that achieving optimal outcomes may require softening international rhetoric, making deals with morally repugnant leaders, or at least tolerating their continued existence.

6.3 Areas for Further Research

6.3.1 Possibility of Side Payments

One area that demands additional study is the potential for making side payments for leaders as a *quid pro quo* for ending interstate wars or exiting office. While this work’s case studies did not find sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that leaders can be induced with side-payments, the possibility remains an intriguing one. The logic that leaders may be willing to accept such promises as a condition for
ending a conflict appears sound, yet there is a lack of data to prove this assertion. Perhaps because of the desire to maintain a clear moral distinction between good and evil, such payoffs have occurred only rarely during the last century. Even when such an approaches was attempted with Hirohito, policymakers tried to hide their actions from the public, further exacerbating the existing lack of data. The newly established Ibrahim Prize which guarantees a $5 million payout to any Sub-Saharan African leader who leaves office peacefully may help provide some additional data but it is problematic because of its narrow regional scope. For the foreseeable future, researchers should attempt to compare new cases with past examples and attempt to identify common patterns that may help future statesmen better understand the potential for side-payments in the conflict termination process.

6.3.2 Possible Impact of “Thick” Cultural Forces

Another area that is worthy of additional study is the possibility of “thick” cultural pressures driving leaders towards risk-acceptant behavior. Although this research tests the impact of cultural forces in shaping the war aims of modern nations, there is reason to believe that cultural beliefs may be much more powerful in small self-selecting groups of non-state actors. Groups such as terrorist cells, religious orders, fringe political organizations, or cults may share unique and powerful beliefs that could override a desire for self-preservation favoring self-sacrifice for a higher goal. While there is still much to be done, recent scholarship has provided some potentially
powerful insights into how the psychology and structure of these groups causes them to act in such atypical ways.⁴

It is also worth considering the possibility that the modern, western belief that self-interest and wisdom can tame man’s baser passions may be fleeting or anachronistic. If this was true, then the modern era of liberal government and the rule of law may be an exception to the typical state of the human condition.⁵ This could signal a regression to a more Machiavellian or Hobbesian mean where the more visceral love of honor or glory trumps the tamer desires for wisdom or pleasure.⁶ Such an abandonment of modern liberalism would signal a radical revision of international

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politics and may even precipitate a breakup of the Westphalian state system.\textsuperscript{7} While unlikely, such an event is worthy of additional study because of the potential to produce strong cultural shockwaves and a return to the honor loving warrior cultures of a bygone era.\textsuperscript{8}

\textcolor{red}{6.3.3 Why Would Leaders Start Wars in the First Place?}

One question that kept reoccurring during this research was—why would leaders ever start wars (or even accept leadership positions) if their primary concern was personal security? One possible explanation is that for whatever reason leaders are bad at making strategic calculations. As noted in the introductory chapter, strategic calculation is a complex undertaking with numerous information problems. While leaders should only choose to fight wars where the expected value of fighting outweighs the expected costs of not fighting, both sides are strongly incentivized to misrepresent their positions. This uncertain and hostile environment provides leaders numerous opportunities to miscalculate and to start wars even if their intentions are benign. If

\textsuperscript{7} For an interesting prediction along these lines, see: Van Creveld, Martin L. The Transformation of War: The Most Radical Reinterpretation of Armed Conflict since Clausewitz New York: The Free Press, 1991.

\textsuperscript{8} This desire to return to the honor loving days of the past is expressed by Shakespeare’s Horatio in the play \textit{Hamlet} as, “I am more an antique Roman than a Dane!” Shakespeare, William. The Tragedy of \textit{Hamlet, Prince of Denmark}. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992. p. 283.
leaders misjudge their prospects for victory, they may not realize their errors until after the audit of combat has determined the likely winner of the conflict. Once leaders realize their mistakes, they may return to their typical security seeking behaviors, but this may be too late to avoid the consequences of their misjudgments.

Psychology provides another potential explanation for this apparent disconnect. Although there is a growing literature on the motivations of soldiers in battle, few serious attempts have been made to assess leaders’ motivations for starting wars. The most prominent recent work on this question, *War and Human Nature* by Stephen Peter Rosen provides an excellent first cut at this problem. This work proposes several physiological and psychological factors such as testosterone and mental illness which may cause leaders to act more aggressively than normal, but, by Rosen’s own admission, this work is designed to, “show how work done in the neurosciences over the last twenty-five years can help us better understand how people make decisions about war and peace…”[and is] the beginning, not the end, of serious discussion of the

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biological dimensions of human international political behavior.” While such biological explanations are potentially fruitful, it would appear that significantly more research is needed to answer these questions with any degree of scientific certainty.

### 6.4 A Final Thought

There is a bumper sticker that I have seen on various college campuses for the past decade or so which reads: “Well-behaved women seldom make history!” True enough, but it would appear that the dynamic highlighted by this slogan is not limited to women. Indeed, history appears as a series of broad evolutionary trends punctuated by unanticipated and disruptive breaks with broader historical patterns. When viewed in such a manner, it is only logical that history makers are people who do not adhere to international, domestic, or cultural rules. Much like earthquakes, the leaders that drive events in unanticipated directions are exceedingly atypical, but this rarity should not discourage scholars from studying their impact. Hopefully, this work has made some progress in that direction by proposing a model for explaining how fear and insecurity may motivate individuals to break with expectations and make history.

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