

Title: When conviction trumps domestic politics: Tony Blair and the Second Lebanon War

Author details

Dr. Toby Greene

Israel Institute Post-Doctoral Fellow

Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Mt. Scopus

Jerusalem

9195051

Israel

Email for correspondence: toby@tobygreene.net

Abstract

It has been argued that domestic political survival is key to political decision making, including in foreign policy. Poliheuristic decision theory claims that “Politicians will not shoot themselves in the foot by selecting alternatives that are likely to have a negative effect on them politically.” How then does one explain a foreign policy decision which causes grievous harm to the political position of the decision maker? The paper reviews existing research on personality and environmental factors which may reduce the significance of domestic political constraints on foreign policy decisions. It then examines Blair's response to the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict, in which his support for Israel triggered a backbench revolt forcing him to announce he would step down within 12 months. The account demonstrates that Blair was aware of the potential political costs of his position, but stuck to it regardless. By seeking to explain why this case diverges from theoretical expectations, the paper generates new hypotheses about how personality and environmental factors may lead to leadership convictions, and not domestic political survival, being the ‘essence of decision’.

When conviction trumps domestic politics: Tony Blair and the Second Lebanon War

Introduction

Given the primacy of domestic politics as a constraint in theories of foreign policy decision making, how does one account for foreign policy decisions in which the decision maker knowingly causes grievous harm to their domestic political position?

A strong strain of political decision making theory holds that considerations of domestic political survival are “the essence of politics.” In the words of Bueno de Mesquita et al., political survival motivates “the selection of policies and the allocation of benefits,” as well as “the selection of political institutions and the objectives of foreign policy” (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, 8–9).

Among studies of foreign policy decision making, Poliheuristic Decision Theory (PDT) has been described as “One of the most significant, fruitful, and cumulative empirical research programs” (Stern 2004). The theory models a two stage decision process. The decision maker first eliminates options that will cause unacceptable domestic political cost, before evaluating remaining options considering all other criteria. As summarized by Mintz and DeRouen, “Although international factors are important, domestic politics is the ‘essence of decision’” (Mintz and DeRouen Jr 2010, 78), and “Politicians will not shoot themselves in the foot by selecting alternatives that are likely to have a negative effect on them politically” (Mintz and DeRouen Jr 2010, 85).

Yet the emphasis on domestic politics as a constraint faces challenges explaining leaders who pursued policies in the face of perilous political opposition (Stern 2004, 100). Such cases raise the question of whether there are generalizable patterns which can explain the conditions under which leaders may act according to their convictions, regardless of political risks?

Tony Blair’s response to the Second Lebanon War is an illuminating case study. In the face of rising domestic and international outcry at Israel’s actions, Blair gave Israel diplomatic cover, in particular by refusing to condemn Israel’s actions as disproportionate or to call for an immediate ceasefire. This episode triggered a backbench revolt forcing Blair to announce he would leave office within 12 months. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Blair shot himself in the foot, contrary to what PDT would predict. What can we learn, therefore, from a case which appears to deviate from the theory?

The value of this case is enhanced because of the rich, first-hand descriptions from Blair's aides and his own memoirs, that demonstrate that Blair was not unaware of his political isolation. Nor did he calculate that the audience costs (Fearon 1994. Tomz 2007) of backing down outweighed the damage done by the unpopularity of his position. The evidence suggests Blair knowingly accepted political loss, because he considered following his convictions more important than his domestic political position, and even embraced public opprobrium as an affirmation of his self-regard as a principled leader.

As Opperman (2014, 23) notes, it is important to identify conditions under which the PDT holds "more or less analytic promise". Doing so may help with its application, and perhaps with its refinement. As a hypothesis generating case study (Levy 2008), this paper assesses why this case diverges from theoretical expectations. The primary goal is not to explain Blair's actions, but to use a close analysis of his actions to generate new hypotheses about factors which reduce the significance of domestic political loss in foreign policy decision making, which can then be tested in future studies.

First, the paper will review relevant theoretical perspectives on domestic politics in foreign policy decisions, with a focus on Poliheuristic theory, and on factors which reduce the constraint of domestic politics, relating both to leadership personality and beliefs, and the political environment. Second, the paper will present a detailed account of Blair's response to the Second Lebanon War. Third, the paper will analyze why this case deviates from theoretical expectations, considering factors relating to personality and the political environment. The paper will conclude with new hypothesis drawn from the analysis, highlighting variables to be tested in future research.

Part 1: Theory

Whereas dominant structural approaches to international relations treat states as the principal unit of analysis, Foreign Policy Analysis looks at how processes within the state shape foreign policy outcomes (Hill 2003, 10). Whether these levels of analysis belong in separate silos or can be integrated is contested (Walker 2011; Waltz 1996). This study works on the basis that whilst the international environment defines the playing field for decision makers, domestic political factors can still play a significant role.

Many domestic factors may shape policy, such as the regime type, political culture, and bureaucratic political factors (Hudson 2005). The focus in this paper is the personal and political reality of the decision maker or makers in their political context. Snyder, Bruck and

Sapin (1962) helped to establish the terms of this research focus, and many aspects of foreign policy decision making have been studied. The behavioral approach in International Relations challenges realist assumptions that decision makers are rational actors, by applying cognitive approaches which uncover the role of biases, emotions, and misperceptions, as well as political interests (Walker 2011, 23; Mintz 2007).

Poliheuristic theory proposes a two stage decision process. First the individual or group uses a heuristic – or cognitive shortcut – to narrow the decision to a more manageable set of options, by eliminating alternatives that are unacceptable on the dimension of domestic costs. This calculation is noncompensatory, meaning regardless of the expected utility to be derived on another dimension of a decision, such as economy or international alliances, if the option does not satisfice – meaning meet a critical threshold – regarding avoidance of domestic political loss, it will likely be dismissed. Relevant types of political loss include: threat to a leader’s survival, significant drop in popularity, intraparty rivalry and competition and threat to political power, dignity, honor, or legitimacy of the leader (Mintz 2004). In the second stage the decision maker or makers select an option based on maximizing benefits and minimizing risks across all other criteria, in line with the rational actor model.

This approach has several strengths. First, it integrates two different approaches to decision making. Rational choice dominates in the second stage of Poliheuristic theory, whilst the cognitive approach dominates in the first stage. Second, it integrates two levels of analysis, the domestic political level, applicable in the first stage, and the international level in the second stage. Third, the theory synthesizes a range of scholarship with varying approaches in a manner that is parsimonious and intuitively sound. Finally, the theory has been supported by numerous case studies (Mintz 2004).

However, it has gaps, acknowledged by its proponents, including the need to “identify ... the cutoff point for when the noncompensatory (avoid major loss) principle applies” (Mintz 2004, 10). It also faces criticism that domestic politics is over-emphasized, in the face of historical examples where “policy makers do indeed sometimes embark on foreign policy projects in the face of heavy (even preponderant) political opposition” (Stern 2004, 110). Indeed, the notion that domestic politics is the essence of foreign policy decision diverges from classical realist theory, which expects a statesman to apply reason to the national interest, ignoring the unreliable considerations of the “popular mind” (Morgenthau 1973, 153). It presents an even

sharper contrast to the assumptions of structural realism, which identifies the international system as the key determinant of international politics (Waltz 1979, 67).

A further challenge is that calculating political loss is often not straightforward, and different measures of loss may be in tension. Literature relating to audience costs (Fearon 1994) has identified the cost of backing down to a leadership's domestic credibility as a significant political factor that can influence decision making. Experimental research by Tomz supports the notion that domestic political audiences disapprove of leaders taking a position and then backing down from it, because they value their country's international reputation for honesty (Tomz 2007). One could imagine a leader facing a dilemma when pursuing a controversial policy: bowing to domestic opposition may alleviate an immediate political crisis, but repeated policy U-turns may earn the leader domestic disapproval for failing to stick to their word, and erode leadership authority over time. Whilst such a possibility is important for considering how a leader may calculate political loss in the first stage of a foreign policy decision, the focus of this paper is the possibility of a leader who does not make avoidance of political loss the top priority, but rather their personal convictions.

In exploring this possibility, we can draw on insights from psychobiographic literature identifying patterns of "rigidification" related to certain personalities, whereby leaders adhere to policies in the face of mounting political costs. A personality study on Woodrow Wilson by George and George, pioneered the application of psychological insights to political events. Wilson's inflexibility in seeking Senate ratification for the League of Nations – a factor which undermined the policy and Wilson's political and personal welfare – is given a psychoanalytic analysis as expressing a compulsive tendency, rooted in a quest for power sought as "a means of restoring the self-esteem damaged in childhood" (George and George 1964, 320).

Barber's comparative analysis of US Presidents from Wilson to Reagan builds on the premise that an individual assumes the office with a package of character, as well as world view and style traits, which will in part shape their tenure (Barber 1985). Though the validity of Barber's typology has been challenged (George and George 1998, 160), it is significant that he highlights the pattern of rigidification related to certain character types, citing as cases –Wilson and the League; Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression; and Lyndon Johnson with Vietnam. In these cases, "the President defeated both his own purposes and the nation's purposes by adhering rigidly to a line of policy long after it had proved itself a failure" (Barber 1985, 34). Barber explains these actions not simply as rooted in intellectual miscalculations but in

emotional experience of the leader, whereby they associate deeply with their policy and felt that changing course would be sacrificing their integrity: a personal price too high to pay. More recently, Renshon has used psychoanalytic tools to analyze Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush. Renshon's analysis is valuable in identifying the importance of an individual's perception of their own leadership, and what is "the basis for his own self-validation" (Renshon and Larson 2003, 287) in addressing priorities and constraints.

Keller has drawn on this and other research to develop a theoretical framework for explaining rigidification. For Keller, a leader whose primary source of self-validation is internal, meaning driven by adherence to ideology or mission (as opposed to external, meaning driven by desire for approval), "will adhere rigidly to those policy options they perceive are necessary, in a given policy context, to uphold those principles/accomplish that mission" (Keller 2009, 469).

Accordingly, Keller points out with respect to PDT that "assuming a two-stage noncompensatory model is accurate, the political dimension is not always the all-important screening dimension employed during the first stage of the process." (495). For an internally-validated leader, sometimes political loss may be less of a priority than "psychic loss", meaning the loss of self-esteem which comes from abandoning a principle.

As well as psychobiographic literature, Keller's analysis builds on the research program into leadership led by Margaret Hermann, which differentiates leadership styles according to three dimensions: the extent to which they respect or challenge constraints; are selective or open in handling incoming information; and are motivated by an internal drive towards a specific goal, which may be an ideology or cause, or by a desired relational state with others, such as power or acclaim (Hermann 2001). Using Leadership Trait Analysis, a language analysis method for assessing leadership style, Hermann has identified that, "Political leaders who are high in their belief that they can control what happens and in the need for power have been found to challenge the constraints in their environments, to push the limits of what is possible." (Hermann 2005, 187).

Keller and Yang have tested the relationship between constrain challenging leadership style and policy selection experimentally, presenting students with a fictional policy dilemma, whilst also assessing their leadership style. 'Constraint challengers' proved more likely to select unpopular policies. They conclude that "certain leadership traits and situational variables affect the noncompensatory threshold at which leaders reject policy options as politically

unacceptable” and call for treating this threshold as “a variable, shaped by leadership style and features of the international and domestic context” (Keller and Yang 2008, 707).

A leader’s interaction with domestic political constraints is a function not only of their source of self-validation and leadership style, but also of the closely related factor of their beliefs. Beliefs – or how the individual subjectively represents reality (Walker and Schafer 2006, 4) – shape not only how the decision maker responds to the international policy challenge, but how they respond to the domestic political management problem which the policy options may present. An influential concept about the role of beliefs in international relations is operational codes, which are categories of “philosophical” beliefs about the nature of politics and political conflict and “instrumental” beliefs about “ends-means relationships in the context of political action” (George 1969, 199).

Walker and Schafer, whose content analysis methodology categorizes leaders according to philosophical and instrumental beliefs, assert that beliefs can “steer the decisions of leaders by shaping the leaders’ perceptions of reality, acting as mechanisms of cognitive and motivated bias that distort, block, and recast incoming information from the environment.” The significance of individual beliefs or personality traits is greater in new or unfamiliar situations (Walker and Schafer 2006, 565).

These research programs show that individual beliefs about the nature of world politics can be significant variables. Other relevant research shows the significance of variations in beliefs about domestic politics. Foyle’s analysis of US presidents from Truman to Clinton found that, “the differing influence of public opinion is mediated largely through a president’s beliefs about the proper influence that public opinion should have on foreign policymaking” (Foyle 1999, 2). Whilst some presidents regarded public support as necessary and desirable, others regarded it as neither (Foyle 1999, 14). Not only can a leader’s personality lower their sensitivity to domestic opposition, but it can make them more likely to try and shape, rather than follow, the public mood. Farnham has described strategies leaders can deploy to increase the acceptability of their foreign policy preferences, arguing that the decision maker is “captive to neither international pressure nor domestic forces” (Farnham 2004, 459; Russett 1990).

Of course the role of public opinion in foreign policy is changing as new technologies have transformed news production and consumption. Rolling 24 hour news (Gilboa 2005), and now internet news and social media (Shirky 2011), have increased real time public awareness of events and elite exposure and sensitivity to public opinion. We can only speculate as to whether

the events in this case study would have been different had Facebook and Twitter been significant barometers and mobilizers of opinion in 2006.

It is not only general beliefs about the nature of politics, means-ends relationships, or the proper relationship between public opinion and foreign policy which might influence the individual decision maker, but also the content of general ideas “on the nature of the social and physical environment that constitutes the policymaker’s field of action.” (Vertzberger 1990, 114). As Goldstein and Keohane describe, “Ideas have their broadest impact on human action when they take the form of world views,” which are broad ideas about the world encompassing not only ethics but cosmology and ontology (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 8). Variations in world views underpin variations in interpreting situations, such as the nature of an external threat and how to combat it. If the world view of the decision maker diverges from their political constituency, they may find themselves forced to choose between their own convictions, and their domestic political standing.

The notion of conviction is significant here. Max Weber’s concept of the ‘ethics of conviction’ in politics, refers to where “an agent seeks to live in complete consistency with her or her ultimate values” (Breiner 1996, 171). I use the term ‘conviction’ to refer to opinions or beliefs that are held strongly, to the point of forming part of the individual’s identity and self-perception, and determining their judgements about the right thing to do. An individual’s convictions are not easily dislodged, and a challenge to their convictions represents a challenge to their identity and self-perception. The more central a belief is for the individual, the more resistant they will be to change it (Vertzberger 1990, 118), and the stronger will be the tendency to evaluate incoming information according to existing perceptions (Jervis 1976, 143).

A leader may therefore respond to an international situation based on their own interpretation, rooted in pre-existing beliefs, frameworks, or stereotypes, which may not be shared by their colleagues or the public. This may be more likely in the case of a leader with more experience, who believes they know best, or who has already developed and publicly committed to a world view which they are unwilling to lose face by departing from.

Perceptual biases may not only affect an individual’s interpretation of an international situation, but also their domestic political standing. A general tendency has been observed among leaders to overestimate their own ability to control events (Jervis 1976; Vertzberger 1990), and there are myriad cases of leaders making fatal miscalculations that lead to them being ejected from power.

According to Weber's well known analysis of 'charismatic leadership', the ability to perform extraordinary feats is closely associated with charismatic based authority (Adair-Totef 2005). Yet those same successes may sometimes hold within the seeds of failure. Richard Ned Lebow has explored how the ancient Greek concept of Hubris can illuminate international affairs. Hubris is a result of success which "breeds overconfidence in one's own judgment and ability to control events" (Lebow 2003, 365–66).

The concept of Hubris as a factor in political psychology has been developed by former British Foreign Secretary and physician David Owen, who considers it widespread in leaders (Owen 2006; 2008). Owen and Davidson (2009) have even proposed framing Hubris as a "disorder of the possession of power, particularly power which has been associated with overwhelming success, held for a period of years and with minimal constraint on the leader." (Owen and Davidson 2009, 1397). Many 'symptoms' identified overlap with narcissistic personality disorder, but with distinctive elements that relate holding high national office.

Whether psychiatric terms are appropriate for assessing Hubris as a political factor are disputed (Wessely 2006; MacSuibhne 2009; Russell 2011) but the observation of patterns whereby powerful political office holders show impaired judgement as result of holding power is significant. The possibility for a decision maker to experience distorted judgement about the domestic political environment further problematizes assumptions about the primacy of domestic politics in foreign policy. Making the maintenance of power key to theories of political decisions not only assumes that that the decision maker prioritizes their political position, but that they are reliable judges of their proximity to the edge of a political cliff. However, Hubris syndrome suggest that the characteristics that propel an individual to seek office, may make them more prone to the hubristic traits that will dispose them of it, as will the very act of holding power over time. Owen and Davidson suggest variables that appear to increase the risk of acquiring Hubris syndrome, including repeated election victories, and observe that "hubris seems to manifest itself most in areas of policy where the leader feels they have their greatest expertise" (Owen and Davidson 2009, 1402).

So far we have seen evidence of how the decision maker's personality, beliefs and style may shape their attitude to domestic political loss, but so too can the political environment, including the electoral cycle. Analyses of second term US presidential foreign policy tend to emphasize the 'lame-duck' effect of a president's declining power as he heads towards the exit. (Quandt 1986; Rosati and Scott 2013, 71). But as Stern notes, "A 'lame duck' President may

perceive himself to have been liberated from domestic political constraints.” (Stern 2004, 111). No longer needing to preserve electoral popularity or satisfy specific domestic constituencies may make a president less risk averse (Dunn 2006, 105), as may the desire to secure a legacy. Domestic political considerations cannot be entirely dismissed by a second term president, since they will not want to hamper their party’s candidates with unpopular policies, and they will be keen to finish with high personal approval. Nonetheless, there are numerous examples suggesting reduced aversion to risk in certain foreign policy decisions for second term presidents (Nincic, Wittkopf, and McCormick 2004, 124). These examples suggest that whilst in some respects a president nearing their end of their term may be a lame duck, in other respects the description ‘free bird’ may be apt.

To summarize, this discussion highlights research on factors relating to the individual decision maker which qualify the proposition that domestic politics is the essence of foreign policy decision. These factors include the personality of the leader, which may be prone to rigidification under certain conditions; a leadership style orientated to challenge constraints; their operational code, which may lead them to a strong belief in their own ability to control historical development; their beliefs about the proper role of public opinion in foreign policy; the content and depth of their world view and convictions; their perception or misperception of both the international and domestic environments; and, as an elaboration on the last point, the possibility that the very act of holding office may lead to hubris which can shape approaches to policy dilemmas. Also noted is the significance of variations in the political environment, such as nearing the end of a fixed term, which may reduce sensitivity to domestic politics.

Part 2: Blair and the Second Lebanon War

Tony Blair has proven an interesting case study for foreign policy decision making (Dyson 2006; Schafer and Walker 2006; Oppermann 2014; Malley and O’Malley 2007; Holland 2012; Hayes 2016; Malici 2011). Whilst in theory the Cabinet is the executive in the British system, in practice Blair was a dominant leader, especially on foreign policy, and Blair took several politically contentious foreign policy decisions. The clear association of Blair with distinct policy positions has made him an apt focus for at a distance leadership trait and operational code analysis.

The episode analyzed here makes for a particularly worthy case study for investigating the limits of the noncompensatory view of domestic politics, and the potential for personal conviction to play a role, for several reasons. First is the clear gap between the leader’s actions

and his domestic political interests, which was apparent at the time, both to the protagonist and his aides, and which ultimately proved politically fatal. Second is the apparent absence of significant pressure or coercion on the decision maker at the international level which could explain their disregard for domestic political loss. Finally, the case is rich in detail thanks to the wealth of accounts from aides and most remarkably, Blair's memoir, which includes an unusual, psychological self-portrait of the very moment in question.

When conflict broke out between Israel and Hezbollah in July 2006 Tony Blair had just entered his tenth year as Prime Minister. He did not intend for it to be his last. He was elected in 1997 with identifiable ideological inclinations, including a strong moral absolutism rooted in Christian faith, an activist approach to social problems, combined with a political pragmatism which rejected traditional polarities and dogmas (Rentoul 2001). Blair and his coterie of New Labour modernizers consciously rejected the politics of the Labour left, including their attitudes to international affairs (Gould 1999). Whereas the Labour left was suspicious of America's global role and the process of globalization, New Labour was proudly Atlanticist and neoliberal.

The conscious jettisoning of left-wing policies included a warmer attitude to Israel. The left of the party typically identified Palestinian nationalism as an anti-colonial struggle against an Israeli colonial power backed by American neo-imperialism. By contrast, Blair saw Israel as a democracy in a region of autocracies which should be defended, and which would make peace if there was a viable Palestinian partner (Greene 2013, 35–50).

Blair's first term saw him establish his credentials on the world stage, most notably through his role in brokering the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, and in mobilizing NATO to stop Serbia's ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians in 1999. It also saw him adopt a presidential style, with a centralization of decision making, including in foreign policy (Hennessy 2001; Hollis 2009; Foley 2000).

The challenge that defined his second and third terms was Jihadist violence targeting the West. The impact of 9/11 was transformative. It did not change Blair's basic beliefs, which were already well formed, but it focused Blair on the specific challenges emerging from the Islamic world. As the threat of Jihadist violence leaped to the top of the agenda it drew a range of interpretations on the British left and in the Labour party as to its causes and how to respond (Greene 2013). With increasing intensity from 9/11 onwards, Blair articulated a view of radical Islam as an implacable anti-Western ideology that had to be confronted, and depicted the

Middle East as caught in a struggle between moderates and extremists. Islamist extremists, Blair argued, had not attacked the West due to justified political grievances, as many on the Labour left believed, but rather to provoke a confrontation that would win Muslims over to their cause.

Blair articulated this position with increased fervor after the London bombings of July 2005 (Blair 2007). Blair put a heavy emphasis on the need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not because Western support for Israel was a source of justified Islamic grievance, but in order to remove a tool used by extremists to rally Muslims to their anti-Western agenda. Blair did not blame Israel primarily for the conflict, and believed that Palestinian reform was vital to establish a credible partner for peace. He supported building up the secular nationalist Fatah, which favored a two state solution, and isolating the Islamist Hamas. Blair was less inclined to publically criticize Israel over its military operations in the Occupied Territories during the Second Intifada than European counterparts. He also supported Ariel Sharon's unilateral Gaza disengagement plan, which came in return for US recognition of the West Bank settlement blocks, triggering a public letter of consternation from 52 retired senior British diplomats (Greene 2013, 141).

Blair's close alignment with Bush administration and his decision to participate in the Iraq War, but also his supportive attitude to Israel, divided Labour MPs. Around one third opposed the Iraq war in a House of Commons vote in March 2003. Whilst polling suggests a majority of the British public supported the war initially (Worcester 2003), Blair nonetheless faced enormous public opposition, including some of the largest demonstrations in British history.

Aside from this analysis of Blair's ideology, what we can say about his personality traits and operational codes? A Leadership Trait Analysis of Blair in the run up to the Iraq War found that he demonstrated a "high belief in his ability to control events, a low conceptual complexity, and a high need for power," and that he had a disposition to "challenge constraints" (Dyson 2007). Blair's operation code has been analyzed based on speeches made in his first term (1997-2001), in comparison to Bill Clinton. The analysis found that "Blair is less cooperative, both strategically and tactically [towards non-democracies], than Clinton ... having a propensity to use more threats," (Schafer and Walker 2006, 575) and found that this difference was "consistent with Blair's significantly stronger belief in his ability to control historical development." (Schafer and Walker 2006, 585). Meanwhile, Owen and Davidson's at a distance psychiatric analysis of Blair concludes that he began to develop a hubris syndrome

during his first term in office and that this continued thereafter (Owen and Davidson 2009, 1402).

Despite a collapse in support for the Iraq War and Blair's personal popularity after the invasion, Blair still won the 2005 election comfortably. Yet he did so with a commitment not to seek a fourth term. Going into the summer of 2006, Blair was somewhat beleaguered. Satisfaction with his personal performance hovered around 30 per cent (Ipsos MORI 2006). He faced considerable opposition within his own party to education reforms. With British troops still deployed in considerable numbers in Afghanistan and Iraq, dissent against his foreign policy remained high, especially in the Labour party, and for his harshest critics, the London bombings of 7 July 2005 were a result of his policy in the 'War on Terror' (Pilger 2005).

Labour was riven with infighting between loyalists of Blair, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, assumed by most to be his successor. The timetable for transition was the subject of much speculation, with Brown's supporters agitating for a swift handover, and Blair and his supporters keen for him to delay (Rawnsley 2010). Few would have predicted that events on the Israeli-Lebanese border would play a significant role in this struggle.

On 12 July, the powerful Iranian and Syrian backed Shia-Lebanese militia Hezbollah, launched a carefully planned incursion into Israel, ambushing an IDF patrol under the cover of rocket fire and killing four soldiers and capturing two, with four more killed when their tank sent in pursuit was blown up (Harel and Issacharoff 2008, 2). This was the latest in a series of border provocations and prompted Israel to abandon its policy of restraint and order a major response (Freilich 2012, 203). Israel targeted Hezbollah's long-range rockets dug into Shia villages in the border area and transport infrastructure used by Hezbollah, including runways at Beirut airport. The fighting escalated as Hezbollah responded by firing hundreds of rockets at Israeli population centers across northern Israel including the port of Haifa, and Israel targeted the Hezbollah headquarters in the Dahia quarter of Beirut with heavy bombing.

At a UN Security Council debate on 14 July, France and Russia criticized Israel's actions as disproportionate. By contrast the UK, along with the US, withheld direct criticism, with the British calling for Israeli restraint. Blair told a press conference that day that, "this situation isn't going to be resolved by whatever we say as international leaders, it will only be resolved by what we do" (Blair and Harper 2006). World leaders at a G8 summit in Russia issued a joint statement on 16 July with British officials, along with French, Americans and Russians, taking a central role. Blair participated in negotiating the final text, in particular the suggestion of an

“international security/monitoring presence” to oversee the disarming of militias and resisting demands for an unconditional ceasefire (Seldon, Snowdon, and Collings 2007; G8 2006). It was also at this summit that Blair was embarrassingly caught on microphone offering to George Bush to visit the region to prepare the ground for US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The informal and seemingly dismissive way Bush greeted Blair, with, “Yo Blair”, whilst chewing on a roll, fueled British media characterizations of Blair as Bush’s poodle (Rawnsley 2006). However, the exchange showed that Blair was not being dragged unwillingly by Bush, but shared his outlook and sought to insert himself into the issue. In addition to the relatively Israel-sympathetic tone from the G8, many Arab leaders privately blamed Hezbollah, and hoped to see a setback for their Iranian patrons (Stourton 2007).

Israel’s key decision makers, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Amir Peretz, and Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, were emboldened. On 17 July, in an uncompromising Knesset speech, Olmert declared expansive goals including: “The return of the hostages . . . , A complete cease fire; Deployment of the Lebanese army in all of Southern Lebanon; Expulsion of Hezbollah from the area, and fulfilment of United Nations Resolution 1559 [calling for the disarmament of all militias and the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory].” (Olmert 2006)

Yet the Israeli government failed to back these goals with a major ground operation, and declined to call up significant reserves. It sufficed with airstrikes and limited incursions to inflict painful damage on Hezbollah. Hezbollah and its commander Hassan Nasrallah proved resilient, and continued to fire around 100 rockets a day at Israeli population centers. This set the stage for weeks of conflict, with Israel unable to deliver a knockout blow. Israel’s underprepared ground forces killed many Hezbollah fighters, but suffered losses themselves. Meanwhile after successfully destroying pre-determined targets, Israel’s air force struggled to pinpoint short range rockets in civilian areas, and its efforts resulted in increasing Lebanese civilian fatalities (Harel and Issacharoff 2008, 161).

Blair was accused with the Americans, of trying to create more time for Israel to deal a fatal blow. The testimony of his aides, colleagues and other international actors, suggest Blair was influenced by a combination of considerations. At the strategic level, Blair framed the conflict in Manichean terms as part of a regional struggle between extremists and moderates. He also drew a link between Hezbollah and the extremists targeting British forces in Iraq, some of

whom were also armed and funded by Iran, as part of a single struggle for the fate of the region. Blair told the House of Commons on 18 July:

All over the Middle East there are those who want to modernize their nations, who believe as we do in democracy and liberty and tolerance. But ranged against them are extremists who believe the opposite, who believe in fundamentalist states and war not against Israel's actions but against its existence. In virtually every country of the region, including on the streets of Baghdad, such a struggle is being played out (Blair 2006a).

This geostrategic assessment, based on Blair's hardened world view, shaped his assessment of Britain's and the West's interests. He did not want a restoration of the status quo, but to change it by inserting an international force. Condoleezza Rice recalled that Blair felt, "you couldn't let Hezbollah benefit from what they had done," and that Blair, "wasn't prepared to sacrifice the quality of the ceasefire for the speed" (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 467). The French, Americans and British were also concerned to strengthen the hand of anti-Syria and anti-Iran factions within Lebanon against the pro-Iranian and pro-Syrian Hezbollah. In essence, Blair shared the view of the Bush administration – and privately that of Arab states including Saudi Arabia – which was, in the words of then-US Deputy National Security Advisor Elliot Abrams, "that Hezbollah had to lose" (Abrams 2013, 180). Demanding an unconditional ceasefire was therefore unacceptable, since this would leave Hezbollah victorious, having withstood Israel's onslaught, and with two captives in hand.

At the same time, Blair was influenced by pragmatic considerations. According to his aides, he sought to avoid a policy gap between himself and Bush, and with the Israelis, believing that support in maintaining his support in public would preserve his ability to influence in private. (Seldon, Snowden and Collings, 471-2). According to his chief of staff Jonathan Powell, Blair's view was:

If you adopt a declaratory policy and start calling for things that you know are going to be ineffective but are going to make you feel better you will give up your ability to change things and that's a mistake... He opted for, 'I'll bear the political pain of not calling for a ceasefire in order to be able to influence events on the ground and stop the fighting.' (Powell, 2009)

Privately both Blair's office and the Foreign Office did pressure Israel over mounting Lebanese casualties (Rawnsley 2010, 382). Blair spoke regularly with Olmert during the conflict (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 472; Harel and Issacharoff 2008, 184). Meanwhile, Foreign

Office ministers called in the Israeli ambassador to question him over targeting and to stress that it made the public backing that the UK was giving to Israel difficult (Greene 2013, 191).

Diplomatically, however, Blair provided cover. His foreign secretary Margaret Beckett loyally withstood international pressure in representing Blair's position at a foreign ministers conference in Rome on 26 July. Beckett was alone in backing US Secretary of State Rice's rejection of calls for an immediate ceasefire. (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 472).

As Lebanese civilian casualties mounted amidst intensive media coverage, Blair's refusal to demand an immediate ceasefire or condemn Israel's actions as disproportionate garnered an escalating domestic political outcry. His position left him, "as isolated internationally as he had been on Iraq, and more isolated at home than on any other issue of his premiership", (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 471). Even among Blair's trusted advisers, few agreed with the substance of his policy. David Manning, formerly Blair's chief foreign policy advisor and then Britain's ambassador to Washington, used a flight to the US to try and change Blair's mind (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 475). Manning believed, "He should have called for a ceasefire. Because I don't think you have any moral authority at all if you don't; you may have grave doubts about the ceasefire and you may not think it's going to work but you are in an odd position internationally if you don't" (Manning, 2008).

Manning highlighted the weakness of Britain's position, since it was unable to contribute to the proposed international force (Rawnsley 2010, 384). Having nothing tangible to offer, Blair had little leverage over either side. Former foreign secretary Jack Straw told Blair privately he was making a fundamental mistake, and broke ranks by publicly describing Israel's actions as "disproportionate" (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 473). Even shadow foreign secretary William Hague, speaking for an opposition Conservative party generally more sympathetic to Israel, said, "elements of the Israeli response are disproportionate" (Hague 2006).

Cabinet minister David Miliband warned of the damage to Labour's national standing during cabinet on 27 July (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 473). Labour backbenchers were calling and writing Blair to express their opposition. Keith Hill, Blair's parliamentary private secretary, concurred that "his refusal to come out with a condemnation of Israel hyped up lot of people, angered MPs across the board" (Rawnsley 2010). His former senior political aide Sally Morgan recalled phoning Blair and telling him flatly, "This will do for you" (Rawnsley 2010, 383).

Public opinion was against Blair. A YouGov poll conducted 24-26 July found 64 per cent agreed that “Tony Blair in the current crisis gives the impression of siding with the Americans, whatever the Americans say,” with just 15 per cent agreeing that he gave the impression of “taking his own line” (YouGov 2006). An Ipsos MORI poll conducted the same week measured Blair’s approval ratings at their lowest ever levels, with 23 per cent satisfied with his performance (Ipsos MORI 2006). The arguments Blair used to win support for the Iraq War – that this was a security issue for Britain related to WMD (Hayes 2016), or that the UK should stand shoulder to shoulder with the US (Dunne 2004) – had no relevance in this context. The public increasingly believed that Blair’s position made Britain less safe by making it more likely it would be targeted by extremists (Riddell 2006).

While we must be cautious about building too much on these public opinion surveys they suggest that for a majority, the overriding concern – or noncompensatory factor – related to the UK’s own security. Blair faced an uphill struggle to persuade others that boosting the motivation of global jihadists to launch attacks on the streets of Britain was an acceptable risk in return for a largely rhetorical position designed to help prevent radical Islamic forces achieving a strategic victory in the Middle East.

Public outrage at Israel escalated after an airstrike on a residential building in Qana on 30 July resulted in 28 civilian deaths including 17 children, with the carnage broadcast around the world. Blair, who was visiting the United States, shifted tone, calling for “an urgent cessation of hostilities” and “maximum restraint”, but conspicuously continued to avoid demanding an immediate ceasefire (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 476).

Blair’s backing for the American position, and his participation in the diplomatic wrangling, helped maintain a diplomatic environment in which the IDF could continue its operations (Heller 2007). But British support went further than rhetorical and diplomatic. The UK permitted American planes resupplying Israel to land at Prestwick airbase. It was a right denied to the United States during the 1973 Yom Kippur War and contrasted with the arms embargo imposed by Britain during the First Lebanon War in 1982.

A leaked United States embassy cable captures the extent of the pressure generated on the government by Blair’s position. It quoted then head of the Middle East and North Africa department at the Foreign Office, Peter Gooderham in a confidential meeting with a US embassy official on 10 August.

Gooderham reiterated the intense domestic pressure HMG [Her Majesty's Government] in general and PM Tony Blair in particular are under to resolve the crisis as soon as possible. The PM is determined to resist this pressure until a durable, lasting solution is in place. (*WikiLeaks* 2006)

Far from seeking to lower his profile, Blair delayed a family holiday to continue working on a UN Security Council resolution (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 477), and continued to work the phones even from his holiday, even though the American and French diplomats were leading the process in New York.

The damage to Blair's public standing was compounded when British police uncovered on August 9 a Jihadist plot to bomb transatlantic airlines. The revelation led to the immediate imposition of new airport security measures, whilst Blair was pictured on a holiday boat in the West Indies (Shipman and Greenhill 2006). It may also have contributed to the perception that Blair's policy had increased the risk to the UK. A Populus poll on 6 September, found that 73 per cent agreed "the British Government's foreign policy, especially its support for the invasion of Iraq and refusal to demand an immediate ceasefire by Israel in the recent war against Hezbollah in Lebanon, has significantly increased the risk of terrorist attacks on Britain" (Riddell 2006).

On August 10 a letter signed by one hundred Labour MPs demanded a recall of parliament (Mulholland and Agencies 2006). However, the immediate political pressure was eased slightly when a UN ceasefire resolution finally passed the following day. It mandated a beefed up international force to help Lebanese government forces deploy in place of Hezbollah and to prevent the group acquiring more arms.

Whilst the resolution led to a ceasefire, it did not end Blair's domestic crisis. MPs usually sympathetic to Blair's world view were deeply concerned about the damage to Labour's standing with the public and by Blair's apparent indifference to public opinion (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 483). Peter Hain, a cabinet member at the time, recalled, "Loyal colleagues who'd never voted against the government – many of them would have described themselves as Blairites – were expressing an unease that I'd never seen before." Sally Morgan agreed that it was then "that he lost the mainstream Labour MPs, the core people." (Rawnsley 2010, 385). Blair's Director of Strategic Communications, Ben Wegg-Prosser, believed that for many MPs, "Lebanon was the straw that broke the camel's back in turning them against Blair's leadership," (Seldon, Snowden, and Collings 2007, 483). In the view of then minister

James Purnell, “You could make a quite a good argument to say that without his support for the war in Lebanon he might have had an extra year of Ministerial [office] - he may or he may not - but the coup would not have happened without Lebanon” (Purnell 2007).

Dissent among Labour MPs was exacerbated by an interview Blair gave to the *Times* published on 1 September in which he again refused to name a date for his departure and called on people to “let me get on with the job” (Webster and Riddell 2006). This infuriated supporters of Gordon Brown (Rawnsley 2010, 390). Following the interview, a clique of usually loyal Labour MPs signed a public letter stating: “without an urgent change in leadership of the party it becomes less likely that we will win the next election” (Rawnsley 2010, 394). The letter was followed by the resignation of junior minister Tom Watson and seven parliamentary private secretaries.

Blair and his team fought for days to avoid giving a timetable for his departure, and to preserve maximum room for maneuver (Wintour 2013). But ultimately, in the face of a sustained campaign by Brown’s supporters and ceaseless media scrutiny, Blair capitulated, and announced he would stand down before the next Labour party conference in September 2007 (Seldon, Snowdon, and Collings 2007, 493).

Before leaving office Blair continued to insert himself into Middle East issues. At the Labour party conference a few weeks later he declared, “From now until I leave office I will dedicate myself, with the same commitment I have given to Northern Ireland, to advancing peace between Israel and Palestine” (Blair 2006c). In another speech in November, Blair articulated a “whole Middle East strategy”. In order to deal with the ongoing violence in Iraq, which was the UK’s core foreign policy concern with thousands of troops still deployed, Blair argued that other regional problems had to be addressed, starting with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, in support of a strategy to confront Iran and take away the sources of tension that they used to, “paint us, as they did over the Israel/Lebanon conflict, as the aggressors, inflame the Arab street and create political turmoil in our democratic politics” (Blair 2006b).

Blair visited the region twice before the end of the year but the scope for significant progress was limited, due to violence between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, and even more so due to Palestinian division between Fatah and Hamas. Meanwhile he continued to try and persuade the Bush administration that resolving the conflict was central to undermining extremism. Shortly before standing down, Blair accepted the job of Quartet envoy to coordinate

international support for the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, part of a strategy to marginalize Hamas (Seldon, Snowdon, and Collings 2007, 577).

Labour's Middle East policy after Blair's resignation demonstrated the extent to which Blair had defined policy in office. During a conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip in 2009 – which aroused international outcry comparable to the Second Lebanon War – the government branded Israel's actions as disproportionate (Miliband 2009). Then in March 2009, shortly before elections in Lebanon, Britain dropped its policy of non-contact with Hezbollah (Black 2009). These positions underlined the extent to which Blair's confrontationalist approach to Islamist groups had left office with him.

Part 3: Why does this case deviate?

The foregoing account is hard to square with PDT's noncompensatory principle based on domestic political loss. This section will seek to draw out the factors which apparently led Blair to set aside the potential for domestic political loss. In doing so, it is important to acknowledge the possibility that Blair did weigh the domestic political costs but did not fully appreciate the opposition his policy was garnering. Blair's chief speechwriter Phil Collins seems to support this account in his interpretation that: "He didn't think it through. It was a massive error. Those political antennae that usually worked so well – he just turned them off" (Rawnsley 2010, 383).

But according to the evidence presented in the foregoing account, Blair's trusted advisors told him clearly that his course of action was alienating not only the general public, but more crucially Labour MPs, concerned with the damage to their own re-election prospects. Ruth Turner, Blair's political secretary, whose job it was to convey political concerns in the Labour party to the Prime Minister, recalled, "He was completely aware of the extent and depth of their anger ... He just chose to do things they didn't like because he had different priorities." (Seldon, Snowdon, and Collings 2007, 473).

Given this evidence, the notion that Blair was simply not aware that he was harming his domestic position is difficult to sustain. Of course, Blair could not have known a backbench coup would follow the conflict, and we cannot know if he would have acted differently had he known. But Blair certainly knew that holding out against public opinion on a conflict being covered intensively in the international media was accumulating significant political loss with the general public, and more crucially, with Labour MPs.

Though Blair's own memoirs, published four years after the events, must of course be read with a critical eye, they support this finding. Blair wrote, "At points I had wondered why I

didn't just cave in and condemn Israel and for them to stop unilaterally. The Israelis would have understood it, and it would have been the proverbial safety valve for the fierce political criticism." Blair's own explanation was:

If I had condemned Israel, it would have been more than dishonest; it would have undermined the world view I had come to hold passionately. So I didn't, but I could feel the PLP [Parliamentary Labour Party] move more or less en masse to a querulous position ... But I had my determination to comfort me, and by and large it did (which is, I suppose what always happened to leaders when the final hubris overwhelms them). (Blair 2010, 600)

He then describes the problem for his standing with the PLP, which was that "They thought my reaction indicated a profound loss of touch, a failure of instinct, a decoupling of me and public opinion that they thought dangerous, and more than that, out of character." Blair's response was that he recognized the public mood was against him, but he was committed to doing what he thought was right. He wrote:

It wasn't that I didn't get public opinion on Lebanon, nor that I couldn't have articulated it. My difficulty was I didn't agree with it. I agreed totally that the deaths of so many innocent civilians, especially children, were completely wrong and unacceptable ... But I also worried about the risk of a Hezbollah 'victory' ... Ending the conflict on terms that deterred Hezbollah in future could save lives...

Ten years before, new to office, alive as if wired up to every current of popular imagination, I would have made a different choice. Now ... I had evolved. I was not a changed person, but I was a changed leader. I could see as plain as a pikestaff the problem this gave me, but I had come to a view that, above all on the issue of security, I should do what I intuitively thought right, not what I intuitively guessed was popular...

[H]ad I changed, or was I just obstinate? Was it leadership, or just vanity? Having got us into Iraq, was it belief that sustained me, or just the fact that I had nowhere else to go? How honest are we ever with ourselves? How hard is it to disentangle our motives from our anxieties, our convictions from our pride" (Blair 2010, 603).

If he turned off his "political antennae", it appears he did so willfully. The decision making heuristic employed by Blair was apparently not the noncompensatory factor of domestic

political constraint but rather the application of his formed world view to the problem. The interpretation of leading political journalist Andrew Rawnsley goes even further.

He stuck to his deeply unpopular position not oblivious to the fury but in spite of it ... He almost relished being stubbornly defiant of opinion internationally and in his own party. It had got to the point, says Matthew Taylor [then-Chief Adviser on Strategy to the Prime Minister], where ‘you could convince him to do something’ not by saying it would be popular, but ‘by saying it’s a really unpopular thing to do. He’d be more likely to do it.’ (Rawnsley 2010, 384).

Jack Straw wrote in his memoirs: “It was as if he was willing his martyrdom” (Straw 2012, 489).

This interpretation suggests the decision maker embraced the notion that having the courage of his convictions whatever the cost, reaffirmed his credentials as a leader. It is impossible therefore to interpret Blair’s actions as an expression of his own political interests defined in terms of political survival. Some seasoned observers at the time explained them in terms of a psychological need to avoid losing face by changing course and having to admit he was wrong. Journalist John Kampfner wrote during the Second Lebanon War that Blair was “locked in a spiral of self-justification for his actions in Iraq, his broader Middle East policy and his unstinting support of Bush.” (Kampfner 2006). According to this approach, Blair was simply unwilling to face the consequences of accepting he was wrong. To change course would have incurred what Keller called “psychic loss”, since it meant unravelling the basis of his foreign policy which had underpinned his approach to the War on Terror, including the Iraq War, and his explanations for why it was going wrong. Fitting the pattern of leadership ‘rigidification’ described earlier, Blair refused to give way on his convictions, even in the face of precipitous political loss.

What were the personality and environmental factors that led to conviction winning out over domestic politics in this case?

As noted earlier, leadership trait analysis indicated Blair’s disposition to challenge constraints (Dyson 2007), thereby making him more likely to select unpopular policy options (Keller and Yang 2008). Furthermore, Operational Code Analysis highlighted his relatively uncooperative and conflictual attitude towards non-democracies, and his relatively strong belief in his ability to control historical development, leading to “a more dogmatic, dominant leadership style characterized by a propensity for choosing conflict behavior (Walker Schafer 2006).”

We can add to this a consideration of Blair's particular position in his career in 2006 – an assessment of his leadership profile in time. For several reasons, Blair seemed more likely to challenge constraints in 2006, towards the end of his period in office, than in 1997, when he began it. First, if we take seriously the possibility of a hubris syndrome, Blair's time in office and his repeated electoral successes likely enhanced his pre-existing tendencies to challenge constraints, his belief in his own ability to control events, and his unwavering confidence in his own judgement over others. Second, after nine years, Blair carried a much more baggage in policy and world view commitments, with greater potential "psychic loss", or loss of face for abandoning them. Blair had focused considerably on foreign policy and addressing the challenge posed by 'radical Islam' from 9/11 onwards, and considered himself to be an expert on the issues (Greene 2013, 175). This made him more likely to follow his own judgement, dismissing contrary opinions even from trusted advisors, or public unease (Vertzberger 1998, 73). The significance of these underlying personality and operational code characteristics is enriched by an appreciation of Blair's ontological and philosophical beliefs about the geopolitical situation, in particular his confrontational approach to radical Islam.

The implication here is that a leader's style and character is not fixed and indeed, the very act of holding office shapes it over time, especially if that period is extended and includes significant political successes and major events.

In addition to these personality and ideological factors, a number of factors of the political environment appear significant. First is the presidentialization of the role of Prime Minister, and in particular the concentration of foreign policy decision making. Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett loyally followed Blair's line. The Cabinet collectively did not constrain him, despite their misgivings. Whilst Jack Straw did confront Blair privately and disagreed publicly – contradicting the convention of collective cabinet responsibility – neither he nor any other cabinet minister threatened resignation, which might have forced Blair to rethink.

Notably, since this was not a policy decision impinging immediately on UK interests or requiring commitment of UK assets or military action, no Parliamentary endorsement was sought for Blair's position. Though the issue was discussed in the House of Commons on three occasions, it was not debated formally or voted on. The House also ended its session as scheduled on 25 July, and therefore did not sit for most of the conflict. Demand from MPs to recall Parliament only built towards the end of the conflict.

Had Blair's policy been subject to intensive Parliamentary scrutiny, or had Blair faced the prospect of losing a Commons vote, he may have been confronted with a starker choice between his convictions and his political standing, and been forced to moderate his stance. As it was, Blair was able to carry on despite growing opposition. It could be said therefore that the lack of formal constraints gave Blair enough rope to hang himself with the key constituency that mattered, his own parliamentary party.

Another environmental factor which may have been significant was the proximity of Blair to the end of his term in office, which meant reduced scope for domestic political loss compared to the beginning of his term in power. Following his 1997 landslide election, Blair can have hoped for two to three terms in office, and therefore had a lot to lose by wrecking his public standing. However, after nine years in office, given his declining popularity, and given the desire for his successor to get a decent run before fighting the next election, Blair hoped for at most two more years. Blair's personal political position therefore warrants comparison with a second term US president, who not seeking a renewed mandate, faces reduced costs associated with losing personal support. But did Blair have reduced sensitivity to domestic political loss because of what we termed earlier a 'free bird' effect?

Blair still had skin in the domestic political game, not only regarding his party's standing, but also with regarding the precise timing of his departure. Blair still retained the power to declare when, within the maximum five-year parliament, he would stand down, and conversely, the House of Commons, and the PLP, retained the power to remove him through no confidence votes. He clearly still wanted to hold office and pursue his agenda for as long as possible. However, the personal stakes for Blair were arguably less than if he had planned to fight another general election.

That said, we cannot ignore that Blair pursued the policy of participating in the Iraq War – a far more consequential decision – in 2003, when he did intend to fight another election. It is impossible to say whether Blair would have acted more cautiously if he intended to fight another election. Nonetheless, the evidence that a leader reaching the end of their term may be less responsive to domestic political risks, should be considered further with respect to theorizing the relationship between foreign policy decision making and domestic political considerations. The relevance of Bueno de Mesquita et al's (2003, 9) axiom "that everyone in a position of authority wants to keep that authority and that it is the maneuvering to do so that is central to politics in any type of regime", is rendered irrelevant when an individual in a

position of authority already knows that they will soon relinquish it. At which point the question “How do I maintain power?” no longer resonates, and the question “What should I do with the power I have in the diminishing time available?” surely becomes more significant.

Conclusion

That domestic politics hangs over every political decision, including foreign policy, is not in doubt. Political leaders are generally driven to maintain power, and even if they are personally leaving office, they care about their domestic political standing and legacy, and that of their party. For that reason, PDT is a powerful and insightful approach, but like any social science theory, parsimony comes at the cost of detail. This case study presented suggests conditions under which a decision maker will act on the basis of their own convictions, in spite of high potential political loss.

There are limitations to the scope of the inferences to be drawn from this case. PDT can apply to groups as well as individuals. The conditions hypothesized below are relevant where an individual either enjoys formal executive power or where a single individual is so dominant as to enjoy effective executive power.

It is also impossible to be conclusive about an individual’s motivations and calculations, which we can expect to be complex and multi-faceted. We should acknowledge the possibility that rather than an open-eyed decision to put personal convictions ahead of known political loss, Blair simply miscalculated the political mood or the salience of the issue. Initially, it may have been reasonable for him to calculate that this overseas conflict, in which Britain was not directly engaged, would not cause him major domestic political harm. That said, the forgoing account has shown that even as the political danger became more apparent, he carried on regardless, and consoled himself with the thought that he was doing what he “intuitively thought right” (Blair 2010, 595).

Though Blair in his third term may have been a particularly stark example of a conviction politician, the literature cited in Part I, which emphasizes personality traits as causal factors in cases of rigidification, suggests his personality and actions fit patterns identifiable in other leaders. The environmental conditions also do not appear unique, but would seemingly be found in other political systems and other time periods. It is possible therefore to use the case to propose generalizable hypotheses that warrant investigation in future studies.

Addressing personality issues first, it seems some combination of personality components which dispose the decision maker to put their convictions ahead of their political survival

would appear to be required for conviction to override domestic political loss. Since, “many different kinds of personality involvements may lie at the root of strongly-held political opinion” (George and George 1998, 166), a single case study provides limited basis for theorizing the relative significance of personality, leadership style and ideology, yet the following can reasonably be hypothesized:

H1: A leader is more likely to follow their own convictions in the face of domestic political loss if their personality disposes them to challenge constraints, or to believe strongly in their own ability to control events.

H2: A leader is more likely to follow their own convictions in the face of domestic political loss where they are committed to a deeply held set of convictions about the geopolitical situation, the interests of the nation, or their own personal role; including the possibility of perceived personal expertise in the issue, and where acting against those convictions threaten loss of face or pride.

Another set of conditions relates to the leadership characteristics in specific context. A personality already disposed to challenge constraints, may be augmented by factors associated with Hubris. Therefore:

H3: A leader is more likely to pursue policy according to their convictions in the face of political loss when their decision making is affected by Hubris, due to a long period in office, electoral success, or a history of accomplishments.

A further set of conditions relates to elements of the domestic political environment, in particular the absence of constraints which may sometimes be in place, such as requirements for cabinet or parliamentary assent, or the intent to seek reelection. Because “constraints are obstacles but not insurmountable” (Kaarbo and Hermann 1998, 248) the absence of these constraints are not necessary for a conviction led decision, but this case suggests that they are contributory factors which make such a decision more likely. Formal political constraints might be regarded as factors, which when present will force a leader to change course, even if their own inclination is to rigidify. The absence of those factors will increase the likelihood of a decision maker following their own convictions. Therefore:

H4: A leader is more likely to pursue policy according to their convictions in the face of political loss, in cases where the formal constraints on the decision maker are weak or absent,

allowing them to pursue a policy without meeting political checks, and therefore travelling a considerable distance from wider opinion.

H5: A leader is more likely to pursue policy according to their convictions in the face of political loss where the decision maker is a relatively ‘free-bird’, nearing the end of their term in office, and therefore with reduced costs associated with erosion of their domestic political position.

In each of these cases, in depth case studies of other leaders with executive power are recommended to explore whether they are supported, and especially case studies which compare the same leader over the span of an extended period in office.

Blair entered office with high sensitivity to public opinion and political loss, but after nine years was undeterred by public criticism, even apparently relishing it as an endorsement of his self-regard as a conviction politician. Whether Blair was doing the right thing is beyond the scope of this study. But this illustration of the conditions under which leadership convictions appeared to outweigh domestic political calculation leads us to a normative question: “What do we want of our leaders when they make foreign policy choices?” It is surely not a leader who has always at the top of their priorities what is political expedient at home.

With political trust considered to be in long term decline (Marien and Hooghe 2011; Levi and Stoker 2000), and cynicism about politicians widespread, what John F. Kennedy called “political courage” (Kennedy 1955) is not a fashionable explanation for political decisions. Self-interest is seen as a truer guide of leadership intentions. Yet does the assumption of self-interest, or the prioritization of political survival, risk being a self-fulfilling prophecy? A political culture where expectations of political leaders are low, will surely effect the mind-set of the leaders also. It may also lead scholars to overlook cases of political leaders who act with conviction, in spite of the personal political risk. Such cases warrant closer attention.

Hubris, inflexibility, and imperviousness to challenges to their world view can be dangerous leadership characteristics, yet the readiness to do what one thinks is right, even at the risk of political loss, is surely a welcome trait. More research should focus on such cases, to understand better the conditions under which conviction becomes the essence of sound leadership.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Israel Institute and the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations for the award of a post-doctoral fellowship which facilitated this research. I am also grateful to a number of colleagues for invaluable feedback on earlier versions of this paper, in particular: Professor Alex Mintz, Professor Jonathan Rynhold, Professor Dan Miodownik, Dr. Mor Mitrani, and three anonymous reviewers.

Bibliography

- Abrams, Elliott. 2013. *Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adair-Toteff, C. 2005. "Max Weber's Charisma." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 5 (2): 189–204.
- Barber, James David. 1985. *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Black, I. 2009. "UK Ready for Talks with Hezbollah." *Guardian*, March 4.
- Blair, Tony. 2006a. "House of Commons Hansard Debates for 18 July 2006 (Pt 0004)." *Hansard*.
- . 2006b. "World Affairs Speech to Lord Mayor's Banquet." Prime Minister's Office. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/archive/2006/11/PMs-world-affairs-speech-to-Lord-Mayors-Banquet-10409>.
- . 2006c. "Speech to Labour Party Conference," September 26. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2006/sep/26/labourconference.labour3>.
- . 2007. "A Battle for Global Values." *Foreign Affairs* 86 (1): 79–90.
- . 2010. *A Journey*. London: Hutchinson.
- Blair, Tony, and Stephen Harper. 2006. "Joint Press Conference." *National Archives*, July 14. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070701080624/http://pm.gov.uk/output/Page9851.asp>.
- Breiner, Peter. 1996. *Max Weber and Democratic Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, Randolph Siverson, and James Morrow. 2003.

The Logic of Political Survival. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Dunn, DH. 2006. “‘Quacking like a Duck’? Bush II and Presidential Power in the Second Term.” *International Affairs* 82 (1): 95-120.

Dunne, Tim. 2004. “‘When the Shooting Starts’: Atlanticism in British Security Strategy.” *International Affairs* 80 (5): 893–909.

Dyson, Stephen Benedict. 2006. “Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair’s Iraq Decisions.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2 (3): 289–306.

———. 2007. “Alliances, Domestic Politics, and Leader Psychology: Why Did Britain Stay out of Vietnam and Go into Iraq?” *Political Psychology* 28 (6): 647–66.

Farnham, B. 2004. “Impact of the Political Context on Foreign Policy Decision-Making.” *Political Psychology* 25 (3): 441-63.

Fearon, James D. 1994. “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes.” *The American Political Science Review* 88 (3): 577–92.

Foley, M. 2000. *The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Foyle, Douglas. 1999. *Counting the Public In: President’s Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Freilich, Charles D. 2012. *Zion’s Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

G8. 2006. “G8 Statement on Situation in Middle East.” *IIP Digital*.
<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2006/07/20060716150444uhyggep0.5012432.html#axzz4S3PeqiSg>.

George, Alexander L. 1969. “The ‘Operational Code’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making.” *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (2): 190–222.

George, Alexander L., and Juliette L. George. 1964. *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study*. New York: Dover Publications.

———. 1998. *Presidential Personality and Performance*. Boulder: Westview Press.

- Gilboa, Eytan. 2005. "The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations." *Political Communication* 22 (1): 27–44.
- Goldstein, J, and R O Keohane. 1993. *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gould, Bryan. 1999. "The Long Retreat from Principle." *New Statesman*, January.
- Greene, Toby. 2013. *Blair, Labour, and Palestine: Conflicting Views on Middle East Peace After 9/11*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hague, William. 2006. "House of Commons Hansard Debates for 20 July 2006 (Pt 0014)." *Hansard*.
- Harel, Amos, and Avi Issacharoff. 2008. *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hayes, Jarrod. 2016. "Identity, Authority, and the British War in Iraq." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12 (3): 334–53.
- Heller, Mark. 2007. "The International Dimension: Why so Few Constraints on Israel?" In *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, edited by Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran, 209–14. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies.
- Hennessy, P. 2001. *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders Since 1945*. London: Penguin Books.
- Hermann, Margaret G. 2001. "How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Framework." *International Studies Review* 3 (2): 47–81.
- . 2005. "Assessing Leadership Style: A Trait Analysis." In *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, 178–212. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hill, Christopher. 2003. *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Holland, Jack. 2012. "Blair's War on Terror: Selling Intervention to Middle England." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 14 (1): 74–95.
- Hollis, R. 2009. *Britain and the Middle East in the 9/11 Era*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hudson, Valerie M. 2005. "Foreign Policy Analysis : Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground

- of International Relations.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1 (1): 1–30.
- Ipsos MORI. 2006. “Ipsos MORI Political Monitor.” *Ipsos MORI*. July 31.
<https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/338/Ipsos-MORI-Political-Monitor-July.aspx>.
- Jervis, Robert. 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kaarbo, J, and M G Hermann. 1998. “Leadership Styles of Prime Ministers: How Individual Differences Affect the Foreign Policymaking Process.” *The Leadership Quarterly* 9 (3): 243–63.
- Kampfner, John. 2006. “Blood on His Hands.” *New Statesman*, August 4.
- Keller, Jonathan W. 2009. “Explaining Rigidity and Pragmatism in Political Leaders: A General Theory and a Plausibility Test from the Reagan Presidency.” *Political Psychology* 30 (3): 465–98.
- Keller, Jonathan W., and Yi Edward Yang. 2008. “Leadership Style, Decision Context, and the Poliheuristic Theory of Decision Making: An Experimental Analysis.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52 (5): 687–712.
- Kennedy, John F. 1955. *Profiles in Courage*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lebow, Richard Ned. 2003. “The Tragic Vision of Politics.” Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leonard, T. 2009. “Nations Line Up To Condemn Attack on Gaza.” *Daily Telegraph*, January 8.
- Levi, Margaret, and Laura Stoker. 2000. “Political Trust and Trustworthiness.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 475–507.
- Levy, Jack. 2008. “Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25 (1): 1–18.
- MacSuibhne, Seamus P. 2009. “What Makes ‘a New Mental Illness’?: The Cases of Solastalgia and Hubris Syndrome.” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 5 (2): 210–25.
- Malici, Akan. 2011. “Alliances and Their Microfoundations: France and Britain in the 9/11

Era.” In *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations*, edited by Stephen G. Walker, Akan Malici, and Mark Schafer. New York: Routledge.

Malley, Eoin O, and E O’Malley. 2007. “Setting Choices, Controlling Outcomes: The Operation of Prime Ministerial Influence and The UK’s Decision to Invade Iraq.” *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 9 (1): 1–19.

Manning, David (British Ambassador to US, 2003-2007), interviewed by Toby Greene, London, September 5, 2008.

Marien, Sofie, and Marc Hooghe. 2011. “Does Political Trust Matter? An Empirical Investigation into the Relation between Political Trust and Support for Law Compliance.” *European Journal of Political Research* 50: 267–91.

Mintz, Alex. 2004. “How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (1): 3–13.

———. 2007. “Behavioral IR as a Subfield of International Relations.” *International Studies Review* 9 (1): 157–72.

Mintz, Alex, and Karl DeRouen Jr. 2010. *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morgenthau, Hans. 1973. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Knopf.

Mulholland, H, and Agencies. 2006. “More Than 100 Labour MPs Demand Recall of Parliament.” *Guardian*, August 11.
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/aug/11/labour.israelandthepalestinians>.

Nincic, Miroslav. 2004. “Elections and U.S. Foreign Policy.” In *The Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, edited by Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick.

Olmert, Ehud. 2006. “Address to the Knesset During the Conflict in the North.” *Knesset*, July 17. https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/olmertspeech2006_eng.htm.

Oppermann, Kai. 2014. “Delineating the Scope Conditions of the Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Noncompensatory Principle and the Domestic

- Salience of Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10 (1): 23–41.
- Owen, David. 2006. “Hubris and Nemesis in Heads of Government.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99 (November).
- . 2008. “Hubris Syndrome.” *Clinical Medicine* 8: 428–32.
- Owen, David, and Jonathan Davidson. 2009. “Hubris Syndrome: An Acquired Personality Disorder A Study of US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers over the Last 100 Years.” *Brain* 132 (5): 1396–1406.
- Pilger, J. 2005. “Blair’s Bombs.” *New Statesman*, July 25.
- Powell, Jonathan (Chief of Staff to Tony Blair, 1997-2007), interviewed by Toby Greene, by telephone, July 7, 2009.
- Purnell, James (Minister of State for Pensions, 2006-2007), interviewed by Toby Greene, London, July 9, 2007.
- Quandt, WB. 1986. “The Electoral Cycle and the Conduct of Foreign Policy.” *Political Science Quarterly* 101 (5): 825–37.
- Rawnsley, Andrew. 2006. “It Wasn’t the ‘Yo’ That Was Humiliating, It Was the ‘No.’” *Guardian*, July 23.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/jul/23/comment.politics>.
- . 2010. *The End of the Party*. London: Viking.
- Renshon, SA, and DW Larson. 2003. *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Rentoul, J. 2001. *Tony Blair: Prime Minister*. London: Warner Books.
- Riddell, P. 2006. “Best Defence Against Terrorism Is a Split with US, Say Voters.” *The Times*, September 6.
- Rosati, JA, and JM Scott. 2013. *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy*. Wadsworth.
- Russell, G. 2011. “Psychiatry and Politicians: The ‘Hubris Syndrome.’” *The Psychiatrist* 35 (4): 140–45.
- Russett, Bruce M. 1990. *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

- Schafer, Mark, and Stephen G. Walker. 2006. "Democratic Leaders and the Democratic Peace: The Operational Codes of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton." *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (3): 561–83.
- Seldon, A, P Snowden, and D Collings. 2007. *Blair Unbound*. London: Simon & Schuster UK.
- Shipman, Tim, and Sam Greenhill. 2006. "Crisis? Yacht Crisis?" *Daily Mail*, August 12. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-400216/Crisis-Yacht-crisis.html>.
- Shirky, C. 2011. "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change." *Foreign Affairs* 90 (1): 28-41.
- Snyder, Richard C, Henry W Bruck, Burton Sapin, and Valerie Hudson. 1962. *Foreign Policy Decision Making (Revisited)*. New York: Macmillan.
- Stern, Eric K. 2004. "Contextualizing and Critiquing the Polyheuristic Theory." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (1): 105–26.
- Stourton, Edward. 2007. "The Summer War in Lebanon: A Tragedy of Errors," April 3. http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/news/summer_war_lebanon.shtml.
- Straw, J. 2012. *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. London: MacMillan.
- Tomz, M. 2007. "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach." *International Organization* 61: 821-40.
- Vertzberger, Yaacov. 1990. *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1998. *Risk Taking and Decision Making: Foreign Military Intervention Decisions*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Walker, Stephen G. 2011. "Macropolitics and Foreign Policy Decisions: The Billiard Ball Model of IR." In *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations*. New York: Routledge.
- Walker, Stephen G., and Mark Schafer. 2006. *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Waltz, K N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. London: Addison-Wesley.

- . 1996. “International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy.” *Security Studies* 6 (1): 54–57.
- Webster, Philip, and Peter Riddell. 2006. “Blair Defies His Party over Departure Date.” *The Times*, September 1.
- Wessely, S. 2006. “Commentary: The Psychiatry of Hubris.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99 (11): 552–53.
- WikiLeaks. 2006. “UK Foreign Secretary Pessimistic on Lebanon SCR; Travel To NY Delayed by Foiled Terrorist Attack,” August 10.
https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06LONDON5861_a.html.
- Wintour, Patrick. 2013. “How Tony Blair’s Team Fought and Failed to See-off Gordon Brown’s Coup.” *The Guardian*, September 19.
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/sep/19/tony-blair-gordon-brown>.
- Worcester, Robert. 2003. “Iraq: Public Support Maintained — The State Of Public Opinion On The War.” *Ipsos MORI*, April 8. <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/newsevents/ca/180/Iraq-Public-Support-Maintained-8212-The-State-Of-Public-Opinion-On-The-War.aspx>.
- YouGov. 2006. “YouGov/Daily Telegraph Results.” YouGov. July.
http://iis.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/TEL060101012_3.pdf.