

David and Solomon: Analysis of Their Domestic and Foreign Policies and
Politics

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The study of international relations often begins with the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, when empires began to be carved into states, or following World War II, when new alliances and global systems emerged. However, through the course *Personalities in Kings*, with Professor Smadar Rosensweig, the Bible was introduced to me as a text to understand the dynamic political landscape of a much earlier time. The biblical stories of King David and King Solomon's regimes help provide tremendous insight into their personal politics, policies, and the broader political landscape in the Near East at the time, and modern political theory allows for deeper understanding of their politics.

This thesis begins by discussing the political theory of realism and its subsections of classical realism, structural realism, and offensive and defensive realism. Once the theoretical foundations are established, the paper continues by analyzing the domestic and foreign policies of King David, whose domestic policy was characterized by the primary objective of unifying Israel by combining the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel (II Samuel 2:1-3) and establishing the capital of a united Israel in Jerusalem (II Samuel 2:5), which influences his foreign policy. While dealing with internal turmoil and realignment, David's foreign policy initially began with defensive wars (I Chronicles 14, 18), which eventually led to stability that allowed for successful, aggressive offensive conquest (II Samuel 8:1-14). David's foreign policy can be characterized and explained by the theory of offensive realism. Based on the backdrop that David established, King Solomon began his kingship as the first successor in the Davidic dynasty. David's offensive realism enabled Solomon to engage in a completely different political framework. The military efforts exerted by David and diplomatic marriages to expand, unify, and stabilize Israel enabled Solomon's foreign policy to be rooted in classical diplomacy, with focus on acquiring soft power through strategically motivated marriages and infrastructure

partnerships. David and Solomon's regimes provide early examples of domestic policy deeply impacting both foreign policy and international relations. Additionally, David's political structure is evaluated for uniquely impacting and shaping his dynastic successor's Solomon's reign. Lastly, this paper concludes with evaluating the success of David and Solomon's regimes in regard to power.

The condition of international relations is "systematic anarchy, defined as the absence of an authoritative government above the level of the states within the system" (Roth, 139). Roth describes this as an "antecedent condition" that was not first found in Ancient Greece, as Thucydides and Aristotle posit, but also existed in the ancient world during the times of the Hebrew Bible (139). The states¹ in the Hebrew Bible, including but not limited to the unified Israelite kingdom, Edom, Philistines, Moab, and Aram, constituted an anarchical international system. Therefore, we can look to the Hebrew Bible and the stories of David and Solomon in the context of international relations and an international system, particularly to analyze their domestic and foreign policies, what these figures and their policies contribute to political theory, and how their politics can be better understood through the political theories of offensive realism and soft power.

Political Realism: Classical, Offensive, Defensive

Within political science, particularly the subfield of international relations, there are different perspectives brought to explain the international system. One of the most prominent of these theories is realism. Realism is founded on three principles that describe the international system: the system is anarchic, states are the primary actors in the system, and states act

¹ The term state will be used interchangeably with kingdom when referring to Israel and other political entities in the Near East region throughout this paper.

according to their own national interest. The third piece of this definition, that states are acting according to their own national interest, is the foundation of the distinctions within the field of realism. Classical realism as defined by Hans Morgenthau, one of the major theorists of classical realism, considers the national interest of states to be power. In his seminal work, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Morgenthau defines political power as “the mutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and between the latter and people at large” (13). Power is measured by the control one party can exert over another party. He then argues that politics are manifestations of the phenomenon of “the struggle for power” and all political policies seek “either to keep power, to increase power, or to demonstrate power” (*ibid.* 21). Morgenthau expands each of these three power-related goals as different foreign policies. The second goal of increasing power is explained as imperialism, which he defines as “a policy which aims at the overthrow of the status quo, at a reversal of the power relations between two or more nations” (*ibid.* 27). Within imperialism, Morgenthau explains that there are three inducements to imperialism: military, economic, and cultural. For military imperialism, when a nation is fighting another nation, the objective of the war, whether it began for defensive or offensive reasons, becomes an imperialist war with the goal of “transforming the relation... into the new status quo of the peace settlement” (*ibid.* 34). According to Morgenthau, states are engaging in foreign policy and going to war because of a human desire for power, and states emerge from war with the desire to establish more power. While anarchy is a considered factor for driving state behavior, the primary motivator according to Morgenthau is the human drive for power that fuels every state.

There has been criticism of Morgenthau’s classical realism because of the dependency on human nature and the difficulty of regulating its principles into a scientific theory. In response,

Kenneth Waltz developed structural realism, or neo-realism, which crafts a perspective that puts less emphasis on the incalculableness of human nature. Instead of the human, animalistic desire for power, the root of the pursuit of power is the anarchic structure of the international system, which forces the states to compete. While classical realism considers the motivating national interest of the state to be power, structural realism argues that the primary interest of the state is security. Additionally, instead of the innate human desire for power that Morgenthau focuses on, Kenneth Waltz in his book *Theory of International Politics* creates a systematic, scientific theory for explaining the international system. Waltz maintains that the international system is decentralized and undirected while running under the condition of anarchy (Waltz 113). He furthers this point by arguing that even with the formulation of alliances, anarchy is maintained and not lessened (*ibid.* 114). Within this anarchic, decentralized system without a formal central authority, defensive realism maintains that states want to achieve security, and the international system promotes states pursuing moderate behavior to ensure their survival and safety, with few incentives for expansion. (Lobell 2010). These behaviors are encouraged because drastic and aggressive behavior can provoke the security dilemma and balancing against the state, which ultimately minimizes security and counteracts the states previous attempts for security. Therefore, states must seek just enough power to only ensure security, with fewer opportunities for expansion, because power is the greatest tool to ensure survival. The difficulty, which is where much further discussion stems from, is determining where the proper level of power needed to ensure the maintenance of security lies.

In line with defensive realism, offensive realism is a structural realist theory that similarly recognizes that states act according to their primary interest of security within the anarchic structure of the international system. However, offensive realists argue that in order to ensure

survival and security, states must pursue hegemony and as much power as possible. Because of the anarchic structure of the international system, states are compelled to seek as much power as possible to ensure their own security. John Mearsheimer, when laying the foundation of offensive realism, argues that states recognize that power is necessary for survival. (Mearsheimer 11). While defensive realism encourages states to maintain the current balance of power, offensive realism promotes seizing opportunities to gain power, with states striving to maximize security through domination and hegemony. Additionally, defensive realism must contend with ambiguity when determining the proper amount of power needed to maintain security and the status quo. Contrarily, for offensive realism, as Mearsheimer argues, the ambiguity in the level of power needed for security and the subsequent security dilemma that ensues leads great powers to endeavor to accumulate as much power as possible and attempt to achieve hegemony. Therefore, states try to dominate over other states and work to not be taken advantage of by other states, which leads to constant security competition, where “the best defense is a good offense” (Mearsheimer 19). For a great power, the ideal situation would place the state as the only regional hegemon, without any great competition, and if there was a competitor, the state would go to considerable lengths to weaken or destroy their rival (*ibid.* 22-23). Therefore, war and variety in state behavior are explained by not only the anarchic system, but also the varying distribution of power among the states in the system. This understanding of the framework of realism, particularly offensive realism, allows for greater insight and understanding into the domestic and foreign motivations, politics, and policies of King David.

David’s Domestic Policy Objectives

As leader of Israel, King David’s reign can be divided into two primary political goals. David’s first objective was concerned with the domestic quality of Israel. He worked towards

creating a stronger, more unified Israel by reuniting the kingdom of Judah with the northern kingdom of Israel and creating a new capital for the united Israelite Kingdom in Jerusalem. David's second objective was focused on foreign policy, where he engaged in diplomacy and aggressive tactics of offensive and defensive military endeavors, which promoted the vast expansion of Israel into a formidable kingdom.

Before focusing on foreign policy, David began his reign as king with a focus on domestic affairs by stabilizing and uniting the kingdom of Israel. David was inheriting a kingdom from Saul that lost significant territory from the recapturing of land that was once under Israel by the Philistines, who also disgraced and defaced Saul's body following his death in battle. Additionally, Israel was experiencing an unstable ruler in Saul who was immensely jealous and insecure towards the end of his kingship (I Samuel 31:7-9). At this juncture in time, it was critical for David to restore domestic peace to Israel when strong leadership, stability, and unity in the kingdom were lacking. David was first anointed as King of Yehuda (II Samuel 2:4) and exclusively served as its king for seven years and six months (II Samuel 2:11). David's first major action as king, arguably one of his greatest political feats, was creating the unified Israelite kingdom by joining the northern Israelite Kingdom with the kingdom of Judah (II Samuel 5:3). Following the unification, David's subsequent political action was moving the capital from Hebron and establishing the capital of the unified Israelite kingdom in Jerusalem. David and his men went and conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and Jerusalem was established as the capital of the new kingdom where David set up his residence (II Samuel 5:5-7).

David's first action as the ruler of the united kingdom of Israel gives tremendous insight into his domestic policy of fostering unity and domestic stability. When establishing his original kingdom of Judah, the placement of the capital in Hebron was divinely mandated (II Samuel

2:1). David was given no instructions from God for where to establish the capital of his unified kingdom. Why then, out of any city, did David choose Jerusalem, a city with no divine mandate, which was not well known as it is not mentioned in the Pentateuch and is mentioned only a few times in passing previously in the Bible, as his capital? Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University's RIETS Kollel in Israel, posits that Jerusalem was chosen because of its power of unification.² When David assumed the kingship, he was not only taking the kingship from Saul, but he was changing the bloodline of the kingship for eternity. Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin, whereas David came from the tribe of Judah, which was blessed with the kingship by Jacob at the end of his life (Genesis 49:10). David's acquisition of power signified the ultimate power transition from the tribe of Benjamin to the tribe of Judah, a perpetual shift that was intended to last through the end of days. Rabbi Meir Leibush, known as *Malbim*, explains that David was assuming power at a time when the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel, which included Benjamin's descendants, were being combined and there was much animosity between the different factions, particularly over the loss of leadership and power. Jerusalem's location was uniquely situated on the border, equally split between the territories of the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin (Malbim on 2 Samuel 5:6). By choosing to place the capital of his new kingdom on the border of the two tribes that were in conflict with each other and experiencing an eternal power shift, David was using the placement of his capital in Jerusalem to create a standard of unity for his kingdom from the onset, creating a stronger Israelite kingdom.³

² Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh presented this argument in a lecture titled "The Unification of Jerusalem" in Sha'alvim for Women, Jerusalem on May 13, 2018 in honor of Jerusalem Day. This was when I was first introduced to his understanding of the unifying power of Jerusalem.

³ Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh explains that this is why Jerusalem is described in Psalms 122:3 by David as *Ir She'chubra La Yachdav*, a city intertwined.

David's immense efforts in rebuilding and strengthening help lay the foundation for his foreign policy. In a world system that is dominated by power, according to the realist perspective, how does David's domestic efforts bolster Israel's power in international politics? Domestic policy has often been overlooked as an influencer of international relations theory. Morgenthau claims that it is a "popular fallacy" to argue that "philosophical or political sympathies" of individual leaders will affect their foreign policy, divorcing the domestic decisions of the state with its foreign policy (Morgenthau 7). Additionally, scholars disregard domestic policy as a force that can be understood in a "systematic and scientific" way or as actions that can simply be understood by assuming that states are acting and responding with external rationality (Lumsdaine 300-301). Contrary to this line of thought, David Lumsdaine argues that states systematically transfer the ordering principles of their domestic policy to the methodology of their international policy. If a state is unified and resolves domestic disputes by "legal, nonviolent, consensual resolution conflict methods" in their domestic politics, the state is more prone to engage in international conflict in a similar way (*ibid.* 305). Therefore, by establishing a domestic policy founded on unity, peaceful coexistence, and a desire for stability, David is building the framework for an international policy that encourages stability and peaceful diplomacy. In order to obtain maximum stability in the international system, according to offensive realism, states must be as secure as possible by maximizing power. Therefore, because of the internal stability that David established, David was able to focus on a foreign policy that begins with diplomacy and culminates in expansive military engagements that created greater power, security, and subsequent stability for Israel during his reign.

David's Foreign Policy

Once David was able to unite his kingdom and establish greater domestic stability by moving his capital, David turned his focus towards expanding Israel's power in the region by fostering diplomatic relationships and military efforts, with both defensive engagements and offensive expansion. In the ancient Near East, marriage alliances between royal houses were an effective means of cementing relationships and trade partnerships between two states, particularly since diplomacy was intended to benefit not only the state, but the ruling family as well (Malamat 8). Accordingly, David's political tenure begins with a list of his children and their mothers, with David's son Abshalom, son of Maacah, the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur as the third on the list (II Samuel 3:2-5). David's marriage with the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur was a tactical marriage, with the aim of acquiring a strategic, political ally in the North that placed the Northern kingdom of Israel between Geshur and Judah, allowing for greater political and military leverage during David's unification of Israel and subsequent conflicts between Israel and Aram (Malamat 8). In addition to diplomatic marriages, David began his reign with a treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre, who sent materials and craftsmen to build David a palace (II Samuel 5:11). Diplomatic marriages and treaties as David's initial foreign policy effort is an example of a peaceful foreign policy, which follows the framework that was established by David's domestic policy. However, as Waltz argues, the increase of alliances does not negate or minimize the overarching, systematic anarchy that underscored the international system at the time. Therefore, David's efforts increased the security and power of the Israelite kingdom at the time but did not affect the existence of anarchy in the international system. Additionally, David's diplomatic efforts were successful attempts to acquire more power in the region because David's marriage with Geshur and treaty with Tyre were political alliances intended to bandwagon with Israel. Bandwagoning efforts by regional actors emphasize how

Israel was a strong hegemon in the region and by increasing Israel's relationships with neighboring countries, David expanded the power and influence of Israel in the Near East. Engaging in diplomacy was one method David successfully employed to fulfill the offensive realist mandate of expanding power to increase security, which is the state's best interest. By building relationships with kings in the region, like Hiram and Talmi, David is positioning Israel to be a state that is more dominant in the region, with diplomatic ties translating to greater stability and regional influence, which ultimately surmount to greater power and security in the region.

Following David's diplomatic efforts, his second engagement with foreign policy was a defensive war against the Philistines. After David's establishment as king over the unified Israelite kingdom, the Philistines "came up" to "seek out" David in Rephaim (II Samuel 5:17-18). The Philistines took a proactive stance against Israel directly following the unification and strengthening under David to minimize threats to power and seek greater hegemony, which was being challenged because of the newfound strength and unity of Israel in the region. In response to this threat, David defeated the Philistines and then struck the Philistines from Geba to Gezer (II Samuel 5:25). In this military engagement, unlike the later, more aggressive, offensive battles during David's reign, David subdued the Philistines with the goal of eliminating their hegemony in the region but did not conquer their territory (Malamat 15).

Some may argue that David's stance against the Philistines, where he subdued them but did not overtake them, is an example of restraint and not the power maximization that offensive realism mandates. This discrepancy is legitimate and may be explained by the motivation behind David's actions. Before his diplomatic endeavors, no reason or motivation is explicitly provided in the Bible. David's offensive military actions follow the prophecy relayed by Nathan where God

tells David that "God will establish a dynasty for you," but there were no explicit instructions for how that dynasty would come about (II Samuel 7:11). Contrarily, for the battle against the Philistines where David does not maximize the power Israel can acquire, David is told by God that He will "deliver the Philistines into your hand" (II Samuel 5:19). In only this conflict does David engage in a defensive realist action, as opposed to maximizing the amount of power he can take because God tells him about the outcome before the war, so there is less of a motivation for David to attempt to maximize power for security because he has the security given to him by God.

Following the battles with the Philistines, David's military conquests and strategy became aggressive and expansive, embodying the offensive realist theory of maximizing power for security. David conducted many offensive campaigns against his neighbors, and among his enemies were the Amalekites, the five Philistine kingdoms of Gath, Ekron, Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod, the three Transjordanian kingdoms of Moab, Ammon and Edom, and the four Aramaean kingdoms of Beth-rehob-Zobah, Damascus, Maacah and Tob (Na'aman 1). David led offensive military efforts against Moab, where Moab was overtaken and became subjects that paid tribute (II Samuel 8:2), Edom, who were defeated and became subjects of David (I Chronicles 18, II Samuel 8:14), and Ammon, who made peace with Israel and became subservient to Israel (II Samuel 10:19). Additionally, David struck Hadadezer, king of Zobah, and overtook Aram who came to assist their vassal state Zobah in a three-part conquest, with Aram eventually becoming subjects to David that brought monetary tribute (II Samuel 8:3-6). Throughout all of these battles, David expands the influence and stature of the kingdom of Israel, which is in the best interest of the state because military expansion maximizes security by increasing Israel's power.

Among the many aggressive military endeavors David partook in against regional competitions, one of the most significant was David expanding his effort tremendously when fighting and overtaking Hazadezer's Aram, following his successful conquest of Moab. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki explains that Hadadezer was stopped by David on the way to expand the borders of Zobah (Rashi on II Samuel 8:3) and Isaac ben Judah Abarbanel, a medieval Portuguese philosopher who is commonly known as Abarbanel, explains that Hadadezer previously conquered land from Israel and there was significant rivalry between the kingdoms (Abarbanel on II Samuel 8:3). When engaging in aggressive military action against Aram, David was stopping Hadadezer's hegemonic expansion and acquisition of land and military power, hindering the development of Aram as a regional hegemon. As a result of the bellicose military conflict, David not only reclaimed Israel's previously lost power but also expanded Israel's power and hegemony in the region as a direct result of minimizing the power and hegemony of Aram.

However, David's conquest of Hadadezer's kingdom was not limited to a defensive action to curtail Aram's expansion into Israel's territory and greater regional hegemony. Abraham Malamat, who was a professor emeritus of Jewish history at the Hebrew University, explains the significance of Israel's defeat of Hadadezer. Hadadezer was the king of Zobah and served as the ruler over a large confederacy of Armenian states, including Zobah, Damascus, Maacah, and Tob. Hadadezer ruled over a vast kingdom in the region, making him a significant regional hegemonic power, in direct conflict with David's Israel (Malamat 3). It took three offensive efforts for Israel to completely overtake Hadadezer's kingdom and incorporate the land as "fully occupied territories" under the unified Israelite kingdom (*ibid.* 4).⁴ David's defeat of

⁴ The three offensive efforts against Aram can be found in I Chronicles 19:7, II Samuel 10, II Samuel 8:3-8

Hadadezer's Aram was a deliberate and successful attempt by David to drastically expand his kingdom, increasing his power and subsequent security, while minimizing Aram's power and influence in the region. David's actions against Hadadezer's Armenian confederacy are an example of his aggressive, offensive military policy, which increased Israel's power and hegemony in the region and created greater security for Israel.

When David succeeds in his military endeavors, Israel's influence and impact in the Near East region expands, which increases Israel's power. In response to David's defeat of Hadadezer's army, King Toi of Hamath sends an embassy led by his son with silver, gold, and copper for David. (II Samuel 8:9-10). Abarbanel explains that the motivations behind King Toi's gift was to establish peace between the states because they had the common enemy of Hadadezer that David defeated (Abarbanel on II Samuel 8:9). However, Hamath's embassy should "not be regarded as a mere gesture of friendship but rather as an indication of Hamath's dependence on Israel" because of the prominence of having Toi's son lead the delegation and the value of the gifts given transcended the norm for routine diplomatic ventures at the time (Malamat 6). Therefore, due to Israel's increased dominance in the region as a result of Israel's military victories, Hamath began to bandwagon with Israel, which emphasizes Israel's regional importance and domination. Throughout his kingship, David's diplomatic engagements, defensive battles, and aggressive military expeditions greatly expanded the size, regional influence, military might, and diplomatic force of Israel and increased Israel's power and subsequent security in the international system.

Evaluating David Through the Theoretical Lens

As shown through the three main tenets of David's foreign policy of diplomacy, defensive military action, and aggressive offensive wars, David's actions embody and can be further explained through the political theory of offensive realism, where the state must acquire as much power as possible to assure security. Offensive realism, as outlined by Mearsheimer⁵, is a structural realist perspective, which argues that states act within the anarchic structure of the international system, with the primary interest of security. As previously explained, the Near East during the time of David is considered an anarchical system. In order to achieve security, which is the state's primary interest, states must pursue hegemony and as much power as possible by working to dominate, weaken, or destroy other competing states to ensure their security and coming as close as possible to the ideal of the state as the only regional hegemon without competition.

All three prongs of David's foreign policy help further the goals outlined by offensive realism. David's marriage to the daughter of the King of Geshur and political treaties and alliances with Hiram, king of Tyre, and Toi, king of Hamath, provide much more power and dominance over the Near East region. David's marriage to the King of Geshur's daughter exemplifies the hegemonic expansion of Israel throughout the region. Hiram's treaty was a deliberate bandwagoning attempt after David's military success against the Philistines, emphasizing Israel's increasing status as a dominant hegemon in the region. Additionally, the treaty with Hamath indicates Hamath's dependence on Israel, which confirms Israel's immense power and dominance of the region because of states continuing to align themselves with Israel. Diplomatic marriages and Hiram and Hamath's bandwagoning through alliances expanded Israel's relationships and influence in the region, which resulted in Israel's increased hegemony,

⁵ In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 2001.

increasing the primary interest of the state of greater security according to offensive realism and furthering the regional dominance of Israel in the Near East.

In addition to diplomatic efforts, David's defensive response to the offensive attacks of the Philistines did not result in the maintenance of the status quo but increased Israel's power by minimizing a competing regional hegemon. By responding to the threat of the Philistines, David did not simply beat the Philistines in one battle at an isolated point. Instead, David took the opportunity of war to strike the Philistine land from Geba to Gezer and eliminate their hegemony in the Near East. While he did not conquer their territory, David took a defensive battle and transformed it into an opportunity to take an offensive stance and minimize a competing hegemon in the region, making them subservient people to Israel.

Lastly, David's aggressive military wars against Hadadezer's Aram, Ammon, Moab, and Edom best exemplify the offensive realist perspective of maximizing power acquisition to achieve the state's best interest of security. Throughout these multiple military endeavors, David broadened Israel's military reach, expanded the borders of the kingdom of Israel, and increased subservience and financial tribute by those in the region towards Israel. The culmination of these actions strengthened Israel's influence in the Near East, which led to increased alliances and bandwagoning with Israel, which fosters greater regional hegemony. With greater influence, military strength, and land acquisition, Israel was able to assert dominance over the region, which positioned Israel to fulfil its best interests according to offensive realism of having the most power and subsequent security.

Joseph Nye and Soft Power

Although offensive realism is the prominent theory used to further understand David's foreign policy, a different idea - soft power - helps illustrate the goals of Solomon's kingship. While success in international relations is often evaluated in terms of power, Joseph Nye created a more nuanced approach to understanding power in his 2004 work *Soft Power*. He differentiates between hard power, "using military and economic might to get others to change their position" and soft power, "the ability to attract," "shape the preference of others," and "getting others to want the outcomes that you want" (Nye 5). Much debate exists regarding what exactly constitutes soft power,⁶ as certain entities, such as military strength, may be classified as hard or soft power, depending on the results of the military strength: whether it gets others to change their positions or gets others to want the outcomes you want. Despite the ambiguity regarding the precise definition of what constitutes soft power, for the purposes of this thesis, we will use Nye's loose definition of "a nation's ability to attract and persuade" and "get others to want the outcomes that you want" (*ibid.* 13). He lists three resources on which the soft power of a country primarily rests: attractiveness of culture to others, adherence to political values, and foreign policies that are legitimate and have moral authority (*ibid.* 11). Through these resources, and by making the culture and goals of a country more attractive, other states are more likely to support, favor, or be attracted to the country and its goals.

Despite the many benefits and obvious impact of soft power, why would a country choose to focus on soft power in place of hard power? States often engage in soft power to achieve a broad range of political goals, and Nye argues that soft power is as important as hard power in international politics (Nye 2011). Soft power is unique in the analysis of political

⁶⁶ Joseph S. Nye, "Think Again: Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* (February 2006), web exclusive at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3393, Vuving, Alexander L. "How Soft Power Works." *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting*, Toronto, 3 Sept. 2009, apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1032656.pdf.

power because it focuses on the human influence and beliefs of individuals in politics. Soft power enables individuals to change their opinions and actions as a result of influence, instead of aggression and war. Nye argues that soft power can be focused on as a way to mitigate war. While Nye recognizes that military power is still extremely important, Nye points towards soft power being less costly and can help prevent the financial drain and overall tumult caused by war (*ibid.* 109). As a result, countries may choose to focus on soft power if the desired outcome is increased influence without engaging in military affairs. Although there is immense value in soft power, it is often disregarded as only a popularity tool that focuses on perception; however, as shown with increased support of American policy following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, when America was perceived more favorably, countries were more willing to support American policies. Soft power is an extremely important tool for countries to engage with in order to boost their perception in the international sphere and can result in improved relationships with other countries and outcomes in foreign policy, as shown by Solomon and the great kingdom he was able to establish.

Solomon's Reign: Classical Diplomacy and Soft Power

David's domestic and foreign policies set the stage for Solomon's transition to power. David's expansive and aggressive military policies during the later period of his kingship fostered the conditions that enabled Solomon to engage in no outright warfare and maintain peace with Israel and its neighbors. Solomon, unlike his predecessors Saul and David, was able to engage in a defensive military plan. Despite the defensive capabilities and standing army that Solomon inherited and helped curate, he chose not to remain passive in his kingship, and instead focused primarily on diplomacy in place of military engagements. Additionally, Solomon used

his fame and wisdom to increase the esteem held for and the attractiveness of Israel. Under this peaceful framework, Solomon was able to take advantage of David's political and military successes and continue to strengthen Israel internally and focus on acquiring soft power by using character, marriages, alliances, treaties, and diplomacy to fortify his kingdom and Israel's influence and relationships in the region. However, towards the end of his kingship he went astray in his adherence to God's wishes and his kingdom suffered tremendously as a result, leading to the beginning of the downfall of the Kingdom of Israel.

Solomon assumed the throne and was anointed through the direct orchestration of his father David, along with Bathsheba, Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah (I Kings 1). While Solomon had to deal with minor internal conflicts at the beginning of his reign with his brother Adonijah, afterwards Solomon was able to strongly establish himself as ruler without further domestic opposition and work to continue strengthening and expanding the work of his father for the kingdom of Israel. As king, Solomon's rule was vast and extended over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and Egypt (I Kings 5:1). After solidifying his inheritance of the kingdom, Solomon entered into an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married Pharaoh's daughter as his first action as king (I Kings 3:1). Abarbanel explains that David took Pharaoh's daughter as a wife because of the political greatness of Egypt, and the goal of the marriage was to help facilitate greater relations between Egypt and Israel (Abarbanel on I Kings 3:1). Solomon used diplomatic marriages as a mechanism for fostering relationships between extremely powerful countries, which enhanced the way other powers viewed Israel. In addition to Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon married many other foreign women, including Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Phoenician, and Hittite women (I Kings 11:1). However, his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, which was singled out, is arguably the most

critical because this is the only recorded instance of a daughter of Pharaoh being given in marriage to a foreign ruler (Malamat 10). Additionally, Pharaoh gave Solomon the city of Gezer as a dowry for his daughter, which signifies not only soft power through Egypt's increasingly positive diplomatic relationship with Israel, but a hard power acquisition as well, giving Israel more military strength, which subsequently increases soft power because a stronger military can increase a nation's ability to attract, persuade, and get others to want the outcome you want. Solomon's marriages were a critical piece of his foreign policy because they allowed Solomon to extend Israel's influence and guaranteed assistance from Egypt. Solomon used soft power – the influence of Israel – to enter into a marriage with one of the greatest powers at the time and gain more power and military influence. By marrying into so many different countries, Solomon is not only enabling increased relationships, but allowing other countries to begin to have a greater appreciation and understanding of Israel's culture, which helps accumulate soft power for Israel.

In addition to diplomatic marriages that increased relations and regard, Solomon was held in extremely high esteem as an individual and a ruler by the neighboring kingdoms because of his character and the domestic development of Israel he facilitated. Solomon was known to be an extremely wise king, whose fame spread to all the surrounding nations (I Kings 5:11), and people came to seek him out for advice and were in awe of his brilliance (I Kings 3). Because of his vast kingdom, all people throughout the land came to pay homage to Solomon, hear his wisdom, and bring him yearly tribute (I Kings 10:34-35). In addition to his wisdom being praised, Solomon was known to be a wealthy king who ran an extremely lucrative government. He had a robust army and cavalry with 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen (I Kings 5:6). Financially, he not only inherited the money left by David for building the temple, but Solomon's kingdom also had an annual receipt of gold of six hundred and sixty-

six talents, which is the equivalent of over \$20,000,000 (Stymiest 61)⁷. To manage his wealth and increase the acquisition of wealth, Solomon created an extremely detailed administrative and taxation system. Solomon created twelve administrative districts that all had prefects governing over each district. Each of these districts provided food to the king and his household, and his daily provisions consisted of 30 kors of semolina, 60 kors of flour, 10 fattened oxen, 20 pasture fed oxen, and 100 sheep and goats (I Kings 5:1-3). While these taxation systems allowed Solomon to achieve tremendous financial heights, these policies also eventually garnered complaints from the Israelite people, causing strife later on when his son succeeds as King (I Kings 12:10). Solomon's immense wisdom, military might, wealth, and impressive bureaucratic taxation systems were tools that allowed for Israel to increase its soft power. When states are successful, which Solomon certainly was for most of his rule, the state, its culture, and supported policies becomes increasingly attractive. As a result, other states become more likely to support, favor, and be attracted to Israel and its goals, which was shown by the high fame and regard held for Israel and Solomon by surrounding states.

Lastly, Solomon's success in his mandate from God and David to build the Temple in Jerusalem enabled Solomon to achieve ultimate legitimacy in the eyes of the Near East cultural expectations at the time, while building trade relations with surrounding countries. The Jewish Temple's sacred stature helped facilitate international trade agreements, helped broker commercial transactions, and provided a sense of shared trust between partners (Green 151-152). Like with David, Hiram engaged in a treaty with Solomon, offering to supply lumber for the building of the temple in exchange for wheat and oil (I Kings 5). David's treaties when building the temple highlight the benefits of the commercial and political ties he experienced with

⁷ This paper was published in 1935. Therefore, with inflation taken into account, the value in USD today is closer to \$350,000,000.

neighboring lands, which manifested in international importance for Jerusalem, and the broader Israelite kingdom (Barnavi 1994). In addition to the building of the temple, throughout his rule Solomon expanded and fortified different cities, including those that housed his chariots and calvary (I Kings 9:16-19). Solomon also established a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which had Hiram's servants serving alongside Solomon's men (I Kings 9:27). These major infrastructure developments drastically increased Israel's capabilities, status, and regional influence because Solomon was able to not only focus on external threats but turn inwards to bolster Israel's industry and military capabilities. These internal efforts not only gave Israel greater economic power and prestige, but directly influenced other countries to support Israel's fleets. Directly following the Bible's description of the newly established infrastructure, the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame and came to meet him for his wisdom with many gifts for Israel (1 Kings 10:1-5). The diplomatic meeting between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba resulted in a commercial treaty between the two kingdoms, as "we are informed that King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba everything she wished for, in addition to what [he] gave her out of his royal bounty" (I Kings 10:13) (Green 155-156). As a result of all the immense infrastructure established by Solomon, Israel was known throughout the land in an increasingly positive light and more diplomatic relationships were established.

By building a temple, amassing fortune, engaging in treaties and marriages, and creating a good name for Israel throughout the Near East, Solomon was able to further establish an incredible kingdom and regard for Israel. This translated directly to Israel's soft power and ability to influence the surrounding states into assisting with treaties and providing goods, calvary, soldiers, and visits to Israel. In addition to controlling vast amounts of land, Solomon had peace on all borders for the majority of his kingdoms, and all the people in his kingdom lived in safety

and peace (I Kings 5:3-5). Under Solomon, due to the stability provided by David and his immense kingdom, Solomon was able to focus not on military expansion but increasing Israel's soft power, stature, and influence in the region through making Israel's culture increasingly attractive to others, which enabled Israel to receive a tremendous amount of material goods, favor, and support from its various neighbors politically and financially.

Despite all of Solomon's success as king, the later period of his kingship and the Davidic dynasty suffered tremendously. While this sudden downfall seems to run contrarily to the immense power amassed by Solomon, the later decline of his kingdom can be explained by his failure to follow the will of God with his diplomatic marriages and idolatry to pagan gods. While Solomon had several marriages that benefitted Israel, Solomon strayed from God's command to not marry women from certain forbidden nations (I Kings 11:1-2). Additionally, we see Solomon follow in the idolatrous ways of his wives, by building idolatrous shrines to several of the gods of his wives, in direct violation of God's commandment (1 Kings 11:7-11). As a result, God tells Solomon that He will take his kingdom away from his son, resulting in God raising an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite and Rezon, who fled from Hadadezer, King of Zobah, and established a kingdom in Damascus. (I Kings 11:17-25). Solomon not only struggled with his new adversaries as a result of his failure to follow through with God's will, but his internal taxation system was cumbersome on his citizens, which resulted in a revolt after his death by the ten northern tribes and the dismantlement of the united Israelite kingdom under his son Rehoboam (Green 157). Although the later part of Solomon's kingdom is remembered negatively due to his onerous taxes and infidel practices, Solomon is remembered throughout history as a charismatic leader whose diplomacy, wisdom, and outward focused economic development enabled Israel to expand its influence throughout the Near East.

Evaluating Solomon Through the Theoretical Lens

Solomon exemplifies a ruler who garnered a tremendous amount of soft power for Israel throughout his kingship; however, Solomon highlights the potential downfalls that may come when too much emphasis is placed on foreign relations and acquiring soft power without ensuring domestic tranquility. Soft power, as explained by Joseph Nye, is the ability to get others to want the outcomes you want and to attract and persuade (Nye 5, 11). In order to persuade other countries to have desires and goals in line with a country through soft power, the culture must be attractive to others, the country must adhere to their political values, and their foreign politics should be legitimate and have moral authority (*ibid.* 11). Solomon was able to amass tremendous soft power for Israel during his kingship by making Israel an extremely attractive country through diplomatic marriages with great powers, having tremendous wisdom and character, an impressive domestic taxation mechanism, and building a robust and renowned temple. However, Solomon focused primarily on the first element of acquiring soft power through attractive culture and failed to develop a country that adhered to its values by straying from the will of God, which ultimately led to the downfall of his kingdom.

Solomon begins his rule by building and establishing the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. He is known as a man of the people, with citizens coming to him for advice and to hear his vast wisdom. He is well loved by his constituents and by the world at large. However, when Solomon begins to turn his focus too outwardly, Professor Smadar Rosensweig explains that this helps contribute to Solomon's downfall as a leader⁸. When a leader focuses too heavily on acquiring soft power and diplomacy and fails to ensure that the domestic quality of his country is high,

⁸ In her course Personality in Kings in Stern College for Women

there is immense disconnect between the leader and his constituents, which effects the internal morale. Once Solomon began to lose focus on his constituents and turn his focus towards his foreign relationships and materialism, Israel no longer wholly adhered to their values, which is detrimental to a country's image and soft power. Additionally, when a leader is viewed in a negative light, the image of the country is negatively affected as well. This phenomenon was recently exemplified during the presidency of Donald Trump. When most countries began to view Trump more negatively than the preceding President Barak Obama, the global confidence in America declined (Wike, Richard, et al. 2017). Trump's low approval rating from the global community directly translated in a loss of soft power for America. Similarly for Solomon, as his adherence to values and the will of God declined, the soft power and attractiveness of Israel's culture declined. Although Solomon's soft power failed to garner lasting influence for Israel with the breakdown of his kingship commencing with his son, while Solomon adhered to moral values and will of God, he positioned Israel as one of the greatest regional hegemons in the Near East through acquiring tremendous amounts of soft power through diplomatic marriages, his character, and infrastructure developments. However, for soft power to be lasting and meaningful, the leader must be good, and the image of the country must be maintained.

Evaluating the Political Success of David and Solomon

David and Solomon are both remembered as some of the greatest kings of Israel. However, both of their kingships had extremely different focuses, strengths, and weaknesses. David was focused on creating and establishing the most prominent kingdom possible. He endeavored to create an extremely powerful and secure country by embodying offensive realism through diplomatic relationships, military strength, and land acquisition.

Through these mechanisms of acquiring greater regional influence, Israel established itself as a prominent regional hegemon. Through offensive realism, Israel acquired a tremendous amount of hard power, where they were able to affect countries and change the political landscape according to their will. Therefore, through the perspective of international relations, where power is the most important qualifier of success, David was an extremely successful king.

Like David, Solomon is also known to have been an extremely triumphant king. Solomon established a tremendous name for Israel through acquiring immense soft power by engaging in diplomatic relationships with great powers, which caused other states to balance with Israel. Additionally, Solomon increased regard for Israel through his esteemed character and profound, God-bestowed wisdom, the building of the temple, and the tax infrastructure he established. However, despite all of the successes of Solomon and the soft power he acquired, because he was unable to maintain consistency in the moral standard of his kingdom, his soft power declined, and as a result his kingdom lost power and led to the ultimate decline of his dynasty. While soft power is an important tool in gaining political power, without either hard power to back up the soft power or a consistent political ruler, soft power is not enough to sustain a kingdom and is much more fickle than hard power. Through analyzing the complexities of David and Solomon's kingships, modern theory is able to shed light on the motivations and complexities of kingdoms from prior millennia and help explain the dynamic policies and the power balances of ancient Near East.

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