

Introduction

We princes ... are set upon stages, in the sight and view of the world.
Queen Elizabeth II

It is almost impossible to think about international affairs without invoking the major figures involved and their distinguishing character traits. How else can the Sicilian Expedition (AD 415–413) be understood, its audacious planning and catastrophic failure, if not seen as the product of Alcibiades' daring and Nicias' paralyzing caution? Can we make sense of the onset of World War II without considering Hitler's imperial ambition? Or understand its final resolution without summing his strategic blunders, or Churchill's steadfast resolve and prudence? Are both Gulf Wars fathomable without Saddam Hussein's lust for regional dominance and overestimations of his strength? Could a 'Bush Doctrine' have emerged in the aftermath of a Gore administration's 9/11?

In this book I explore what has become a neglected topic in the contemporary study of international politics: the role of statesmanship. Prevailing realist, rational choice, and personality theories of international relations conceive of leadership too narrowly. The realist perspective subjects all political leaders to the same functional necessity, state survival in the international system, thus limiting their scope of autonomous action. Rational choice theories attribute leaders' preferences to the domestic political system, the constituencies they are beholden to, and assume that their foreign policies are universally motivated by their desire to gain and remain in power. These abstract models of action, particularly foreign policy action, based on the assumption of self-interest and the calculation of cost and benefits, provide overly simplistic explanations of leader behavior. Moreover, this theoretical gap is poorly addressed by existing theories that tend to emphasize the idiosyncratic role of personalities.

I argue that each approach neglects the crucial role of leaders' political ambition. I develop a theory of transformative ambition to describe leaders who, motivated by a particular political and moral understanding,

seek to change and redefine their domestic polity and use foreign policy as a means to achieve domestic ends. Drawing on Aristotle's idea of magnanimity and Niccolò Machiavelli's lessons to princes through his examples of great founders, I examine the character traits that surround and amplify transformative ambition. I argue that these leaders are guided by their desires and beliefs about what can be accomplished through international politics. They are not blind to constraints, but use their state capabilities and the art of statesmanship to shape their societies and the world. Through the force of their initiative, personalities, and the practice of statesmanship, leaders with transformative ambition try to accomplish great goals despite international and domestic constraints. When successful they manage to change the conventions and rules of domestic and international politics and (re)set the relations between states.

THE PROBLEM OF AMBITION

I begin with the crucial but undeveloped idea in foreign policy theories that a leader's political ambition matters. Political ambition in international politics can manifest in war, diplomacy, empire, and the normative and legal shaping of the international order: Hitler's will to dominate Europe and promote his radical ideology through aggressive expansion; Churchill's great desire to practice statesmanship in order to save Britain and the rest of the world from the dangers of Nazism and tyranny; Woodrow Wilson's grand moral hope to practice international leadership by transforming the anarchic order into a moral and legalistic one; Mikhail Gorbachev's stunning reversal of the Soviet Union's traditional Cold War foreign relations through his policy of 'New Thinking,' an attempt at reform via conciliatory policies with the West and loosening the Soviet Union's grip on Eastern Europe. Pericles channeled his enormous aims into a vision of Athens as an imperial ruler and civilizing force in the Greek world. Alcibiades' ambition, on the other hand, knew no bounds; filled with a desire to achieve greatness through unlimited imperial expansion, he lacked Pericles' patriotism, not to mention his prudence.

Ambition is not just a drive but a complex phenomenon because it is highly individualistic but, to some degree, is also nurtured by the leader's domestic regime. Constitutions, social mores, and the passions and habits of the polity favor particular qualities in their leaders and so

have a hand in shaping and constraining political ambition. At the same time, it is on account of what I call transformative political ambition that leaders seek to transcend the constraints of domestic politics by bringing in new modes and orders, transforming and redefining existing constitutions, or shaping the polity's moral and political understanding. These kinds of leaders turn to international affairs to accomplish their ambitions and find it quite necessary to rise above the limits of the international environment as well. Domestically, transformative ambition surpasses the desire for political survival, and such leaders seek to change the concrete political and material elements of a regime.

So what is the nature of ambition, where does it come from, and what effect does it have on leaders' political behavior? From the perspective of individual psychology, ambition is a product of unconscious motives and personal experiences. Seen in this way, it is the displacement of unconscious emotional needs upon public objects. As such, its origin is very idiosyncratic. Yet, ambition in political life, unlike other forms, is both personal and public. Once in power, the less ambitious remain satisfied with their posts, while others may set their sights beyond political power. This book pays particular attention to the idea that transformative ambition not only differs in degree but also in kind. This categorical difference is clearly and forcefully articulated by Abraham Lincoln (1953 [1992]) in his Lyceum Address, which he gave at the age of 28:

Many great and good men sufficiently qualified for any task they should undertake, may ever be found, whose ambition would inspire to nothing beyond a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair; but such belong not to the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle. What! Think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon? Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored. It sees no distinction in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It scorns to tread in the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen.

Lincoln draws our attention to those individuals with boundless ambition and the spiritedness to go with it; only bold and path-breaking political actions that increase their power and glory can satisfy them. Lincoln understood such transcendent desire for eternal renown that is achieved through worldly accomplishments. Figures such as Alcibiades and Napoleon displayed the restive and grand ambition of the family of the

lion and tribe of the eagle. Each leader possessed great ambition and set his sights beyond the bounds of his context but lacked magnanimity, a rare virtue that may be coupled with grand ambition. It is this combination of grand ambition and virtue that is the cornerstone of transformative ambition.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICAL AMBITION

The political leaders that I examine here are cut from the same fabric as Lincoln's 'tribe of the eagle' because they try to make bold and sweeping changes to domestic and international politics in order to accomplish a principled aim for their countries. Their ambition and concomitant behavior cannot be explained by current political-science theories that posit political necessity as the source of behavior. Since such acts of transformation are rarely necessary, I take an alternative approach and make the case that some of history's leaders have purposely tried to change the course of politics. On account of their ambition and statesmanship, they gained a mastery over politics and transformed their political environments.

Leaders with transformative ambition are moved by principles, such as the establishment of a new political regime, the defense of free politics, and desire to raise the rank of one's nation, which drive them to boldly reshape fundamental features of domestic society. In order to accomplish such tasks, they may seek to reorder domestic institutions, to propose new policies and establish new doctrines, and to rethink the ideals that animate their countries. A leader with transformative ambition feels elevated by a grand goal or project and therefore tries to infuse ordinary politics with nobler purposes by pushing the regime's political and moral elements further, challenging, and elevating them toward that which has not yet been realized.

One way that this is achieved is by the proper articulation of a leader's goals. The leaders with transformative ambition that I concentrate on accomplished their goals by making appropriate use of oratory, whose purpose is 'to describe the people as they are in such a way as to inspire them to be what they should be' (Newell, 2009, p. 51). Leaders such as Pericles of Athens and Charles de Gaulle aimed for a redefinition of the national character that not only influenced citizens' beliefs but also shaped their habits and practices. However, empirically, I am interested in a more specific political transformation, the kind that ties

the success of domestic goals to foreign policy. Thus, transformative ambition manifests itself on two levels: the leader's ability to foster domestic and international institutions while they also prepare the polity for a psychological and moral acceptance of the new domestic and international orders they seek.

Although I argue that leaders' ambition is a unique quality that catalyzes historical change, I closely examine how leaders develop their unique attributes and art of leadership within the context of their regimes. I focus mainly on leaders who have risen to the pantheon of great statesmen and pay careful attention to how they engaged in the rough and tumble politics of their days. Even when scrutinized in relation to their regimes, my analysis shows that leaders with transformative ambition still managed to introduce new political ideas and novel practices that changed the established principles and customs that had governed their nations' domestic politics as well as the structure of global affairs.

Transformative ambition needs content and direction, which flows from a leader's personal ambitions, his moral opinions, and political deliberation about the challenges and opportunities presented to him. In this book, I do not make the simple distinction between self-interested leaders and public-spirited ones. Leaders with transformative ambition often combine a desire for personal achievements with service to the common good, as they understand it. From time immemorial, leaders with grand ambition have sought stages on which their virtues may shine. The leaders with transformative ambition examined here tend to manifest this dualism: they are genuinely moved by public service and the common weal, but they also seek their self-satisfaction. As Waller Newell has deftly observed, in politics outstanding personalities confront the greatest issues and crises of their eras while also pursuing great honors through preeminent public service (2009, pp. 26–8).

Through Aristotle's idea of magnanimity, I provide a model of leadership that demonstrates how self-regarding leaders reconcile their great personal ambition with the demands of public-minded statesmanship. Magnanimous leaders aspire to great honors and wish to act on a grand scale, but they often have a sober view of power; they limit their honor seeking to the kind that can also be dedicated to justice. Although their ambition is dedicated to the grandeur of their nations, their strength of character and prudence of judgment provides them with the capacity to think and act at a distance from ordinary citizens. The ability to remove themselves from quotidian matters and base self-interest enables them to

translate their ambition into a productive vision that can transform the existing elements and principles of a regime toward greater and nobler purposes.

To illustrate the Aristotelian dimension of transformative ambition, I discuss the example of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle channeled his ambition toward public service; he sought to transform the state through the promotion of a distinct French unity, achieved by pursuing national greatness. He turned deliberately toward foreign policy to increase the nation's glory, its prestige, and a shared sense of national purpose. He believed that the success of domestic transformation, de Gaulle's idea of French unity, resided in elaborating a grand foreign policy. In the Cold War era that was divided into two blocs, de Gaulle sought to recapture French grandeur for the sake of unity. He did this by increasing France's international role by transforming the global order at the margins: he attacked the Cold War status quo, made inroads into the Third World, and sought to maximize France's influence and freedom of maneuver despite the fact that its relative power did not warrant such a forceful foreign policy.

My key examples of transformative ambition, Charles de Gaulle and Pericles, show how leaders can be the driving force for political change in their regimes and they often deliberately turn to foreign policy to achieve their ambitions. I argue that these leaders are not blind to the conditions that international relations impose on states and that they use artful diplomacy and harness their states' capabilities to pursue innovative and beneficial transformation of their nations. Through their actions, moreover, the world of states is partly of their own making, reflecting their ideas about what the world is like and how it should be.

AMBITION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, LEADERSHIP STUDIES AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: CARVING A MIDDLE GROUND

In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I examine neorealism, institutional theories that assume leaders are motivated foremost by a concern for political survival, and personality theories that assume that the motivations influencing foreign policy are the product of psychological idiosyncrasies. In Chapters 4 and 5, I place my idea of transformative political ambition within theories of moral and political leadership as discussed by leadership scholars and political philosophers. Lastly, in Chapters 6 and 7, I

apply my theory of transformative political ambition to a sustained case study of Pericles.

For realists, states have to protect themselves from other states because no other state or governing body will do so. In this sense, all states perform the same functions for their citizens, and leaders represent the authoritative voice of the state in foreign policy. As a result, realists argue that a unitary state should be assumed in matters pertaining to international politics. In a realist world, the state's motivation for survival is a leader's too. Political ambition is coupled with the leader's obligation to respond to the demands imposed on the state by anarchy. Realist leaders select foreign policies while working in the realm of 'high politics,' which means that they worry about the international environment, and state security is the overriding preoccupation of their statecraft.

In Chapter 1, I argue that realists' portrayal of Bismarck as a quintessential realist fails to do justice to his statesmanship and ambition, which had a profound effect on the state, geopolitics, and the rules and practices of statecraft. Bismarck's political skill and genius was unmatched. He accomplished extraordinary changes not only by outmaneuvering domestic and foreign rivals, but also by taking it upon himself to apply a novel scientific outlook to international politics. Bismarck held to the notion that in the service of the state an amoral concept of power was required in the practice of domestic and international politics. He introduced *Realpolitik*, which prioritized power and opportunity over ideology. By abandoning established rules and beliefs, he led Germany toward unification. In the process, Bismarck radically reshaped the geopolitical landscape in Europe, revolutionized diplomacy, and overturned the established rules that had held the international order together. Although he transformed Germany and Europe, I do not classify him as a leader with transformative ambition because his statecraft was not animated by any moral principle. However, Bismarck had a complicated view of politics and I examine it closely in order to discern the content of his ambition.

Rational choice theorists that focus on the effect of domestic institutions are skeptical of realism's depiction of 'high politics' and argue that political leaders are not only beholden to the state, but to themselves and their desire to remain in power. No matter which political regime is under observation, these theorists assume that leaders are always intent on maintaining power. As a result, their policy preferences are not independent of the citizens who are in command of the institutions that select them into power.

Chapter 2 critically examines the theory of strategic political survival, which assumes that the ambition of democratic and autocratic leaders is strategic because they practice statecraft with a view to satisfy the preferences of citizens who control their political fates. The incentives of political actors at the level of 'low politics' are the most influential factors in political decisions. I critique this view by turning to Niccolò Machiavelli's *Prince*, which speaks directly to leaders who found new regimes or refound existing ones. I reexamine cases of political leaders, particularly in Latin America, that either subvert existing political institutions or create them from the ground up.

Finally, personality scholars think that political ambition reflects behavior that is based on psychological needs, the most pervasive of which is the need for power although the need for approval and affiliation are also prevalent. For these theorists, ambition precedes political life because it is a function of psychological needs and drives that are well developed long before leaders enter politics. Strong internal motives combine with personality traits and produce individual orientations that determine leaders' behavior in international politics. For personality scholars, foreign policy behavior is largely idiosyncratic: personal characteristics affect their foreign policy behavior. In Chapter 3, I examine the personality approach's study of leadership by turning to its classic application of Woodrow Wilson's personality and foreign policy, specifically his role in the failed ratification of the League of Nations Treaty in the United States Senate. I am critical of the view that Wilson's political personality was one that was defined by compensating for low self-esteem, which led to the failed ratification of the League of Nations. Rather, I argue that personality scholars fail to understand that Wilson's intractability with the Senate was not a function of a flawed personality as much as his desire to do immortal work, and he used prerogative and his belief in presidential rhetoric to try and achieve this goal.

The nature of political ambition and the problems it poses in politics and to societies are major subjects in political thought and are broached by classical and modern thinkers. In Chapter 4, I show how the idea of transformative political ambition is distinct from theories of transformational leadership. I specifically critique James Macgregor Burns' (1978) theory of transformational leadership, which is widely considered to be the foundational work for modern leadership studies. The critique contains three parts: the problem with the idea that leaders elevate values and aim to achieve self-actualization; Burns' insufficient treat-

ment of political ambition and how it is shaped and expressed in regimes, and his neglect of how leaders act differently in both domestic and international contexts.

For Burns, there is a difference between individuals who hold positions of power and leaders. He views leaders as visionary moral guides who are capable of transforming the lives of followers. In this sense, Burns and I share a common ground. Leaders are not merely reactive; rather they are purposeful and may try to accomplish the highest political goals despite their constraints. Yet, I understand purposeful leadership through the perspective of political theory. I argue that political ambition, a leader's moral compass, and intention for transformation are tied in complicated ways to the particular regime.

The regime determines the goals of a society; it both influences and is affected by leadership. The relationship between political ambition and the study of regimes raises normative questions about justice and the proper role of leadership within a government. Thus, while Burns seeks a general theory of leadership, I argue that leadership aimed at moral and institutional change must be examined in the fine grain of regime politics, especially when the change is political. Leaders that possess transformative ambition in politics are spurred by a combination of personal and public concerns. Leaders want political power and need it to get things done. However, scholars tend to simplify ambition as an impulsive desire for power or as a calculated interest in political power that is held by rational and self-interested individuals. I do not argue against the plausibility of these claims.

However, I propose that individual ambition can have a public scope beyond private aggrandizement. Leaders can seek honor that is gained from the esteem of respectable citizens. When leaders seek some public recognition, it can lead them to refuse power for its own sake. Moreover, such aspirations can result in leaders bearing themselves with responsibility toward office. Responsibility does not amount to a denial of ambition, but it does enable some leaders to distinguish between their sense of worthiness and the limits that political power presents to fulfilling their ambition. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Aristotle's idea of magnanimity helps us to understand how leaders with transformative ambition hold high notions of their merit and a desire for greatness while also permitting them to consider moral goals, such as duty and justice, in their self-assessments. Aristotle's magnanimous man represents a leader of great ambition who acts for great political purposes and simultaneously restrains himself from overstepping his regime's laws.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I illustrate Pericles of Athens as a representative case study of a leader with transformative ambition who restrained the power-seeking motive and showed both great ambition and magnanimity, which I contrast with Donald Kagan's (2009) biography of Pericles. In Chapter 6, through the example of Pericles, I demonstrate how the interaction of personal characteristics and regime politics indelibly shapes some leader attributes. Ancient Athens fostered an environment where the better qualities of individuals could flourish, which enabled some of its leaders to stand above the morass of politics. Athens produced leaders who were very competitive, cunning, and bold. They were molded by the empire's ascendance, and they behaved in ways that added to its glory and strength.

Pericles possessed superior leadership qualities, virtues, and the inner sense of greatness and his worth. With his sights set on political goals that did justice to his pride and notions of dignity, he found that the opportunity to fulfill his ambitions arose through energetic service to the city. Pericles was superior to his contemporaries in many ways. He was a natural imperialist like other leaders, but he acted as an independent force in policy and was able to shape and curb his followers' political aims. Thus, he could define the Athenian imperial project in a way he believed was both sustainable and did justice to the Athenian character. Pericles was acutely aware that the democratic regime he helped bring into being had a distinct daring character, which was both the source of Athens' imperial success and a potential security risk.

Chapter 7 examines Pericles international leadership, specifically how his vision of Athenian democracy gave shape to Athens's imperial project. Pericles had the difficult task of managing an expanding empire's power. He did his best to turn the desire for expansion and wealth toward Athens' more noble activities, such as political participation, public works, and philosophical and aesthetic achievement. Moreover, his diplomatic decisions were instrumental in precipitating the war against Sparta and his military strategy revolutionized the conduct of ancient Greek warfare. Pericles met an untimely end, however, and much of his project was undermined by lesser leaders, who could not lead the democracy after his death. In this last chapter, I raise issue with the longevity and unintended effects of the projects inaugurated by leaders with transformative ambition.