

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

2019

Lions, and Dragons, and Wolves (Oh my): A Study of the Series "Game of Thrones" and Political Theory

Emily Manus

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [American Popular Culture Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Manus, Emily, "Lions, and Dragons, and Wolves (Oh my): A Study of the Series "Game of Thrones" and Political Theory" (2019). *Honors Theses*. 717.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/717

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Lions, and Dragons, and Wolves (Oh my): a Study of the
Series *Game of Thrones*”**

written by

Emily Manus

and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Professor Sarah Smith, thesis director

Dr. Johnny Wink, second reader

Dr. Steve Thomason, third reader

Dr. Barbara Pemberton, Honors Program director

Date

Lions and Dragons and Wolves

(oh my)

A Study of the Television Series *Game of Thrones* and Political
Theory

Emily Manus

Professor Sarah Smith

The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, THE PRINCE

Introduction

Game of Thrones has a reputation of being unpredictable. Fans watch in anticipation as their beloved characters face dangerous situations, not knowing if they will make it our alive or not. No character is safe. While this reputation, may lead one to think that there is no way to know what characters will do and how they will react to certain circumstances, if one looks at them through the sphere of political theory and ethics, one can possibly piece together what actions characters will take and what outcome these actions could possibly have. Looking at the characters through these lenses, provides insight into their leadership styles and also allows one to analyze why they have been successful or not.

What has allowed certain characters to flourish while others fail? Their abilities to gain and maintain power. In *Game of Thrones*, several kings have met their demise as have many notable lords and ladies. Having a title does not guarantee you protection or power. This has been noted several times throughout the series by both characters of the show and critics. When Tyrion remarks to his father, Tywin, about how he had sent King Joffrey, the most powerful man in Westeros to bed without his supper after he has an outburst, Twin replies, "You are a fool if you think he is the most powerful man in Westeros." Simply having a title does not give you power.

Lord Varys also contests in the series about how power lies where people believe it lies. In this series, while many people make claims for the throne, none of them necessarily have a

legitimate claim or the strongest claim. Both Jon and Daenerys have claims to the Iron Throne under the Targaryen line, which had been usurped by Robert Baratheon. King Joffrey and King Tommen have claims under Robert as his supposed children, while Stannis and Renly Baratheon have claims as his brothers if they can prove Robert's children are not his. However, since there is no certain line, this also gives others the opportunity to seize the throne or to break out as their own kingdom as the North and the Iron Islands try to do.

Game of Thrones is a show filled with the rise and the fall of leaders. Throughout its current seven seasons, the players of the game have routinely changed, shifting the power dynamics. While many people and houses have come and gone, three houses have stood strong: Stark, Lannister, and Targaryen. The current leaders of these respective houses, Jon Snow, Cersei Lannister, and Daenerys Targaryen, have all overcome many obstacles to gain and hold power. Under the scope of several renowned political theorists and sociologists, this paper will analyze the perspective strengths and weaknesses of these leaders, as well as, how these traits and decisions they have made will affect their likelihood to sit on the Iron Throne.

Fire and Blood: Daenerys Targaryen

The Fall of the Dragon

Prior to the start of the series, House Targaryen came to Westeros from Valyria, a great city in Essos renowned for its power and dragons. However, a few years after the Targaryen family left, Valyria was destroyed. This made house Targaryen the owner of the world's only known dragons (A Wiki of Ice and Fire).

In Essos, Aegon Targaryen I launched the War of Conquest. This united the North, the Riverlands, the Vale, the Westerlands, the Stormlands, and the Reach. Later the Kingdom of

Dorne, would also join them, creating the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. House Targaryen ruled the Seven Kingdoms for nearly 300 years after this (A Wiki of Ice and Fire).

However, House Targaryen effectively became extinct following Robert's Rebellion. Robert Baratheon started a war against the Targaryens, following his fiancée's Lyanna Stark's believed kidnapping and rape at the hands of Rhaegar Targaryen, the heir to the Iron Throne.

Rhaegar's father, King Aerys, became increasingly mad, likely a consequence of his incestuous background. When Lyanna's brother, Brandon, comes to demand his sister's freedom, he burns Brandon's father, Rickard Stark, the Warden of the North, alive and kills the others, without a trial. This eventually leads to the houses Baratheon, Stark, Tully, and Arryn uniting together in rebellion against the King.

As the war turns in favor of Robert Baratheon, House Lannister, which had remained neutral, sacks King's Landing, the capital city, in the name of King Robert. The Mad King orders his two remaining King's guards, including Jaime Lannister, to ignite the city with wildfire and instructs Jaime to kill his father, Tywin. To save the city, Jaime kills the other King's guard and then the Mad King.

Rhaegar Targaryen is killed in combat and his wife and two children are murdered during the sack of King's Landing. The only remaining Targaryens after the rebellion are Daenerys and Viserys, the surviving children of the Mad King, who are forced to flee into exile and, Aemon Targaryen, who had sworn his life to service in the Night's Watch.

A Dragon is Not a Slave

The series begins with Daenerys Targaryen and her brother Viserys living in exile in Essos, where she faces many hardships. Her brother, who is cruel and abusive to her, forces her

into a marriage with Khal Drogo, in return for the help of the Dothraki people to retake the Iron Throne. However, this would be a difficult feat, as the Dothraki had never crossed the sea, which they would have to do to invade Westeros.

Daenerys has a hard time adjusting to life with the Khalessar. She does not speak Dothraki, isolating her from most of the people, including her husband. One of her few allies is Jorah Mormont, a noble from Westeros who was exiled for selling poachers into slavery. He pledges himself to Viserys and his cause to retake the Iron Throne. He befriends Daenerys and shows her kindness at a time when she feels very lonely.

After the wedding, Viserys waits anxiously for the Dothraki to depart for Westeros and becomes impatient. He sees them as a brutal, barbaric civilization and does not respect their culture. He becomes increasingly angry and begins to take his physical outbursts out on Daenerys.

When Daenerys commands the Khalessar to stop one day during their travels, Viserys is infuriated that she commanded him and attempts to strike her. He is stopped by one of her guards who wraps a whip around his neck, choking him. He offers to kill Viserys; however, she insists she does not want her brother harmed. Viserys then demands that Jorah, who has pledged himself to Viserys, kill the guard, but Jorah refuses to do so.

Soon after this, Viserys realizes that Drogo has no intention of helping him retake the Iron Throne and attempts to leave with Daenerys's three dragon eggs, intending to sell them so he can buy a ship. However, he is thwarted by Jorah, who says that he can leave, but that he cannot take the eggs. Viserys counters that Jorah has sworn an oath to him and implores whether

loyalty means nothing to him. Jorah counters that loyalty means everything to him, showing that he is loyal to Daenerys, not Viserys.

Fire Cannot Kill a Dragon

Viserys becomes even more irrational as he has no available means to help him retake the Iron Throne. During a Dothraki feast, he bursts in uninvited and has an outburst, threatening to cut Daenerys's unborn son out of her womb if he does not get the crown he was promised. Khal Drogo says that he will get the golden crown he was promised and has him killed with Daenerys's approval by placing a burning pot of gold on his head ("A Golden Crown").

Viserys's death makes Daenerys the rightful heir to the Iron Throne. This establishes her as a traditional authority in Westeros. A traditional authority figure is one who seemingly has a right to rule or lead based upon an established principle such as a succession to the crown (Williams The fact that Daenerys is now the rightful heir, and not Viserys, gives Khal Drogo a better purpose to use the Dothraki to take the Iron Throne, as she is his wife and carries his child, who would be the heir to the Iron Throne.

While at first Drogo is still reluctant to invade Westeros, as he sees no reason a Khal needs an iron chair, his mind changes after an assassin tries to poison Daenerys but is thwarted by Jorah ("You Win or You Die"). After this, he declares that the Dothraki will cross the Narrow Sea and reclaim the throne of Daenerys's father for his son. His people, who are at first afraid to cross the sea, become exhilarated hearing of how they will conquer Westeros and how Drogo's son will be the Stallion who Mounts the World.

Not a Queen, but a Khaleesi

Daenerys, at first an outsider, becomes a beloved Khaleesi of the Dothraki and comes to truly love Khal Drogo. She respects their culture and soon becomes fluent in the language. She goes so far to eat the heart of a stallion in order to prove her loyalty to the Dothraki (“A Golden Crown”). However, while she respects their culture and beliefs, she does institute some landmark changes.

One of the most revolutionary things she changes is the way the Dothraki treat women. A nomad culture, the Dothraki are infamous for travelling around pillaging villages and raping the women they come across. This outrages Daenerys and she demands that they stop raping women and instead marry them. Khal Drogo stands with his wife and declares that the men will no longer rape the women of the villages they pillage.

Instituting change is a difficult feat and Daenerys struggles with getting all the people to go along with the changes she wants to implement. Those in power are usually at an advantage by how things are and those who would benefit by the change, lack the power to do anything about it. Many of the men of the Khalessar are outraged at Daenerys that they are no longer allowed to rape the women, while the women do not strongly voice their support for this change either. “It should be borne in mind that there is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order, and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new” (Machiavelli, 34). However, Daenerys is able to quash any objections because Khal Drogo, whom the men of the Khalessar respect and recognize as an authority figure, supports her.

However while most of the men respect Khal Drogo, his decision to support Daenerys’s decision that the men shall no longer rape women does anger many of the Dothraki men, who see

it as an insult to their culture. Raping the women has always been something they have done and is considered a reward for the men who take the villages. One man goes so far to challenge Drogo for the title of Khal as a result of Daenerys's changes. Drogo accepts the challenge and kills the man in combat ("The Pointy End"). However, not all is well, as Drogo suffers a wound that eventually leads to his death.

As his health declines, the Dothraki leave Drogo behind; they follow the strongest man. Jorah warns Daenerys that they should leave, as she will likely be killed by those who seek to be the next Khal, but she refuses to leave her husband. Daenerys does all she can to save him, but it is hopeless. She is pregnant with his child, who has been prophesized to be the Stallion who would Mount the World, but his child will not automatically become the Khal after Drogo's death as the Dothraki do not honor blood-ruling lines. She goes so far as to consult the help of a witch, who helps keep Drogo alive, but the magic she uses to prevent him from dying comes at a price ("Baelor"). Daenerys miscarries her child as a result since it is blood magic, as it requires a blood sacrifice. Daenerys believes Drogo's horse is the sacrifice, but it is actually her and Drogo's unborn child. While Drogo is alive, he is unable to do anything and is miserable. Daenerys has to smother him in order to put him out of his misery ("Fire and Blood").

During Drogo's funeral, Daenerys lies next to him as they light his funeral pyre. She has seemingly lost everything. She has lost her beloved husband and unborn child and with them any chance she had of having the support of the Dothraki to take back the Iron Throne. She also lays the three dragon eggs she was gifted at her wedding on the pyre with her. Everyone fears that she will burn to death and Jorah tries to stop her. However, she clings to a vision she's had of the dragons being born in the fire and trusts that it will come true.

The next day, Daenerys rises from the pyre unburnt and with three live dragons (“Fire and Blood”). She becomes Daenerys the unburnt, mother of dragons. This sets her up to become a seemingly mystic, supernatural being. This attribute helps to classify her as a charismatic leader as defined by Max Weber. Weber defines charisma as a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities (Williams). This wins over the Dothraki after the death of Khal Drogo. It shows them that she was not just a girl with a title, but something more. This leads the Dothraki to follow her.

When a Khal dies, his surviving Khaleesi is sent to live with the other widowed Khaleesies of the Dothraki, while the strongest man becomes the new Khal. However, when Daenerys rises from the flames with three dragons, her power compels all the men in the village to follow her. This is a break from tradition. The Dothraki have never followed a woman or a foreigner until now.

Breaker of Chains

Daenerys begins to lead the Dothraki on a quest to find more soldiers and aid, so that she can invade Westeros and reclaim the Iron Throne. However, she is greatly disturbed by the mistreatment of the people in the cities she travels through. She decides to put her own ambitions aside in order to help free the people.

Her first landmark act comes when she frees the Unsullied, a powerful army made up of eunuch slaves. She meets with their master and agrees to give one of her dragons to him in exchange for Unsullied soldiers. However, once the exchange takes place, she has her dragon burn the master alive and gives the Unsullied their freedom. After she frees them, they choose to

follow her, greatly increasing her power and strength. She then has the Unsullied kill all the slave masters in the city, effectively freeing all the slaves in Astaphor (“And Now His Watch is Ended”).

Daenerys proves her ability to manipulate during this interaction by misleading the slave master. “Everyone will appreciate how admirable it is for a ruler to keep his word and be honest rather than deceitful. However, in our own times we've had examples of leaders who've done great things without worrying too much about keeping their word. Outwitting opponents with their cunning, these men achieved more than leaders who behaved honestly” (Machiavelli, 107). If Daenerys had not done this, she would not have been able to have a big enough army and would not have been able to conquer the free cities and then eventually set sail for Westeros. While her manipulation may be seen as dishonorable by viewers, the master was a cruel person. Daenerys does not feel the need to treat slave masters with respect as they disrespect mankind.

After freeing Astaphor's slaves, she marches her army to a neighboring city, Yunkai, which is also a slave city. Yunkai has hired the Second Sons to defend the city and they send someone to kill Daenerys before they suffer the same fate as Astaphor. However, the man they send, Daario Naharis, cannot bring himself to kill her as he finds her inspirational. Instead he chops off the heads of the lieutenants of the Second Sons and pledges the Second Sons to her cause (“Second Sons”). Daenerys then conquers the city and frees the slaves, who call her *mhysa*, meaning mother (“*Mhysa*”).

Her identity as *mhysa* to the freed slaves creates an image of her as a savior. This makes the slaves see her as a charismatic authority. The idea with a charismatic authority is that the person possesses divine qualities, that normal humans do not have (Williams). Daenerys freed them from slavery, which to them was an impossible feat.

Daenerys then marches on the last city in Slaver's Bay, Mereen. During this journey, she is horrified to find child slaves crucified every mile from Yunkai to Mereen ("Two Swords"). At each post, she has her soldiers take the child's corpse down to give him or her a proper burial. When she arrives in Mereen, she takes over the city by inciting a slave rebellion.

Once she has taken power in Mereen, she executes 163 former slave masters to grant justice to the 163 slave children they crucified, despite being warned by one of her advisors, Ser Barristan Selmy, that this action could backfire ("Oathkeeper"). One of the slave masters' sons come to Daenerys and pleads for mercy. She argues that since they showed the children no mercy, so she will show them no mercy. She has the slave masters crucified, so they can die the agonizing death they condemned the children to. She also discovers that Jorah was originally spying on her for Robert Baratheon and exiles him, despite him admitting that while this was true, he grew to care for her and support her cause ("The Mountain and the Viper").

Breaking the Wheel

While Daenerys succeeds in conquering cities, she struggles with ruling and holding power. The former slave masters form a resistance movement called the Sons of the Harpy, which aims to assassinate her. She also starts to lose the support of several of the slaves she has freed after publicly executing one of her counselors who killed one of the Sons of the Harpy who was in their captivity ("The House of Black and White"). In an attempt to restore peace, she reopens the fighting pits and decides that she will marry a Mereen nobleman, Hizdhar zo Loraq ("Kill the Boy"). The fighting pits are one of the few things that the freed slaves and masters both seemed to enjoy and are a big part of the culture of Mereen. While Daenerys find it barbaric, she agrees to open it, hoping it will bring peace. She decides to marry Hizdhar zo Loraq

since he is an established Mereen noble, who would help her foster peace with the other nobles, while still enacting changes.

While Daenerys takes these measures to bring peace between the Mereen nobles and freed slaves, she still faces fierce backlash from the former slave owners and does her originally strong support from the freed slaves begins to wane. “The innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new” (Machiavelli, 34). Daenerys once again struggles with instituting change. Whenever she sees a moral issue, she wants to put it to an immediate end; however, she soon learns that this is not the best way to produce change, as it causes chaos and discord. The previous slave masters see the freed slaves as stolen property. They are angry about what Daenerys has done and want to execute her. While at first, Daenerys seems to have strong support from the freed slaves, this support begins to waver as many of them are even more impoverished now than when they were enslaved.

It is also harder for her to institute changes without the support of either legal or traditional authority. With the Dothraki, while she did encounter some pushback to the changes she instituted, she had the backing of Khal Drogo, who had traditional authority and the respect of the Dothraki people. She does not have this in Mereen. Even after marrying a Meereen nobleman, she still does not have this same support, as he is not a strong, central figure with a lot of influence and power as Khal Drogo was.

At the opening of the fighting pits, Jorah appears with Tyrion Lannister, who has fled Westeros after killing his father (“The Gift”). She makes Tyrion part of her counsel, but once again exiles Jorah, as she still feels betrayed by him (“Hardhome”). However, after Jorah saves her from an assassination attempt, she regains her trust in him. The Sons of the Harpy then

launch an attack at the pit and kill several freedmen and Mereen nobles, including her betrothed. She is cornered by the sons, when one of her dragons, Drogon, appears and kills most of the Sons. The Unsullied are then able to overcome the Sons, but as the sons began to throw spears at Drogon, Daenerys climbs on his back to fly him to safety ("The Dance of Dragons").

Drogon then flies to the Dothraki Sea and leaves Daenerys there. Eventually, Daenerys is discovered to be a widow of a khal by another Dothraki clan and taken by Khal Moro to live with the other widows of khals in Vaes Dothrak ("The Red Woman"). Khal Moro sees her only as a widow of a khal and not a Queen in her own right. She offers him a thousand horses if he will return her to Mereen, but he refuses as Dothraki tradition states widows must be taken to live in Vaes Dothrak after their husband dies. Once they arrive, the other widows warn her that the khals will judge her for breaking tradition and not coming to live with the other widows following Drogo's death ("Oathbreaker").

She is brought before all the khals of the Dothraki and she argues that she is strong enough to lead the Dothraki. This angers them as they do not believe women can lead and they threaten to rape her. After this, Daenerys sets the temple on fire. All the khals burn to death in the fire, but she emerges from the flames once again unburnt. The Dothraki bow to her and declare her Khaleesi once more ("Book of the Stranger").

Once again, she wins over the Dothraki by proving herself to be the strongest person due to her immunity to fire. After this, she travels back to Mereen with the Khalessar. Along the way Drogon appears. This amazes the Khalessar as they all have never seen a dragon. She asks that if they will help her retake the Iron Throne across the Narrow Sea and they all enthusiastically agree. She also names them all bloodriders, instead of the traditional number of three a Khal chooses ("Blood of my Blood"). Daenerys breaks Dothraki tradition once again, further

exemplifying her status as a charismatic leader by instituting reforms and changes (Williams). She empowers all the people by naming them all bloodriders, making them all equals, breaking another Dothraki tradition, as normally only three men are chosen.

Daenerys returns to Mereen with the Dothraki to find that it is under siege by fleets from Yunkai, Astaphor, and Volantis. She meets with the slave masters to discuss terms for their surrender, but they believe she should surrender. They say that they will allow her to leave Mereen and return to Westeros, if she leaves behind Missandei and the Unsullied army and kills her dragons. Yet, because of her previous success with breaking the wheel, she refuses this offer and instead chooses to fight. Her three dragons fly over the ships and destroy most of them. The slave masters surrender, and Daenerys seizes the ships that survived the dragon fire (“Battle of the Bastards”).

Queen of the Andals and the First Men

Soon after these exploits in Essos, Daenerys begins to make alliances in Westeros. First, Theon and Yara Greyjoy arrive in Mereen and offer Daenerys the Iron Fleet, if she promises to install Yara as Queen of the Iron Islands once she has retaken the Iron Throne (“Battle of the Bastards”). She accepts this offer, which provides her with the ships she needs to cross the sea to get to Westeros. With the help of Varys, who has also joined her force of counselors, she wins the support of Ellaria Sand and Olenna Tyrell, who both have lost loved ones at the hand of Cersei Lannister (“The Winds of Winter”).

With Daenerys’s newfound support, she finally sets sail for Westeros (“Dragonstone”). However, she has learned from her past mistakes and does not leave Mereen without a structure to keep the peace: rather than establishing new power that was not there before and then leaving

the city without a new structure in a place while she goes to conquer and free other cities, as she had previously done, she takes measures to ensure that the city will not fall back into the power of the slavers. When she departs for Westeros, she leaves Daario and the Second Sons to keep peace in Meeren (“The Winds of Winter”).

While in Essos Daenerys’s authority is exclusively charismatic, in Westeros it is also traditional. In the cities she conquers in Essos and within the Dothraki clans, she has no rightful claim to power legally or by blood. She instead wins over supporters and uses this support to gain power. However, in Westeros she could be considered a traditional authority as she has a legitimate claim to the throne.

Max Weber defines a charismatic leader as someone whom men obey not by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him (Williams). Everywhere Daenerys goes, she gains more supporters who believe in her and her cause. She wins over the people of all places she conquers as she is a fair ruler who cares for the welfare of the common man. She gives people their freedom, and they in turn pledge themselves to her. She also wins over the support of nobles from Westeros. Tyrion tells her that he believes in her and she’s wins over the reluctant Jon Snow, who originally refuses to bend the knee to her. She has proven herself to be a caring, wise ruler winning her the support of the people and nobles alike.

When Daenerys arrives in Westeros Cersei Lannister is on the throne, despite the fact she has no legitimate claim to it. She is the surviving queen mother, but this gives her no claim to the throne. Daenerys is the daughter of King Aerys and his only surviving heir, making her the rightful Queen of the Seven Kingdoms.

The additional benefit of being a traditional authority versus just a charismatic authority gives Daenerys a legitimacy she does not have in Essos. Once she conquers cities in Essos, she is still not accepted as a leader by many of the people in the city, especially the slavers. She also often does not have the freed slaves' support as much as she thinks she does. One freed slave even comes to her to beg her to be allowed to sell himself back to his master as his position as a slave was better than being free and living in one of her shelters, where strong freed slaves prey on the weak and old ones ("The Children").

If I Look Back, I am Lost

Daenerys has noble intentions with helping the less fortunate, but often they do not play out the way she plans. She would like to ban slavery immediately and to give the former slaves a good life. However, as the system of slavery has been in place for so many years, it cannot be immediately eradicated. There must be a transition period.

While she was married to Khal Drogo, Daenerys was able to enact changes much more quickly. However, it is not so simple to institute changes in larger cities, where she does not have the support of traditional authority. She learns to move past this expectation and listen to her advisors, so she can best help the people.

While she is still frustrated that she cannot institute these drastic reforms immediately, she is willing to do whatever it takes to do the right thing. She works with Tyrion to make a deal with the slavers to slowly transition slaves to freedom over a seven-year period. That way both the slaves and slavers can prepare for the future and thus the transition can be peaceful ("Book of the Stranger").

Not the Mad Queen

Daenerys's father was deemed the Mad King. He did not heed the advice of his advisors and did whatever he pleased. Towards the end of his reign, he became truly mad, going so far as deciding to burn King's Landing and its citizens with wildfire, until he is killed by Jaime Lannister.

Daenerys is not her father. In contrast to him, she strongly relies on her advisors and allows them to speak openly with her. "There is no other way to guard oneself against flattery than to have men understand that they will not offend you by telling you the truth" (Machiavelli, 140). She knows that her father did not heed the warnings of his advisors and they did not feel open to talking to him, but instead conspired against him. She makes her own advisors promise that, if ever she does not act in the best interests of the people, they will feel free to discuss it with her and help her fix it.

Daenerys names Tyrion Lannister as her Hand of the Queen ("The Winds of Winter"). She is at first wary of trusting Tyrion, as he is a Lannister, but is soon impressed by his wisdom. He checks her worse impulses and gives her advice she sometimes does not like to hear. Instead of shutting him down, she listens to the advice and often heeds it. Tyrion understands the way Westeros is run and understands the people, this gives Daenerys good insight as she has not been there since she was a baby. He also takes a more diplomatic approach to government, in contrast to Daenerys's revolutionary approach. He is able to foster peace and negotiate with leaders, helping to create alliances and avoid violence.

She also listens to the people. She hears their concerns and then takes whatever measures she can to resolve the issue, even when she does not like doing so. When one of her dragons burned a toddler to death, she decides she must chain her dragons up, even though this upsets her ("The Children"). Likewise, she agrees to reopen the fighting pits in order to try to bring peace in Meereen and unite the nobles and former slaves, despite finding it immoral.

Fire and Blood

Daenerys proves herself to be a proactive leader as she attempts to conquer Westeros. She takes part in battles, riding one of her dragons ("The Spoils of War"). When Jon Snow leads an expedition North of the Wall, to get proof of the White Walkers, she flies in with her dragons to rescue the men who have become surrounded by the White Walkers ("Beyond the Wall"). Unlike Cersei Lannister, she takes part in combat.

This helps her keep the support of the people fighting in her armies. "Nothing wins a ruler respect like great military victories and a display of remarkable personal qualities" (Machiavelli, 132). It is inspiring for people to see their leader fight beside you. It shows that they are brave and do not value their own life more than the lives of their people.

However, the expedition North of the Wall leads to the death of her dragon, Viserion ("The Dragon and the Wolf"). This proves problematic, as the dragon is transformed into a White Walker and then used by the Night King to burn down the Wall, so the White Walkers can march South. This greatly cuts down the amount of time, it would take the White Walkers to get South as well as giving the Night King a strong weapon against the people of Westeros.

After seeing the White Walkers for herself, she agrees with Jon Snow, that they are the greater threat. She meets with Cersei in order to attempt to get her to agree to an armistice, while Daenerys's forces help Jon to fight North of the Wall. Cersei at first staunchly against it, seemingly has a change of heart after seeing the White Walker they brought with, and even agrees to help him them fight against them. However, it is later revealed she is lying and has no intention of fighting with him, but instead plans to allow her two enemies to fight one another and then fight whoever wins.

I Will Do What Queens Do, I Will Rule

Daenerys has spent the entire series working to get back to Westeros, so she could reclaim her family's throne. While she has faced some drawbacks and become sidetracked, helping the people of Essos, her goal has always been to rule Westeros. I believe Daenerys will stop at nothing to

accomplish this. While she is willing to put the common good above this goal, she still sees this as her divine purpose. Her desire is to help people and to her this is also the best way to do this as she would be a fair and kind ruler, unlike Cersei.

Winter is Coming: Jon Snow

The Bastard of Winterfell

Jon Snow is raised as Ned Stark's bastard son. While he was accepted and loved by his whole family apart from Ned's wife Catelyn, he still did not have the respect that came along with being a Stark. As a bastard, he was never expected to rise to any position of power or influence.

In the beginning of the series, Ned Stark departs for King's Landing, while Jon voluntarily joins the Night's Watch, inspired to do so by his uncle Benjen. Jon begs Ned to tell him about his mother as they depart, but Ned declines, telling him that they will talk about it the next time they see each other ("The Kingsroad"). At first, he is unpopular with many of the men of the Night's Watch, as many are envious of his background. Jon had a loving family and chose to join the Night's Watch voluntarily, while many of them were forced and do not have the fighting experience and training that Jon has.

The Watcher on the Wall

Despite the fact that he's chosen to be there, Jon is unhappy at the Wall. He is upset that no one, except for Tyrion Lannister, told him the truth about the types of men who would be his brothers in the Night's Watch. These men are not noble fighters. Many are rapists and criminals. Since he is not satisfied with the conditions at the wall, when news comes soon after his arrival there that his father has been arrested and that his brother, Robb, is starting a war to free him and

get their sisters back, Jon decides to break his vow to serve the Night's Watch for life in order to join him ("Baelor").

However, he is reluctantly convinced to come back to the Wall after his closest friend, Samwell Tarly, and two others risk their own lives to bring Jon back so he cannot be executed for breaking his vow ("Fire and Blood"). Jon, like all members of House Stark, places a strong value on doing his duty and keeping his word. While he would have much rather have gone to help his family in the war, he ultimately decides that he must honor his oath to the Night's Watch.

The Man Who Gives the Sentence Should Swing the Sword

Jon, as a member of House Stark, follows a deontological ethics model. Deontological ethics is duty based (Shakil). It involves doing the right thing no matter the consequences. It also believes that the motives, and not the consequences of an action, are what determines something to be moral or immoral (Shakil).

This adherence to deontological ethics causes people to trust the Starks. They know that they can trust the Starks to keep their word. However, following this model of ethics can also be detrimental. Ned Stark's refusal to bend the knee to Joffrey, since he knows Joffrey was not the legitimate heir despite the risk of being accused of treason. He could have bent the knee and gone back home to live happily with his family, but he had to do the right thing. This decision ultimately leads to Ned's execution, causing the start of the War of Five Kings.

Strict adherence to deontological ethics also was harmful to Robb Stark. After Stark bannerman Richard Karstark attempts to avenge his son's murder by Jaime Lannister by murdering the two young Lannister boys that were being held hostage to avenge his son's

murder by Jaime Lannister, Robb decides to execute him ("Kissed by Fire"). His mother pleads with him to simply arrest him, in order to not lose the support of the Karstarks, whose men they need for their army, but he will not. The punishment for murder is death and Robb refuses to depart from this no matter the consequence. This decision leads Robb Stark to seek support elsewhere. He is forced to ally himself with the unscrupulous, Walder Frey, which later leads to his death.

Following the deontological model of ethics lead not only to the deaths of Robb and Ned, but also to the death of Jon. As Lord Commander of the Night Watch, Jon does not view the Wildlings as their enemies, but as an ally against their mutual enemy, the White Walkers. This angers several of the Crows of the Night's Watch, who hate the Wildings, and they end up planning a mutiny and stab him to death ("Mother's Mercy"). However, Jon's death is not permanent as Robb's and Ned's are and when he is brought back to life by the red priestess, Melisandre, he gains a second chance to lead ("Home").

However, Jon cannot fully depart from the deontological approach to ethics, as this has also proven to be catastrophic for the Starks. In Season 1, Robb agreed to marry one of Walder Frey's daughters in exchange for being able to cross his land ("Baelor"). However, he falls in love with another woman and decides to follow his heart and marry her. In order to try to rectify the situation, Robb's uncle Edmure Tully agrees to marry one of Frey's daughters. At the wedding, known as the Red Wedding, the Freys as well as other Stark bannermen, the Boltons, turn on the Starks and, with the support of the Lannisters, murders Robb and most of the other Starks ("The Rains of Castamere"). If Robb had kept his word to Walder Frey, he and his mother would likely still be alive and he would have likely won the war.

Lord Commander Snow

After deciding to stay at the Wall, Jon slowly starts to win the support of the other men of the Night's Watch by his courage. He leads a group of men to capture the mutineers who killed Lord Commander Jeor Mormont ("Oathkeeper"), leads a successful defense of Castle Black ("The Watchers on the Wall"), and survives being caught by the Wildling army. He is a natural leader and people recognize this. He is chosen to replace Lord Commander Mormont, despite his young age ("The House of Black and White").

As Lord Commander, Jon has legal authority. Legal authority is rooted in the power of a position. This power is extended to the person acting under the authority of the title and this power is only within the scope of what is granted to the position (Williams). While Jon has been raised as a Stark, he does not carry the noble name. He is not elected based on who his family is, but rather based on his ability to lead.

He also wins the support of the Wildings, a group that the Night's Watch has feuded with for centuries, by treating them with respect. He knows they have a common enemy in the White Walkers and wants to push aside previous hostilities to take down the Night King. This angers many of the Crows, who eventually murder Jon over the alliance. These men are later executed under Jon's authority after he is brought back to life by Melisandre.

The King in the North

Sansa Stark, his sister, comes to Castle Black, seeking his help in taking Winterfell back from the Boltons ("Book of the Stranger"). While he now feels free to leave the Night's Watch, as he has fulfilled his oath by giving his life in service, he tells her he has no army. She insists that the Wildings owe him their lives, but he does not see it this way and is reluctant to ask them

to fight for him. However, the Wildings decide to fight for him anyways and help the Starks and their remaining bannerman take back Winterfell.

Thus, Jon and the Wildings ride South to take on the Boltons in the Battle of the Bastards, with the support of House Mormont and a couple other minor Northern houses despite Jon and Sansa's efforts to gather more of the Stark bannermen ("The Broken Man"). Despite the fact that the Boltons' forces greatly outnumber his, Jon decides to fight anyways as he does not think he will ever be able to gather a bigger force and he wants to save his little brother, Rickon, who is being held hostage by Ramsey Bolton. Ramsey starts off the battle by shooting Rickon with a bow as he tries to run to Jon. Jon's army fights well but is soon surrounded by the Bolton forces. However, when all hope seems lost, Littlefinger, Sansa's uncle by marriage, rides in with the Knights of the Vale.

With the aid of Knights of the Vale, Jon and his men are successful in taking Winterfell back from Boltons ("The Battle of the Bastards"). Despite the fact that Sansa, being the oldest legitimate Stark alive, is the rightful heir to Winterfell, the people of Winterfell choose Jon to be their leader, declaring him King in the North ("The Winds of Winter").

The White Wolf

Jon does not believe anyone owes him their loyalty. He is a humble leader, who does not lead due to birthright, but because people respect him. Although his supposed father, Ned Stark, was Lord of Winterfell, Jon cannot not be Ned's heir because he is a bastard. He does not have the sworn fealty and support a legitimate heir would receive just from bearing the last name Stark. However, he does earn the loyalty of many around him.

Jon's ability to win loyalty, rather than demand it, makes him a charismatic authority as defined by Max Weber. He wins over the Wildlings, who for many years fought even amongst themselves before being unified under Mance Rayder. They have no reason to follow Jon. He is not even one of their own, but they fight for him because they believe in him and because he treats them with respect and as equals. Jon also possesses the supernatural aspect of charisma that Max Weber describes. After Jon dies, Melisandre, a red priestess of the Lord of the Light, who believes Jon to be the Prince Who Was Promised brings him back to life.

He is also merciful. He does not punish the houses who did not fight with him during the Battle of the Bastards. Nor does he punish the surviving heirs of the Stark bannermen who fought with the Boltons. While his supposed father, Ned, and brother, Robb, were also kind-hearted people, they took a more legalistic approach to ruling.

Unlike his father and brother, Jon is able to consider the whole situation, not just what is objectively right and wrong, realizing there is often a middle ground option that is wiser. After Richard Karstark murders two young Lannister boys, Robb Stark executes him. While Karstark was in the wrong, executing him leads to House Stark losing the support of their bannermen. This, in turn, leads to the Starks having to turn to the Freys, an unscrupulous house, for support.

Robb reluctantly agrees with Walder Frey to marry one of his daughters in exchange for their support as he views it as the only way to save his father. However he is unable to save his father, and later abandons this promise in order to marry Talisa, the woman he loves. This leads to the Freys betraying the Starks, leading to the murders of Robb and Catelyn Stark.

Unfortunately, rulers cannot always do what they would like to do. Sometimes they have to sacrifice their own wants or abandon their own principles for the greater good. Sometimes

doing the good thing is not the right thing. Jon knows this, unlike his father and brother, who stand too firm in their own principles.

Unlike his brother and father, Jon also has the ability to put his personal interests aside for the greater good. When Robb heads into battle to avenge the death of their father, Ned Stark, Jon wants to leave the Night's Watch to join his brother. However, he has taken an oath declaring he will always be in the Night's Watch and ends up honoring this commitment, despite the large temptation to go and fight for his family.

He is also able to put the greater good above his own desires. Initially when Daenerys comes to him seeking his support, he refuses to bend the knee to her and take on Cersei. He argues instead that the White Walkers are a bigger threat and if they do not defeat them, there will be no kingdom to rule over. His determination convinces Daenerys to aide him in defeating the White Walkers, for she recognizes and respects that Jon is willing to put aside his own desire for revenge against Cersei- who is responsible for the deaths of his father and brother- in favor of the common good.

Jon also places a strong value on honor like his family, often firmly standing his ground. Despite pressure from Sansa and others to punish houses Karstark and Umber for their betrayal of House Stark and supporting House Bolton, Jon refuses to punish the children ("Dragonstone"). Instead, he allows them to once again pledge themselves to House Stark, which they have been pledged to for centuries. Jon argues these houses have already paid the price for their betrayal as the heads of their houses were both killed in the Battle of the Bastards, when the Starks retook Winterfell.

He also refuses to go back on his oath to Daenerys Targaryen, declaring her the rightful Queen of Westeros. When the two camps go to attempt a truce with Cersei Lannister, in order to deal with the threat of the Night Walkers, Cersei agrees as long as Jon Snow will remain neutral in the war to come. She states that she knows Ned Stark's son will be true to his word. He declares that he has already promised his support to Daenerys and refuses to go back on this, despite the fact it would help him deal with the eminent threat of the White Walkers ("The Dragon and the Wolf").

Jon is also careful about whom he trusts. While Littlefinger came to House Stark's aid with the Knights of the Vale during the Battle of the Bastards, he is smart enough to know Littlefinger is not truly his ally. Jon has seen enough betrayal to know better than to trust everyone.

Jon has been betrayed by some of his own men due to his support of the Wildings, resulting in his own murder though he is brought back to life by Melisandre. This betrayal shakes his belief that all men are men of their words. He has to hang the men who have betrayed him, including a twelve-year old boy whom he took under his wing ("Oathbreaker"). This betrayal enables him to feel free to leave Castle Black, as he has fulfilled his oath as he had given his life in service to the Night's Watch, and is now free to help Sansa retake Winterfell.

This is a lesson that Ned and Robb Stark did not learn. Ned trusted Little Finger, even though Little Finger himself warned him not to, leading to his arrest and subsequent execution. Robb trusted the Freys and the Boltons, despite the fact that he had wronged Walder Frey by not wedding one of his daughters and that Roose Bolton was growing continually frustrated by the way Robb was leading, leading to his murder at the Red Wedding.

A Song of Ice and Fire

Jon is also willing to take big risks to do the right thing. He initially refuses to bend the knee to Daenerys and help her fight against Cersei because he knows the Night King is the bigger threat. He risks being imprisoned by her or even being executed as she believes him to be in open rebellion to her by being named King of the North. However, he wins her over and she agrees to help him fight the Night King leading him to bend the knee. Although, unbeknownst to Jon, he actually has a stronger claim to the Iron Throne than she does. Jon is not Ned Stark's bastard but is the son of Lyanna Stark and Rhaegar Targaryen, making him the rightful heir.

However, it is unlikely that he will vie from himself to sit on the Iron Throne despite his claim as rightful heir. He has pledged himself to Daenerys and as a man who places a lot of weight on upkeeping his oaths, he is unlikely to break it. He also has no desire to sit on the Iron Throne or a hunger for power. He is a natural born leader, but he does not thrust himself into positions of power, whether he serves in them as obligations to people who support him. He supports Daenerys and knows she would be a good ruler and therefore would not assert himself to power and would disagree with anyone who wanted to support him over her.

Hear me Roar: Cersei Lannister

Everyone Who Isn't Us Is an Enemy

Cersei Lannister is often seen as cruel, manipulative person who only wants to increase her own power; however, this initially was not completely true. Originally, her motivation was protecting her children at all costs. Her children are the offspring of her brother and not her husband, King Robert Baratheon. Robert is a man prone to anger, she knows that if he ever

discovers that he isn't the children's biological father, he would likely kill both Cersei and her children.

Jon Arryn discovers that Cersei's children are illegitimate but dies before he tells anyone. After Jon Arryn's death, Ned Stark is named Hand of the King. He is suspicious of the cause of Jon's death and finds his notebook. He discovers that Cersei's children are not Robert's, making them all illegitimate. He meets with Cersei to inform her that he knows the truth and that he must tell Robert, but wants her to escape back to Casterly Rock, where her father's men can protect her and her children ("You Win or You Die"). She counters that there is nowhere that she would be safe from Robert's wrath.

When You Play the Game of Thrones, You Win or You Die

Before Ned can tell Robert the truth, he is mortally wounded by a wild boar during a hunting trip. On his death bed, Robert names Ned Lord Regent and Protector of the Realm until Joffrey is of age and he has Ned write out his will. Instead of putting Joffrey's name in the will, Ned uses the words "my legitimate heir." Renly Baratheon tries to get Ned to side with his claim of the throne, but Ned refuses, believing the throne should go to the rightful heir, Renly's older brother Stannis. Thus, Ned sends Stannis a letter ("You Win or You Die").

Ned then confides in Petyr Baelish that he knows that Joffrey is illegitimate. Baelish proposes that they allow Joffrey to remain on the throne, but that they would rule behind the scenes and if he became too cruel, they would expose his secret and place Renly Baratheon on the throne ("You Win or You Die"). Ned declares this idea treacherous, standing by his plan to reveal the truth and place Stannis on the throne. Baelish agrees to work with Ned and secure the backing of the City Watch.

When Ned confronts Cersei with Robert's will, she tears it up and tells her men to seize him. Ned then orders his men to arrest Cersei and Joffrey, but they are slaughtered by the City Watch, revealing that Baelish has betrayed Ned. Ned is arrested and later executed on the orders of Joffrey, despite Cersei's pleading with her son to show Ned mercy ("Baelor").

Cersei does not plead for Ned's life out of concern for the morality of it or for Ned's sake, but for her own sake. Cersei subscribes to a philosophy of egoism, where her own well-being and interests trumps everything else (Shaver). Her desire to protect herself and her family drives all of her decisions. If Joffrey had allowed Ned to live his life out on the Wall, if Robb Stark had pledged fealty, there would have been peace in Westeros. Joffrey would have been able to stay on the throne and Cersei would have been able to live as freely as she liked with Robert gone.

Yet Joffrey's hasty action derails Cersei's original plan. Ned's death leads to a rebellion in the North and both Renly and Stannis Baratheon launch campaigns to seize the throne. Joffrey is also cruel and unpopular with the people, which threatens to destabilize House Lannister's power and forces them to seek new allies. Following Renly's death at the hands of his brother Stannis, the Lannisters form an alliance with the Tyrells, the second wealthiest house in Westeros after house Lannister ("The Ghosts of Harrenhal"). Joffrey abandons his engagement to Sansa Stark in order to marry Margaery Tyrell ("Valar Morghulis"). At their wedding, Joffrey is poisoned (unbeknownst to Cersei) by Margaery's grandmother, Olenna Tyrell, who fears he would be cruel to Margaery and be a bad king ("The Lion and the Rose").

A Lannister Always Pays His Debts

Cersei blames Tyrion for Joffrey's death. Tywin sees this as an opportunity to get rid of Tyrion, the son he is ashamed of. He sentences Tyrion to death for the crime, even though he knows he is not guilty. However, Tyrion is freed by his brother, Jaime, before he can be put to death. After Tyrion escapes, he murders his father before fleeing the country ("The Children"). He then goes on to ally himself with Daenerys Targaryen, becoming her hand to the queen.

Cersei's blaming Tyrion for Joffrey's murder also causes her to lose the support of House Martell to Daenerys. In the trial, Tyrion demands a trial by combat and Oberyn Martell offers to be his champion and fight in his stead. Oberyn is brutally murdered by Cersei's champion, the Mountain, after Oberyn defeats him in the trial ("The Mountain and the Viper"). To avenge Oberyn, his lover, Ellaria Sand, murders Cersei's daughter, Marcella, who was to marry Oberyn's nephew. She also murders Oberyn's brother, Doran Martell, the Prince of Dorne, and his son Trystan, taking control of Dorne. She then pledges House Martell and Dorne to Daenerys, so Ellaria can take Cersei down for murdering her love.

Cersei blaming Tyrion for Joffrey's murder also leads to the loss of her father, who has been the stronghold of the family. Tywin has been revered and respected around all of Westeros. People fear him, but they know that he kept his word to you if you keep your word to him. Of course they recognized that the reverse is also true: if they betray him, he will crush them.

Cersei does not command the same type of respect. She does not stick to her word and is constantly betraying others for her own sake or the sake of her family. She also does not hold power the way her father does. While Joffrey is cruel, Tywin puts him into his place when he is around and effectively rules the kingdom in his stead.

Tywin also would have led Tommen in a good direction, had he lived. Cersei is overly protective of Tommen, as her last surviving child. She begins to fear that her son's, King Tommen's, wife, Margaery, has more influence over him than she does. This leads Cersei to arm the High Sparrow, a religious zealot, and have Margaery's brother, Loras, arrested due to his homosexuality ("Sons of the Harpy"). When Margaery defends her brother, she too is arrested, leading Tommen to become depressed and refuse to leave his room ("Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken").

I Choose Violence

Cersei hopes that the High Sparrow will lead to the destruction of House Tyrell, which is unwise as they are the Lannister's strongest ally. However, granting the High Sparrow power greatly weakens her own power. Tommen is crushed after Margaery is arrested, and this leads him to go to drastic measures to save her. He is too timid to fight against the High Sparrow and instead sides with him, and giving the High Sparrow more power in order to free Margaery.

The power Cersei has given to the High Sparrow end up backfiring on her as she, too, is later arrested by the High Sparrow and tortured, an event that leads her to seek revenge ("The Gift"). During Loras's trial, Cersei blows up the Sept of Baelor, killing everyone inside, including Tommen's wife, Queen Margaery, and effectively destroying House Tyrell. Cersei considers this a win as she is effectively getting rid of two enemies: the High Sparrow and the Tyrells. However, when King Tommen sees the explosion, he is devastated knowing that his wife is dead, so he kills himself, and Cersei finds herself more alone than ever ("The Winds of Winter").

Pride of Lions

Cersei often talks about her love for her children and how she would do anything to protect them, but she is partly responsible for all their deaths. Joffrey is murdered because he is unstable and cruel. If Cersei had given him more guidance and corrected his behavior, versus letting him believe he could get away with anything since he was the prince, he would not have been poisoned at his own wedding.

Moreover, Myrcella is killed in order to get revenge against Cersei for Oberyn Martell's death during Tyrion's trial of combat. Tommen kills himself as a result of Cersei's blowing up the Sept and killing his wife. Cersei continually believes she is acting in Tommen's best interest, but really she is acting in hers: Margaery has made Tommen happy, and while she may have been using him to fulfill her desire of being queen, she is still good for him. She is well received by the people and helps to direct the throne in a direction which gains favor with the common people. Cersei is overcome with jealousy against Margaery. She wants to be in control of Tommen, which goes back to Cersei's egoism. Even though she loves her children and may even believe herself to be acting in their best interest, she is really protecting her own well-being and interests.

A Lion Does Not Concern Himself with the Opinion of Sheep

House Lannister's approach to ethics is teleological, in contrast to House Stark which follows a deontological approach. Teleological ethics is consequence based: any means are justified as long as one gets the desired outcome (Brittanica).

While House Lannister does not always get the desired outcome, they are willing to take brash measures to attempt to get what they want. While Cersei does not intend for blowing up the Sept to lead to Tommen committing suicide, she does succeed in getting rid of the High

Sparrow and the Tyrells, whom she resents. She did not care that many innocent lives will be affected by her actions; she is willing to do anything to get revenge against the High Sparrow for arresting her and allowing her to be tortured.

Tywin Lannister is also concerned about outcomes and not how noble an action is. After the Red Wedding, his son Tyrion points out how it is considered bad form to kill one's guests. However, Tywin ponders why it is more noble to kill thousands of men in battle or a few at a wedding. Tywin's forces are losing against Robb Stark's on the battlefield, so he has to find another way to get rid of him. While it may not be honorable, he destroys his enemy and that is all that matters to him.

Power is Power

After Tommen's death, Cersei declares herself Queen of the Seven Kingdoms despite having no legitimate claim to the throne. Yet, it is unlikely she will be able to hold onto the Iron Throne. She does not have any good, reliable allies and as her wealth and power have begun to dwindle, she has no means of forcing people to obey and follow her. People only follow her out of fear and once her power is stripped away, she will have no one behind her. Her need for vengeance against the High Sparrow have resulted in the deaths of all of House Tyrell except Olenna. While Cersei does not like the Tyrells, they were good allies. They were a reliable, wealthy house that has now pledged itself to Daenerys.

Cersei has destroyed all of her alliances. "It is necessary for a prince to have the people friendly; otherwise in adversity he does not have a remedy" (Machiavelli, 59). These allies were all established noble families with resources and men to fight for her. Her actions have led to these houses abandoning her and pledging their support to Daenerys Targaryen.

Not only has Cersei lost all of her reliable Allies, she also does not have a friendly relationship with the people. During her walk of atonement, she is viciously attacked by the people ("Mother's Mercy"). She is seen as a cruel, uncharitable queen. Due to the war, food is in low supply and many are starving. Many people have also lost loved ones in battle.

This is one of the reasons Cersei grows envious of Margaery. Margaery is charitable and well loved by the people. She spends time with orphans and helps to provide for them. She declares that the leftovers from her and Joffrey's wedding should be given to the poor. However, Cersei undermines this and demands that the leftovers be given to the dogs. Cersei does this to show that even though she is no longer queen, she still holds power.

At the end, Cersei's only ally is Euron Greyjoy, who only allies himself with her because his nephew and niece got to Daenerys Targaryen before he did ("Dragonstone"). His only interest is being given the right to the Iron Islands, which are rightfully his niece's and nephew's, and increasing his own power. He is not a reliable ally as he is not even the legitimate heir to the Iron Islands and he is out for his own interests, not Cersei's.

Her only hope is that Daenerys Targaryen's forces will be greatly dwindled by the fight against the Night King. Cersei agrees to an armistice only because it gives her an advantage. Her two enemies will attack each other, while she can rebuild her dwindling forces. While Daenerys's forces travel North, she sends Euron Greyjoy to transport sell-swords from Essos ("The Dragon and the Wolf").

However, sell-swords are not as reliable as an army that fights for a cause. "The fact is, they have no other attraction or reason for keeping the field than a trifle of stipend, which is not sufficient to make them willing to die for you" (Machiavelli, 71-72). Especially, when faced with

unbelievable obstacles such as dragons and White Walkers, sell-swords are likely to desert. Even on the promise that a Lannister always pays his debts, many sell swords would likely rather risk losing their pay than risk losing their lives against these mythical creatures.

A Cat of a Different Coat

Cersei's problems begin to really get out of hand once her father is killed by her brother Tyrion. Tywin is a wise leader and while he is alive, he is the true power behind the throne. He is able to control his grandsons, while they're on the throne, and keeps the throne powerful. He is a powerful figure who evokes fear in others but is only harsh or cruel when a situation calls for it.

Once he is gone, the throne's power begins to diminish. While Tommen is much kinder and more likeable king than his brother Joffrey was, he is a weak king. He knows that he lacks the wisdom to be a king and relies on his advisors to counsel him. While Tywin is alive, he provides guidance and wisdom and keeps the throne in check. However, after he dies, chaos ensues. Cersei is not as wise as she thinks she is, and she makes several mistakes that lead to the throne losing power and eventually lead to Tommen's death.

People followed and obeyed Tywin not only because they feared him, but because they trusted him. If people know they will be rewarded if they obey someone and punished if they betray them, that is a good incentive to do what that person wants you to. However, if they cannot trust the person to honor their word and commitment, there is no drive to follow that person. The person may have people obey them for a while simply out of fear, but they cannot hold onto this power.

One of Cersei's most damnable flaws is that she is overly cruel. People fear her due to her cruelty, while people feared Tywin as they knew he would punish them if they betrayed him.

Tywin's mode of fear inspires loyalty, while Cersei's mode of fear inspires people to rebel against her and not trust her. Machiavelli argues that a ruler should make himself feared in a way that does not incite hatred (Machiavelli). Tywin understands this. He commands respect and will only lash out at others when necessary. While Cersei also incites fear in others, she does so too frequently and therefore is not reliable.

Cersei also strikes out against people who are not really her enemies. The Tyrells were the Lannisters' strongest allies. Their support helped the Lannisters win the Battle of Blackwater, which prevented Stannis from claiming the throne ("Blackwater"). They also are the second wealthiest family in Westeros and their lands produce a surplus of food, which is in short supply due to the war. Instead of appreciating this strong alliance, Cersei is overcome by jealousy of Queen Margaery.

Tywin realizes that the Tyrells have allied with them in the interest of increasing their own power, but he does not fear this. He knows he is still more powerful. When he decides that Loras should wed Cersei instead of Sansa, Olenna protests as Cersei is older and she fears she will not be able to have anymore children ("The Climb"). Tywin remedies this by declaring if she does not agree to Loras' wedding Cersei, he will name Loras to the King's Guard, meaning he cannot be the heir to High Garden or ever marry. When given this ultimatum, Olenna agrees to the marriage.

Tywin knows how to outmaneuver others, to always give himself the upper hand and maintain power. Cersei does not know how to do this. She simply destroys the people she believes her enemies without consideration of the possible consequences. "Therefore, a wise prince ought to think of a mode whereby his citizens always and in every quality of time, have need of the state and of him; and they will always be faithful to him." (Machiavelli, 60). If she

were to help the poor, Cersei could make an ally out of them and get them in her good graces. Instead she uses them as a pawn for her own show of power. In times of war, food often runs in short supply, leading to much starvation. This could lead the people to revolt against her and seek a more benevolent ruler who cares about the people.

She is also driven by a desire for revenge. She places this desire above the well-being of her rule or Westeros. She acts out against others, without thought of the possible consequences of these actions. She kills many people, making their surviving family members her enemies. “One has either to caress men or extinguish them, for if they can take revenge for light offenses, they cannot do so for grave ones; if one has to do hurt to men it should be in such a mode that there is no fear of vengeance.” (Machiavelli, 14). Initially the Lannisters had the support of both House Tyrell and House Martell due to negotiations made by Tywin Lannister. However, Cersei’s need for vengeance help result in the deaths of all of House Tyrell except Olenna and the death of Oberyn Martell. These deaths resulted in the loss of both of these important allies to Daenerys Targaryen.

Had Cersei killed off the entire families, the loss may not have been so detrimental as she could simply have claimed their resources and assets as her own and place someone else in charge of the regions. However, by leaving family members of those she hurts alive, she leaves herself vulnerable to attack.

A Lion Still has Claws

In season seven, Cersei pays off her debt to the Iron Bank, fulfilling the promise that a Lannister always pays their debts, she believes this will create a stronger ally in the Iron Bank, but it could have the opposite effect. (“The Spoils of War”). When she owed the bank money,

they had a vested interest in her survival and keeping the throne: if she lived, they could get their money back. However, now that the debt has been paid, she is more disposable.

She also has to use a substantial amount of funds to pay. The Lannisters have spent a lot of money in recent years with the costs of war as well as royal expenditures on things such as weddings. While the Lannisters are wealthy, they do not have unlimited funds. Once these funds run out, their power will be greatly diminished, if not destroyed.

Cersei does not have enough men to build her army, solely out of the men pledged to House Lannister. She is forced to resort to sell-swords. However, if she is not paying them, they will cease to fight for her. Cersei likely has had to raise taxes as well to fund these expenditures. She is already unpopular with the people and this will cause even more discord.

Oath Keeper

She also loses the support of her brother, Jaime Lannister, after revealing that she has no intention of actually sending Lannister forces to fight the White Walkers in the North alongside the Stark and Targaryen forces ("The Dragon and the Wolf"). Jaime decides to ride North to keep his word and join in the Great War between the living and dead.

Cersei does not know how to wage warfare. Without Jaime, she is truly lost. It is also probable that many Lannister soldiers will flock to support Jaime and ride North with him, reducing Cersei's army even more. All of these factors make it seem that Cersei has no chance of winning against Daenerys and Jon.

Conclusion

Who is best qualified to sit on the Iron Throne and rule Westeros? Both Daenerys and Jon have proven themselves to be good leaders and both have legitimate claims to the thrones. Seemingly the simple solution would be for them to get married. They have already begun a relationship and would rule well together. However, unbeknownst to them both, Daenerys is actually Jon's aunt. Although the Targaryen family has a history of incest, Jon and Daenerys may not be receptive to this idea. If they do indeed decide to split up, who will rule?

Jon has the stronger claim. While he is the grandson of the Mad King and Daenerys is the daughter, Jon is the son of the crown prince, placing him higher in the line of succession. However, Jon is less keen to rule. Daenerys, on the other hand, has dreamed of coming back to Westeros her entire life to reclaim what belonged to her family. For years, her goal has been to sit on the Iron Throne and make the world a better place: even when she finds out that she is not the rightful heir, it is doubtful, that she will want to step down.

In contrast, Jon has no desire to be king. Anytime he has held a position of power, it is because others have placed him there because he is a good leader, not because he desires it. He was nominated and won Lord Commander without asking for it. He was chosen to be the King in the North without campaigning for it.

Jon also places a strong value on keeping his word. He was already pledged himself to Daenerys. If they do not end up together, he will want to stick to his word and allow her to take the Iron Throne. He has already declared her his queen.

I believe it is highly unlikely Cersei will end up on the Iron Throne at the end of the series or that she will even survive the ending. Cersei has made mistake after mistake. She has continually lost the allies she had due to her untrustworthiness and inability to work with others.

She is on her own. She has no support from any other great houses, her funds are dwindling, and she does not have the support of the common people.

I believe the series will conclude with Cersei being killed, while Jon and Daenerys take the Iron Throne. This will restore the Targaryen dynasty that had ruled for hundreds of years prior to Robert's Rebellion. However, unlike prior Targaryen rulers, Daenerys and Jon have both faced many hardships and risen to power by gaining people's support, on the basis of their merits and not on their family background. This makes them more attuned to meet the needs of the people. They have also gained support from members of all surviving noble houses, showing that they can continue the strong union between the Seven Kingdoms.

Jon and Daenerys hold the skills that enable a ruler to lead efficiently and effectively. "The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves" (Machiavelli, 108). They have the strength to defend themselves against enemies and wise advisors to help them to overcome people trying to defy them.

Jon and Daenerys should rule the Iron Throne together. They both have legitimate claims, with Jon having a stronger claim. However, Daenerys has a stronger desire to rule. She wants to reclaim her family's throne and implement changes. Jon does not have a desire to rule, but this is part of what makes him a good leader. He would help to balance out Daenerys as well, so that she would not become overly militant when initiating changes. Daenerys also would be more willing to take brash measures if they are necessary for the well-being of Westeros. Jon would have more trouble with this, since he more strictly adheres to deontological ethics. They bring out the best in each other.

Based upon my analysis, I believe that the series will conclude with Jon and Daenerys taking the Iron Throne together. However, as previously stated, *Game of Thrones* is practically unpredictable. It is possible that the conclusion will be completely unexpected. Though by looking at these characters through political and ethical lenses, I do not believe there is any way that Cersei remains on the Iron Throne. She lacks the support of reliable allies or the people. If she is able to somehow defeat Jon and Daenerys, someone else would come along to usurp her or she would be overthrown by the people. However, I truly believe that the most likely conclusion is Jon and Daenerys taking the Iron Throne together, truly creating a song of ice and fire.

Works Cited

- “A Golden Crown”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 6, 22 May 2011
- “And Now His Watch Is Ended”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 3, Episode 4, 21 April 2013
- “Baelor”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 9, 12 June 2011
- “Battle of the Bastards”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 9, 19 June 2016
- “Beyond the Wall”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 7, Episode 6, 20 August 2017
- “Blackwater”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 2, Episode 9, 27 May 2012
- “Blood of my Blood”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 6, 29 May 2016
- “Book of the Stranger”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 4, 15 May 2016
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Teleological Ethics.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 24 Apr. 2008.
- “Dragonstone”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 7, Episode 1, 16 June 2017
- “Fire and Blood”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 10, 19 June 2011
- “Hardhome”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 8, 31 May 2015
- “Home”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 2, 1 May 2016
- “House Targaryen.” *A Wiki of Ice and Fire*,
- “Kill the Boy”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 5, 10 May 2015
- “Kissed by Fire”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 3, Episode 5, 28 April 2013
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Waveland Press, 1989.

Martin, George R. R. *Game of Thrones*, HBO

“Mhysa”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 3, Episode 10, 9 June 2013

“Mother’s Mercy”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 10, 14 June 2015

“Oathbreaker”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 3, 8 May 2016

“Oathkeeper”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, Episode 4, 27 April 2014

“Second Sons”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 3, Episode 8, 19 May 2013

Shakil, Ali. “Kantian Duty Based (Deontological) Ethics.” *Sevenpillarsinstitute.org*, 29 January 2013, sevenpillarsinstitute.org/kantian-duty-based-deontological-ethics/.

Shaver, Robert. “Egoism.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 15 Jan. 2019, plato.stanford.edu/entries/egoism/.

“Sons of the Harpy”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 4, 3 May 2015

“The Broken Man”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 7, 5 June 2016

“The Children”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, Episode 10, 15 June 2014

“The Climb”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 3, Episode 6, 5 May 2013

“The Dance of Dragons”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 9, 7 June 2015

“The Dragon and the Wolf”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 7, Episode 7, 27 August 2017

“The Ghosts of Harrenhal”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 2, Episode 5, 29 April 2012

“The Gift”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 7, 24 May 2015

“The House of Black and White”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 2, 19 April 2015

“The Kingsroad”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 2, 24 April 2011

“The Lion and the Rose”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, Episode 2, 13 April 2014

“The Mountain and the Viper”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, Episode 8, 1 June 2014

“The Pointy End”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 8, 5 June 2011

“The Red Woman”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 1, 24 April 2016

“The Rains of Castamere”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 3, Episode 9, 2 June 2013

“The Spoils of War”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 7, Episode 4, 6 August 2017

“The Watchers on the Wall”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, Episode 9, 8 June 2014

“The Winds of Winter”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 6, Episode 10, 26 June 2016

“Two Swords”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, Episode 1, 6 April 2014

“Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 5, Episode 6, 17 May 2015

“Valar Morghulis”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 2, Episode 10, 3 June 2013

Williams, Dana. “Max Weber: Traditional, Legal-Rational, and Charismatic Authority.”
University of Akron, 2 December 2003.

“You Win or You Die”, *Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 7, 29 May 2011