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Great Powers in Action

My theory offered in Chapter 2 attempts to explain why great powers tend to have aggressive intentions and why they aim to maximize their share of world power. I tried there to provide a sound logical foundation for my claims that status quo powers are rarely seen in the international system, and that especially powerful states usually pursue regional hegemony. Whether my theory is ultimately persuasive, however, depends on how well it explains the actual behavior of the great powers. Is there substantial evidence that great powers think and act as offensive realism predicts?

To answer yes to this question and show that offensive realism provides the best account of great-power behavior, I must demonstrate that 1) the history of great-power politics involves primarily the clashing of revisionist states, and 2) the only status quo powers that appear in the story are regional hegemons—i.e., states that have achieved the pinnacle of power. In other words, the evidence must show that great powers look for opportunities to gain power and take advantage of them when they arise. It must also show that great powers do not practice self-denial when they have the wherewithal to shift the balance of power in their favor, and that the appetite for power does not decline once states have a lot of it. Instead, powerful states should seek regional hegemony whenever the

possibility arises. Finally, there should be little evidence of policymakers saying that they are satisfied with their share of world power when they have the capability to gain more. Indeed, we should almost always find leaders thinking that it is imperative to gain more power to enhance their state's prospects for survival.

Demonstrating that the international system is populated by revisionist powers is not a simple matter, because the universe of potential cases is vast.[1] After all, great powers have been competing among themselves for centuries, and there is lots of state behavior that is fair game for testing my argument. To make the inquiry manageable, this study takes four different perspectives on the historical record. Although I am naturally anxious to find evidence that supports offensive realism, I make a serious effort to argue against myself by looking for evidence that might refute the theory. Specifically, I try to pay equal attention to instances of expansion and of non-expansion and to show that the cases of non-expansion were largely the result of successful deterrence. I also attempt to employ consistent standards when measuring the constraints on expansion in the cases examined.

First, I examine the foreign policy behavior of the five dominant great powers of the past 150 years: Japan from the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 until the country's defeat in World War II; Germany from the coming to power of Otto von Bismarck in 1862 until Adolf Hitler's final defeat in 1945; the Soviet Union from its inception in 1917 until its collapse in 1991; Great Britain/the United Kingdom from 1792 until 1945; and the United States from 1800 to 1990.[2] I choose to examine wide swaths of each state's history rather than more discrete time periods because doing so helps show that particular acts of aggression were not instances of aberrant behavior caused by domestic politics, but, as offensive realism would predict, part of a broader pattern of aggressive behavior.

Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union are straightforward cases that provide strong support for my theory. They were almost always looking for opportunities to expand through conquest, and when they saw an opening, they usually jumped at it. Gaining power did not temper their offensive proclivities; it whetted them. In fact, all three great powers

sought regional hegemony. Germany and Japan fought major wars in pursuit of that goal; only the United States and its allies deterred the Soviet Union from trying to conquer Europe. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that policymakers in these states talked and thought like offensive realists. It is certainly hard to find evidence of key leaders expressing satisfaction with the existing balance of power, especially when their state had the capability to alter it. In sum, security considerations appear to have been the main driving force behind the aggressive policies of Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union.

The United Kingdom and the United States, however, might appear to have behaved in ways that contradict offensive realism. For example, the United Kingdom was by far the wealthiest state in Europe during much of the nineteenth century, but it made no attempt to translate its considerable wealth into military might and gain regional hegemony. Thus, it seems that the United Kingdom was not interested in gaining relative power, despite the fact that it had the wherewithal to do so. During the first half of the twentieth century, it looks like the United States passed up a number of opportunities to project power into Northeast Asia and Europe, yet instead it pursued an isolationist foreign policy—hardly evidence of aggressive behavior.

Nonetheless, I will argue that the United Kingdom and the United States did behave in accordance with offensive realism. The United States aggressively pursued hegemony in the Western Hemisphere during the nineteenth century, mainly to maximize its prospects of surviving in a hostile world. It succeeded, and it stands as the only great power in modern history to have achieved regional hegemony. The United States did not attempt to conquer territory in either Europe or Northeast Asia during the twentieth century, because of the great difficulty of projecting power across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Nevertheless, it acted as an offshore balancer in those strategically important areas. The stopping power of water also explains why the United Kingdom never attempted to dominate Europe in the nineteenth century. Because they require detailed discussion, the American and British cases are dealt with in the next chapter.

Second, I examine the foreign policy behavior of Italy from its creation as a unified state in 1861 until its defeat in World War II. Some might concede that the mightiest great powers look for opportunities to gain power, yet still think that the other great powers, especially the weaker ones, behave like status quo powers. Italy is a good test case for this line of argument, because it was clearly "the least of the great powers" for virtually the entire time it ranked as a player in European politics.[3] Despite Italy's lack of military might, its leaders were constantly probing for opportunities to gain power, and when one presented itself, they rarely hesitated to seize it. Furthermore, Italian policymakers were motivated to be aggressive in large part by balance-of-power considerations.

Third, one might concede that "the number of cases in which a strong dynamic state has stopped expanding because of satiation or has set modest limits to its power aims has been few indeed" but nevertheless maintain that those great powers were foolish to behave aggressively, because offense usually led to catastrophe.[4] Those states ultimately would have been more secure if they had concentrated on maintaining the balance of power, not attempting to alter it by force. This self-defeating behavior, so the argument goes, cannot be explained by strategic logic but must instead be the result of misguided policies pushed by selfish interest groups on the home front. Defensive realists often adopt this line of argument. Their favorite examples of self-defeating behavior are Japan before World War II, Germany before World War I, and Germany before World War II: each state suffered a crushing military defeat in the ensuing war. I challenge this general line of argument, paying careful attention to the German and Japanese cases, where the evidence shows that they were not engaged in self-defeating behavior fueled by malign domestic politics.

Finally, I examine the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Defensive realists suggest that once nuclear-armed rivals develop the capability to destroy each other as functioning societies, they should be content with the world they have created and not attempt to change it. In other words, they should become status quo powers at the nuclear level. According to offensive realism, however, those rival nuclear powers will not simply accept

mutual assured destruction (MAD) but instead will strive to gain nuclear superiority over the other side. I will attempt to show that the nuclear weapons policies of both superpowers were largely consistent with the predictions of offensive realism.

With the exception of the American and British cases, which are discussed in the next chapter, my four different cuts at the historical record are dealt with here in the order in which they were described above. Therefore, let us begin with an assessment of Japanese foreign policy between the Meiji Restoration and Hiroshima.

JAPAN (1868–1945)

Before 1853, Japan had little contact with the outside world, especially the United States and the European great powers. More than two centuries of self-imposed isolation had left Japan with a feudal political system and an economy that was not in the same league as those of the leading industrial states of the day. The great powers used "gunboat diplomacy" to "open up" Japan in the 1850s by forcing it to accept a series of unequal commercial treaties. At the same time, the great powers were striving to gain control over territory on the Asian continent. Japan was powerless to affect these developments; it was at the mercy of the great powers.

Japan reacted to its adverse strategic position by imitating the great powers both at home and abroad. Japanese leaders decided to reform their political system and compete with the West economically and militarily. As Japan's foreign minister put it in 1887, "What we must do is to transform our empire and our people, make the empire like the countries of Europe and our people like the peoples of Europe. To put it differently, we have to establish a new, European-style empire on the edge of Asia."[5]

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 was the first major step on the road to rejuvenation.[6] Although the main emphasis in the early years of modernization was on domestic policy, Japan almost immediately began acting like a great power on the world stage.[7] Korea was Japan's initial target of conquest, but by the mid-1890s it was apparent that Japan was bent on

controlling large portions of the Asian continent; by the end of World War I, it was clear that Japan sought hegemony in Asia. Japan's offensive inclinations remained firmly intact until 1945, when it was decisively defeated in World War II. During the nearly eight decades between the Meiji Restoration and the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay, Japan took advantage of almost every favorable shift in the balance of power to act aggressively and increase its share of world power.[8]

There is wide agreement among students of Japanese foreign policy that Japan was constantly searching for opportunities to expand and gain more power between 1868 and 1945, and that security concerns were the main driving force behind its behavior. For example, Nobutaka Ike writes, "It would appear in retrospect that a recurring theme of the epoch was war, either its actual prosecution or preparation for it. . . . The evidence leads one to the conjecture that war represented an integral part of Japan's modernization process."[9] Even Jack Snyder, a prominent defensive realist, recognizes that "from the Meiji restoration in 1868 until 1945, all Japanese governments were expansionist."[10]

Regarding Japan's motive, Mark Peattie captures the prevailing wisdom when he notes that, "security—or rather insecurity—in relation to the advance of Western power in Asia seems, by the evidence, to have been the dominant concern in the acquisition of the component territories of the Japanese empire."[11] Even E. H. Norman, an incisive critic of the authoritarian cast of the Meiji Restoration, concludes that all lessons of history "warned the Meiji statesmen that there was to be no half-way house between the status of a subject nation and that of a growing, victorious empire."[12] General Ishiwara Kanji forcefully made that same point at the Tokyo war-crimes trials in May 1946, when he challenged an American prosecutor with these words:

> Haven't you heard of Perry [Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. navy, who negotiated the first U.S.-Japan trade treaty]? Don't you know anything about your country's history? . . . Tokugawa Japan believed in isolation; it didn't want to have anything to do with other countries and had its doors locked tightly. Then along came Perry from

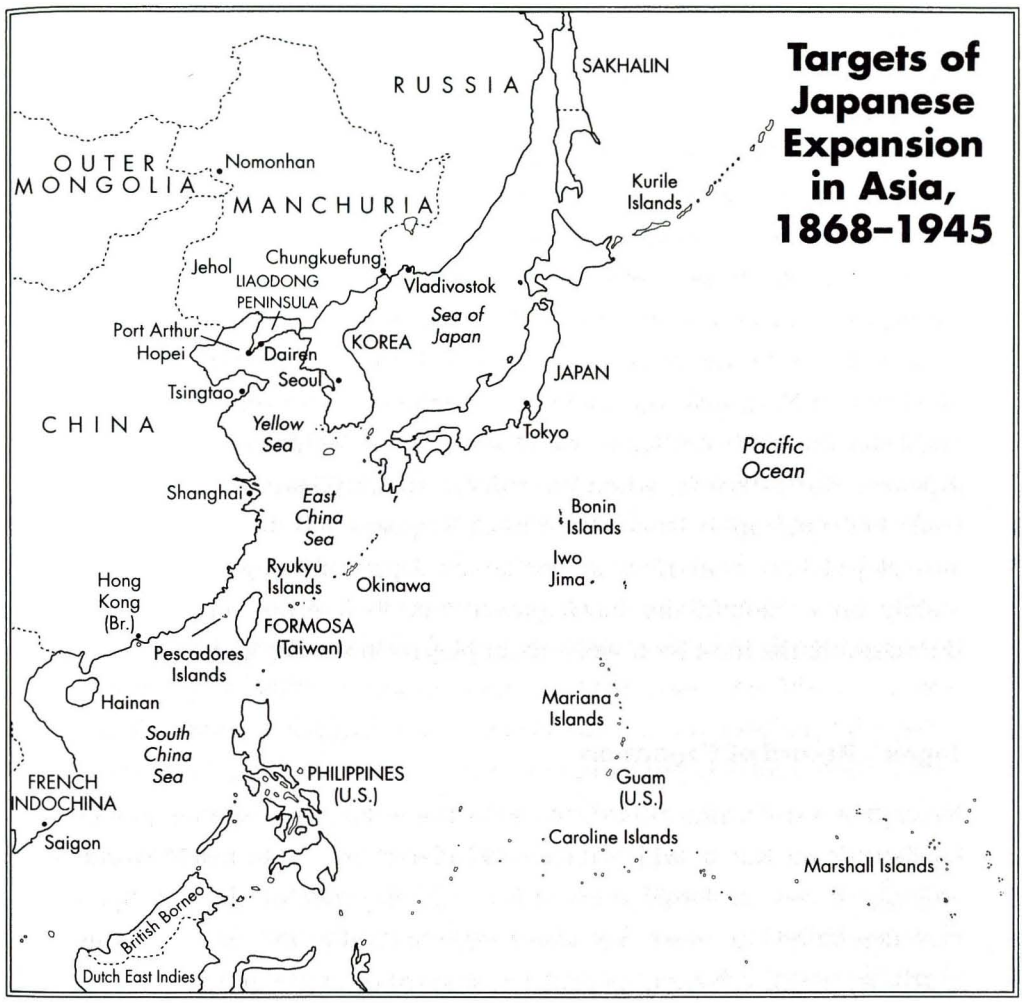
> your country in his black ships to open those doors; he aimed his big guns at Japan and warned, "If you don't deal with us, look out for these; open your doors, and negotiate with other countries too." And then when Japan did open its doors and tried dealing with other countries, it learned that all those countries were a fearfully aggressive lot. And so for its own defense it took your country as its teacher and set about learning how to be aggressive. You might say we became your disciples. Why don't you subpoena Perry from the other world and try him as a war criminal?[13]

Targets and Rivals

Japan was principally concerned with controlling three areas on the Asian mainland: Korea, Manchuria, and China. Korea was the primary target because it is located a short distance from Japan (see Map 6.1). Most Japanese policymakers surely agreed with the German officer who described Korea as "a dagger thrust at the heart of Japan."[14] Manchuria was number two on Japan's target list, because it, too, is located just across the Sea of Japan. China was a more distant threat than either Korea or Manchuria, but it was still an important concern, because it had the potential to dominate all of Asia if it ever got its act together and modernized its economic and political systems. At the very least, Japan wanted to keep China weak and divided.

Japan was also interested at different times in acquiring territory in Outer Mongolia and Russia. Moreover, Japan sought to conquer large portions of Southeast Asia and, indeed, accomplished that goal in the early years of World War II. Furthermore, Japan had its sights on a number of islands that lie off the Asian continent. They included Formosa (now Taiwan), the Pescadores, Hainan, and the Ryukyus. The story of Japan's efforts to achieve hegemony in Asia, however, unfolded largely on the Asian continent and involved Korea, Manchuria, and China. Finally, Japan conquered a large number of islands in the western Pacific Ocean when it went to war against Germany in 1914 and the United States in 1941.

Neither China nor Korea was capable of checking Japan's imperial ambitions, although China helped the great powers stymie Japan's drive


Targets of Japanese Expansion in Asia, 1868–1945
RUSSIA
SAKHALIN
OUTER MONGOLIA
Nomonhan
MANCHURIA
Kurile Islands
Jehol
Chungkuefung
LIAODONG PENINSULA
Vladivostok
Sea of Japan
Port Arthur
Hopei
Dairen
KOREA
JAPAN
Seoul
Tsingtao
CHINA
Yellow Sea
Tokyo
Pacific Ocean
Shanghai
East China Sea
Bonin Islands
Ryukyu Islands
Okinawa
Iwo Jima
Hong Kong (Br.)
FORMOSA (Taiwan)
Pescadores Islands
Hainan
Mariana Islands
South China Sea
PHILIPPINES (U.S.)
Guam (U.S.)
FRENCH INDOCHINA
Saigon
Caroline Islands
Marshall Islands
British Borneo
Dutch East Indies

MAP 6.1

for regional hegemony between 1937 and 1945. Unlike Japan, which modernized after its initial contacts with the West, both China and Korea remained economically backward until well after 1945. Consequently, Japan gained a significant military advantage over China and Korea in the late nineteenth century and was eventually able to annex Korea and to conquer large portions of China. Japan might have dominated the Asian continent by the early twentieth century had it not been contained by the great powers.

Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States played key roles in checking Japan between 1895 and 1945. Russia is part of Asia as well as of Europe, and thus it qualifies as both an Asian and a European great power. Indeed, Russia was Japan's principal great-power rival in Northeast Asia, and it was the only great power that fought against Japan's armies on the continent. Of course, Russia had imperial ambitions of its own in Northeast Asia, and it challenged Japan for control of Korea and Manchuria. Nevertheless, there were times, as during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), when the Russian military was so weak that it could not stand up to Japan. The United Kingdom and the United States also played important roles in containing Japan, although they relied mainly on economic and naval power, not their armies. France and Germany, for the most part, were minor players in the Far East.

Japan's Record of Expansion

In the first few decades after the Meiji Restoration, Japanese foreign policy focused on Korea, which remained isolated from the outside world, although it was still loosely viewed as a tributary state of China.[15] Japan was determined to open up Korea diplomatically and economically, much the way the Western powers had opened up Japan at mid-century. But the Koreans resisted Japan's overtures, prompting a fierce debate in Japan between 1868 and 1873 over whether to use force to accomplish that end. The decision was ultimately made to forego war and concentrate instead on domestic reform. A Japanese surveying team, however, clashed with Korean coastal forces in 1875. War was narrowly averted

when Korea accepted the Treaty of Kang-wah (February 1876), which opened three Korean ports to Japanese commerce and declared Korea an independent state.

Nevertheless, China still considered Korea its vassal state, which inevitably led to an intense rivalry between China and Japan over Korea. Indeed, fighting broke out in late 1884 between Chinese and Japanese troops stationed in Seoul. But war was averted because both sides feared that the European great powers would take advantage of them if they fought with each other. Nevertheless, Sino-Japanese competition over Korea continued, and in the summer of 1894 another crisis broke out. This time, Japan decided to go to war against China and settle the issue on the battlefield. Japan quickly defeated China and imposed a harsh peace treaty on the losers.[16] With the Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed on April 17, 1895, China ceded the Liaodong Peninsula, Formosa, and the Pescadores to Japan. The Liaodong Peninsula was part of Manchuria and included the important city of Port Arthur. Furthermore, China was forced to recognize Korea's independence, which effectively meant that Korea would become a ward of Japan, not China. Japan also received important commercial rights in China and exacted a large indemnity from China, leaving little doubt that Japan was bent on becoming a major player in Asian politics.

The great powers, especially Russia, were alarmed by Japan's growing power and its sudden expansion on the Asian continent. Russia, France, and Germany decided to rectify the situation; a few days after the peace treaty was signed, they forced Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China. The Russians were determined to prevent Japan from controlling any part of Manchuria, because they intended to control it themselves. Russia also made it clear that it would contest Japan for control of Korea. Japan was allowed to keep Formosa and the Pescadores. With this "Triple Intervention," Russia replaced China as Japan's rival for control of Korea and Manchuria.[17]

By the early twentieth century, Russia was the dominant force in Manchuria, having moved large numbers of troops there during the Boxer Rebellion (1900). Neither Japan nor Russia was able to gain the upper hand in Korea, mainly because Korean policymakers skillfully

played the two great powers off against each other so as to avoid being devoured by either side. Japan found this strategic landscape unacceptable and offered the Russians a simple deal: Russia could dominate Manchuria if Japan could control Korea. But Russia said no, and Japan moved to rectify the problem by going to war against Russia in early February 1904.[18]

Japan won a resounding victory at sea and on land, which was reflected in the peace treaty that was signed at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on September 5, 1905. Russia's influence in Korea was ended, ensuring that Japan would now dominate the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, Russia transferred the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, including control of the South Manchuria Railway. Russia also surrendered the southern half of Sakhalin Island to Japan; Russia had controlled it since 1875. Japan had reversed the outcome of the Triple Intervention and gained a large foothold on the Asian continent.

Japan moved quickly to consolidate its gains, annexing Korea in August 1910.[19] Japan had to proceed more cautiously in Manchuria, however, because Russia still maintained a large army in Northeast Asia and a serious interest in Manchuria. Moreover, the United States was alarmed by Japan's growing might and sought to contain it by keeping Russia strong and using it as a balancing force against Japan. Faced with this new strategic environment, Japan agreed with Russia in July 1907 to divide Manchuria into separate spheres of influence. Japan also recognized Russia's special interests in Outer Mongolia, while Russia recognized Japan's domination of Korea.

Japan continued its offensive ways when World War I broke out on August 1, 1914. Japan entered the war on the Allies' side within the month and quickly conquered the Pacific islands controlled by Germany (the Marshalls, the Carolines, and the Marianas), as well as the German-controlled city of Tsingtao on China's Shandong Peninsula. China, which was then in the midst of major political turmoil and in a precarious strategic position, asked Japan to return control of those cities to China. Japan not only refused the request, but in January 1915, it presented China with the infamous "Twenty-one Demands," which called for China to make major economic and political concessions to Japan that would have

eventually turned China into a Japanese vassal state like Korea.[20] The United States forced Japan to abandon its most radical demands, and China grudgingly agreed to Japan's more limited demands in May 1915. It was apparent from these events that Japan was bent on dominating China sooner rather than later.

Japan's foreign policy ambitions were on display again in the summer of 1918 when its troops invaded northern Manchuria and Russia itself in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution (October 1917).[21] Russia was in the midst of a bloody civil war, and Japan intervened in tandem with the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. The Western powers, who were still fighting against the kaiser's armies on the western front, hoped with this intervention to get Russia back into the war against Germany. In practice, that meant helping the anti-Bolshevik forces win the civil war. Although Japan contributed seventy thousand troops to the intervention force, more than any other great power, it showed little interest in fighting the Bolsheviks and instead concentrated on establishing control over the areas it occupied: the northern part of Sakhalin Island, northern Manchuria, and eastern Siberia. Japan's intervention in Russia was difficult from the start, because of harsh weather, an unfriendly population, and the vast size of the territory it occupied. After the Bolsheviks triumphed in the civil war, Japan began withdrawing its troops from Russia, pulling out of Siberia in 1922 and northern Sakhalin in 1925.

By the end of World War I, the United States felt that Japan was getting too big for its britches, and it set out to rectify the situation. At the Washington Conference in the winter of 1921–22, the United States forced Japan to accept three treaties that effectively reversed Japan's gains in China during World War I and put limits on the sizes of the American, British, and Japanese navies.[22] These treaties included much rhetoric about the need for cooperation in future crises and the importance of maintaining the political status quo in Asia. But Japan was dissatisfied with the Washington treaties from the start, mainly because it was determined to expand its empire in Asia, whereas the treaties were designed to contain it. Still, Japan's leaders signed the treaties because they felt that Japan was in no position to challenge the Western powers, who had just

emerged victorious from World War I. In fact, Japan did little to upset the status quo throughout the 1920s, which was a relatively peaceful decade in Asia as well as in Europe.[23]

Japan was back to its aggressive ways in the early 1930s, however, and its foreign policy became increasingly aggressive over the course of the decade.[24] Japan's Kwantung Army initiated a crisis with China on September 18, 1931.[25] The "Mukden incident," as it came to be known, was a pretext for going to war to conquer all of Manchuria. The Kwantung Army won the war quickly, and in March 1932, Japan helped establish the "independent" state of Manchukuo, which was a de facto Japanese colony.

With both Korea and Manchuria firmly under its control by early 1932, Japan set its sights on dominating China itself. Indeed, Japan had begun probing and pushing into China even before the formal establishment of Manchukuo.[26] In January 1932, fighting broke out in Shanghai between China's Nineteenth Route Army and Japanese naval units. Japan was forced to send ground troops into Shanghai, and the ensuing battles lasted for almost six weeks before the United Kingdom arranged a truce in May 1932. In early 1933, Japanese troops moved into Jehol and Hopei, two provinces in northern China. When a truce there was finally worked out in late May 1933, Japan remained in control of Jehol, and the Chinese were forced to accept a demilitarized zone across the northern part of Hopei.

In case anyone still had doubts about Japan's intentions, its foreign ministry issued an important statement on April 18, 1934, proclaiming that East Asia was in Japan's sphere of influence and warning the other great powers not to help China in its struggle with Japan. In effect, Japan fashioned its own version of the Monroe Doctrine for East Asia.[27] Japan finally launched a full-scale assault against China in the late summer of 1937.[28] By the time Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Japan controlled large portions of northern China as well as a number of enclaves along China's coast.

Japan was also involved in a series of border conflicts with the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, including a pair of major battles at Chungkuefung (1938) and Nomonhan (1939).[29] Leaders of the Kwantung

Army were bent on expanding beyond Manchuria into Outer Mongolia and the Soviet Union itself. The Red Army decisively defeated the Kwantung Army in both fights, and Japan quickly lost its appetite for further northward expansion.

Two critical events in Europe during the early years of World War II—the fall of France in the spring of 1940 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union a year later—opened up new opportunities for Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia and the western Pacific.[30] Japan took advantage of them but ended up in a war with the United States that lasted from December 1941 until August 1945, in which Japan was decisively defeated and eliminated from the ranks of the great powers.

GERMANY (1862–1945)

In the years from 1862 to 1870 and from 1900 to 1945, Germany was bent on upsetting the European balance of power and increasing its share of military might. It initiated numerous crises and wars during those fifty-five years and made two attempts in the twentieth century to dominate Europe. Between 1870 and 1900, Germany was concerned mainly with preserving, not changing, the balance of power. But Germany had not become a satiated power, as it made clear in the first half of the twentieth century. The cause of its benign late-nineteenth-century behavior was that Germany did not have sufficient power at the time to challenge its rivals.

Germany's aggressive foreign policy behavior was driven mainly by strategic calculations. Security was always a burning issue for Germany because of geography: it is located in the center of Europe with few natural defensive barriers on either its eastern or its western flank, which makes it vulnerable to invasion. Consequently, German leaders were always on the lookout for opportunities to gain power and enhance the prospects for their country's survival. This is not to deny that other factors influenced German foreign policy. Consider, for example, German behavior under its two most famous leaders, Otto von Bismarck and Adolf Hitler. Although Bismarck is usually considered an artful practitioner of

realpolitik, he was motivated by nationalism as well as security concerns when he started and won wars in 1864, 1866, and 1870–71.[31] Specifically, he not only sought to expand Prussia's borders and make it more secure, but also was determined to create a unified German state.

There is no doubt that Hitler's aggression was motivated in good part by a deep-seated racist ideology. Nevertheless, straightforward power calculations were central to Hitler's thinking about international politics.[32] Since 1945, scholars have debated how much continuity links the Nazis and their predecessors. In the foreign policy realm, however, there is widespread agreement that Hitler did not represent a sharp break with the past but instead thought and behaved like German leaders before him. David Calleo puts the point well: "In foreign policy, the similarities between imperial and Nazi Germany are manifest. Hitler shared the same geopolitical analysis: the same certainty about conflict among nations, the same craving and rationale for hegemony over Europe. The First World War, he could claim, only sharpened the validity of that geopolitical analysis."[33] Even without Hitler and his murderous ideology, Germany surely would have been an aggressive state by the late 1930s.[34]

Targets and Rivals

France and Russia were Germany's two principal rivals between 1862 and 1945, although during brief periods Russo-German relations were friendly. Franco-German relations, on the other hand, were almost always bad over that entire period. The United Kingdom and Germany got on reasonably well before 1900, but relations soured in the early twentieth century and the United Kingdom, like France and Russia, ended up fighting against Germany in both world wars. Austria-Hungary was Germany's bitter enemy in the early years of Bismarck's reign, but they became allies in 1879 and stayed linked until Austria-Hungary disintegrated in 1918. Relations between Italy and Germany were generally good from 1862 until 1945, although Italy did fight against Germany in World War I. The United States fought against Germany in both world wars, but otherwise there was no significant rivalry between them during those eight decades.

The list of particular targets of German aggression for the period between 1862 and 1945 is long, because Germany had ambitious plans for expansion after 1900. Wilhelmine Germany, for example, not only sought to dominate Europe, but also wanted to become a world power. This ambitious scheme, known as *Weltpolitik*, included the acquisition of a large colonial empire in Africa.[35] Nevertheless, Germany's most important goal during the first half of the twentieth century was expanding on the European continent at the expense of France and Russia, which it attempted to do in both world wars. Germany had more limited goals from 1862 to 1900, as discussed below, because it was not powerful enough to overrun Europe.

Germany's Record of Expansion

Bismarck took over the reins of government in Prussia in September 1862. There was no unified German state at the time. Instead, an assortment of German-speaking political entities, scattered about the center of Europe, were loosely tied together in the German Confederation. Its two most powerful members were Austria and Prussia. Over the course of the next nine years, Bismarck destroyed the confederation and established a unified German state that was considerably more powerful than the Prussia it replaced.[36] He accomplished that task by provoking and winning three wars. Prussia joined with Austria in 1864 to defeat Denmark and then joined with Italy in 1866 to defeat Austria. Finally, Prussia defeated France in 1870, in the process making the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine part of the new German Reich. There is little doubt that Prussia acted as offensive realism would predict from 1862 until 1870.

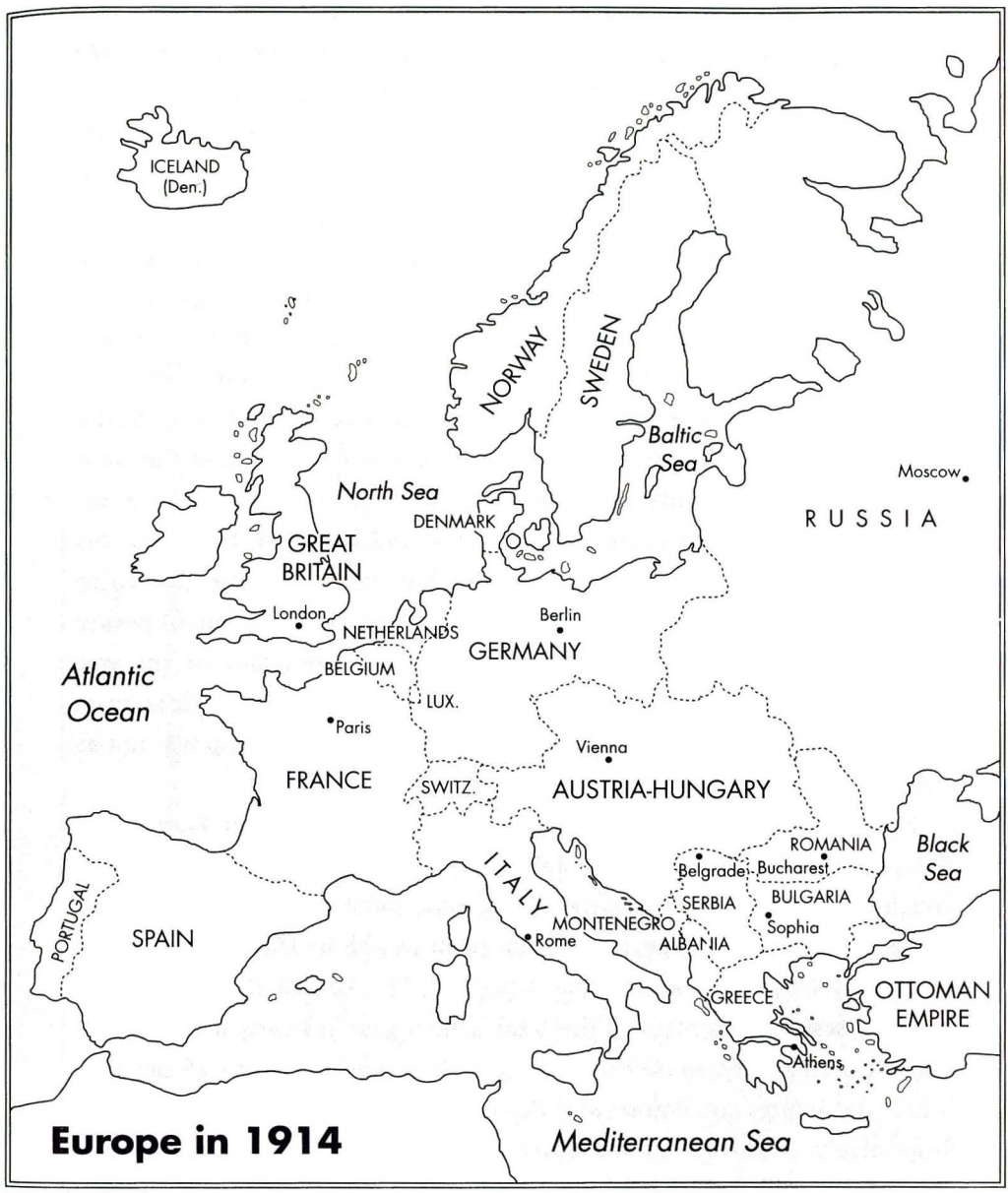
Bismarck became chancellor of the new Germany on January 18, 1871, and remained in office for nineteen years, until Kaiser Wilhelm fired him on March 20, 1890.[37] Although Germany was the most powerful state on the European continent during those two decades, it fought no wars and its diplomacy was concerned mainly with maintaining, not altering, the balance of power. Even after Bismarck left office, German foreign policy remained on essentially the same course for another decade. Not until the

early twentieth century did Germany's diplomacy turn provocative and its leaders begin to think seriously about using force to expand Germany's borders.

What accounts for this thirty-year hiatus of rather peaceful behavior by Germany? Why did Bismarck, who was so inclined toward offense during his first nine years in office, become defense-oriented in his last nineteen years? It was not because Bismarck had a sudden epiphany and became "a peace-loving diplomatic genius."[38] In fact, it was because he and his successors correctly understood that the German army had conquered about as much territory as it could without provoking a great-power war, which Germany was likely to lose. This point becomes clear when one considers the geography of Europe at the time, the likely reaction of the other European great powers to German aggression, and Germany's position in the balance of power.

There were few minor powers on Germany's eastern and western borders. Indeed there were none on its eastern border, which abutted Russia and Austria-Hungary (see Map 6.2). This meant that it was difficult for Germany to conquer new territory without invading the homeland of another great power—i.e., France or Russia. Furthermore, it was apparent to German leaders throughout these three decades that if Germany invaded either France or Russia, Germany would probably end up fighting against both—and maybe even the United Kingdom—in a two-front war.

Consider what happened in the two major Franco-German crises of this period. During the "War in Sight Crisis" of 1875, both the United Kingdom and Russia made it clear that they would not stand by and watch Germany crush France, as they had done in 1870.[39] During the "Boulanger Crisis" of 1887, Bismarck had good reason to think that Russia would aid France if a Franco-German war broke out.[40] When that crisis ended, Bismarck negotiated the famous Reinsurance Treaty (June 13, 1887) between Germany and Russia. His aim was to keep the wire open to the Russian tsar and forestall a military alliance between France and Russia. But as George Kennan points out, Bismarck probably realized, "like many other people—that in the event of a Franco-German war it would be impossible, treaty or no treaty, to prevent the Russians from


ICELAND
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GERMANY
BELGIUM
LUX.
Atlantic
Ocean
Paris
Vienna
FRANCE
SWITZ.
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
ROMANIA
Black
Sea
Belgrade
Bucharest
SERBIA
BULGARIA
ITALY
MONTENEGRO
Sophia
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
Rome
ALBANIA
GREECE
OTTOMAN
EMPIRE
Athens
Europe in 1914
Mediterranean Sea

MAP 6.2

coming in against the Germans in a short space of time."[41] Virtually all doubt about the issue was erased between 1890 and 1894, when France and Russia formed an alliance against Germany.

Although Germany was the most powerful state in Europe between 1870 and 1900, it was not a potential hegemon, and thus it did not have sufficient power to be confident that it could defeat France and Russia at the same time, much less the United Kingdom, France, and Russia all at once. In fact, Germany probably would have found France alone to be a formidable opponent before 1900. Potential hegemons, as discussed in Chapter 2, possess the most powerful army and the most wealth of any state in their region.

Germany did have the number one army in Europe, but it was not substantially more powerful than the French army during the late nineteenth century. The German army was the larger of the two fighting forces in the first few years after the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), and at the close of the nineteenth century (see Table 6.1). Although France had more soldiers in its army than Germany did in the 1880s and early 1890s, this numerical advantage was largely meaningless, because it was due to to the fact that France—unlike Germany—had a much larger pool of poorly trained reserves who would contribute little to the outcome of any war between the two countries. In general, the German army had a clear qualitative advantage over its French counterpart, although the gap was not as marked as it had been during the Franco-Prussian War.[42]

Regarding wealth, Germany had a sizable advantage over France and Russia from 1870 to 1900 (see Table 3.3). But the United Kingdom was much wealthier than Germany during that same period. For example, Germany controlled 20 percent of European wealth in 1880, while France controlled 13 percent and Russia 3 percent. The United Kingdom, however, possessed 59 percent of the total, which gave it nearly a 3:1 advantage over Germany. In 1890, Germany's share had grown to 25 percent, while the figures for France and Russia were 13 percent and 5 percent, respectively. But the United Kingdom still controlled 50 percent of European wealth, which gave it a 2:1 advantage over Germany.

In sum, German aggression during the last three decades of the nineteenth century probably would have led to a great-power war that it was not well-positioned to win. The Second Reich would have ended up fight-

TABLE 6.1

Manpower in European Armies, 1875–95

	1875		1880		1885		1890		1895	
	Standing army	War potential	Standing army	War potential	Standing army	War potential	Standing army	War potential	Standing army	War potential
Austria-Hungary	278,470	838,700	239,615	771,556	284,495	1,071,034	336,717	1,818,413	354,252	1,872,178
United Kingdom	192,478	539,776	194,512	571,769	188,657	577,334	210,218	618,967	222,151	669,553
France	430,703	1,000,000	502,697	2,000,000	523,833	2,500,000	573,277	2,500,000	598,024	2,500,000
Germany	419,738	1,304,541	419,014	1,304,541	445,392	1,535,400	492,246	2,234,631	584,734	3,000,000
Russia	765,872	1,213,259	884,319	2,427,853	757,238	1,917,904	814,000	2,220,798	868,672	2,532,496
Italy	214,667	460,619	214,667	460,619	250,000	1,243,556	262,247	1,221,478	252,829	1,356,999

NOTE: "War potential" (referred to in *The Statesman's Year-Book* as an army's "war footing") represents the total number of men who would be in the army immediately after mobilization; it thus encompasses a country's active army plus all its reserves, however poorly trained they may be. These numbers should be taken with a grain of salt because they are only estimates, and they include many reservists who were only partially trained, and sometimes not trained at all. *The Statesman's Year-Book* does not list a war footing for the United Kingdom; I obtained it by adding the various reserves, militias, and volunteer forces it does list to the active British army at home and in the empire.

SOURCES: All figures are from *The Statesman's Year-Book* (London: Macmillan, various years), except for France's 1875 and 1880 war potential, and Italy's 1885 standing army, which are the author's estimates. Years and page numbers are as follows (years refer to editions of *The Statesman's Year-Book*). Austria-Hungary: 1876, p. 17; 1881, p. 17; 1886, p. 19; 1891, p. 350; 1896, p. 356; United Kingdom: 1876, pp. 226–27; 1881, pp. 224–25; 1886, pp. 242–43; 1891, pp. 55–56; 1896, pp. 55–56; France: 1876, p. 70; 1881, p. 70; 1886, p. 76; 1891, p. 479; 1895, p. 487; Germany: 1876, p. 102; 1881, p. 102; 1886, p. 108; 1891, pp. 538–39; 1896, pp. 547–48; Russia: 1876, p. 371; 1882, p. 380; 1887, p. 430; 1891, pp. 870, 872; 1896, pp. 886, 888; Italy: 1876, p. 311; 1881, p. 311; 1886, p. 337; 1891, p. 693; 1896, p. 702.

ing two or three great powers at the same time, and it did not have enough relative power to win that kind of war. Germany was powerful enough to set alarm bells ringing in the United Kingdom, France, and Russia when there was even a hint that it might go on the offensive, but it was not yet powerful enough to fight all three of its great-power rivals at once. So Germany was forced to accept the status quo from 1870 to 1900.

By 1903, however, Germany was a potential hegemon.[43] It controlled a larger percentage of European industrial might than did any other state, including the United Kingdom, and the German army was the most powerful in the world. It now had the capability to consider going on the offensive to gain more power. It is not surprising that at about this time Germany began to think seriously about altering the European balance of power and becoming a world power.

Germany's first serious move to challenge the status quo was its decision at the turn of the century to build a formidable navy that would challenge the United Kingdom's command of the world's oceans and allow it to pursue *Weltpolitik*.[44] The result was a naval arms race between the United Kingdom and Germany that lasted until World War I. Germany initiated a major crisis with France over Morocco in March 1905. Its aim was to isolate France from the United Kingdom and Russia and prevent them from forming a balancing coalition against Germany. In fact, the crisis backfired on Germany and those three states formed the Triple Entente. Although Germany's leaders did not start the so-called Bosnian crisis in October 1908, they intervened on Austria-Hungary's behalf and forced the crisis to the brink of war before Russia backed down and accepted a humiliating defeat in March 1909. Germany initiated a second crisis over Morocco in July 1911, and again the aim was to isolate and humiliate France. It too did not work: Germany was forced to back down and the Triple Entente tightened. Most important, Germany's leaders were principally responsible for starting World War I in the summer of 1914. Their aim was to defeat Germany's great-power rivals decisively and redraw the map of Europe to ensure German hegemony for the foreseeable future.[45]

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) defanged Germany throughout the Weimar period (1919–33).[46] Germany was not allowed to have an air

force, and the size of its army could not exceed one hundred thousand men. Both conscription and the famous German General Staff were outlawed. The German army was so weak in the 1920s that German leaders seriously feared an invasion by the Polish army, which had attacked the Soviet Union in 1920 and defeated the Red Army.[47] Although Germany was in no position to acquire territory by force, virtually all of its leaders during the Weimar period were committed to upsetting the status quo and at least gaining back the territory in Belgium and Poland that had been taken from Germany at the end of World War I.[48] They were also intent on restoring German military might.[49] This revisionist bent among Weimar's ruling elites explains in part why there was so little resistance to Hitler's military and foreign policies after he came to power in 1933.

Germany's leading statesman during Weimar was Gustav Stresemann, who was foreign minister from 1924 until his death in 1929. His views on foreign policy appeared to be rather tame, at least compared to those of many of his political rivals, who complained that he was not aggressive enough in pushing Germany's revisionist agenda. He signed both the Locarno Pact (December 1, 1925) and the Kellogg-Briand Pact (August 27, 1928), which were attempts to foster international cooperation and eliminate war as a tool of statecraft. He also brought Germany into the League of Nations (September 8, 1926) and rarely spoke about using force to upset the balance of power. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus among scholars that Stresemann was no idealist but was instead "a convinced adherent of the doctrine that *Machtpolitik* was the sole determining factor in international relations and that only a nation's power potential could determine its standing in the world."[50] Moreover, he was deeply committed to expanding Germany's borders. He signed nonaggression treaties and used accommodating language with the United Kingdom and France, because he thought that clever diplomacy was the only way that a militarily feeble Germany could get back some of its lost territory. If Germany had possessed a formidable army during his tenure at the foreign ministry, he almost certainly would have used it—or threatened to use it—to gain territory for Germany.

Little needs to be said about Nazi Germany (1933–45), since it is universally recognized as one of the most aggressive states in world history.[51]

When Hitler came to power in January 1933, Germany was still a military weakling. He immediately set out to rectify that situation and build a powerful Wehrmacht that could be employed for aggressive purposes.[52] By 1938, Hitler felt it was time to begin expanding Germany's borders. Austria and the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland were acquired in 1938 without firing a shot, as was the rest of Czechoslovakia and the Lithuanian city of Memel in March 1939. Later that year, the Wehrmacht invaded Poland, then Denmark and Norway in April 1940, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France in May 1940, Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941, and the Soviet Union in June 1941.

THE SOVIET UNION (1917–91)

Russia had a rich history of expansionist behavior before the Bolsheviks came to power in October 1917. Indeed, "the Russian Empire as it appeared in 1917 was the product of nearly four centuries of continuous expansion."[53] There is considerable evidence that Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, and their successors wanted to follow in the tsars' footsteps and further expand Soviet borders. But opportunities for expansion were limited in the Soviet Union's seventy-five-year history. Between 1917 and 1933, the country was essentially too weak to take the offensive against rival major powers. After 1933, it had its hands full just trying to contain dangerous threats on its flanks: imperial Japan in Northeast Asia and Nazi Germany in Europe. During the Cold War, the United States and its allies were determined to check Soviet expansion all across the globe. Nevertheless, the Soviets had some chances to expand, and they almost always took advantage of them.

There was a deep-seated and long-standing fear among Russia's rulers that their country was vulnerable to invasion, and that the best way to deal with that problem was to expand Russia's borders. Not surprisingly, Russian thinking about foreign policy before and after the Bolshevik Revolution was motivated largely by realist logic. Describing the "discourse of Russia's statesmen" between 1600 and 1914, William Fuller

writes, "They generally employed the cold-blooded language of strategy and analysis. They weighed the international impact of what they proposed to do; they pondered the strengths and weaknesses of their prospective enemies; and they justified their policies in terms of the benefits they anticipated for Russian power and security. One is struck by the omnipresence of this style of reasoning."[54]

When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they apparently believed that international politics would immediately undergo a fundamental transformation and that balance-of-power logic would be relegated to the boneyard of history. Specifically, they thought that with some help from the Soviet Union, communist revolutions would spread across Europe and the rest of the world, creating like-minded states that would live in peace before finally withering away altogether. Thus, Leon Trotsky's famous quip in November 1917, when he was appointed commissar for foreign affairs: "I shall issue some revolutionary proclamations to the peoples and then close up shop." Similarly, Lenin said in October 1917, "What, are we going to have foreign affairs?"[55]

World revolution never happened, however, and Lenin quickly became "a political realist second to none."[56] In fact, Richard Debo argues that Lenin abandoned the idea of spreading communism so fast that he doubts Lenin ever took the idea seriously.[57] Stalin, who ran Soviet foreign policy for almost thirty years after Lenin died, was also driven in large part by the cold logic of realism, as exemplified by his willingness to cooperate with Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1941.[58] Ideology mattered little for Stalin's successors, not simply because they too were deeply affected by the imperatives of life in an anarchic system, but also because "Stalin had undercut deep faith in Marxist-Leninist ideological universalism and killed its genuine advocates; he had reduced the party ideologues to propagandist pawns in his global schemes."[59]

In short, Soviet foreign policy behavior over time was driven mainly by calculations about relative power, not by communist ideology. "In the international sphere," as Barrington Moore notes, "the Communist rulers of Russia have depended to a great extent on techniques that owe more to Bismarck, Machiavelli, and even Aristotle than they do to Karl Marx or

Lenin. This pattern of world politics has been widely recognized as a system of inherently unstable equilibrium, described in the concept of the balance of power."[60]

This is not to say that communist ideology did not matter at all in the conduct of Soviet foreign policy.[61] Soviet leaders paid some attention to promoting world revolution in the 1920s, and they also paid attention to ideology in their dealings with the Third World during the Cold War. Moreover, there was often no conflict between the dictates of Marxist ideology and realism. The Soviet Union, for example, clashed with the United States from 1945 until 1990 for ideological as well as balance-of-power reasons. Also, virtually every time the Soviet Union behaved aggressively for security-related reasons, the action could be justified as promoting the spread of communism. But whenever there was a conflict between the two approaches, realism invariably won out. States do whatever is necessary to survive and the Soviet Union was no exception in this regard.

Targets and Rivals

The Soviet Union was concerned mainly with controlling territory and dominating other states in Europe and Northeast Asia, the two regions in which it is located. Until 1945, its principal rivals in those areas were local great powers. After 1945, its main adversary in both Europe and Northeast Asia was the United States, with which it competed all across the globe.

Germany was the Soviet Union's main European rival between 1917 and 1945, although they were allies from 1922 to 1933 and from 1939 to 1941. The United Kingdom and France had frosty and sometimes hostile relations with Moscow from the time of the Bolshevik Revolution until the early years of World War II, when the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union finally came together to fight the Nazis. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies were arrayed against the United States and its Western European allies; indeed, the Soviet Union's chief foreign policy goal over the course of its history was to control Eastern Europe. Soviet leaders surely would have liked to dominate Western

Europe as well and become Europe's first hegemon, but that was not feasible, even after the Red Army destroyed the Wehrmacht in World War II, because the North Atlantic Treaty Organization stood squarely in its way.

In Northeast Asia, Japan was the Soviet Union's archenemy from 1917 until 1945. Like tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union sought to control Korea, Manchuria, the Kurile Islands, and the southern half of Sakhalin Island, all of which were dominated by Japan during this period. When World War II ended in 1945, the United States became Moscow's main enemy in Northeast Asia; China became an important Soviet ally after Mao Zedong's victory over the Nationalists in 1949. However, China and the Soviet Union had a serious falling out in the late 1950s, which led China to ally with the United States and Japan against the Soviet Union in the early 1970s. The Soviet Union gained control of the Kuriles and all of Sakhalin Island in 1945, and Manchuria came under the firm control of China after 1949, leaving Korea as the region's main battleground during the Cold War.

Soviet leaders were also interested in expanding into the Persian Gulf region, especially into oil-rich Iran, which shared a border with the Soviet Union. Finally, during the Cold War, Soviet policymakers were determined to win allies and gain influence in virtually every area of the Third World, including Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the South Asian subcontinent. Moscow was not bent on conquering and controlling territory in those less-developed regions, however. Instead, it sought client states that would be useful in its global competition with the United States.

The Soviet Union's Record of Expansion

The Soviet Union was engaged in a desperate fight for survival during the first three years of its existence (1917–20).[62] Immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin pulled the Soviet Union out of World War I, but in the process he was forced to make huge territorial concessions to Germany in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 15, 1918).[63] Shortly thereafter, the Western allies, who were still fighting against Germany on the western

front, inserted ground forces into the Soviet Union.[64] Their aim was to force the Soviet Union to rejoin the war against Germany. That did not happen, however, in large part because the German army was defeated on the battlefield in the late summer and early fall of 1918, and World War I ended on November 11, 1918.

Germany's defeat was good news for the Soviet leaders, because it spelled the death of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, which had robbed the Soviet Union of so much of its territory. Moscow's troubles were far from over, however. A bloody civil war between the Bolsheviks and various rival groups had broken out in the first months of 1918. To make matters worse, the Western allies supported the anti-Bolshevik forces, also known as the "Whites," in their fight with the Bolshevik "Reds" and kept their intervention forces in the Soviet Union until the summer of 1920. Although the Bolsheviks sometimes appeared to be on the verge of losing the civil war, the balance of power shifted decisively against the Whites in early 1920, and it was then only a matter of time before they were defeated. But before that could happen, the newly created state of Poland took advantage of Soviet weakness and invaded the Ukraine in April 1920. Poland hoped to break apart the Soviet Union and make Belorussia and Ukraine independent states. The hope was that those new states would then join a Polish-dominated federation of independent eastern European states.

The Polish army scored major victories in the early fighting, capturing Kiev in May 1920. But later that summer the Red Army turned the tide of battle, so much so that by the end of July, Soviet forces reached the Soviet-Polish border. Amazingly, the Soviets now had an opportunity to invade and conquer Poland, and maybe with help from Germany (the other great power unhappy about Poland's existence), redraw the map of eastern Europe. Lenin quickly seized the opportunity and sent the Red Army toward Warsaw.[65] But the Polish army, with help from France, routed the invading Soviet forces and pushed them out of Poland. Both sides were exhausted from the fighting by then, so they signed an armistice in October 1920 and a formal peace treaty in March 1921. By that point the civil war was effectively over and the Western allies had withdrawn their troops from Soviet territory.[66]

Soviet leaders were in no position to pursue an expansionist foreign policy during the 1920s or early 1930s, mainly because they had to concentrate on consolidating their rule at home and rebuilding their economy, which had been devestated by all the years of war.[67] For example, the Soviet Union controlled a mere 2 percent of European industrial might by 1920 (see Table 3.3). But Moscow did pay some attention to foreign affairs. In particular, it maintained close relations with Germany from April 1922, when the Treaty of Rapallo was signed, until Hitler came to power in early 1933.[68] Although both states were deeply interested in altering the territorial status quo, neither possessed a serious offensive military capability. Soviet leaders also made an effort in the 1920s to spread communism around the globe. But they were always careful not to provoke the other great powers into moving against the Soviet Union and threatening its survival. Virtually all of these efforts to foment revolution, whether in Asia or Europe, came up short.

Probably the most important Soviet initiative of the 1920s was Stalin's decision to modernize the Soviet economy through forced industrialization and the ruthless collectivization of agriculture. He was motivated in large part by security concerns. In particular, he believed that if the Soviet economy continued to lag behind those of the world's other industrialized states, the Soviet Union would be destroyed in a future great-power war. Speaking in 1931, Stalin said, "We have lagged behind the advanced countries by fifty to a hundred years. We must cover that distance in ten years. Either we'll do it or they will crush us."[69] A series of five-year plans, initiated in October 1928, transformed the Soviet Union from a destitute great power in the 1920s into Europe's most powerful state by the end of World War II.

The 1930s was a decade of great peril for the Soviet Union; it faced deadly threats from Nazi Germany in Europe and imperial Japan in Northeast Asia. Although the Red Army ended up in a life-and-death struggle with the Wehrmacht during World War II, not with the Japanese army, Japan was probably the more dangerous threat to the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s.[70] Indeed, Soviet and Japanese troops engaged in a series of border clashes in the late 1930s, culminating in a brief war at

Nomonhan in the summer of 1939. Moscow was in no position to take the offensive in Asia during the 1930s, but instead concentrated on containing Japanese expansion. Toward that end, the Soviets maintained a powerful military presence in the region and provided considerable assistance to China after the start of the Sino-Japanese War in the summer of 1937. Their aim was to keep Japan bogged down in a war of attrition with China.

The Soviet Union's main strategy for dealing with Nazi Germany contained an important offensive dimension.[71] Stalin apparently understood soon after Hitler came to power that the Third Reich was likely to start a great-power war in Europe and that there was not much chance of reconstituting the Triple Entente (the United Kingdom, France, Russia) to deter Nazi Germany or fight against it if war broke out. So Stalin pursued a buck-passing strategy. Specifically, he went to considerable lengths to develop friendly relations with Hitler, so that the Nazi leader would strike first against the United Kingdom and France, not the Soviet Union. Stalin hoped that the ensuing war would be long and costly for both sides, like World War I on the western front, and thus would allow the Soviet Union to gain power and territory at the expense of the United Kingdom, France, and especially Germany.

Stalin finally succeeded in passing the buck to the United Kingdom and France in the summer of 1939 with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in which Hitler and Stalin agreed to gang up on Poland and divide it between them, and Hitler agreed to allow the Soviet Union a free hand in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and Finland. This agreement meant that the Wehrmacht would fight against the United Kingdom and France, not the Soviet Union. The Soviets moved quickly to implement the pact. After conquering the eastern half of Poland in September 1939, Stalin forced the Baltic countries in October to allow Soviet forces to be stationed on their territory. Less than a year later, in June 1940, the Soviet Union annexed those three tiny states. Stalin demanded territorial concessions from Finland in the fall of 1939, but the Finns refused to make a deal. So Stalin sent the Red Army into Finland in November 1939 and took the territory he wanted by force.[72] He was also able to convince Hitler in June 1940 to allow the Soviet Union to absorb

Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, which were part of Romania. In short, the Soviet Union made substantial territorial gains in eastern Europe between the summers of 1939 and 1940.

Nevertheless, Stalin's buck-passing strategy came up short in the spring of 1940 when the Wehrmacht overran France in six weeks and pushed the British army off the continent at Dunkirk. Nazi Germany was now more powerful than ever and it was free to invade the Soviet Union without having to worry much about its western flank. Recalling how Stalin and his lieutenants reacted to news of the debacle on the western front, Nikita Khrushchev wrote, "Stalin's nerves cracked when he learned about the fall of France. . . . The most pressing and deadly threat in all history faced the Soviet Union. We felt as though we were facing the threat all by ourselves."[73] The German onslaught came a year later, on June 22, 1941.

The Soviet Union suffered enormous losses in the early years of World War II but eventually turned the tide against the Third Reich and began launching major offensives westward, toward Berlin, in early 1943. The Red Army, however, was not simply concerned with defeating the Wehrmacht and recapturing lost Soviet territory. Stalin was also determined to conquer territory in Eastern Europe that the Soviets would dominate after Germany was defeated.[74] The Red Army had to conquer Poland and the Baltic states to defeat the German army, but the Soviets also launched major military operations to capture Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, even though those offensives were not essential for defeating Germany and probably delayed the final victory.

The Soviet Union's appetite for power and influence in Northeast Asia was also evident during World War II. In fact, Stalin managed to win back more territory than Russia had controlled in the Far East before its defeat by Japan in 1905. The Soviets had managed to keep out of the Pacific war until the final days of that conflict, when the Red Army attacked Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchuria on August 9, 1945. This Soviet offensive was in large part a response to long-standing pressure from the United States to join the war against Japan after Germany was defeated. Stalin, however, demanded a price for Soviet participation, and Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt responded by striking a secret deal with

him at Yalta in February 1945.[75] For joining the fight against Japan, the Soviets were promised the Kurile Islands and the southern half of Sakhalin Island. In Manchuria, they were given a lease on Port Arthur as a naval base and recognition of the Soviet Union's "preeminent interests" over the commercial port of Dairen and the region's two most important railroads.

No firm decision was reached on Korea's future during World War II, although the Red Army occupied the northern part of that country during the closing days of the conflict.[76] In December 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union effectively agreed to jointly administer Korea as a trusteeship. But that plan fell apart quickly, and in February 1946, Stalin began building a client state in North Korea. The United States did the same in South Korea.

With Germany and Japan in ruins, the Soviet Union emerged from World War II as a potential hegemon in Europe and Northeast Asia. If it were possible, the Soviets surely would have moved to dominate both of those regions. Indeed, if ever a state had good reason to want to rule over Europe it was the Soviet Union in 1945. It had been invaded twice by Germany over a thirty-year period, and each time Germany made its victim pay an enormous blood price. No responsible Soviet leader would have passed up an opportunity to be Europe's hegemon in the wake of World War II.

Hegemony was not feasible, however, for two reasons. First, given the enormous amount of damage the Third Reich inflicted on Soviet society, Stalin had to concentrate on rebuilding and recovering after 1945, not fighting another war. Thus, he cut the size of the Soviet military from 12.5 million troops at the end of World War II to 2.87 million by 1948.[77] Second, the United States was an enormously wealthy country that had no intention of allowing the Soviet Union to dominate either Europe or Northeast Asia.[78]

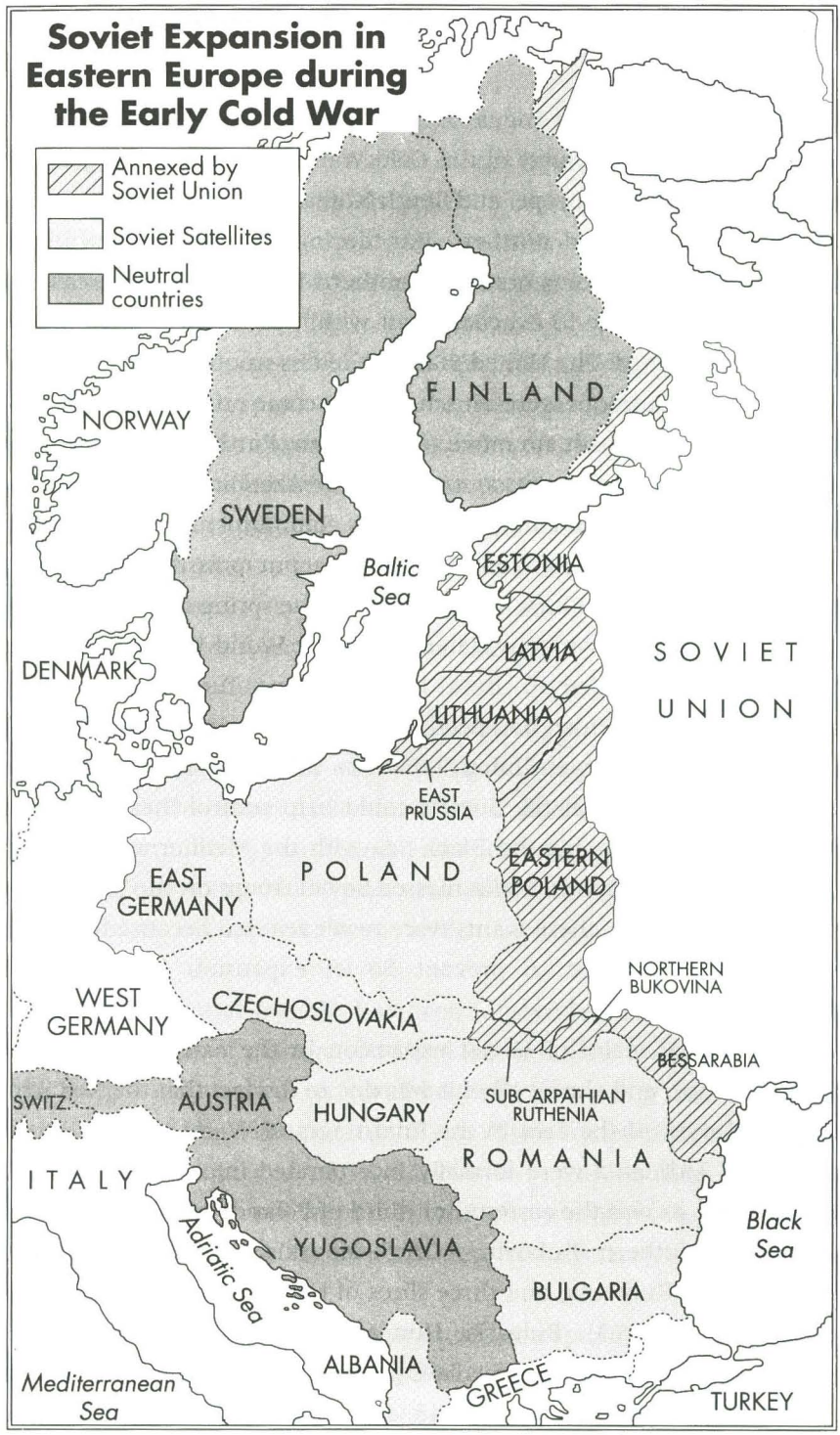
In light of these constraints, Stalin sought to expand Soviet influence as far as possible without provoking a shooting war with the United States and its allies.[79] Actually, the available evidence indicates that he hoped to avoid an intense security competition with the United States, although he

was not successful in that endeavor. In short, Stalin was a cautious expansionist during the early part of the Cold War. His four main targets were Iran, Turkey, Eastern Europe, and South Korea.

The Soviets occupied northern Iran during World War II, while the British and the Americans occupied southern Iran.[80] All three great powers agreed at the time to evacuate Iran within six months after the war against Japan ended. The United States pulled its troops out on January 1, 1946, and British troops were on schedule to come out by March 2, 1946. Moscow, however, made no move to leave Iran. Furthermore, it was supporting separatist movements among both the Azeri and the Kurdish populations in northern Iran, as well as Iran's communist Tudeh Party. Both the United Kingdom and the United States put pressure on Stalin to remove his troops from Iran, which he did in the spring of 1946.

Regarding Turkey, which was neutral during World War II until March 1945, Stalin demanded in June 1945 that the Turkish provinces of Ardahan and Kars, which had been part of Russia from 1878 to 1918, be given back to the Soviet Union.[81] He also asked for military bases on Turkish territory so that the Soviets could help control the Dardanelles, the Turkish straits linking the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. In support of these demands, Stalin massed Soviet troops on the Turkish border at one point. But these wants were never realized because the United States was determined to prevent Soviet expansion in the eastern Mediterranean.

The principal realm of Soviet expansion in the early Cold War was Eastern Europe, and almost all of it was due to the fact that the Red Army conquered most of the area in the final stages of World War II. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were formally incorporated into the Soviet Union after the war, as was the eastern one-third of Poland, part of East Prussia, Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, Czechoslovakia's eastern province of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, and three slices of territory on Finland's eastern border (see Map 6.3). Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania were turned into satellite states immediately after the war. Czechoslovakia suffered the same fate in February 1948, and a year later the Soviets created another satellite state in East Germany.


Soviet Expansion in Eastern Europe during the Early Cold War
Annexed by Soviet Union
Soviet Satellites
Neutral countries
NORWAY
FINLAND
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
SOVIET UNION
DENMARK
EAST PRUSSIA
POLAND
EASTERN POLAND
EAST GERMANY
NORTHERN BUKOVINA
WEST GERMANY
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
BESSARABIA
SWITZ.
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
SUBCARPATHIAN RUTHENIA
ROMANIA
ITALY
Black Sea
Adriatic Sea
YUGOSLAVIA
BULGARIA
ALBANIA
GREECE
TURKEY
Mediterranean Sea

MAP 6.3

Finland and Yugoslavia were the only states in Eastern Europe to escape complete Soviet domination. Their good fortune was due mainly to two factors. First, both states had clearly demonstrated in World War II that it would be difficult and costly for the Soviet army to conquer and occupy them for an extended period of time. The Soviet Union, which was attempting to recover from the massive damage it had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, already had its hands full occupying the other states in Eastern Europe. Thus, it was inclined to avoid costly operations in Finland and Yugoslavia. Second, both states were willing to maintain a neutral position in the East-West conflict, which meant that they were not a military threat to the Soviet Union. If either Finland or Yugoslavia had shown an inclination to ally with NATO, the Soviet army probably would have invaded it.[82]

The Soviet Union also attempted to gain power and influence in Northeast Asia during the early Cold War, although that region clearly received less attention than did Europe.[83] Despite some distrust between Stalin and Mao, the Soviets provided aid to the Chinese Communists in their fight against the Nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek. The Chinese Communists won the civil war in 1949 and allied with the Soviet Union against the United States. One year later, the Soviets supported North Korea's invasion of South Korea, which led to a three-year war that left Korea divided along roughly the same line that had divided it before the war.[84]

By the early 1950s, the United States and its allies around the globe had a formidable containment policy firmly in place, and there was little opportunity for further Soviet expansion in Europe, Northeast Asia, or the Persian Gulf. In fact, Stalin's decision to back North Korea's invasion of South Korea in late June 1950 was the last case of Soviet-sponsored aggression in any of those critically important areas for the remainder of the Cold War. Soviet efforts at expansion between 1950 and 1990 were confined to the Third World, where it met with occasional success, but always with firm resistance from the United States.[85]

After decades of competition with the United States for control over Europe, the Soviet Union suddenly reversed course in 1989 and abandoned

its empire in Eastern Europe. That bold move effectively brought the Cold War to an end. The Soviet Union itself then broke apart into fifteen remnant states in late 1991. With few exceptions, the first wave of scholars to study these events argued that the Cold War ended because key Soviet leaders, especially Mikhail Gorbachev, underwent a fundamental transformation in their thinking about international politics during the 1980s.[86] Rather than seeking to maximize the Soviet Union's share of world power, Moscow's new thinkers were motivated by the pursuit of economic prosperity and liberal norms of restraint in the use of force. Soviet policymakers, in short, stopped thinking and acting like realists and instead adopted a new perspective emphasizing the virtues of cooperation among states.

As more evidence becomes available, however, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the first-wave explanation of Soviet behavior at the end of the Cold War is incomplete, if not wrong. The Soviet Union and its empire disappeared in large part because its smokestack economy could no longer keep up with the technological progress of the world's major economic powers.[87] Unless something drastic was done to reverse this economic decline, the Soviet Union's years as a superpower were numbered.

To fix the problem, Soviet leaders sought to gain access to Western technology by greatly reducing East-West security competition in Europe, liberalizing their political system at home, and cutting their losses in the Third World. But that approach backfired because political liberalization unleashed the long-dormant forces of nationalism, causing the Soviet Union itself to fall apart.[88] In sum, the conventional wisdom from the initial wave of scholarship on the end of the Cold War had it backwards: far from abandoning realist principles, the behavior and thinking of Soviet leaders reinforce the pattern of history that states seek to maximize their power in order to remain secure from international rivals.[89]

ITALY (1861–1943)

There is much agreement among students of Italian foreign policy that although Italy was the weakest of the great powers between 1861 and 1943, it constantly sought opportunities to expand and gain more power.[90]

Richard Bosworth, for example, writes that "pre-1914 Italy was a power on the make, looking for a bargain package deal which would offer the least of the great powers a place in the sun."[91] The foreign policy of post–World War I Italy, which was dominated by Benito Mussolini, shared the same basic goal. Fascist Italy (1922–43) merely faced a different set of opportunities than its predecessor, liberal Italy (1861–1922). Writing in 1938, four years before Italy collapsed in World War II, Maxwell Macartney and Paul Cremona wrote, "In the past Italian foreign policy has certainly not been dominated by abstract ideals. Nowhere have the implications of Machiavelli's *mot* on the political inutility of innocence been more thoroughly grasped than in his native country."[92]

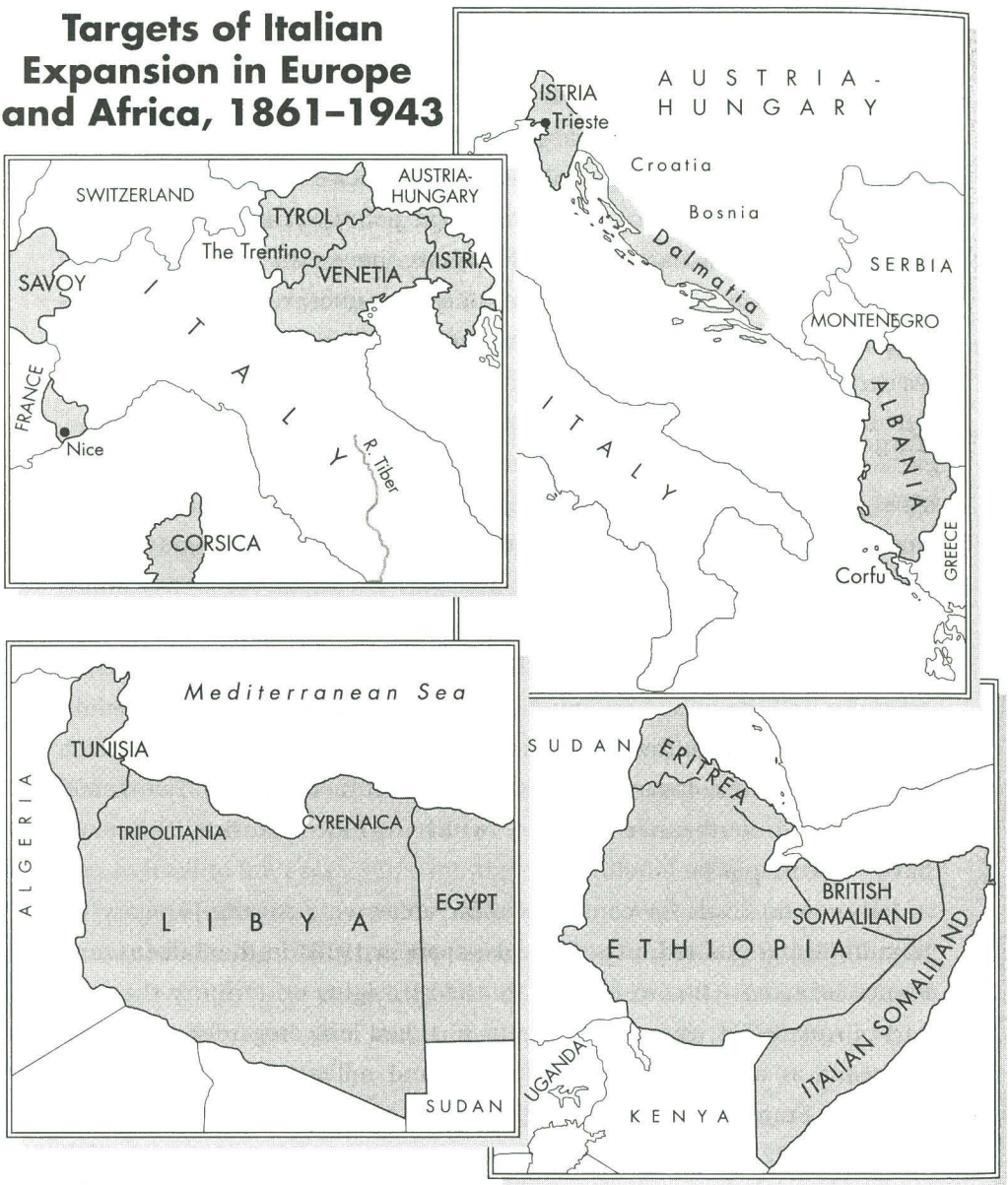
Targets and Rivals

One gets a good sense of the breadth of Italy's appetite for territorial conquest by considering its main targets over the course of the eight decades that it was a great power. It focused its aggressive intentions on five different areas: North Africa, which included Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia; the Horn of Africa, which included Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somaliland; the southern Balkans, which included Albania, Corfu, the Dodecanese Islands, and even parts of southwestern Turkey; southern Austria-Hungary, which included Dalmatia, Istria, the Trentino (the southern part of Tyrol), and Venetia; and southeastern France, which included Corsica, Nice, and Savoy (see Map 6.4).

Italy's main rivals for control of these areas were Austria-Hungary (at least until that multiethnic state broke apart in 1918) in the Balkans, and France in Africa. Of course, Italy also had its sights on territory that was part of Austria-Hungary and France, which had long "regarded the Italian peninsula as a free field for diplomatic and military maneuver."[93] The Ottoman Empire, which was falling apart between 1861 and its final demise in 1923, was also an important factor in Italy's calculations: that empire controlled large swaths of territory in the Balkans and North Africa.

Although Italy's hostile aims were ever-present, its army was ill-equipped for expansion. In fact, it was a remarkably inefficient fighting force.[94] Not only was it incapable of holding its own in a fight against the

Targets of Italian Expansion in Europe and Africa, 1861–1943



MAP 6.4

other European great powers, it also could be counted on to perform poorly against the fighting forces of smaller European powers as well as native armies in Africa. Bismarck put the point well when he said that "Italy had a large appetite and rotten teeth."[95] Consequently, Italian leaders tended to avoid direct military engagements with other great powers unless their adversary was about to lose a war or had substantial numbers of its troops bogged down on another front.

Because of Italy's lack of military prowess, its leaders relied heavily on diplomacy to gain power. They paid careful attention to choosing alliance partners and were adept at playing other great powers off against each other for Italy's benefit. In particular, they operated on the assumption that although they were playing a weak hand, Italy possessed sufficient military might to tip the balance between other major powers, who would recognize that fact and make concessions to Italy to win its allegiance. Brian Sullivan labels this approach "the strategy of the decisive weight."[96] World War I probably provides the best example of that strategy in action. When the conflict broke out on August 1, 1914, Italy remained on the sidelines, where it dickered with each of the warring sides to get the best possible deal before entering the conflict.[97] Both sides made Italy generous offers, because each believed that the Italian army might tip the balance one way or the other. Although Italy had been formally allied with Austria-Hungary and Germany before World War I, it joined the war in May 1915 on the Allies' side, because the United Kingdom and France were willing to concede more territory to Italy than were its former allies.

Liberal and Fascist Italy's Record of Expansion

Italy's first efforts at territorial expansion were in Europe. In 1866, Italy joined forces with Prussia to fight against Austria. The Prussians crushed the Austrians in battle, but the Italians were defeated by the Austrians. In the peace settlement, however, Italy was awarded Venetia, a large area on its northern frontier that had been part of Austria. Italy then sat out the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), although it conquered Rome in September 1870 when it was obvious that France, which had previously protected

Rome's independence, would lose its war with Prussia. Italy, as Denis Mack Smith notes, "thus casually gained Rome, like Venice, as just another by-product of Prussian victory."[98] During the "Great Eastern Crisis," which broke out in 1875 when the Ottoman Empire's control over southeastern Europe seemed to slip precipitously, Italy began scheming to take territory from Austria-Hungary. But the schemes failed and Italy came away empty-handed from the Congress of Berlin (1878), which ended the crisis.

Italy shifted its focus away from Europe and toward Africa in the early 1880s. Even before unification in 1861, Italian elites had shown significant interest in conquering territory along the North African coast. Tunisia was the number one target. But France beat Italy to the punch and captured Tunisia in 1881, which soured Italian relations with France for the next twenty years and caused Italy to form the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany in 1882. That same year, Italy attempted to join the British occupation of Egypt, but Bismarck nixed that scheme. Italy then turned its attention to the Horn of Africa, an area to which the other great powers paid little attention. An Italian expeditionary force was sent to the region in 1885, and within a decade, Italy had its first two colonies: Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. It failed to conquer Ethiopia, however. In fact, the Ethiopian army inflicted a major defeat on the Italian army at Adowa in 1895.

By 1900, Italy was again looking to expand in North Africa and Europe. Opportunities to expand presented themselves in both regions as the Ottoman Empire began losing its grip on Libya and the Balkans. Relations between Triple Alliance partners Austria-Hungary and Italy went sour at this point, in large part because they became rivals in the Balkans. This burgeoning rivalry opened the door for Italy to think seriously about taking Istria and the Trentino away from Austria-Hungary.

Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire over Libya in 1911; when the war ended a year later, Italy had won control over its third African colony. During that conflict, Italy also conquered the Dodecanese Islands, whose inhabitants were mostly Greek. But World War I provided Italy with its greatest opportunity to expand its power and enhance its security.

As noted, Italian policymakers bargained hard with both sides before joining forces with the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. Italy's basic aims were to secure a "defensible land frontier" with Austria-Hungary and "domination of the Adriatic," the large body of water that separates Italy from the Balkans.[99] In the famous Treaty of London, the Allies promised Italy that after the war was won, it could have 1) Istria, 2) the Trentino, 3) a large chunk of the Dalmatian coast, 4) permanent control over the Dodecanese Islands, 5) the Turkish province of Adalia, 6) control of the Albanian city of Valona and the area immediately surrounding it, and 7) a sphere of influence in central Albania.[100] The Italians, as A.J.P. Taylor notes, "were certainly not modest in their claims."[101]

Italy suffered more than a million casualties in World War I, but it came out on the winning side. After the war, Italy not only expected to get what it was promised in 1915, it also saw new opportunities for expansion with the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia. Thus, as Sullivan notes, "Italians began planning for control over the oil, grain, and mines of Romania, the Ukraine, and the Caucasus, and for protectorates over Croatia and the eastern Red Sea coast."[102] For a variety of reasons, however, Italy's grand ambitions were never realized. In the final postwar settlement, it gained only Istria and the Trentino, which were nevertheless strategically important areas.[103] Italy also continued to occupy the Dodecanese Islands, over which it was given formal control in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne.

Thus, in the six decades between unification and Mussolini's coming to power in October 1922, liberal Italy had acquired Rome, Venetia, Istria, the Trentino, and the Dodecanese Islands in Europe, and Eritrea, Libya, and Italian Somaliland in Africa. Fascist Italy quickly set about building on its predecessor's record of successful conquests. In August 1923, Mussolini's army invaded the Greek island of Corfu at the mouth of the Adriatic Sea, but the United Kingdom forced Italy to abandon its conquest. He also set his sights on Albania, which Italy had occupied during World War I but had given up in 1920 when the local population rebelled against the foreign rulers. Mussolini supported an Albanian chieftan in the mid-1920s, who then signed an agreement with Italy that effectively made Albania an

Italian protectorate. But that was not enough for the fascist leader, who formally annexed Albania in April 1939.

Ethiopia was another key target for Mussolini. Italy began making plans to occupy it in the mid-1920s, and "from at least 1929 onwards surreptitiously occupied places inside Ethiopia."[104] In October 1935, Italy launched a full-scale war against Ethiopia, and one year later it gained formal control over that African state. Finally, Italy sent troops to fight in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) on the side of General Francisco Franco's reactionary junta. Italy's main aim was to acquire the Balearic Islands in the western Mediterranean, which would allow Italy to threaten France's lines of communication with North Africa, and the United Kingdom's lines of communication between Gibraltar and Malta.[105]

Mussolini saw World War II as an excellent chance to conquer foreign territory and gain power for Italy. Specifically, Nazi Germany's stunning military successes in the early years of the war "gave Italy unprecedented leverage and freedom of action."[106] Mussolini's first major step was to declare war against France on June 10, 1940, one month after Germany invaded France, and at a point when it was clear that France was doomed to defeat. Italy entered the war at this opportune moment to acquire French territory and colonies. Nice, Savoy, Corsica, Tunisia, and Djibouti were the main targets, although Italy was also interested in acquiring other French-controlled areas such as Algeria, as well as parts of the British empire, such as Aden and Malta. Mussolini also demanded that the French navy and air force be turned over to Italy. Germany met hardly any of Italy's demands, however, because Hitler did not want to give France any incentive to resist the Nazi occupation.

Despite this setback, Mussolini continued looking for opportunities to conquer territory. In the early summer of 1940, he offered to join forces with Nazi Germany if it invaded the United Kingdom. In August 1940, Italy captured British Somaliland. At the same time, Mussolini was contemplating invasions of Greece, Yugoslavia, and Egypt, which was defended by a small British army. In September 1940, Italy invaded Egypt with the hope of reaching the Suez Canal. The following month, Italy invaded Greece. Both operations turned into military disasters for the

Italian army, although the Wehrmacht came to its rescue in both.[107] These military debacles notwithstanding, Italy declared war against the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, when it appeared that the Red Army would be the Nazi war machine's next victim. Italy sent about two hundred thousand troops to the eastern front. Again, Mussolini hoped to get some of the spoils of victory for Italy, but his hopes were never realized, and Italy surrendered to the Allies in September 1943.

In sum, Mussolini, like Italy's liberal leaders before him, was a relentless expansionist.

SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIOR?

The preceding four cases—Japan, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Italy—support the claim that great powers seek to increase their share of world power. Moreover, these cases also show that great powers are often willing to use force to achieve that goal. Satiated great powers are rare in international politics. This description of how great powers have acted over time is, in fact, not that controversial, even among defensive realists. Jack Snyder, for example, writes that "the idea that security can be achieved through expansion is a pervasive theme in the grand strategy of great powers in the industrial era."[108] Furthermore, in *Myths of Empire,* he offers detailed case studies of great-power behavior in the past that provide abundant evidence of the offensive proclivities of such states.

One might recognize that history is replete with examples of great powers acting aggressively but still argue that this behavior cannot be explained by the logic of offensive realism. The basis of this claim, which is common among defensive realists, is that expansion is misguided. Indeed, they regard it as a prescription for national suicide. Conquest does not pay, so the argument runs, because states that try to expand ultimately meet defeat. States would be wiser to maintain the status quo by pursuing policies of "retrenchment, selective appeasement, shoring up vital rather than peripheral areas, or simply benign neglect."[109] That states do otherwise is evidence of irrational or nonstrategic behavior, behavior that cannot be

prompted by the imperatives of the international system. Rather, this behavior is primarily the result of malign domestic political forces.[110]

There are two problems with this line of argument. As I have already discussed, the historical record does not support the claim that conquest hardly ever pays and that aggressors invariably end up worse off than they were before the war. Exapansion sometimes pays big dividends; at other times it does not. Furthermore, the claim that great powers behave aggressively because of pernicious domestic politics is hard to sustain, because all kinds of states with very different kinds of political systems have adopted offensive military policies. It is not even the case that there is at least one type of political system or culture—including democracy—that routinely eschews aggression and works instead to defend the status quo. Nor does the record indicate that there are especially dangerous periods—for example, the nuclear age—during which great powers sharply curtail their offensive tendencies. To argue that expansion is inherently misguided implies that all great powers over the past 350 years have failed to comprehend how the international system works. This is an implausible argument on its face.

There is a more sophisticated fallback position, however, that may be discerned in the writings of the defensive realists.[111] Although they usually argue that conquest rarely pays, they also admit on other occasions that aggression succeeds a good part of the time. Building on that more variegated perspective, they divide the universe of aggressors into "expanders" and "overexpanders." Expanders are basically the smart aggressors who win wars. They recognize that only limited expansion makes good strategic sense. Attempts to dominate an entire region are likely to be self-defeating, because balancing coalitions invariably form against states with large appetites, and such states end up suffering devastating defeats. Expanders might occasionally start a losing war, but once they see the writing on the wall, they quickly retreat in the face of defeat. In essence, they are "good learners."[112] For defensive realists, Bismarck is the archetypical smart aggressor, because he won a series of wars without committing the fatal error of trying to become a European hegemon. The former Soviet Union is also held up as an example of an

intelligent aggressor, mainly because it had the good sense not to try to conquer all of Europe.

Overexpanders, on the other hand, are the irrational aggressors who start losing wars yet do not have the good sense to quit when it becomes apparent that they are doomed to lose. In particular, they are the great powers who recklessly pursue regional hegemony, which invariably leads to their own catastrophic defeat. Defensive realists contend that these states should know better, because it is clear from history that the pursuit of hegemony almost always fails. This self-defeating behavior, so the argument goes, must be the result of warped domestic politics. Defensive realists usually point to three prominent overexpanders: Wilhelmine Germany from 1890 to 1914, Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1941, and imperial Japan from 1937 to 1941. Each of these aggressors started a war that led to a devastating loss. It is not an exaggeration say that the claim that offensive military policies lead to self-defeating behavior rests primarily on these three cases.

The main problem with this "moderation is good" perspective is that it mistakenly equates irrational expansion with military defeat. The fact that a great power loses a war does not necessarily mean that the decision to initiate it was the result of an ill-informed or irrational decision-making process. States should not start wars that they are certain to lose, of course, but it is hard to predict with a high degree of certainty how wars will turn out. After a war is over, pundits and scholars often assume that the outcome was obvious from the start; hindsight is 20-20. In practice, however, forecasting is difficult, and states sometimes guess wrong and get punished as a result. Thus, it is possible for a rational state to initiate a war that it ultimately loses.

The best way to determine whether an aggressor such as Japan or Germany was engaged in self-defeating behavior is to focus on the decision-making process that led it to initiate war, not the outcome of the conflict. A careful analysis of the Japanese and German cases reveals that, in each instance, the decision for war was a reasonable response to the particular circumstances each state faced. As the discussion below makes clear, these were not irrational decisions fueled by malign political forces on the home front.

There are also problems with the related argument that pursuing regional hegemony is akin to tilting at windmills. To be sure, the United States is the only state that has attempted to conquer its region and succeeded. Napoleonic France, Wilhelmine Germany, Nazi Germany, and imperial Japan all tried but failed. One out of five is not an impressive success rate. Still, the American case demonstrates that it is possible to achieve regional hegemony. There are also examples of success from the distant past: the Roman Empire in Europe (133 B.C.–235 A.D.), the Mughal Dynasty on the South Asian subcontinent (1556–1707), and the Ch'ing Dynasty in Asia (1683–1839), to name a few. Furthermore, even though Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, and Hitler all lost their bids to dominate Europe, each won major battlefield victories, conquered huge tracts of territory, and came close to achieving their goals. Only Japan stood little chance of winning hegemony on the battlefield. But as we shall see, Japanese policymakers knew that they would probably lose, and went to war only because the United States left them with no reasonable alternative.

Critics of offensive policies claim that balancing coalitions form to defeat aspiring hegemons, but history shows that such coalitions are difficult to put together in a timely and efficient manner. Threatened states prefer to buck-pass to each other rather than form an alliance against their dangerous foe. For example, the balancing coalitions that finished off Napoleonic France and Nazi Germany came together only after these aggressors had conquered much of Europe. Moreover, in both cases, the defensive alliances did not form until after the drive for hegemony had been blunted by a significant military defeat in Russia, which effectively fought both Napoleon and Hitler without allies.[113] The difficulty of constructing effective defensive alliances sometimes provides powerful states with opportunities for aggression.

Finally, the claim that great powers should have learned from the historical record that attempts at regional hegemony are doomed is not persuasive. Not only does the American case contradict the basic point, but it is hard to apply the argument to the first states that made a run at regional hegemony. After all, they had few precedents, and the evidence from the earliest cases was mixed. Wilhelmine Germany, for example,

could look at both Napoleonic France, which failed, and the United States, which succeeded. It is hard to argue that German policymakers should have read history to say that they were sure to lose if they attempted to conquer Europe. One might concede that point but argue that Hitler certainly should have known better, because he could see that Wilhelmine Germany as well as Napoleonic France had failed to conquer Europe. But, as discussed below, what Hitler learned from those cases was not that aggression did not pay, but rather that he should not repeat his predecessor's mistakes when the Third Reich made its run at hegemony. Learning, in other words, does not always lead to choosing a peaceful outcome.

Thus, the pursuit of regional hegemony is not a quixotic ambition, although there is no denying that it is difficult to achieve. Since the security benefits of hegemony are enormous, powerful states will invariably be tempted to emulate the United States and try to dominate their region of the world.

Wilhelmine Germany (1890–1914)

The indictment against the Kaiserreich for engaging in self-defeating behavior has two counts. First, its aggressive actions caused the United Kingdom, France, and Russia to form an alliance—the Triple Entente—against Germany. Thus, it is guilty of self-encirclement. Second, Germany then started a war with that balancing coalition in 1914 that it was almost sure to lose. Not only did Germany have to fight a two-front war as a result of its self-encirclement, but it had no good military strategy for quickly and decisively defeating its rivals.

These charges do not bear up under close inspection. There is no doubt that Germany made certain moves that helped cause the Triple Entente. Like all great powers, Germany had good strategic reasons for wanting to expand its borders, and it sometimes provoked its rivals, especially after 1900. Nevertheless, a close look at how the Entente was formed reveals that the main driving force behind its creation was Germany's growing economic and military might, not its aggressive behavior.

Consider what motivated France and Russia to come together between 1890 and 1894, and then what motivated the United Kingdom to join them between 1905 and 1907. As noted, both France and Russia worried about Germany's growing power during the 1870s and 1880s. Bismarck himself feared that they might form an alliance against Germany. After Russia threatened to come to France's aid during the "War in Sight Crisis" (1875), Bismarck built an alliance structure that was designed to isolate France from the other European great powers. Although he successfully kept France and Russia from allying against Germany during his tenure in office, Russia probably would not have stood by and watched Germany defeat France, as it had in 1870–71. Indeed, it was apparent by the late 1880s that France and Russia were likely to form an alliance against Germany in the near future, whether Bismarck remained in power or not. Soon after Bismarck left office in March 1890, France and Russia began negotiating an alliance, which was put in place four years later. But Germany did not behave offensively in the years before or immediately after Bismarck left office. His successors precipitated no significant crises between 1890 and 1900.[114] So it is hard to argue in this instance that aggressive German behavior caused self-encirclement.[115]

One might argue that Bismarck's successors caused Russia to join with France not by behaving aggressively but by foolishly failing to renew the Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia. Bismarck negotiated this arrangement in 1887 in a desperate move to keep Russia and France apart. There is widespread agreement among scholars, however, that the treaty was a dead letter by 1890 and that there was no substitute diplomatic strategy available. Indeed, W. N. Medlicott maintains that, the Reinsurance Treaty notwithstanding, Bismarck's "Russian policy was in ruins" by 1887.[116] Even if Bismarck had remained in power past 1890, it is unlikely that he could have forestalled the Franco-Russian alliance with clever diplomacy. "Neither Bismarck nor an even greater political genius at the head of German foreign policy," Imanuel Geiss argues, "could probably have prevented . . . an alliance between Russia and France."[117] France and Russia came together because they were scared of Germany's growing power, not because Germany behaved aggressively or foolishly.

Germany did behave aggressively in the early twentieth century, when the United Kingdom joined with France and Russia to form the Triple Entente. But even here, the United Kingdom was motivated more by Germany's growing power than by its aggressive behavior.[118] Germany's decision in 1898 to build a fleet that could challenge the British navy surely soured relations between the United Kingdom and Germany, but it did not drive the United Kingdom to make an alliance with France and Russia. After all, the best way for the United Kingdom to have dealt with this naval arms race was to have won it hands down, not to have committed itself to fight a land war against Germany, which would have mandated spending precious defense dollars on the army rather than the navy. The Moroccan crisis of 1905, which was the first instance of overtly aggressive German behavior, certainly played an important role in the establishment of the Triple Entente between 1905 and 1907. But the main factor behind the United Kingdom's decision to form that three-cornered alliance was Russia's devastating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), which had little to do with German behavior.[119] Russia was effectively knocked out of the European balance of power with that defeat, which meant a sudden and dramatic improvement in Germany's power position on the continent.[120] British leaders recognized that France alone was not likely to fare well in a war with Germany, so they allied with France and Russia to rectify the balance and contain Germany. In sum, changes in the architecture of the European system, not German behavior, were the main cause of the Triple Entente.

The German decision to push for war in 1914 was not a case of wacky strategic ideas pushing a state to start a war it was sure to lose. It was, as noted, a calculated risk motivated in large part by Germany's desire to break its encirclement by the Triple Entente, prevent the growth of Russian power, and become Europe's hegemon. The precipitating event was a crisis in the Balkans between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, in which Germany sided with the former and Russia with the latter.

German leaders clearly understood that they would have to fight a two-front war and that the Schlieffen Plan did not guarantee victory. Nevertheless, they thought that the risk was worth taking, especially since

Germany was so much more powerful than either France or Russia at the time, and there was good reason to think that the United Kingdom might remain on the sidelines.[121] They almost proved right. The Schlieffen Plan narrowly missed producing a quick and decisive victory in 1914.[122] As political scientist Scott Sagan notes, it was for good reason that the French referred to their last-second victory near Paris in September 1914 as "the Miracle of the Marne."[123] Moreover, Germany almost won the subsequent war of attrition between 1915 and 1918. The Kaiser's armies knocked Russia out of the war in the fall of 1917, and they had the British and especially the French armies on the ropes in the spring of 1918. Had it not been for American intervention at the last moment, Germany might have won World War I.[124]

This discussion of German behavior before World War I points to an anomaly for offensive realism. Germany had an excellent opportunity to gain hegemony in Europe in the summer of 1905. Not only was it a potential hegemon, but Russia was reeling from its defeat in the Far East and was in no position to defend itself against a German attack. Also, the United Kingdom was not yet allied with France and Russia. So France stood virtually alone against the mighty Germans, who "had an opportunity without parallel to change the European balance in their favor."[125] Yet Germany did not seriously consider going to war in 1905 but instead waited until 1914, when Russia had recovered from its defeat and the United Kingdom had joined forces with France and Russia.[126] According to offensive realism, Germany should have gone to war in 1905, because it almost surely would have won the conflict.

Nazi Germany (1933–41)

The charge against Hitler is that he should have learned from World War I that if Germany behaved aggressively, a balancing coalition would form and crush it once again in a bloody two-front war. The fact that Hitler ignored this obvious lesson and rushed headlong into the abyss, so the argument goes, must have been the result of a deeply irrational decision-making process.

This indictment does not hold up on close inspection. Although there is no question that Hitler deserves a special place in the pantheon of mass murderers, his evilness should not obscure his skill as an adroit strategist who had a long run of successes before he made the fatal mistake of invading the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Hitler did indeed learn from World War I. He concluded that Germany had to avoid fighting on two fronts at the same time, and that it needed a way to win quick and decisive military victories. He actually realized those goals in the early years of World War II, which is why the Third Reich was able to wreak so much death and destruction across Europe. This case illustrates my earlier point about learning: defeated states usually do not conclude that war is a futile enterprise, but instead strive to make sure they do not repeat mistakes in the next war.

Hitler's diplomacy was carefully calculated to keep his adversaries from forming a balancing coalition against Germany, so that the Wehrmacht could defeat them one at a time.[127] The key to success was preventing the Soviet Union from joining forces with the United Kingdom and France, thus recreating the Triple Entente. He succeeded. In fact, the Soviet Union helped the Wehrmacht carve up Poland in September 1939, even though the United Kingdom and France had declared war against Germany for having invaded Poland. During the following summer (1940), the Soviet Union stood on the sidelines while the German army overran France and pushed the British army off the continent at Dunkirk. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, France was out of the war, the United States was not yet in, and the United Kingdom was not a serious threat to Germany. So the Wehrmacht was effectively able to fight a one-front war against the Red Army in 1941.[128]

Much of Hitler's success was due to the machinations of his rivals, but there is little doubt that Hitler acted skillfully. He not only played his adversaries off against one another, but he went to considerable lengths to convince them that Nazi Germany had benign intentions. As Norman Rich notes, "To conceal or obscure whatever his real intentions may have been, Hitler dedicated no small part of his diplomatic and propagandistic skill. In his public speeches and diplomatic conversations he monoto-

nously intoned his desire for peace, he signed friendship treaties and nonaggression pacts, he was lavish with assurances of good will."[129] Hitler surely understood that the blustery rhetoric of Kaiser Wilhelm and other German leaders before World War I had been a mistake.

Hitler also recognized the need to fashion a military instrument that could win quick victories and avoid the bloody battles of World War I. To that end he supported the building of panzer divisions and played an important role in designing the blitzkrieg strategy that helped Germany win one of the most stunning military victories of all time in France (1940).[130] Hitler's Wehrmacht also won stunning victories against minor powers: Poland, Norway, Yugoslavia, and Greece. As Sebastian Haffner notes, "From 1930 until 1941 Hitler succeeded in practically everything he undertook, in domestic and foreign politics and eventually also in the military field, to the amazement of the world."[131] If Hitler had died in July 1940 after France capitulated, he probably would be considered "one of the greatest of German statesmen."[132]

Fortunately, Hitler made a critical mistake that led to the destruction of the Third Reich. He unleashed the Wehrmacht against the Soviet Union in June 1941, and this time the German blitzkrieg failed to produce a quick and decisive victory. Instead, a savage war of attrition set in on the eastern front, which the Wehrmacht eventually lost to the Red Army. Compounding matters, the United States came into the war in December 1941 and, along with the United Kingdom, eventually opened up a second front in the west. Given the disastrous consequences of attacking the Soviet Union, one might think that there was abundant evidence beforehand that the Soviet Union would win the war, that Hitler was warned repeatedly that launching Operation Barbarossa was tantamount to committing national suicide, and that he did it anyway because he was not a rational calculator.

The evidence, however, does not support this interpretation. There was little resistance among the German elite to Hitler's decision to invade the Soviet Union; in fact, there was considerable enthusiasm for the gambit.[133] For sure, some German generals were dissatisfied with important aspects of the final plan, and a few planners and policymakers thought that the

Red Army might not succumb to the German blitzkrieg. Nevertheless, there was a powerful consensus within the German elite that the Wehrmacht would quickly rout the Soviets, much the way it had defeated the British and French armies a year earlier. It was also widely believed in both the United Kingdom and the United States that Germany would defeat the Soviet Union in 1941.[134] Indeed, there were good reasons to think that the Red Army would collapse in the face of the German onslaught. Stalin's massive purges of his army in the late 1930s had markedly reduced its fighting power, and almost as if to prove the point, the Red Army performed badly in its war against Finland (1939–40).[135] Plus, the Wehrmacht was a finely tuned fighting force by June 1941. In the end, Hitler and his lieutenants simply miscalculated the outcome of Operation Barbarossa. They made a wrong decision, not an irrational one, and that sometimes happens in international politics.

A final point about Germany's two failed attempts at hegemony. Haffner wrote during the Cold War of the wide belief that it was "a mistake from the very start" for Germany to have attempted to dominate Europe.[136] He emphasized how members of "the younger generation" in what was then West Germany "often stare at their fathers and grandfathers as though they were lunatics ever to have set themselves such a goal." He notes, however, that "it should be remembered that the majority of those fathers and grandfathers, i.e., the generation of the First and that of the Second World War, regarded the goal as reasonable and attainable. They were inspired by it and not infrequently died for it."

Imperial Japan (1937–41)

The indictment against Japan for overexpansion boils down to its decision to start a war with the United States, which had roughly eight times as much potential power as Japan in 1941 (see Table 6.2) and went on to inflict a devastating defeat on the Japanese aggressors.

It is true that Japan had picked fights with the Red Army in 1938 and 1939 and lost both times. But as a result, Japan stopped provoking the Soviet Union and the border between them remained quiet until the last

TABLE 6.2

Relative Share of World Wealth, 1830–1940

	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1913	1920	1930	1940
United Kingdom	47%	57%	59%	59%	53%	45%	32%	23%	15%	14%	16%	11%	11%
Germany	4%	4%	3%	9%	13%	16%	16%	21%	20%	21%	14%	14%	17%
France	18%	14%	10%	12%	11%	10%	8%	7%	6%	6%	5%	9%	4%
Russia	13%	8%	6%	3%	2%	2%	3%	6%	5%	6%	1%	6%	13%
Austria-Hungary	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	—	—	—
Italy	—	—	—	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
United States	12%	12%	15%	13%	16%	23%	35%	38%	48%	47%	62%	54%	49%
Japan	—	—	—	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	4%	6%

NOTE: "Wealth" is measured with the same composite indicator used in Table 3.3. Note that the calculations of world wealth used here are based on figures for the relevant great powers. Minor powers are not included, save for the United States in the nineteenth century, when it was not yet a great power.

SOURCES: All data are from J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *National Material Capabilities Data, 1816–1985* (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, February 1993).

days of World War II, when Japan's fate was clearly sealed. It is also true that Japan invaded China in 1937 and became involved in a lengthy war that it was unable to win. However, not only was Japan reluctantly drawn into that conflict, but its leaders were confident that China, which was hardly a formidable military power at the time, would be easily defeated. Although they were wrong, Japan's failure to win a victory in China was hardly a catastrophic failure. Nor was the Sino-Japanese War the catalyst that put the the United States on a collision course with Japan.[137] American policymakers were clearly unhappy about Japanese aggression in China, but the United States remained on the sidelines as the war escalated. In fact, it made little effort to help China until late 1938, and even then it offered the beleagured Chinese only a small package of economic aid.[138]

Two stunning events in Europe—the fall of France in June 1940 and especially Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941—drove the United States to confront Japan, and eventually led to Pearl Harbor. As Paul Schroeder notes, "The United States did not seriously consider stopping the Japanese advance by force of arms, or consider Japan as an actual enemy, until the Far Eastern war had become clearly linked with the far greater (and, to the United States, more important) war in Europe." In particular, it was "opposition to Hitler which began to condition American policy in the Far East more than any other factor."[139]

The Wehrmacht's victory in the west not only knocked France and the Netherlands out of the war, but it also forced a badly weakened United Kingdom to concentrate on defending itself against a German assault from the air and the sea. Since those three European powers controlled most of Southeast Asia, that resource-rich region was now an open target for Japanese expansion. And if Japan conquered Southeast Asia, it could shut down a considerable portion of the outside aid flowing into China, which would increase Japan's prospects of winning its war there.[140] And if Japan controlled China and Southeast Asia as well as Korea and Manchuria, it would dominate most of Asia. The United States was determined to prevent that outcome, and thus in the summer of 1940 it began working hard to deter further Japanese expansion.

Japan was anxious to avoid a fight with the United States, so it moved cautiously in Southeast Asia. By the early summer of 1941, only northern Indochina had come under Japan's control, although Tokyo had been able to get the United Kingdom to shut down the Burma Road between July and October 1940 and the Dutch to provide Japan with additional oil. It seemed by mid-June 1941 that "even if there were little hope of real agreement" between Japan and the United States, "there remained a chance that some kind of temporary and limited settlement might be reached."[141] At the time, it did not seem likely that they would be at war in six months.

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, however, fundamentally altered relations between Japan and the United States and sent them hurtling down the road to war.[142] Most American policymakers, as noted, believed that the Wehrmacht was likely to defeat the Red Army, thus making Germany the hegemon in Europe. A Nazi victory would also have left Japan as the hegemon in Asia, since the Soviet Union was the only great power with an army in Asia that could check Japan.[143] Thus, if the Soviets lost to the Germans, the United States would have found itself confronting hostile hegemons in Asia as well as Europe. Not surprisingly, the United States was bent on avoiding that nightmare scenario, which meant that the Soviet Union had to survive the German onslaught of 1941 as well as any future German offensives.

Unfortunately for Japan, it was in a position in 1941 to affect the Soviet Union's chances for survival. In particular, American policymakers were deeply worried that Japan would attack the Soviet Union from the east and help the Wehrmacht finish off the Red Army. Not only were Germany and Japan formally allied in the Tripartite Pact, but the United States had abundant intelligence that Japan was considering an attack on the beleaguered Soviet Union, which Japan had fought against just two years earlier.[144] To preclude that possibility, the United States put tremendous economic and diplomatic pressure on Japan in the latter half of 1941. The aim, however, was not simply to deter Japan from striking the Soviet Union, but also to coerce Japan into abandoning China, Indochina, and possibly Manchuria, and more generally, any ambition it might have to

dominate Asia.[145] In short, the United States employed massive coercive pressure against Japan to transform it into a second-rate power.

The United States was well-positioned to coerce Japan. On the eve of World War II, Japan imported 80 percent of its fuel products, more than 90 percent of its gasoline, more than 60 percent of its machine tools, and almost 75 percent of its scrap iron from the United States.[146] This dependency left Japan vulnerable to an American embargo that could wreck Japan's economy and threaten its survival. On July 26, 1941, with the situation going badly for the Red Army on the eastern front and Japan having just occupied southern Indochina, the United States and its allies froze Japan's assets, which led to a devastating full-scale embargo against Japan.[147] The United States emphasized to Japan that it could avoid economic strangulation only by abandoning China, Indochina, and maybe Manchuria.

The embargo left Japan with two terrible choices: cave in to American pressure and accept a significant dimunition of its power, or go to war against the United States, even though an American victory was widely agreed to be the likely outcome.[148] Not surprisingly, Japan's leaders tried to cut a deal with the United States in the late summer and fall of 1941. They said that they would be willing to evacuate their troops from Indochina once a "just peace" was reached in China, and they maintained that they would be willing to pull all Japanese troops out of China within twenty-five years after peace broke out between China and Japan.[149] But U.S. policymakers stuck to their guns and refused to make any concessions to the increasingly desperate Japanese.[150] The United States had no intention of allowing Japan to threaten the Soviet Union either in 1941 or later in the war. In effect, the Japanese would be defanged either peacefully or by force, and the choice was theirs.[151]

Japan opted to attack the United States, knowing full well that it would probably lose, but believing that it might be able to hold the United States at bay in a long war and eventually force it to quit the conflict. For example, the Wehrmacht, which was outside the gates of Moscow by November 1941, might decisively defeat the Soviet Union, thus forcing the United States to focus most of its attention and resources on Europe, not Asia.

Furthermore, the U.S. military, a rather inefficient fighting machine in the fall of 1941, might be further weakened by a surprise Japanese attack.[152] Capabilities aside, it was not certain that the United States had the will to fight if attacked. After all, the United States had done little to stop Japanese expansion in the 1930s, and isolationism was still a powerful ideology in America. As late as August 1941, an extension of the one-year term of service for those who were drafted in 1940 passed the House of Representatives by only one vote.[153]

But the Japanese were not fools. They knew that the United States was more likely than not to fight and likely to win the ensuing war. They were willing to take that incredibly risky gamble, however, because caving in to American demands seemed to be an even worse alternative. Sagan puts the point well: "The persistent theme of Japanese irrationality is highly misleading. . . . [T]he Japanese decision for war appears to have been rational. If one examines the decisions made in Tokyo in 1941 more closely, one finds not a thoughtless rush to national suicide, but rather a prolonged, agonizing debate between two repugnant alternatives."[154]

THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

My final test of offensive realism is to examine whether its prediction that great powers seek nuclear superiority is correct. The opposing position, which is closely identified with the defensive realists, is that once nuclear-armed rivals find themselves operating in a MAD world—that is, a world in which each side has the capability to destroy the other side after absorbing a first strike—they should willingly accept the status quo and not pursue nuclear advantage. States should therefore not build counterforce weapons or defensive systems that could neutralize the other side's retaliatory capability and undermine MAD. An examination of the superpowers' nuclear policies during the Cold War thus provides an ideal case for assessing these competing realist perspectives.

The historical record makes it clear that offensive realism better accounts for the nuclear policies of the United States and the Soviet Union during the

Cold War. Neither superpower accepted the defensive realists' advice about the virtues of MAD. Instead, both sides developed and deployed large, sophisticated counterforce arsenals, either to gain nuclear advantage or to prevent the other side from doing so. Moreover, both sides sought to develop defenses against the other side's nuclear weapons, as well as elaborate clever strategies for fighting and winning a nuclear war.

U.S. Nuclear Policy

The nuclear arms race between the superpowers did not become serious until about 1950. The United States enjoyed a nuclear monopoly in the early years of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union did not explode its first nuclear device until August 1949. Thus, concepts such as counterforce were irrelevant in the late 1940s, because the Soviets had no nuclear weapons for the United States to target. The main concern of American strategists during this period was how to stop the Red Army from overrunning Western Europe. They believed that the best way to deal with that threat was to launch a nuclear bombing campaign against the Soviet industrial base.[155] In essence, the strategy was "an extension" of the American strategic bombing campaign against Germany in World War II, although "greatly compressed in time, magnified in effect, and reduced in cost."[156]

After the Soviets developed the atomic bomb, the United States sought to develop a splendid first-strike capability—that is, a strike that would preemptively destroy all of the Soviets' nuclear capabilities in one fell swoop. American nuclear policy during the 1950s was called "massive retaliation," although that label was probably a misnomer, since the word "retaliation" implies that the United States planned to wait to strike the Soviet Union until after absorbing a Soviet nuclear strike.[157] In fact, there is considerable evidence that the United States intended to launch its nuclear weapons first in a crisis in order to eliminate the small Soviet nuclear force before it could get off the ground. General Curtis LeMay, the head of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), made this point clear in the mid-1950s, when he declared that the vulnerability of SAC's bombers—a cause for worry at the time—did not concern him much, because his script for a nuclear war

called for the United States to strike first and disarm the Soviet Union. "If I see that the Russians are amassing their planes for an attack," he said, "I'm going to kick the shit out of them before they take off the ground."[158] It would thus be more accurate to define U.S. nuclear policy in the 1950s as "massive preemption" rather than massive retaliation. Regardless, the key point is that during the 1950s, the United States was committed to gaining nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the United States did not achieve a first-strike capability against the Soviet nuclear arsenal during either the 1950s or the early 1960s. Granted, had the United States struck first in a nuclear exchange during that period, it would have inflicted much greater damage on the Soviet Union than vice versa. And American planners certainly did put forth plausible best-case scenarios in which a U.S. first strike eliminated almost all of the Soviet Union's nuclear retaliatory force, thus raising doubts about whether Moscow truly had an assured-destruction capability.[159] The United States, in other words, was close to having a first-strike capability. Still, most American policymakers at the time believed that the United States was likely to suffer unacceptable damage in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union, even if that damage fell short of total destruction of the United States.[160]

By the early 1960s, however, it was readily apparent that the growing size and diversity of the Soviet nuclear arsenal meant that it would soon be impossible, given existing technology, for the United States seriously to contemplate disarming the Soviet Union with a nuclear first strike.[161] Moscow was on the verge of developing an invulnerable and robust second-strike capability, which would put the superpowers squarely in a MAD world. How did American policymakers view this development, and how did they respond to it? They were not only deeply unhappy about it, but for the remainder of the Cold War, they devoted considerable resources to escaping MAD and gaining a nuclear advantage over the Soviet Union.

Consider the sheer number of Soviet targets that the United States was planning to strike in a nuclear war, a number that went far beyond the requirements of MAD. It was generally agreed that to have an assured-destruction capability, the United States, after absorbing a Soviet first

strike, had to be able to destroy about 30 percent of the Soviet Union's population and about 70 percent of its industry.[162] That level of destruction could have been achieved by destroying the 200 largest cities in the Soviet Union. This task required about 400 one-megaton weapons, or an equivalent mix of weapons and megatonnage (hereinafter referred to as 400 EMT). However, the actual number of Soviet targets that the United States planned to destroy far exceeded the 200 cities required for assured destruction. For example, SIOP-5, the actual military plan for employing nuclear weapons that took effect on January 1, 1976, listed 25,000 potential targets.[163] SIOP-6, which the Reagan administration approved on October 1, 1983, contained a staggering 50,000 potential targets.

Although the United States never acquired the capability to hit all of those potential targets at once, it deployed a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons, which grew steadily in size from the early 1960s until the Cold War ended in 1990. Moreover, most of those weapons had significant counterforce capability, because American strategic planners were not content merely to incinerate 200 Soviet cities, but were determined to destroy a large portion of the Soviet Union's retaliatory capability as well. For example, 3,127 nuclear bombs and warheads were in the U.S. inventory in December 1960, when SIOP-62 (the first SIOP) was approved.[164] Twenty-three years later, when SIOP-6 was put into effect, the strategic nuclear arsenal had grown to include 10,802 weapons. Although the United States needed a reasonably large retaliatory force for assured-destruction purposes—because it had to assume that some of its nuclear weapons might be lost to a Soviet first strike—there is no question that the size of the American nuclear arsenal during the last twenty-five years of the Cold War went far beyond the 400 EMT required to destroy 200 Soviet cities.

The United States also pushed hard to develop technologies that would give it an advantage at the nuclear level. For example, it went to considerable lengths to improve the lethality of its counterforce weapons. The United States was especially concerned with improving missile accuracy, a concern that its weapons designers allayed with great success. America also pioneered the development of MIRVs (multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles), which allowed it to increase significantly the

number of strategic warheads in its inventory. By the end of the Cold War, the "hard-target kill capability" of U.S. ballistic missiles—that is, U.S. counterforce capability—had reached the point at which the survivability of the Soviets' land-based missile silos was in question. Washington also invested heavily in protecting its command-and-control systems from attack, thus augmenting its capability to wage a controlled nuclear war. In addition, the United States pushed hard, if unsuccessfully, to develop effective ballistic missile defenses. American policymakers sometimes said that the ultimate purpose of missile defense was to move away from a nuclear world that prized offense to a safer, defense-dominant world, but the truth is that they wanted defenses in order to facilitate winning a nuclear war at a reasonable cost.[165]

Finally, the United States came up with an alternative to the strategy of massive retaliation that, it hoped, would allow it to wage and win a nuclear war against the Soviet Union. This alternative strategy was first formulated by the Kennedy administration in 1961 and came to be known as "limited nuclear options."[166] The new policy assumed that neither superpower could eliminate the other side's assured-destruction capability, but that they could still engage in limited nuclear exchanges with their counterforce weapons. The United States would aim to avoid striking Soviet cities so as to limit civilian deaths and would concentrate instead on achieving victory by dominating the Soviet Union in the limited counterforce exchanges that were at the heart of the strategy. It was hoped that the Soviets would fight according to the same rules. This new policy was codified in SIOP-63, which took effect on August 1, 1962. There were four important successor SIOPs over the remainder of the Cold War, and each new SIOP essentially provided smaller, more precise, and more select counterforce options than its predecessor, as well as command-and-control improvements that would facilitate fighting a limited nuclear war.[167] The ultimate aim of these refinements, of course, was to ensure that the United States had an advantage over the Soviet Union in a nuclear war.[168]

In sum, the evidence is overwhelming that the United States did not abandon its efforts to gain nuclear superiority during the last twenty-five years of the Cold War.[169] Nevertheless, it did not gain a meaningful advan-

tage over the Soviets. In fact, it did not come as close to achieving that goal as it had during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Soviet Nuclear Policy

Although we know less about the Soviet side of the story than we do about the American side, it is not difficult to determine whether the Soviets sought nuclear advantage over the United States or were content to live in a MAD world. We not only have details on the size and composition of the Soviet nuclear arsenal during the course of the Cold War, but also have access to a large body of Soviet literature that lays out Moscow's thinking on nuclear strategy.

The Soviet Union, like the United States, built a massive nuclear arsenal with abundant counterforce capability.[170] The Soviets, however, were late bloomers. They did not explode their first nuclear weapon until August 1949, and their arsenal grew slowly in the 1950s. During that decade, the Soviet Union lagged behind the United States in developing and deploying nuclear weapons, as well as the systems to deliver them. By 1960 the Soviet inventory contained only 354 strategic nuclear weapons, compared to 3,127 for the United States.[171] But the Soviet force grew rapidly during the 1960s. By 1970 it numbered 2,216; ten years later it numbered 7,480. Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking" notwithstanding, the Soviet Union added almost 4,000 bombs and warheads to its nuclear inventory during the 1980s, ending up with 11,320 strategic nuclear weapons in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall came down.

Furthermore, most Soviet strategists apparently believed that their country had to be prepared to fight and win a nuclear war.[172] This is not to say that Soviet leaders were eager to fight such a war or that they were confident that they could gain a meaningful victory. Soviet strategists understood that nuclear war would involve untold destruction.[173] But they were determined to limit damage to the Soviet Union and prevail in any nuclear exchange between the superpowers. There is little evidence to suggest that Soviet leaders bought the defensive realists' arguments about the virtues of MAD and the dangers of counterforce.

American and Soviet strategists did differ, however, on the question of how best to win a nuclear war. It is apparent that Soviet planners never accepted U.S. thinking about limited nuclear options.[174] Instead, they seemed to favor a targeting policy much like the U.S. policy of massive retaliation from the 1950s. Specifically, they maintained that the best way to wage a nuclear war and limit damage to the Soviet Union was to launch a rapid and massive counterforce strike against the entire war-making capacity of the United States and its allies. The Soviets did not emphasize targeting American civilians, as assured destruction demands, although a full-scale nuclear strike against the United States certainly would have killed many millions of Americans.

Thus it seems that both superpowers went to considerable lengths during the Cold War to build huge counterforce nuclear arsenals so that they could gain nuclear advantage over the other. Neither side was content merely to build and maintain an assured-destruction capability.

Misunderstanding the Nuclear Revolution

One may recognize that the superpowers relentlessly sought nuclear superiority but still argue that this behavior was misguided, if not irrational, and that it cannot be explained by balance-of-power logic. Neither side could possibly have gained meaningful nuclear advantage over the other, and, what is more, MAD makes for a highly stable world. Thus, the pursuit of nuclear superiority must have been the result of bureaucratic politics or dysfunctional domestic politics in both the United States and the Soviet Union. This perspective is held by most defensive realists, who recognize that neither superpower accepted its own claims about the merits of MAD and the evils of counterforce.[175]

It is not easy to apply this line of argument to the 1950s and the early 1960s, because the small size of the Soviet arsenal during that period gave the United States a real chance of gaining nuclear superiority. Indeed, some experts believe that the United States did have a "splendid first-strike" capability against the Soviet Union.[176] I disagree with this assessment, but there is little question that during the early Cold War the

United States would have suffered much less damage than its rival in a nuclear exchange. The defensive realists' best case thus covers roughly the last twenty-five years of the Cold War, when both the United States and the Soviet Union had an unambiguous assured-destruction capability. Yet even during this period of strategic parity, each superpower still sought to gain a nuclear advantage over the other.

To begin with, the broad contours of strategic nuclear policy are consistent with the predictions of offensive realism. Specifically, the United States worked hardest at gaining nuclear superiority in the 1950s, when a first-strike capability was arguably within its grasp. Once the Soviet Union approached a secure retaliatory capability, however, the U.S. effort to gain superiority slackened, although it did not disappear. Although American policymakers never embraced the logic of assured destruction, the percentage of U.S. defense spending devoted to strategic nuclear forces declined steadily after 1960.[177] Moreover, both sides agreed not to deploy significant ballistic missile defenses and eventually placed qualitative and quantitative limits on their offensive forces as well. The nuclear arms race continued in a number of different ways, some of which were described above, but neither side made an all-out effort to acquire superiority once MAD was in place.

Moreover, the continuation of the arms race was not misguided, even though nuclear superiority remained an elusive goal. In fact, it made good strategic sense for the United States and the Soviet Union to compete vigorously in the nuclear realm, because military technology tends to develop rapidly and in unforeseen ways. For example, few people in 1914 understood that the submarine would become a deadly and effective weapon during World War I. Few in 1965 foresaw how the brewing revolution in information technology would profoundly affect conventional weapons such as fighter aircraft and tanks. The key point is that nobody could say for sure in 1965 whether some revolutionary new technology might not transform the nuclear balance and give one side a clear advantage.

Furthermore, military competitions are usually characterized by what Robert Pape has called an "asymmetric diffusion of military technology."[178] States do not acquire new technologies simultaneously, which means that

the innovator often gains significant, albeit temporary, advantages over the laggard. Throughout the Cold War, for example, the United States maintained a significant advantage in developing technologies to detect the other side's submarines and to hide its own.

Great powers always prefer to be the first to develop new technologies; they have to make sure that their opponents do not beat them to the punch and gain the advantage for themselves. Thus, it made sense for each superpower to make a serious effort to develop counterforce technology and ballistic missile defenses. At a maximum, a successful breakthrough might have brought clear superiority; at a minimum, these efforts prevented the other side from gaining a unilateral advantage. In short, given the strategic benefits that come with nuclear superiority, and the fact that it was hard to know throughout the Cold War whether it was achievable, it was neither illogical nor surprising that both superpowers pursued it.

CONCLUSION

The nuclear arms race between the superpowers and the foreign policy behavior of Japan (1868–1945), Germany (1862–1945), the Soviet Union (1917–91), and Italy (1861–1943) show that great powers look for opportunities to shift the balance of power in their favor and usually seize opportunities when they appear. Moreover, these cases support my claims that states do not lose their appetite for power as they gain more of it, and that especially powerful states are strongly inclined to seek regional hegemony. Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union, for example, all set more ambitious foreign policy goals and behaved more aggressively as their power increased. In fact, both Japan and Germany fought wars in an attempt to dominate their areas of the world. Although the Soviet Union did not follow suit, that was because it was deterred by American military might, not because it was a satiated great power.

The fallback argument, which allows that the major states have relentlessly pursued power in the past but characterizes this pursuit as self-

defeating behavior caused by destructive domestic politics, is not persuasive. Aggression is not always counterproductive. States that initiate wars often win and frequently improve their strategic position in the process. Furthermore, the fact that so many different kinds of great powers have sought to gain advantage over their rivals over such broad spans of history renders implausible the claim that this was all foolish or irrational behavior brought about by domestic pathologies. A close look at the cases that might seem to be prime examples of aberrant strategic behavior—the final twenty-five years of the nuclear arms race, imperial Japan, Wilhelmine Germany, and Nazi Germany—suggests otherwise. Although domestic politics played some role in all of these cases, each state had good reason to try to gain advantage over its rivals *and* good reason to think that it would succeed.

For the most part, the cases discussed in this chapter involve great powers taking active measures to gain advantage over their opponents—exactly what offensive realism predicts. Let us now turn to the American and British cases, which seem at first glance to provide evidence of great powers ignoring opportunities to gain power. As we shall see, however, each of these cases in fact provides further support for the theory.