From the holdings of the Department of Special Collections , Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

These documents are either in the public domain, or can only be used for educational and research purposes (Fair use) as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls in the public domain or within fair use as defined by the copyrightlaw. We do not charge any permission or usage fees for the publication of images of material inour collections, including those provided by Princeton University Library, via our website, catalog, or directly from staff.For more information regarding copyright, credit, and citation please review the information onthe Copyright, Credit and Citation Guidelines page of our website.
https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/policies/copyright-credit-and-citation-guidelines. If you have any questions, including how to order higher-quality images from the collection, contact Special Collections Public Services via our Ask Us! Form. https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/ask-us

---

Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026 Public and International Affairs

2016

Tides of Fortune: The Rise and Decline of Great Militaries

Cooper, Zack

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

---

http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp01k643b3645

U.S. Copyright law: The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, §108, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of fair use that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law. https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf

TIDES OF FORTUNE:
THE RISE AND DECLINE OF GREAT MILITARIES

Zack Cooper

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

BY THE WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL

Adviser: Aaron Friedberg

September 2016

© Copyright by Zachary Ball Cooper, 2016. All rights reserved.

ABSTRACT

What types of defense policies do states pursue and how do these policies change over time? This question is central to understanding state behavior, yet it has been understudied. This dissertation proposes a theory of perceived relative power that explains how states alter their defense policies in response to perceived changes in relative power. This hypothesis suggests that as states go through cycles of rise and decline, their leaders alter national objectives (ends), security strategies (ways), and military investments (means) in predictable patterns. States prioritize different military capabilities depending on whether they are rising or declining and strong or weak. This theory helps to explain the rise and decline of great militaries, including the likely next steps in the military competition between the United States and China.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT III

TABLE OF CONTENTS IV

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS VI

INTRODUCTION 1

THE PUZZLE 2

THE THEORY 4

THE IMPLICATIONS 6

LITERATURE ON DEFENSE POLICY 8

STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS 9

DOMESTIC EXPLANATIONS 21

CULTURAL EXPLANATIONS 34

WEAKNESSES OF EXISTING THEORIES 38

A THEORY OF PERCEIVED RELATIVE POWER 41

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES: PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIVE POWER 42

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: DEFENSE POLICY 53

SUMMARY 75

RESEARCH DESIGN 76

CASE SELECTION 77

RISING POWERS 83

AMERICAN RISE 85

GERMAN RISE 132

DECLINING POWERS 189

BRITISH DECLINE 191

FRENCH DECLINE 252

COLLAPSING POWERS 300

JAPANESE COLLAPSE 302

SOVIET COLLAPSE 353

CONCLUSION 414

CASE STUDY FINDINGS 414

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS 423

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY 434

SUMMARY 440

BIBLIOGRAPHY 442

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank professors Aaron Friedberg, Tom Christensen, John Ikenberry, and Steve Rosen for serving as readers and committee members for this dissertation – their support and insight have been critical throughout this project. In addition, many others have provided thoughtful guidance that helped to shape this research project. I am particularly grateful for the advice of Dima Adamsky, Omar Bashir, Jeff Cooper, Mike Green, Sheena Greitens, Marina Henke, Kath Hicks, Mike Horowitz, Mike Hunzeker, Richard Jordan, Robert Keohane, Pattie Kim, Dan Kliman, Steve Kreeger, Michael Kreuzer, Alex Lanoszka, Darren Lim, Evan Montgomery, Julia Morse, Rohan Mukherjee, Vipin Narang, Mira Rapp-Hooper, Tom Scherer, Anna Schrimpf, Jake Shapiro, Travis Sharp, Mike Sulmeyer, Caitlin Talmadge, Jim Thomas, and Keren Yarhi-Milo. Of course, all errors remain my own.

This project also could not have been completed without generous research support from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton's Center for International Security Studies, the National Institute for Social Science, the Bradley Family Fellowship, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. In addition, several institutions permitted me to research or present elements of the dissertation in the United States, Europe, and Asia, for which I am deeply grateful.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Laurie Ball Cooper, for enduring the dissertation process. No one has shared more of the burden and no one has been more supportive.

INTRODUCTION

> By nurturing the nation's strength we should ride the tide of fortune.
>
> - Prince Hirohito, referencing a proclamation on the end of World War I (1920)[1]

Political scientists, particularly security specialists, tend to be drawn to the causes, conduct, and consequences of wars. Why do states fight? Which states, strategies, or tactics succeed in battle? When and how do postwar settlements take hold? These questions are vital to security studies, but they focus on passing periods in the lives of militaries. Most of the time militaries are preparing, planning, training, equipping, and innovating for war, rather than actually fighting. Despite this fact, the existing literature largely overlooks the determinants of defense policies, leaving scholars and policymakers to wonder how leaders choose their national objectives, security strategies, and military investments.

This dissertation proposes a theory of perceived relative power that traces how a state's defense policies vary based on its leaders' views of relative power. Defense policies can be separated into a three-part hierarchy of national objectives (ends), security strategies (ways), and military investments (means). Although existing scholarship does contain predictions about how states develop defense policies, the literature does not adequately address the full ends-ways-means logic chain. In addition, prevailing research struggles to account for change of policies over time and often suffers from limited predictive power. Therefore, security studies can benefit from a new theory of defense policy.

---

[1] Peter Michael Wetzler, *Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 133.

The Puzzle

Scholars have long struggled to explain the determinants of defense policies, but the intensifying military competition in Asia presents a puzzle for both academics and policymakers. Given China's rapid development of the world's second largest economy, it is no surprise that Beijing's military modernization has proceeded apace. Yet, major questions remain about China's defense policies and how the United States might alter its own defense policies in response. The most prominent puzzle is why China has shifted its strategy and investments toward power projection and away from the anti-access capabilities that have called into question U.S. military dominance in Asia.

Over the last few decades the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has developed and fielded military systems capable of denying the United States the ability to project power in East Asia. Most notable are so-called anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities such as conventionally-armed ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, and diesel submarines. Many experts believe that these systems have leveled the playing field between China and the United States by allowing Beijing to field comparatively cheap anti-access weapons that can neutralize Washington's more advanced and expensive power projection systems, such as aircraft carriers. In the last five years, however, the PLA has shifted its focus and begun to invest in traditional means of power projection, including aircraft carriers. China's transition from an asymmetric anti-access approach to a more symmetric power projection strategy appears risky given the large military spending gap between China and the United States, as well as decades of U.S. experience in projecting and sustaining military power at a distance. Why would China choose to pursue the very same power projection systems that it has successfully countered by developing anti-access systems? And why do so now?

Scholars have attempted to explain China's pursuit of power projection capabilities by referencing structural, domestic, and cultural factors. Mark Cozad suggests that Chinese power projection platforms are "sustainable, broadly-scoped capabilities that will allow them to challenge the major regional powers" rather than the United States.[2] Andrew Scobell and Andrew Nathan argue that China's present capabilities "entail a largely symbolic presence," rather than a real warfighting capability.[3] Robert Ross proposes that naval nationalism is to blame, resulting from "The Chinese people's nationalist ambition… Combined with the persistent PLA Navy's demands to possess an aircraft carrier."[4] These and other theories explain aspects of Chinese defense policy, but none makes a convincing case about both the nature and timing of China's transition toward power projection.

This dissertation presents an alternative hypothesis: leaders in Beijing have changed their perception of China's relative power position, causing a shift in Chinese objectives, which has in turn driven the PLA toward new strategies and investments. During China's early rise, it was a relatively weak state, forced to focus on denying foreign powers that the ability to intervene in regional disputes. Today, however, leaders in Beijing appear to believe that China is becoming

---

[2] Mark Cozad in "China's Regional Power Projection," Army War College (U.S.), National Bureau of Asian Research (U.S.), and Texas A & M University, *Beyond the Strait: PLA Missions Other than Taiwan*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 291.

[3] Andrew Scobell and Andrew J. Nathan, "China's Overstretched Military," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 142. Also see Adam P. Liff, forthcoming, "Shadowing the Hegemon."

[4] Robert Ross in Michael A. Glosny, Phillip C. Saunders, and Robert S. Ross, "Debating China's Naval Nationalism," *International Security* 35, no. 2 (October 1, 2010): 174–175. See also Robert S. Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response," *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): 46–81.

relatively strong, permitting the PLA to challenge the United States symmetrically.[5] This theory, which is outlined below, has the potential to explain both the nature and timing of China's shifting defense policies, as well as those of other states.

The Theory

The theory of perceived relative power begins with the simple premise that national leaders choose defense policies according to their perceptions of relative power. Leaders focus on two separate but related factors: 1) their state's perceived *level* of relative power and 2) their state's perceived *trend* in relative power. The level of relative power can range from strong to weak. The trend in relative power can vary from rising to declining. Based on these two variables, a state can be placed into one of four categories: 1) weak and rising, 2) strong and rising, 3) strong and declining, or 4) weak and declining. These four categories reflect four phases in the rise and decline of states.

In each phase of relative power, national leaders experience different circumstances, so they naturally pursue distinctive objectives, strategies, and investments. All else equal, a strong state should seek more extensive national objectives than a weak state. Extensive objectives require security strategies focused on control of territory, whereas more limited objectives can be accomplished by denying that control to one's adversary. In turn, control-focused strategies require military investments in sustainable systems, while denial-focused strategies can be

[5] As Michael McDevitt notes, "It wasn't until the 18th Party Congress in 2012 that maritime issues were officially identified as a national priority for the Communist Party, the state, and the country. The Chinese Communist Party leadership concluded that becoming a maritime power was essential to achieving its national goals." Michael McDevitt, "Becoming a Great 'Maritime Power': A Chinese Dream" (CNA, June 2016), 117–118.

accomplished more cheaply with expendable systems. Thus, strong and weak states should pursue different national objectives, security strategies, and military investments.

National leaders care not only about their state's perceived level of relative power, but also about the perceived trend in relative power. All else equal, a state that is rising (regardless of whether it is strong or weak) should seek more expansionist objectives than one that is declining. Expansion requires an offensive strategy, whereas consolidation can be accomplished with a defensive strategy. Offensive strategies, in turn, require military investments in mobile systems, while defense strategies can be accomplished more cheaply with less mobile systems. Therefore, just as strong and weak states should pursue different defense policies, so should rising and declining states.

According to this theory, states therefore pursue different defense policies during each of the four phases of relative power. In phase 1, a weak and rising state should adopt limited expansionist objectives, requiring an offensive denial strategy, and expendable mobile systems – this might be termed an "anti-access" defense policy. In phase 2, a strong and rising state should pursue extensive expansionist objectives, an offensive control strategy, and sustainable mobile systems – this is a "power projection" defense policy. In phase 3, a strong and declining state should favor extensive consolidation objectives, a defensive control strategy, and sustainable immobile systems – a "garrison fortification" defense policy. In phase 4, a weak and declining state should seek limited consolidation objectives, a defensive denial strategy, and expendable immobile systems – an "area denial" defense policy. Thus, using only perceptions of relative power, this theory makes predictions about the ends, ways, and means that different states are likely to pursue.

The Implications

This theory of perceived relative power has implications for both academics and policymakers. For academics, this theory brings together numerous theoretical concepts into a coherent theory of defense policy.[6] By combining elements of the literature on power transitions, the offense-defense balance, asymmetric conflict, and grand strategy, this theory helps to resuscitate compelling but often overlooked concepts. In addition, the case studies demonstrate the importance of balance of threat theory, which helps to identify the conditions under which perceptual, structural, domestic, and cultural factors are most significant.

For policymakers, gaining a better understanding of the likely next steps in the military competition in Asia is vital to avoid conflict. By explaining the drivers behind Chinese defense policies, this study can help to explain Beijing's past behavior and predict some of its future policies. In addition, one might ask why the United States has not only maintained its investment in traditional power projection systems but has embraced an approach that some say increased emphasis on power projection, despite the threat from Chinese anti-access systems. For example, U.S. military leaders have put forward a concept known as Air-Sea Battle that is intended "to ensure that U.S. forces remain able to project power on behalf of American interests worldwide."[7] Yet, given the cost-effectiveness of anti-access weapons against power projection systems, one might have expected the United States to field its own anti-access systems to protect allies and partners. Understanding how and why rising and declining powers pursue

[6] This theory is related in many ways to concepts put forward in Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). xx.

[7] Schwartz, Norton A., and Jonathan W. Greenert, "Air-Sea Battle: Promoting Stability in a Period of Uncertainty," *The American Interest* (2012).

different defense policies can therefore help leaders forecast future defense policies and adjust their approaches accordingly.

This dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 briefly reviews the existing literature on defense policies and discusses some of its limitations. Chapter 3 outlines the theory of perceived relative power and puts forward the research design for evaluating this theory. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 each review two cases of states transitioning from one phase of perceived relative power to another. Chapter 4 discusses the rise of the United States and Germany at the turn of the 20th century. Chapter 5 reviews the decline of Great Britain and France before World Wars I and II, respectively. Chapter 6 addresses the collapse of Japan during World War II and that of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War. Chapter 7 concludes by evaluating the theory, discussing its academic importance, and highlighting policy implications, particularly for Sino-American military competition.

LITERATURE ON DEFENSE POLICY

> The fundamental cause of wars among states and changes in international systems is the uneven growth of power among states.
>
> - Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (1981)[1]

This study seeks to explain why states adopt and change defense policies. Security scholars have spent decades researching the importance of structural, domestic, cultural, and other factors in determining the likelihood, nature, and outcomes of war. Yet, few existing theories explain why states adopt certain defense policies and why these defense policies change over time. This chapter outlines the literature on defense policy, assessing traditional structural, domestic, and cultural explanations.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to put forward a working definition of defense policy. Defense policy is defined here as encompassing three hierarchical elements: national objectives, security strategies, and military investments. This set of policies is often termed ends, ways, and means, respectively.[2] As defined here, the top tier of defense policies—ends—are the "objectives toward which one strives."[3] The second tier of defense policies—ways—are the

---

[1] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 84.

[2] On different definitions of defense policy or planning, see Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), 178.

[3] Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., "Toward An Understanding of Military Strategy," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, by Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., n.d., 170. Steve Krasner argues that national interests are "a set of transitively ordered preferences that persist over time and are related to general societal goals." Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 55.

security strategies that states adopt in pursuit of national objectives. The third tier of defense policies—means—are "instruments by which some end can be achieved," such as military investments.[4] For the purposes of this study, these three elements combine to form a state's defense policies.[5]

Why do states adopt certain defense policies and change these policies over time? Although most of the relevant literature does not focus specifically on this question, existing scholarship on defense policies is substantial. Many different theories exist, which can be grouped into three general categories: 1) *structural* explanations rooted in the distribution of capabilities, geography, or technology; 2) *domestic* explanations concerning the interaction of individuals or groups pursuing parochial interests; and 3) *cultural* explanations determined by global, national, or organizational cultures. Each of these explanations is described in detail below.

Structural Explanations

Realist scholars suggest that defense policies result from features of the international system, particularly the distribution of capabilities, geography, and technology. Before discussing specific structural explanations of defense policy, however, it is necessary to address whether structural explanations are even capable of illuminating national policies. Kenneth Waltz argues, "Structurally we can describe and understand the pressures states are subject to. We cannot

[4] Lykke, Jr., "Toward An Understanding of Military Strategy," 170. Note that military doctrine is often included in this hierarchy – it is not addressed in detail here, but is discussed throughout this study.

[5] This is not to ignore the critical role that other elements, such as force posture, alliances, and warfighting tactics, have in determining defense policy. This study subsumes posture, alliances, and tactics into security strategies (the "ways" category), as they are inherently about how best to use fixed resources to accomplish desired ends.

predict how they will react to the pressures…"[6] For this reason, Waltz argues that realism is not a theory of foreign policy. Yet, Iain Johnston responds, "The claim that neorealist theory addresses international politics and not foreign policy seems somewhat disingenuous. Neorealism does make predictions about what individual states do or ought to do to pursue their interests…"[7] Colin Elman agrees that "neorealist theories can be used to make foreign policy predictions."[8] To do so, Tom Christensen and Jack Snyder suggest that Waltz's "ultraparsimonious theory must be cross-fertilized… factoring in military technology, geography, and power variables that go beyond the mere counting of great power poles."[9] This study adopts such an approach.

The core tenets of realist theory are hotly debated, but most formulations include rational political units in an anarchic system with conflictual goals and a focus on material capabilities.[10] Realist theory holds that structural variables, such as the relative distribution of power, are the primary determinants of foreign policy.[11] Yet, these factors have produced a wide variety of predictions about state behavior. The oldest debate flows from the question of whether states seek survival, security, or power. Classical realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, favor "interest

---

[6] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979), 71.

[7] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). ix.

[8] Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why No Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (September 1996): 47.

[9] Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, no. 02 (March 1990): 138.

[10] See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. For an alternative assessment, see Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1999): 12–16.

[11] See Peter D. Feaver et al., "Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? (Or Was Anybody Ever a Realist?)," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (July 2000): 182.

defined in terms of power."[12] John Mearsheimer insists that "all states are forced to seek the same goal: maximum relative power."[13] On the other hand, Kenneth Waltz argues, "the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security."[14] A. F. K. Organski concurs, "Power is surely one of the most important goals that nations pursue, but it is not the only goal, and it is not always the principal one… Power, in other words, is an important means to other goals… only rarely is it sought as an end in itself."[15] Waltz admits, "Beyond the survival motive, the aims of states may be endlessly varied; they may range from the ambition to conquer the world to the desire merely to be left alone."[16] Randall Schweller goes further, arguing that war is often driven "not for reasons of self-preservation but for the purpose of greedy expansion…"[17] In short, although survival may be a primary interest for states, many realist scholars admit that "not all states are merely interested in survival."[18]

---

[12] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6. ed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 5.

[13] John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 48. Posen notes some "states will generally try to expand their power. States will seek not simply equality, but superiority." Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 68.

[14] Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 616.

[15] A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (Knopf, 1958), 53–66.

[16] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 91.

[17] Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (March 1996): 120.

[18] Andrew Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do Not Fight Each Other," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (September 1997): 115. Gilpin, for example, notes: "state objectives have been of three types… conquest of territory… control over the behavior of other actors… [and] influence over the world economy…" Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 23–24.

Regardless of whether states seek survival, security, power, or other ends, the most basic neorealist proposition on defense policy is that states imitate each other.[19] Waltz writes, "competition in the arts and the instruments of force... produces a tendency toward the sameness of the competitors."[20] Barry Posen explains, "As in any competitive system, successful practices will be imitated. Those who fail to imitate are unlikely to survive."[21] Thus, "states specifically look to the most powerful and successful state in the system as a model for emulation."[22] As a result, Waltz notes that realism "explains why states similarly placed behave similarly despite their internal differences."[23]

In short, neorealism's most basic prediction is: "Contending states imitate the military innovations contrived by the country of greatest capability and ingenuity."[24]

Material Capabilities

Other scholars suggest that international pressures drive states to differentiate defense policies. John Mearsheimer argues, "great powers not only imitate each other's successful practices, they also prize innovation. States look for new ways to gain advantage over opponents, by developing

[19] As most commonly defined in the literature, such imitation or emulation "is the conscious, purposeful imitation, in full or in part, by one state of any institution, technology, or governing practice of another state." Joâo Resende-Santos, "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems: Military Organization and Technology in South America, 1870–1930," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (March 1, 1996): 199. See also Yu-Ming Liou, Paul Musgrave, and J. Furman Daniel, "The Imitation Game: Why Don't Rising Powers Innovate Their Militaries More?," *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 157–74.

[20] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 127.

[21] Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 82.

[22] Resende-Santos, "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems," 200.

[23] Kenneth N. Waltz, "International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (September 1996): 54.

[24] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 127.

new weapons, innovative military doctrines, or clever strategies."[25] What might cause states to adopt different defense policies? Christensen and Snyder note that determinate predictions can be made by studying a state's "position in the international system—and in some cases by introducing the role of perception."[26] Thus, relative power levels may determine defense policies.[27]

John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William Wohlforth describe power as a continuum and distinguish between "strong" and "weak" states.[28] From the earliest times, strength has been viewed as advantageous. Thucydides famously wrote, "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."[29] Clausewitz concurred, "The best strategy is to be very strong."[30] Asymmetries in power permit coercion, which is "typically a weapon of the strong against the weak because strong states can effectively threaten weak ones without fear of retaliation."[31] As a result, Gilpin observes, "dominant states have sought to exert control over the system in order to advance their self-interests."[32] Weak states, on the other hand, are forced to pursue more limited aims. Stephen Walt notes, "Where great powers have both global interests and global

---

[25] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001), 165.

[26] Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks," 139.

[27] Measuring power is notoriously difficult and is a subject that is addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

[28] Michael Mastanduno, David A. Lake, and G. John. Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action," *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (December 1989): 467.

[29] Thucydides, "The History of the Peloponnesian War," http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.mb.txt.

[30] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* (edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret), Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 204.

[31] Peter Liberman, "The Spoils of Conquest," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 138.

[32] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 29.

capabilities, weak states will be concerned primarily with events in their immediate vicinity."[33] Posen observes, "small states may opt for deterrent doctrines because their capabilities are insufficient to support any other kind."[34] These more limited aims are necessary because as Arnold Wolfers argues, "Rational policy-makers will seek to bring policy ends and commitments to pursue them in line" creating "mutual dependence between ends and means."[35]

Therefore, strong states may adopt extensive national objectives, whereas weak states must accept more limited aims, creating differentiation in national defense policies based on relative power.

Geography

In addition to the distribution of capabilities, other systemic factors—such as geographic features—play a part in determining defense strategies.[36] Robert Jervis notes, "If all states were self-sufficient islands, anarchy would be much less of a problem. A small investment in shore defenses and a small army would be sufficient to repel invasion."[37] Jack Levy and William Thomson argue, "Predominant sea powers differ from dominant continental powers in their

---

[33] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 30.

[34] Barry Posen, "Explaining Military Doctrine," 41 in Robert J Art and Kenneth N Waltz, *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

[35] Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 114–115.

[36] Stephen Brooks comments, "realist scholars point to three material factors other than the distribution of capabilities that affect the probability of conflict: technology, geography, and international economic pressures." Stephen G. Brooks, "Dueling Realisms," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 456.

[37] Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 02 (January 1978): 195.

goals, strategies, and behavior, as well as in the responses they elicit from other leading states."[38] For this reason, Levy and Thompson suggest, "It is critical to distinguish between autonomous continental systems, where land-based military power is dominant, and transregional maritime systems, where naval strength and economic wealth are dominant."[39] The fundamental difference between land and sea powers is reflected in the views of H. J. Mackinder and A. T. Mahan.[40] Mackinder wrote, "who rules eastern Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Islands; and who rules the World Island commands the World."[41] Meanwhile, Mahan advised, "the control of the seas… is the chief among the merely material elements in the power and prosperity of nations."[42] As these advocates suggest, differences in geographic features are likely to shape national defense policies.[43]

Geographic distance between states is another critical factor. Kenneth Boulding argues, "the further from home any nation has to operate... the less strength it can put in the field."[44]

---

[38] Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?," *International Security* 35, no. 1 (July 2010): 8.

[39] Ibid., 13.

[40] Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: A. Lane, 1976), 177–202.

[41] Sir Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (H. Holt, 1919), 150. These arguments were echoed by Nicholas Spykman, who suggested, "who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944), 43. Also see Nicholas John Spykman, "Frontiers, Security, and International Organization," *Geographical Review* 32, no. 3 (July 1942): 436–437.

[42] A. T. Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare: Selections from the Writing of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*, ed. Allan F. Westcott (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1941), 286.

[43] How does geography affect defense policy? Levy and Thomson suggest, "The stronger the leading sea power is, the more likely it is interested primarily in extended control over markets, as opposed to territory…" Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea," 18.

[44] Kenneth Ewart Boulding, *Conflict and Defense; a General Theory* (New York: Harper, 1962), 230–232, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001109316.

Therefore, Walt's balance of threat theory includes a measure of geographic proximity.[45] Other geographic barriers also effect the ability to project power. Mearsheimer notes, "Large bodies of water are formidable obstacles that cause significant power-projection problems for attacking armies…"[46] For this reason, Levy and Thompson find, "Sea powers are significantly less capable than land powers of invading and occupying land powers."[47] On the other hand, Gilpin argues, "the ability of a political center to radiate its influence is affected significantly by the cost of transportation… costs of transportation partially explains why empires and great states, until the modern era, have tended to be centered around water…"[48] Stephen Van Evera suggests that other geographic features must be considered, such as "oceans, lakes, mountains, wide rivers, dense jungles, trackless deserts, or other natural barriers that impede offensive movement or give defenders natural strong points."[49]

Although there are disagreements on the impact of specific geographic features, scholars agree that continental and maritime powers are likely to favor armies and navies, respectively. Maritime states—those with coastal borders longer than their land borders—are likely to have an easier time defending their territory, and therefore have less need of armies.[50] On the other hand, maritime states are likely to require larger navies due to the distinction between "territorial

---

[45] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 5.

[46] Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 44.

[47] Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea," 38.

[48] Conversely, Gilpin notes, "for the Mongols and the Arabs, steppe power and desert power functioned as sea power." Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 57–59.

[49] Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (April 1998): 19.

[50] This is a major difference since "the survival of the state in the international arena requires the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation-state…" Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action," 463.

hegemony over land and people" and "economic hegemony over markets."[51] Therefore, continental and maritime states are likely to pursue different defense policies.

Technology

While capabilities and geography are critical factors, Charles Glaser suggests the need to include the "offense-defense balance and offense-defense distinguishability—as key variables."[52] First proposed by Robert Jervis and George Quester, the offense-defense balance refers to the ease of distinguishing between offensive and defensive forces and the relative strength of each.[53] The offense-defense balance has been used to explain many aspects of international relations. For example, Thomas Schelling suggests an "inherent propensity toward peace or war" that is "embodied in weaponry, the geography, and the military organization of the time."[54] Jervis observes, "When weapons are highly vulnerable, they must be employed before they are attacked."[55] Gilpin notes, "Military innovations that tend to favor the offense over the defense stimulate territorial expansion and the political consolidation of international systems by empires or great powers."[56]

---

[51] Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea," 17.

[52] Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 61.

[53] See Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma"; George H. Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

[54] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1976), 234.

[55] Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 196–199. Technological differentiation is one reason that Glaser argues, "the strong general propensity for adversaries to compete is not an inevitable logical consequence of structural realism's basic assumptions." Glaser, "Realists as Optimists," 50.

[56] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 61.

Defining the offense-defense balance has proven highly problematic.[57] Most offense-defense advocates follow George Quester's lead in arguing that mobility "generally supports the offensive."[58] However, Samuel Huntington suggests weapons cannot be "usefully categorized as either offensive or defensive."[59] Martin van Creveld agrees, "the distinction between 'offensive' and 'defensive' weapons is largely spurious. Even if certain weapons are found to favor one side, this is hardly true of all weapons employed at a given time and place on all different levels of a war."[60] To address this critique, Sean Lynn-Jones suggests that the offense-defense balance be measured by "the amount of resources that a state must invest in offense to offset an adversary's investment in defense."[61] Conducting this type of study requires that one conduct "a historical audit", but Jack Levy has warned that "it would be tautological to use this conception of the offensive/defensive balance to predict the military success of the aggressor."[62] For this reason, Richard Betts observes that the offense-defense balance has shifted from a focus on military

[57] Defining the terms offense and defense, Betts argues that traditionally "Offense was identified as attack by ground, naval, or air forces against an adversary's territory… and defense as blocking the attack forces." Richard K. Betts, "Must War Find a Way?: A Review Essay," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1999): 179.

[58] Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System*, 52.

[59] Samuel P. Huntington, "US Defense Strategy: The Strategic Innovations of the Reagan Years," in *American Defence Annual 1988*, by Joseph Kruzel (Lexington: Prentice Hall & IBD, 1988).

[60] Martin van Creveld, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present* (New York : Toronto : New York: Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1991), 177.

[61] Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics," *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (June 1, 1995): 667, doi:10.1080/09636419509347600.

[62] Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965). Also see James D. Fearon, "The Offense-Defense Balance and War Since 1648" (unpublished, April 8, 1997). In addition, see Jack S. Levy, "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (June 1984).

outcomes to a focus on "national decisions about whether to initiate war."[63] Yet, Fearon contends, "problems of aggregation and classification make it virtually impossible to measure the 'overall' offense-defense balance at a given time simply by looking at the technology and doctrines employed by states."[64] Addressing this critique, Stephen Van Evera takes a more expansive view that includes "military factors, geographic factors, domestic social and political factors, and the nature of diplomacy."[65] Nevertheless, this systemic conception of the offense-defense balance has remained problematic, leading Stephen Biddle to argue that the unit of analysis should not be a systemic variable but a dyadic operation.[66]

In addition to definitional problems, categorizing technological advances and determining causal pathways has proven difficult. Jervis notes, "Neither naval forces nor tactical air forces can be readily classified in these terms."[67] Adding a third dimension to warfare—through operations in air, space, or the underwater environment—further complicated this picture. As Billy Mitchell once wrote, "The advent of air power, which can go straight to the vital centers and either neutralize or destroy them, has put a completely new complexion on the old system of making war."[68] Moreover, the growing reliance on nuclear and missile forces further complicates notions

---

[63] Betts, "Must War Find a Way?," 179.

[64] Fearon, "The Offense-Defense Balance and War Since 1648," 13.

[65] Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," 16.

[66] Stephen Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-Defense Theory," *The Journal of Politics* 63, no. 03 (August 2001): 747–748.

[67] Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 206.

[68] William Mitchell, *Skyways: A Book on Modern Aeronautics* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1930), 255-256, referenced in Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, Indiana University Press (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 223. Kier, however, suggests strategic bombing is offensive, noting "Air forces have exploited strategic bombing (an offensive doctrine) to ensure their independence." Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine*

of offense and defense.[69] In addition, some scholars question whether technology should be seen as a cause or an effect. Keir Lieber writes, "political and military elites tend not to shape their strategies on the basis of military technology but rather to view the utility of new technologies through the lens of their current strategies."[70] Looking at the World War I period, Shimsoni finds that policymakers "manipulate, develop, and exploit available technology through doctrine and war plans…"[71] Matthew Evangelista traces the development of technology and finds that both internal and external explanations are required to describe the technology development process.[72] Thomas Mahnken concurs that U.S. military services "shaped technology far more than technology shaped the services."[73] Nevertheless, van Creveld writes, "none of the important devices that have transformed war… owed its origins to a doctrinal requirement laid down by people in uniform."[74]

---

between the Wars, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997), 16.

[69] Conversely, Archer Jones notes, "power and mobility had an inverse ratio," and "with missile weapons, mobility had varied inversely with weight that in turn, had varied directly with power." Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 493.

[70] Keir A. Lieber, *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics over Technology*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005), 153.

[71] Jonathan Shimshoni, "Technology, Military Advantage, and World War I: A Case for Military Entrepreneurship," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990): 189.

[72] Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

[73] Thomas G. Mahnken, *Technology and the American Way of War since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 11.

[74] van Creveld, *Technology and War*, 220.

Despite these disagreements, supporters of the offense-defense balance hold that states "prefer the more successful type of force, so they buy defensive forces when the defense is strong and offensive forces when the offense is strong."[75]

Domestic Explanations

Although external factors are often given preference, there is no question that domestic politics affects defense policy.[76] Allan Stam warns, "If we ignore domestic politics and its connections to a state's power… we will frequently miss critical events in the internal affairs of states that may have significant international repercussions."[77] Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein go further, "the narrow constituents of realism—material power, changes in the distribution, and external threat—are radically incomplete… domestic forces may actually be increasing in scope and importance."[78] Even Waltz admits, "The causes of war lie not simply in states or in the state system they are found in both."[79] Thus, the causes of defense policies likely lie in both as well.[80]

---

[75] Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," 14.

[76] As Peter Gourevitch observes, "Domestic structure for the 'I.R.' person is an independent or intervening variable and sometimes an irrelevant one." Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32, no. 04 (September 1978): 881.

[77] Allan C. Stam III, *Win, Lose, or Draw: Domestic Politics and the Crucible of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 14. He suggests using a rational choice model to incorporate domestic factors, and argues that democracies are more likely to win in war. See Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[78] Richard N. Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5.

[79] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (July 2000): 13.

[80] On the relationship between national defense and the state system see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*, Studies in Social Discontinuity (Cambridge,

In suggesting a preference-based theory of international politics, Andrew Moravcsik incorporates "the underlying identities, interests, and power of individuals and groups (inside and outside the state apparatus) who constantly pressure the central decision makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences."[81] In this conception, interest groups compete in pursuit of parochial objectives. Such objectives may differ substantially from realist desires for power and security. For example, John Orme notes that many believe the overriding objective of advanced states is economic prosperity.[82] He argues, "the nature and intensity of national support for any state purpose… varies decisively with the social context."[83] Jack Snyder, in one of the most ambitious efforts to connect domestic politics to defense policies, analyzes the sources of expansionary impulses and roots them in domestic factors. He finds, "The myth of security through expansion originated in each case as a justification for the policies of domestic political coalitions formed among groups having parochial interests in imperial expansion, military preparations, or economic autarky."[84] Elizabeth Kier endorses a similar proposition, noting "the interaction

---

MA: Blackwell, 1992). Otto Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[81] Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 04 (September 1997): 518.

[82] John Orme, "The Utility of Force in a World of Scarcity," 458 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*.

[83] Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously," 520.

[84] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, 2. print, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1–2. Snyder identifies three myths that lead to overexpansion: "gains are losses are cumulative; the offensive has the advantage; and offensive threats make others more cooperative." Ibid., 3.

between constraints set in the domestic political arena and a military's organizational culture determines choices between offensive and defensive doctrines."[85]

One challenge for domestic political explanations of defense policy is to articulate a theory that applies across cases. Robert Putnam writes, "Domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled, but our theories have not yet sorted out the puzzling tangle."[86] Thus, "The common approach is to focus on international relations, without much consideration of the domestic politics that influence them."[87] As Brooks notes, "In circumstances where the preferred strategy is unclear, the mechanism by which particular politics are selected may be significantly influenced by domestic-level bargaining."[88] Putnam proposes a two-level approach, which "recognizes that central decision-makers strive to reconcile domestic and international imperatives simultaneously…"[89] Christensen concurs, "Domestic politics matter, but they do so precisely because leaders respond to changes in the international environment by adopting strategies that are controversial in the domestic arena."[90] This section reviews three factors: domestic structures, bureaucratic politics, and individual leadership.

---

[85] Kier, *Imagining War*, 5.

[86] Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 03 (June 1988): 427.

[87] Harvey M. Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge, *US Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 1.

[88] Brooks, "Dueling Realisms," 471.

[89] Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics," 460.

[90] Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3–4.

Domestic Structures

If domestic preferences matter, then the way they are adjudicated should be important as well. Deborah Avant suggests, "Domestic institutions might vary in several ways: on a continuum of capability and legitimacy (from strong to weak states), mode of authority (from democratic or autarchic), or constitutional arrangement (parliamentary to presidential)."[91] Regime type is particularly important, since as Daniel Kliman argues, "Regime type sets the boundaries for how democratic leaders formulate strategy."[92] One possible interpretation of the democratic peace literature is that liberal democratic states are less likely to build offensive forces when facing other liberal democracies. Andrew Kydd finds, "modern democratic states have remarkably open policy processes. If a democracy is a security seeker, therefore, this fact will be common knowledge."[93] Michael Doyle points out that, "complaisance characterizes declined or not quite risen liberal states… During much of the nineteenth century, the United States informally relied upon the British fleet for many of its security needs."[94] This could help explain the infrequency of war between democracies, which Jack Snyder calls "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations."[95]

---

[91] Deborah Avant, "Political Institutions and Military Effectiveness: Contemporary United States and United Kingdom," 80, in Risa Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, eds., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[92] Daniel M. Kliman, *Fateful Transitions: How Democracies Manage Rising Powers, from the Eve of World War I to China's Ascendance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 2.

[93] Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing," 129.

[94] Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs (Part 2)," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1983): 337.

[95] Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 662. See also Joanne Gowa and Sebastian Rosato.

Beside regime type, other domestic factors may be critical as well. Snyder argues that coalition logrolling and coalition ideology are particularly effective in cartelized systems, but less so in unitary authoritarian systems or in "the democratic systems of Britain and the United States, which… strengthened diffuse interests opposed to overexpansion."[96] Another approach is taken by Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry who differentiate between "'soft' (decentralized and constrained) and 'hard' (centralized and autonomous) states."[97] Alternatively, Peter Katzenstein suggests that during their ascendancy states pursue open policies and during decline they often pursue closed policies.[98] For these reasons and others, Steve Rosen contends, "the social structures of the political unit can affect its ability to generate military power, offensively and defensively."[99]

Critics of such explanations argue, "It is impossible to formulate in a systematic and exhaustive fashion the domestic determinants of the foreign policies of states. There simply are too many qualitative variables: personalities, national character, social structure, economic interests, political organization, etc."[100] Others note that reliance solely on domestic factors is unwise because as John Lewis Gaddis writes, "systemic interests tend to take precedence over ideological interests."[101] Fareed Zakaria argues, "Domestic politics has a crucial influence on foreign policy. It is a mistake, however, to place it in competition with international factors when

---

[96] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 18.

[97] Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action," 467–468.

[98] Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

[99] Stephen Peter Rosen, "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 29.

[100] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 96–97.

[101] John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security* 10, no. 4 (1986): 131.

constructing general explanations of state behavior, not least because it will lose the contest."[102] Yet, despite these critics, "Few scholars embrace theories of world politics that rely exclusively on the structural circumstances created by material capabilities of states and its distribution within the international system."[103]

Bureaucratic Politics

Bureaucratic politics explanations focus less on domestic constituencies and more on the interactions and biases of organizations. Michael Horowitz finds that, "like the strategic environment, domestic political and military organizational factors are vital in shaping the way military organizations behave."[104] Organizations must be understood because, as Waltz has noted, "Organization have at least two aims: to get something done and to maintain themselves as organizations."[105] Kimberly Zisk similarly suggests, "security policymakers, both military and civilian, do not choose between being state actors oriented toward finding the best solutions to international problems, or being bureaucratic actors oriented toward preserving the health of their organizations. They are both…"[106] Graham Allison, perhaps the most famous advocate of including bureaucratic politics in the study of international relations, writes, "the bureaucratic

---

[102] Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (1992): 198.

[103] The authors do note "But it is also widely agreed that one ignores such factors at one's explanatory peril." G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences," *World Politics* 61, no. 01 (January 2009): 24.

[104] Michael Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power : Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 26.

[105] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 111.

[106] Kimberly Marten Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955-1991* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6.

politics model directs attention to intra-national games, the overlap of which constitutes international relations."[107] He explains, "the actor is not a monolithic 'nation' or 'government' but rather a constellation of loosely allied organizations on top of which government leaders sit…"[108] Potential implications include hypotheses that organizations are resistant to change, that militaries prefer offensive strategies, and that militaries desire symbols of prestige.

The theory that bureaucracies, and especially militaries, are resistant to change is perhaps the most popular organizational theory. Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff note, "militaries are commonly seen as traditional in nature and therefore as being strongly disinclined to undertake major change."[109] Walt suggests several ways "that political and organizational interests distort the development of strategic thought," to include opposition to innovations that threaten traditional roles and missions.[110] Similarly, Rosen warns, "History is in fact full of examples of armies and navies that were defeated and went on being defeated because they did not innovate… failure in war has not been necessary or sufficient for peacetime innovation."[111] For example, James Q. Wilson uses organizational theory in suggesting, "The key difference

---

[107] Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971), 149.

[108] Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *The American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (September 1969): 699–709.

[109] Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, eds., *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology*, Making Sense of Global Security (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 4. They do comment, however, that "the pace of technological change, in information technology in particular, is creating the possibility of revolutionary change in the conduct of military operations. The ability of developed states, indeed all states, to achieve national-security policy aims will depend in large part on whether and how well their military organizations adapt to their changing strategic, political, budgetary, and technological environments." Ibid., 3.

[110] Stephen M. Walt, "The Search for a Science of Strategy: A Review Essay," *International Security* 12, no. 1 (1987): 149–154.

[111] Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 8–9.

between the German army in 1940 and its French opponents was not in grand strategy, but in tactics and organizational arrangements…"[112]

A second theory is that military organizations prefer offensive strategies. Jack Levy notes "the endemic preference of military organizations for offensive strategies…"[113] Walt comments, "most military strategists have strongly preferred offensive military doctrines… for organizational reasons…"[114] Posen suggests, "Military organizations will generally prefer offensive doctrines because they reduce uncertainty in important ways."[115] Snyder agrees that "the military professional tends to hold a simplified, zero-sum view of international politics and the nature of war… The assumption of extreme hostility also favors the notion that decisive, offensive operations are always needed to end wars."[116] Van Evera writes that militaries, "may adopt defensive strategies if civilians demand them, but without civilian direction they almost

---

[112] James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 14. For more on these debates, also see William A. Lucas and Raymond H. Dawson, "The organizational politics of defense," International Studies Association Occasional Paper, No. 2, 1974.

[113] Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 110. See also Jack S. Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," *International Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 1986): 193.

[114] Walt, "The Search for a Science of Strategy," 158.

[115] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 47.

[116] Snyder continues, "Organizations like to work according to a plan that ties together the standard operating procedures of all the subunits into a prepackaged script." He also notes that "explanations for the offensive bias are rooted even more directly in the parochial interests of the military, including the autonomy, prestige, size, and wealth of the organization." Moreover, "The prestige, self-image, and material health of military institutions will prosper if the military can convince civilians and themselves that wars can be short, decisive, and socially beneficial. One of the attractions of decisive, offensive strategies is that they hold out the promise of demonstrable return on the nation's investment in military capability." Jack Snyder, "The Cult of the Offensive in 1914," 117-118 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*. See also Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

invariably purvey offensive ideas, and develop offensive solutions."[117] Christensen and Snyder therefore note that "uncontrolled" militaries "favor offensive strategies."[118] Scott Sagan summarizes five common explanations of military bias in favor of offense: "offensive doctrines enhance the power and size of military organizations… offensive doctrines tend to promote military autonomy… offenses enhance the prestige and self-image of military officers… offenses structure military campaigns in favorable ways… [and] beliefs about the need for decisive military operations that tend to be offensive in nature."[119]

A third theory is that military organizations prefer symbols of prestige over warfighting capability. Some scholars trace this desire back to states rather than militaries. Gilpin notes, "Prestige, rather than power, is the everyday currency of international relations."[120] Hans Morgenthau comments, "Whatever the ultimate objectives of a nation's foreign policy, its prestige—its reputation for power—is always an important and sometimes decisive factor in determining success or failure of its foreign policy."[121] This is essentially the application of the third element in "Thucydides' famous trinity of interest, fear, and glory."[122] Dan Markey argues, "states pursue prestige so as to demonstrate their power rather than as an end in itself."[123] In this

---

[117] Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 282. Referenced in Kier, *Imagining War*, 15.

[118] Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks," 145.

[119] Scott D. Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (1986): 155–156.

[120] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 31.

[121] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 93.

[122] Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (New York: Norton, 1997), 234.

[123] Daniel Markey, "Prestige and the Origins of War: Returning to Realism's Roots," *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (June 1999): 129.

sense, "prestige is the ultimate relative (or positional) good."[124] Adam Liff applies this concept to "status-seeking" rising powers that pursue status through efforts to "mimic the military policy profile of higher-ranked states."[125] Theories of prestige-seeking are closely related to concepts of nationalism.[126] Robert Ross, for example, suggests that China's aircraft carrier program is the result of "the Chinese people's nationalist ambition for an aircraft carrier" and "the persistent PLA Navy's demands."[127]

Thus, bureaucratic politics explanations include hypotheses about military resistance to change, preference for offensive strategies, and desires for prestigious symbols.

---

[124] Ibid., 157.

[125] Liff suggests "This status-seeking driven mimicry often occurs even when the normatively-associated policies are disconnected from, or even contrary to, pressing national security and/or material interests." Adam P. Liff, "Shadowing the Hegemon? Great Power Norms, Socialization, and the Military Trajectories of Rising Powers" (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2014), 1, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1558898357.

[126] Barry Posen defines nationalism as "the propensity of individuals to identify their personal interest with that of a group that is too large to meet together; to identify that interest on the basis both of a 'culture' that the group shares, and a purported history that the group purportedly shares; and to believe that this group must have a state structure of its own in order to thrive." Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," 81. One scholar notes, "Nationalism is probably the most important among non-military factors which complicate constellations of forces determining the territorial distribution of power." Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organization and Society* (University of California Press, 1968), 88. Yet, despite Posen's finding that states "act purposefully to produce nationalism because of its utility in mass mobilization warfare," Ernest Gellner finds that nationalism "arises only for some states" Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," 84. Ernest Gellner and John Breuilly, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 5. Van Evera argues that nationalism is most likely arise in states "that depend on some measure of popular consent, but are narrowly governed by unrepresentative elites." Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1994): 33.

[127] Robert Ross in See also Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism."

Individual Leadership

Defense policies are determined by individuals, so "first image" explanations are vital.[128] Henry Kissinger once noted, "As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference the personalities make."[129] As Jervis argues, "unless national behavior and international outcomes are entirely determined by the external environment, there is significant room for choice by publics and statesmen."[130] Charles Kupchan concludes similarly, "all three levels of analysis shape international relations… system, state and individual interact…"[131]

The study of individuals, like that of domestic politics more broadly, is difficult to systematize. Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack ask, "How can we explain twentieth-century history without reference to Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, or Mao Zedong?"[132] They note, "With the shift from Bismarck to Wilhelm II came a change in Germany's alliances and foreign policy posture. This shift did not reflect a new strategic environment or domestic pressures, but rather the different visions of the individuals at the helm of the state."[133] For example, during a visit of King Edward to Kiel, Wilhelm II announced, "When as a little boy I was allowed to visit Plymouth and Portsmouth… I admired

---

[128] Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

[129] Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 13.

[130] Robert Jervis, "The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past," *International Security* 16, no. 3 (1991): 41.

[131] Charles Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 7.

[132] Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (April 2001): 108.

[133] Ibid., 125.

the proud English ships in those two superb harbors. Then there awoke in me the wish to build ships of my own like those some day, and when I was grown up to possess a Navy as fine as the English."[134] As this quote illustrates, "individuals set the ultimate and secondary intentions of a state…"[135] To this end, Deborah Avant proposes an institutional model incorporating the reality that "individuals want to ensure or to enhance their institutional positions… actors make short-run calculations to preserve or enhance their power…"[136] Despite this fundamental insight, most scholars have found it difficult to incorporate individuals into broader theories of foreign policy.

An alternative approach is to look at the ways that individuals perceive and systemically misperceive information. Existing literature shows that individuals are highly influenced by references to historical events and analogies.[137] Jervis finds that, "Sudden events influence images more than do slow developments."[138] Applying this concept, Keren Yarhi-Milo writes, "decision makers tend to rely on kinds of information that are particularly vivid… [and] often debate the significance of or entirely ignore what scholars consider credible indicators…"[139] Similarly, Christensen and Snyder note, "soldiers' and policymakers' perceptions of international

---

[134] Quoted in Bernhard Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, trans. Fritz August Voigt (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931), 29.

[135] Byman and Pollack also note, "individual leaders shape their state's strategies… individuals are more important when systemic, domestic, and bureaucratic forces conflict or are ambiguous." Byman and Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men," 134–142.

[136] Deborah Avant, "Political Institutions and Military Effectiveness: Contemporary United States and United Kingdom," 81, in Brooks and Stanley, *Creating Military Power*.

[137] Ernest R May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

[138] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976), 308.

[139] Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*, 2014, 3–5.

structural incentives… are shaped by their formative experiences, especially the last major war."[140] Other scholars find that analogical reasoning may bias individuals and organizations against defense policies that are similar to previously failed policies, and toward recently effective examples.[141] As Dan Reiter comments, "decision-makers look to past experiences for guidance when they make foreign policy."[142] Jervis notes that individuals learn most from firsthand involvement, early experiences, and important events, but they tend to be anchored to their beliefs.[143] As a result, "adjustment of background images occurs through changes of personnel" and it often "takes the replacement of one generation by another to let the impact of external changes take its full effect."[144]

These scholars remind theorists that individuals ultimately determine national objectives, so defense policies must vary to some degree when leaders and their characteristics change.

---

[140] Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks," 145. There may be a similar effect for crises as there is for wars. See Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis*, 4. [print] (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[141] Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[142] Dan Reiter, *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliances, and World Wars*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2. See also Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[143] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*.

[144] Glenn Herald Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977), 332. Karl Deutsch and Richard Merritt, "Effects of Events on National and International Images," in Kelman, ed., *International Behavior*, 182-183 referenced in Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 16.

Cultural Explanations

A final driver of defense policies is culture. Michael Desch argues, "When realist theories are found wanting, we should supplement them with new culturalist theories."[145] On this, Colin Dueck agrees, noting "cultural explanations of strategic adjustment start from the premise that international pressures are essentially indeterminate."[146] Dima Adamsky suggests that states often seem "dysfunctional, if not irrational… An ideational approach… offers a better-suited analytical framework for this task."[147] Jeffrey Legro finds that organizational cultures in World War II, "shaped the preferences and actions of states in ways that often defied both balance-of-power considerations and international norms."[148] Samuel Huntington famously argued that cultural differences can have major effects not only on domestic politics but on state behavior.[149]

Many definitions of strategic culture exist.[150] Jack Snyder first used the term "strategic culture" in 1977 when describing Soviet nuclear doctrine, defining it as "the sum total of ideas,

---

[145] Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 170.

[146] Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 14, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=445472.

[147] Adamsky notes, "Cultural analysis is not a substitute for but an effective supplement to neorealism for explaining states' strategic behavior." Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010), 11.

[148] Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint during World War II*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). x.

[149] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

[150] Note that strategic culture is just one aspect of culture, as evidenced by Alexander Wendt's famous observation that, "Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. Anarchy is what states make of it." For example, John Vasquez argues that realism is not simply the outcome of the state system but the cause of conflict within it. Bradley Klein observes, "To study strategic culture is to study the cultural hegemony of

conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other."[151] Iain Johnston refines the concept by defining strategic culture as having two basic elements: "(a) a central paradigm that supplies answers to three basic, related questions about the nature of conflict in human affairs, the nature of the enemy, and the efficacy of violence; and (b) a ranked set of strategic preferences logically derived from these central assumptions."[152] Along similar lines, Adamsky comments, "scholars choose strategic culture parameters from three independent pools: national-popular culture, characteristics of policy-making mechanisms in security affairs, and 'bureaucratic reflexes' and organizational cultures of defense

---

organized state violence." Similarly, Markus Fischer notes that "social reality is constituted by intersubjective consciousness based on language and that human beings are free to change their world by a collective act of will." Put differently, Eyre and Suchman argue, "the world political and social system builds modern nation-states, which in turn build modern militaries and procure modern weaponry." Johnston concludes that, "to the extent *parabellum* is cross-cultural *and* learned we should begin to treat realpolitik behavior as a product of a 'cultural realist' norm." Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 02 (March 1992): 395. John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 27 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 02 (April 1988): 136. Markus Fischer, "Feudal Europe, 800-1300: Communal Discourse and Conflictual Practices," *International Organization,* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), 430. Dana P. Eyre and Mark C. Suchman, "Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons: An Institutional Theory Approach," 82 in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New Directions in World Politics (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996). Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 31. See also Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 77.

[151] Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1997), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2005/R2154.pdf.

[152] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*. ix-x.

institutions."[153] Legro describes military organizational cultures as "patterns of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that proscribe how a group should adapt to its external environment and manage its internal structure."[154] In presenting a cultural explanation of state behavior, Thomas Berger relies on "a construct emerging out of contingent historical, social, and rational processes."[155]

Regardless of its precise definition, how does strategic culture determine defense policies? John Duffield argues, "culture helps to define the basic goals of the collectivity… shapes perceptions of the external environment… shapes the formulation and identification of the behaviors available… [and] can strongly influence the evaluation of the seemingly available options and thus the choices that are made among them."[156] Therefore, strategic culture appears to most directly influence a state's strategy. Bradley Klein proposes to "treat military strategy as a cultural practice" embodying "the state's war-making style, understood in terms of its military institutions and its accumulated strategic traditions…"[157] Dueck suggests "culture shapes strategic choice in several ways. First, culture influences the manner in which international events, pressures, and conditions are perceived. Second, it provides a set of causal beliefs

[153] Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, 12. Adamsky differentiates between "social structure (collectivistic vs. individual), communication style (high context vs. low context), and time orientation (polychromic vs. monochromic)." Ibid., 16.

[154] Legro, *Cooperation under Fire*.

[155] Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[156] John S. Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism," *International Organization* 53, no. 04 (September 1999): 771–772.

[157] Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture," 135–136.

regarding the efficient pursuit of national interests. Third, it helps determine the actual definition of those interests, by providing prescriptive foreign policy goals."[158]

Culture also provides another explanation for Paul Kennedy's observation of "a noticeable 'lag time' between the trajectory of a state's relative economic strength and the trajectory of its military/territorial influence."[159] Desch concurs that cultural theories "show some promise of supplementing realist theories by explaining lags between structural change and state behavior…"[160] Changes in strategic culture are infrequent and slow, in part because they are often measured over decades or centuries. For example, Adamsky notes, "Features of culture, norms, and ideas that transcend generations and impact continuously upon a state's strategic behavior are chosen as the parameters of the strategic culture in a given case."[161] Duffield suggests one reason for culture's slow effect: "information that reinforces existing images and beliefs is readily assimilated, whereas inconsistent data tend to be ignored, rejected, or distorted…"[162] Thus, Thomas Mahnken argues, "A nation's way of war flows from its geography and society and reflects its comparative advantage. It represents an approach that a

[158] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy*, 15.

[159] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. xxiii.

[160] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 169.

[161] Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, 12.

[162] Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior," 770. Duffield also acknowledges, "puzzling instances in which states have not altered their behavior, or have done so only with considerable delay, in response to significant shifts in their relative power positions? Declining powers have often been slow to reduce their international commitments and to accept a smaller world role, or have even refused to do so until forced by events. Conversely, rising states have not infrequently failed to expand their external involvements in step with increases in their relative national power." Ibid., 768.

given state has found successful in the past. Although not immutable, it tends to evolve slowly."[163]

Therefore, cultural explanations can explain some decisions within states and across systems, particularly regarding the types of strategies that states pursue.

Weaknesses of Existing Theories

The structural, domestic, and cultural explanations described above provide a wide variety of predictions about defense policies. There is no question that each of these factors plays a role in determining defense policies. Yet, these explanations have three major limitations: first, most theories focus on only one element of the ends-ways-means hierarchy; second, few theories can explain changes in defense policies over time; and third, most explanations lack either parsimony or predictive power. Each of these constraints is described in greater detail below.

First, few existing theories describe the full ends-ways-means logic chain from the formation of national objectives through the adoption of a security strategy to the choice of specific military investments. Barry Posen describes grand strategy as "a chain of political ends and military means," which he sees as being highly dependent on "political-military integration."[164] Many structural explanations focus on either national objectives or security strategies, without venturing to predict the types of military investments that states will make. Similarly, many domestic explanations focus on national interests, bypassing the strategies or investments needed to attain them. Cultural explanations often touch on security strategies but ignore both national

[163] Mahnken, *Technology and the American Way of War since 1945*, 3.
[164] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 25.

interests and military investments. As a result, scholars lack a dominant defense policy theory to connect ends, ways, and means.[165]

Second, and perhaps most importantly for this project, few existing theories explain changes in defense policies over time. Structural and cultural explanations are particularly weak in this regard. For example, structural theories of defense policy that rely on imitation or geography struggle to explain why a nation like France would shift from an offensive strategy before World War I to a defensive strategy before World War II. Similarly, cultural theories can only explain such decisions by changes in strategic culture, yet scholars note that culture is relatively stable with few "significant adjustments over short periods…"[166] Moreover, domestic theories often explain rapid defense policy shifts by highlighting changes in preferences or organizations, without addressing the underlying causes that triggered changes in those factors at a certain time.

Third, most existing theories are either highly parsimonious with limited predictive power or highly predictive with limited cross-case applicability or parsimony. As Robert Keohane suggests, "We should seek parsimony first, then add on complexity while monitoring the adverse effects this has on the predictive power of our theory: its ability to make significant inferences on

---

[165] Traditional conceptions of ends, ways, and means assume that ends are determined before ways or means. Clausewitz's famous dictum that "war is the continuation of policy by other means" suggests that decisions on objectives should precede strategies or investments. However, Samuel Huntington notes it is not always a safe assumption "that the ends of policy would be defined before strategy had to be prepared." This assumption of strategic coherence is therefore problematic, and must be assessed in greater detail. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret, First paperback printing (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989). Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 19. print (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2002), 263.

[166] Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior," 770.

the basis of limited information."[167] Unfortunately, many structural explanations value parsimony over empirical accuracy and many domestic or cultural explanations are difficult to apply across cases. Additionally, when existing theories fail, many scholars fall back on other explanations without a theoretical construct for doing so. As Fareed Zakaria writes, "a good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factors."[168] Yet, defense policy has been left without a unifying theory of this sort.

None of these factors is fatal for existing structural, domestic, and cultural explanations, but together these weaknesses suggest an opportunity for new theory to make a substantive contribution to the field. The next section puts forward a theory of perceived relative power that is designed to address the full ends-ways-means logic chain and explain change over time, while also preserving both parsimony and predictive power.

[167] Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 187–188.

[168] Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics," 198.

A THEORY OF PERCEIVED RELATIVE POWER

> The most basic realist proposition is that states must recognize and respond to shifts in their relative power…
>
> - Randall Schweller, *International Security* (2000)[1]

The theory of perceived relative power suggests that national leaders alter defense policies as states undergo cycles of rise and decline. The core of this theory is the recognition that leaders prioritize different defense policies depending on whether they perceive their state to be rising or declining and strong or weak. Based on leaders' perception of the level and trend in relative power, states can be divided into four phases of relative power: 1) rising and weak; 2) rising and strong; 3) declining and strong; or 4) declining and weak.[2] In each phase, a state has different incentives based on its relative position and its expectations about its future position. These perceptions drive states to adopt different defense policies, and to alter them over time in response to perceived changes in relative power.

Having reviewed the existing literature and noted some of its limitations, this chapter explains this new theory in detail. The first section describes the two independent variables: the perceived level of relative power and the perceived trend in relative power. The next section reviews the effect on the dependent variable—defense policy—describing the implications for national objectives (ends), security strategies (ways), and military investments (means). The final section summarizes the theory and outlines the research design and case selection methodology.

---

[1] Feaver et al., "Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm?," 174.

[2] States could also perceive their relative power to be stable—neither rising nor declining—but for the purposes of this study stable relative power is conceptualized as a transitory period between rising and declining power.

Independent Variables: Perceptions of Relative Power

Structural theories tend to be more parsimonious and broadly applicable than domestic or cultural theories. Yet, many structural theories struggle to explain change over time because they typically focus on the static distribution of capabilities within a system. Moreover, the most dynamic structural concept—power transition theory—has long taken a backseat to other realist models. Yet, it is clear that power levels and power trends shape defense policies. Therefore, this theory begins by focusing on two aspects of power: one static and another dynamic. The static element is a state's perceived level of relative power, measured on a spectrum from strong to weak. The dynamic aspect, which helps to incorporate change into typically static realist models, is a state's perceived trend in relative power, measured on a spectrum from rising to decline.

How should power be defined and measured? Realists tend to focus on the distribution of resources and capabilities.[3] Some scholars measure power simply by estimating gross domestic product.[4] Geoffrey Blainey incorporates seven factors: military strength, predictions of other nations, perceptions of internal unity, memory of previous conflicts, perceptions of conflict sustainability, nationalism and ideology, and the qualities of individual leaders.[5] On the other

[3] Despite this lack of agreement on the components of power, most realist theories, particularly power transition theory, are highly dependent on the elements included in measurements. Indra de Soysa, John R. Oneal, and Yong-Hee Park, "Testing Power-Transition Theory Using Alternative Measures of National Capabilities," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 4 (August 1, 1997): 509–28.

[4] Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (April 2011): 22–24.

[5] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 123. Others favor population size, territory, resource endowment, economic capacity, military might, and organizational-instructional competence. Ikenberry, Mastanduno, and Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences," 4.

hand, Joseph Nye writes, "Power is the ability to achieve one's purposes or goals."[6] Yet, Robert Dahl asks of power and influence, "over what actors with respect to what matters?"[7] Elaborating on this point, David Baldwin notes the "multidimensional characteristic of power is that the same actors can be simultaneously strong and weak."[8] Summarizing these views, Zeev Maoz argues that power can be defined as control over resources, actors, or outcomes.[9] Thus, as Gilpin laments, "the number and variety of definitions should be an embarrassment to political scientists."[10]

The theory presented here focuses on relative power, rather than absolute power, because defense policy is inherently competitive.[11] Joseph Grieco notes, "realists find that states are positional, not atomistic, in character…"[12] As a result, an increase in the capabilities of one state are typically viewed as decreasing the relative capabilities of other states.[13] Regardless of the

---

[6] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 177.

[7] Robert A. Dahl and Bruce Stinebrickner, *Modern Political Analysis* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 29–33.

[8] David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power: A Conceptual Analysis," *International Organization* 34, no. 04 (September 1980): 497.

[9] Zeev Maoz, "Power, Capabilities, and Paradoxical Conflict Outcomes," *World Politics* 41, no. 02 (January 1989): 240.

[10] Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Foreign Direct Investment*, The Political Economy of International Relations Series (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 24.

[11] One should not, however, assume that states maximizing relative power necessarily maximize military spending because as Glaser notes, "maximizing relative power may not maximize the military capabilities that a country needs for defense and deterrence." Glaser, "Realists as Optimists," 72.

[12] Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42, no. 03 (June 1988): 487.

[13] This focus on relative power rather than absolute power does not rule out the possibility of cooperation between states. As Duncan Snidal has shown, "Relative gains do not impair cooperation nearly so much as has been claimed." Other scholars have demonstrated that

specific components of relative power, this theory suggests that defense policies are driven not by abstract measurements of power but by national leaders' perception of power.[14] Expanding on this point, Ned Lebow and Benjamin Valentino write, "It is important to distinguish between power and perceptions of power… For purposes of status and balancing, perceptions of power appear more important than actual power or capabilities…"[15] William Wohlforth agrees, "If power influences the course of international politics, it must do so largely through the perceptions of the people who make decisions on behalf of states."[16] Aaron Friedberg concurs, "Even if one acknowledges that structures exist and are important, there is still the question of how statesmen… are able to determine where they stand in terms of relative national power at any given point in history."[17] Moreover, Wohlforth suggests that "decisionmakers' assessments appear to capture real power relationships far better than the crude measures commonly used by political scientists."[18] As a result, Wohlforth notes, "For statesmen, accurate assessments of

---

absolute and relative gains can be simultaneously incorporated into models by shifting the time horizon and shadow of the future. Duncan Snidal, "International Cooperation among Relative Gains Maximizers," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (December 1991): 401. See also Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *The American Political Science Review*, 1991, 1303–20. David Edelstein, "Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers," *Security Studies* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 2002): 40.

[14] Nye notes that leaders commonly include "population, territory, natural resources, economic size, military forces, and political stability" in measurements of power. Nye, Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power," 178.

[15] R. N. Lebow and B. Valentino, "Lost in Transition: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory," *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 406–407. Lebow and Valentino also note that many rising powers "went to war because they thought they were powerful enough to become more powerful still. The perception of strength, not of weakness and threat, is the precondition for many, if not most, superpower wars." Ibid., 405.

[16] William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1–2.

[17] Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 8.

[18] Feaver et al., "Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm?," 184.

power are impossible. For scholars, accurate assessments practically mean a correct rendering of the perceptions that inform decisions."[19]

Nevertheless, some critics suggest that realists must exclude perceptions from their theories.[20] Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik warn, "If the perceptions and beliefs about effective means-ends calculations of states, given adequate information, consistently fail to correspond to material power relationships, then power is at best one of a number of important factors and perhaps a secondary one. The parsimony and coherence of realist theory is eroded."[21] Snyder warns, "Changes in strategic 'perceptions' were often directly caused by changes in policy preferences rather than the other way around."[22] In response, Van Evera argues, "the structure of power per se is benign and causes rather few wars, but the structure of power as perceived is often malignant and explains a good deal of war."[23] He notes, "misperceptions are common… Realism thus is most powerful—that is it explains the most international politics—if we repair it by shifting its focus (a) from the gross to the fine-grained structure of power and (b) from power itself to national perceptions of power."[24]

Including perceptions also allows scholars to incorporate biases and misperceptions. For example, Keren Yarhi-Milo's selective attention thesis suggests, "Individual perceptual biases

---

[19] Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, 10.

[20] In particular, Legro and Moravcsik suggest, "a reformulation that highlights the distinctive focus of realism on conflict and material power." Legro and Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?," 8.

[21] Ibid., 35.

[22] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 128.

[23] Van Evera, *Causes of War*, 6. Van Evera also argues, "If states think the offense is strong, they will act as if it were. Thus offense-defense theory has two parallel variants, real and perceptual." Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," 46 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*.

[24] Van Evera, *Causes of War*, 6–9.

and organizational interests and practices are likely to shape what types of indicators are regarded as informative signals…"[25] Richard Betts warns, "Military bureaucracies often inflate estimates of enemy power because it seems better to err on the side of caution, and because economy-minded politicians must be scared into allocating more resources to military programs." Similarly, Michael Fischerkeller argues, "judgment of the target as culturally inferior results in a discounted capability evaluation…"[26] Regarding one's own power, Kahneman and Tversky have shown that losses typically "loom larger than gains."[27] On the topic of risk acceptance, Barbara Farnham notes that "people are willing to take risk to avoid an outcome framed as a loss that they refuse to take when the outcome is presented as a gain."[28]

Given the role of individuals in determining defense policies, the theory presented here focuses on perceptions of relative power. Whether this is a "realist" conceptualization is secondary to the question of whether it is powerful, parsimonious, and addresses a gap in existing scholarship. After all, even Legro and Moravcsik admit the importance of "sober calculations of relative power" to understanding state behavior.[29]

Perceived Relative Power Level: Strength vs Weakness

Scholars have long studied how different static *levels* of relative power affect defense policies. Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry argue, "Internationally weak states will emphasize domestic

[25] Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary*, 3.

[26] Michael P. Fischerkeller, "David versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars," *Security Studies* 7, no. 4 (June 1998): 3.

[27] Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (March 1979): 288.

[28] Barbara Farnham, ed., *Avoiding Losses/taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 3.

[29] Legro and Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?," 40.

strategies more than will internationally powerful states. Likewise, powerful states will emphasize international strategies more than will weak states."[30] Stronger states—those with more relative capability—are more likely to prevail in a conflict than weaker states. Strong states can therefore adopt more extensive national objectives and the attendant security strategies and military investments these objectives require. Therefore, Barry Buzan writes "it clearly makes a big difference" whether "revisionist states are strong or weak."[31] This is not to suggest that strong states win all wars or attain all their objectives. In fact, evidence shows that over the last 200 years, weak actors have won nearly 30 percent of highly asymmetric conflicts.[32]

Thus, ends, ways, and means are likely to vary among strong and weak states. It is therefore critical to differentiate between these two types of states to understand the likelihood of their pursuing different defense policies. Although these categories are fluid, states that see themselves as strong are likely to adopt different policies than those that think they are weak. National leaders may compare their state's power to that of the strongest state in the system or to

---

[30] Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action," 468.

[31] Barry Buzan, *People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2007), 241. Applying this concept to the system more generally, Glenn Snyder comments that the military balance depends on "whether the states interested in preserving the status quo were able to deny territorial gains to the expansion-minded state or states." Glenn Herald Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 41.

[32] Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (July 2001): 96. Also see Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars." Arreguín-Toft suggests, "Strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts when they adopt the wrong strategy vis-à-vis their weaker adversaries." Andrew Mack identifies asymmetries in resource power, arguing, "insurgents may gain political victory from a situation of military stalemate or even defeat." Ibid., 121. Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 02 (January 1975): 177. See also Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the most threatening state. Because different leaders may compare themselves to different states, what matters for the purposes of this study is not which state is used as the basis for comparison, but rather the power differential as viewed by national leaders.

Perceived Relative Power Trend: Rise vs Decline

Power transition theorists have long acknowledged the importance of relative power *trends*, but this variable is often overlooked in defense policy literature.[33] Gilpin, however, emphasizes power trends when noting, "a change in the capacity of the state to achieve these objectives tends to induce a change in state behavior… a change in a state's power and wealth usually causes a corresponding change in the foreign policy of the state."[34] Organski agrees, "Expanding nations, particularly those that have recently risen in power, are most likely to have goals that involve changing the status quo, whereas declining nations and nations near the peak of their power are most concerned to preserve the existing order."[35] Charles Kupchan argues that declining states typically retrench and focus on core interests while rising states pursue competitive strategies of expansion. He notes, "rapid and adverse shifts in the international balance of power creates the need for strategic adjustment but also prevents that adjustment from taking place."[36] These scholars argue that theorists should differentiate between rising and declining states when studying defense policy. To that end, Modelski's long-cycle concept describes, "two phases: the ascending phase and the descending phase… The nation-state plays distinct, and contrasting,

[33] Woosang Kim, for example, finds support for power transition theory going back as early as the Peace of Westphalia. Woosang Kim, "Power Transitions and Great Power War from Westphalia to Waterloo," *World Politics* 45, no. 01 (October 1992): 153–72.

[34] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 23.

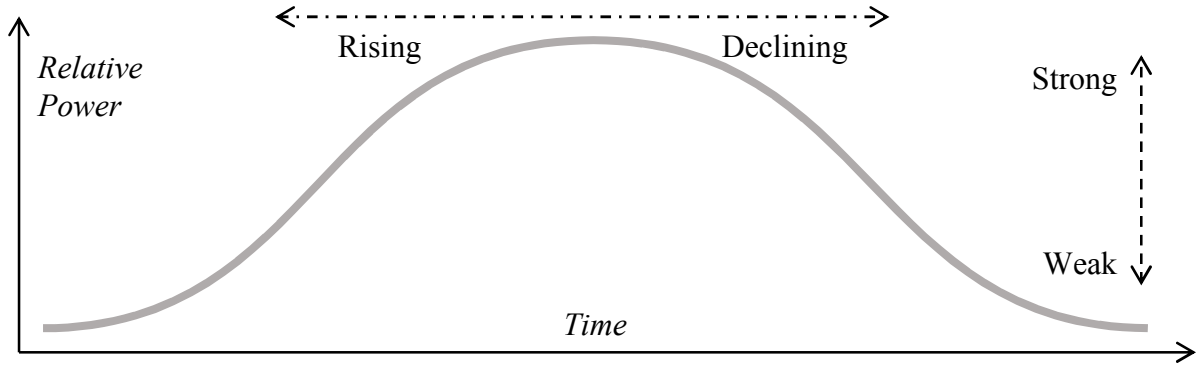
[35] Organski, *World Politics*, 100.

[36] Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire*, 14.

roles in the two phases of the long cycle."[37] Incorporating relative power trends can therefore strengthen existing models and help to explain changes in defense policy.

To simplify the conceptualization of perceived relative power described thus far, the diagram below represents the rise and decline of a state as a simple arc. This is not to suggest that states rise or decline smoothly, nor that all states experience the full cycle of rise and decline.[38] Nevertheless, for the purposes of describing this theory, the figure demonstrates that relative power levels are likely to change over time.

Figure 1: Relative Power Trends and Levels



Synthesis: Four Phases of Relative Power

It is now possible to trace the rise and decline of an idealized state through four phases.[39] In the first phase, the state views itself as relatively weak but rising. Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry

[37] George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 02 (April 1978): 232–233.

[38] See Mancur Lloyd Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[39] Note that few states, if any, proceed smoothly and methodically through all four of these phases. Instead, states tend to experience minimal change in perceptions of relative power followed by rapid reevaluation of power dynamics when salient events occur.

suggest, "Weak states are more constrained in their ability to achieve their goals through international action."[40] As a result, the theory presented here argues that weaker states are more likely to have limited defense policies. On the other hand, Gilpin writes, "As its relative power increases, a rising state attempts to change the rules governing the system."[41] For this reason, Legro reasons, "rising power leads to a growing geopolitical appetite and a likely change toward revisionism."[42] Thus, this theory hypothesizes that weak but rising states should adopt limited but expansionist national objectives.

In the second phase, the state still sees itself as rising but is now relatively strong. Modelski introduces the notion that strong powers have "the urge to control and to dominate, to imprint a pattern on events."[43] Gilpin concurs, "As the power of a state increases, it seeks to extend its territorial control, its political influence, and/or its domination of the international economy."[44] Walt Rostow suggests, "more advanced societies could impose their will on the less advanced, through the exercise of military force…"[45] Similarly, Vasquez notes, "the stronger wants to

[40] Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action," 468.

[41] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 187.

[42] Jeffrey W. Legro, "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power," *Perspectives on Politics* null, no. 03 (September 2007): 518.

[43] Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," 224.

[44] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 106.

[45] W. W. Rostow, "The Stages of Economic Growth," *The Economic History Review* 12, no. 1 (1959): 5–6. See also Walt W. Rostow, *Politics and the Stages of Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

occupy or colonize the territory of the weaker…"[46] As a result, strong and rising states should adopt more extensive expansionist national objectives.[47]

In the third phase, the state has reached its pinnacle of power and enters a period of relative decline. As Gilpin notes, "Eventually, countervailing forces come into play to slow down and finally arrest the expansion of the state."[48] The state is still relatively strong, but the relative power trend is moving in a disadvantageous direction. As Dale Copeland warns, "states in decline fear the future."[49] John Lewis Gaddis concurs that "the point at which a great power perceives its decline to be beginning is a perilous one."[50] Declining states have incentive to lock in the status quo now before it worsens. States in this position have several options. MacDonald and Parent argue that declining powers have to retrench because "the rigors of great power politics compel them to do so."[51] Ikenberry explains how postwar institutions have "served as mechanisms of political control that allowed the leading state (at least to some extent) to lock other states into a favorable set of postwar relations…"[52] Alternatively, Levy notes that a

---

[46] J. A. Vasquez, "Capability, Types of War, Peace," *Political Research Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 1986): 323.

[47] This is an optimistic time for rising powers, but as Geoffrey Blainey warns, "Recurring optimism is a vital prelude to war." Erik Gartzke also suggests that optimism increases the likelihood of miscalculation and misperception, increasing the probability of war. Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 53. Erik Gartzke, "War Is in the Error Term," *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): 567–87. Also see Erik Gartzke and Dominic Rohner, "The Political Economy of Imperialism, Decolonization and Development," *British Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 03 (July 2011): 525–56.

[48] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 107.

[49] Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 4.

[50] Gaddis, "The Long Peace," 141.

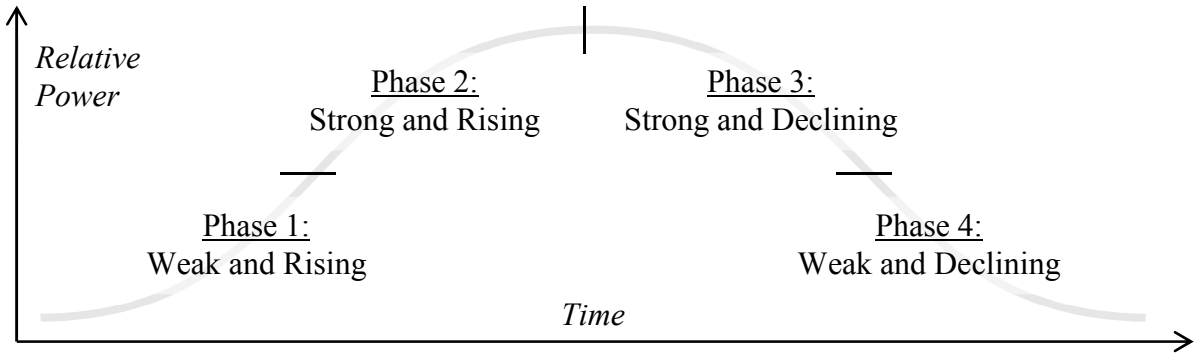
[51] MacDonald and Parent, "Graceful Decline?," 9.

[52] G. John. Ikenberry, *After Victory Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 2, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10491748.

declining power could attempt to confront a rising challenger before that challenger becomes powerful enough to threaten its position.[53] These options are addressed in greater detail later in this chapter, but regardless of the specific strategy pursued, strong but declining states have incentives to consolidate their positions before the relative power balance worsens.

In the fourth phase, the state continues to decline and becomes relatively weak. Gilpin notes, "differential rates of growth of declining and rising states in the system produce a decisive redistribution of power and result in disequilibrium in the system."[54] A state may experience a drastic decline by losing a war or experiencing domestic upheaval, leaving it relatively vulnerable.[55] Although such states seek to maintain the status quo, their weakness limits the ability to achieve extensive objectives. Thus, a weak and declining state should adopt more limited national objectives than it did when it was strong.

Figure 2: Four Phases of Relative Power



[53] Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War," *World Politics* 40, no. 01 (October 1987): 82–107. I am indebted to Stephen Rosen for reminding me of the importance of this as a potential declining power strategy.

[54] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 185.

[55] On declining states, see Tanisha M Fazal, *State Death the Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Dependent Variable: Defense Policy

How do states alter their defense policies based on perceptions of relative power? This theory suggests that the states most satisfied with the existing distribution of benefits are least likely to challenge the status quo, while states that are least satisfied are most likely to challenge the status quo. The status quo is defined here primarily in terms of the control of territory. Although states can compete with one another in many different domains, militaries are best equipped to contest control of territory. Moreover, as Robert Pape notes, "the principal issue in serious international disputes is usually control over territory."[56] Therefore, defense policies are determined in large part by whether a state seeks to increase the amount of territory under its control or increase the degree of control it exerts over existing possessions.

The theory of perceived relative power explains the full logic chain from ends to ways to means. This theory begins by evaluating the national objectives that states seek at different phases of relative power. States can pursue either expansion or consolidation and do so in either a limited or an extensive manner. Next, states develop security strategies, which can be either offensively or defensively oriented and focused on gaining control of territory or denying that control to competitors. Finally, states pick a set of military investments, which can be either mobile or immobile and sustainable or expendable. Thus, each element of defense policy varies along two dimensions, which correspond to perceived relative power levels and trends. Each of these concepts is defined and explained in the section that follows.

This is not to suggest, however, that states only adopt one objective, strategy, or set of investments at any given time. All states, for example, are likely to pursue a combination of

[56] Robert Anthony Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), 16.

offensive and defensive forces. As Mearsheimer suggests, states are "both offensively-oriented and defensively-oriented. They think about conquest themselves, and they balance against aggressors…"[57] Even the most offensively oriented states still fortify command and control facilities and the most defensively oriented states still need some mobility for reserve forces. Yet, it is still possible to identify the primary focus of national defense policies, even if states adopt elements of multiple policies simultaneously. Thus, this theory predicts a state's primary objective, strategy, and investments, focusing on changes in defense policies over time.

Figure 3: Perceived Relative Power Theory's Causal Claims

			National Objectives (Ends)	**Security Strategies (Ways)**	**Military Investments (Means)**
Perceived Relative Power	**Level**	*weak*	→ *limited* objectives	→ *denial* strategy	→ *expendable* systems
		strong	→ *extensive* objectives	→ *control* strategy	→ *sustainable* systems
	Trend	*rising*	→ *expansion* objectives	→ *offensive* strategy	→ *mobile* systems
		declining	→ *consolidation* objectives	→ *defensive* strategy	→ *immobile* systems

Ends: National Objectives

Building on existing realist concepts, the theory of perceived relative power suggests that strong states pursue extensive objectives while weak states pursue limited objectives. Simultaneously, rising states expand their objectives while declining states consolidate their objectives. Note that under this construct a state adopts two types of objectives. The first categorization concerns the

[57] Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 12.

degree of control over territory and derives from a state's perceived relative power level (strong or weak). The second categorization relates to the geographic scope of control over territory and derives from a state's perceived relative power trend (rising or declining). Thus, as described here, national objectives reflect the degree and scope of a state's aims for territorial control.

This theory's predictions about national objectives are rooted in the power transition literature. Power transition scholars rely on relative power to determine national objectives. Organski notes, "As the power of a state increases, the relative cost of changing the system and of thereby achieving the state's goals decreases (and, conversely, increases when a state is declining)…"[58] By virtue of their relative power advantage, strong states are capable of significant changes to the international system—especially the territorial status quo—and can therefore adopt extensive objectives. Yet, as Douglas Lemke and William Reed caution, "Being powerful does not guarantee a state will be satisfied (or dissatisfied)."[59] Therefore, extensive objectives should not be confused with revisionist objectives. For example, many strong states are already satisfied by the status quo, particularly declining states seeking to lock in the existing distribution of benefits.

Weak states, on the other hand, are capable of only minor changes to the international system and therefore pursue limited objectives. As Gaddis writes, "the condition of being a great power is a transitory one: sooner or later, the effects of exhaustion, overextension, and lack of imagination take their toll among nations…"[60] States that are weak must adopt more limited objectives. Even those rising states that hope for greatness are unlikely to adopt extensive objective while they are weak. As Copeland argues, "rising states should want to avoid war

[58] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 95.

[59] D. Lemke and W. Reed, "Power Is Not Satisfaction: A Comment on de Soysa, Oneal, and Park," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August 1, 1998): 513.

[60] Gaddis, "The Long Peace," 43.

while they are still rising, since by waiting they can fight later with more power."[61] Because revisionism is determined by whether rising states have the capability to change the system, Schweller notes, "when status-quo states are far more powerful than revisionist states, the system will be stable. When a revisionist state or coalition is stronger than the defenders of the status quo, the system will eventually undergo change…"[62]

Hypothesis 1: perceived strong states adopt extensive national objectives; perceived weak states adopt limited national objectives.

According to this model, a state's relative power trend signals whether the state is likely to be satisfied or dissatisfied with the status quo. The distribution of benefits in the international system is static, but relative power is dynamic. Therefore, Gilpin argues, "The most important factor for the process of international political change is not the static distribution of power in the system… but the dynamics of power relationships over time."[63] As a result, states that are increasing in relative power have an incentive to adjust the territorial status quo, while those that are declining have an incentive to preserve their position.[64] Rising states wish to alter the status quo, but doing so risks conflict. Barry Buzan points out, "Whereas stability is the preferred security solution for status quo states, it defines the essence of the problem for revisionists."[65]

---

[61] Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 3.

[62] Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 104.

[63] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 93.

[64] Glaser suggest two motives dive expansionism, differentiating between expansion for security and "Nonsecurity expansion" that "arises from the state's desire to increase its wealth, territory, and/or prestige, to spread its ideology, and so forth…" Charles L. Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models," *World Politics* 44, no. 04 (July 1992): 501.

[65] Buzan, *People, States & Fear*, 241.

Thus, Lemke and Reed conclude that "satisfied states are constrained by the status quo, but dissatisfied states are unconstrained and act as though anarchy prevails."[66] One reason for this tendency is that "revisionist states value what they covet more than what they currently possess.."[67] Therefore, Robert Powell finds that conflict is most likely "When the disparity between the status quo division of benefits and the distribution of power is large…"[68]

In this conception, rising states are inherently expansionist, seeking to alter the distribution of territory. According to Yarhi-Milo, expansionism could "consist of an active plan to achieve a hegemonic international position (unlimited expansionist) or effect a change in the distribution of power that while significant, is more limited in scope (limited expansionist)."[69] By this logic, weak but rising powers are likely to seek limited expansion. As Schweller notes, some states limit their expansionist goals to "continental, regional, or local preponderance."[70] Note that the tendency of rising powers to revise the system is used here without normative implications. As E. H. Carr argues, "It is profoundly misleading to represent the struggle between satisfied and dissatisfied Powers as a struggle between morality on one side and power on the other. It is a clash in which, whatever the moral issue, power politics are equally predominant on both sides."[71]

---

[66] Lemke and Reed, "Power Is Not Satisfaction," 512.

[67] Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit," 105.

[68] Robert Powell, "Stability and the Distribution of Power," *World Politics* 48, no. 02 (January 1996): 241.

[69] Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary*, 14.

[70] Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-quo Bias," 107. Schweller also suggests other objectives are possible, noting "aggressor states have often sought to expand for reasons other than mere survival, for example, greed, divine right, manifest destiny, and revenge." Ibid., 115.

[71] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939; an Introduction to the Study of International Relations.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 38.

Declining states, on the other hand, are satisfied with the status quo distribution of territory, but concerned about the future, so they seek to consolidate control over their possessions. Schweller explains, "states that find the status quo most agreeable are usually the ones that created the existing order; as the principal beneficiaries of the status quo, they more than anyone else have a vested interest in preserving it."[72] He places states on a range from highly satiated to highly insatiable, with the strong powers inhabiting the ends of the range. Declining states are likely to consolidate their share of the international system's benefits in order to preserve their power. As Schweller advises, "Status-quo powers seek self-preservation and the protection of values they already possess; they are security-maximizers, not power-maximizers."[73] Thus, rising and declining states have different incentives, which shape their choice of national objectives.

Hypothesis 2: perceived rising states adopt expansionist national objectives;
perceived declining states adopt consolidationist national objectives

In summary, this theory of perceived relative power makes similar predictions about national objectives to those proposed by power transition scholars. For example, Organski identifies four categories, "1. The powerful and satisfied, 2. The powerful and dissatisfied, 3. The weak and satisfied, 4. The weak and dissatisfied."[74] Schweller differentiates between unlimited-aims revisionists and limited-aims revisionists, as well as between staunchly status quo and limited

[72] Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit," 101.

[73] Ibid., 104. This observation suggests that power maximization is only likely under certain circumstances, explaining why "rulers or nations at times develop a lust for power or influence as ends in themselves… a rational drive has become a pathological urge; a quest for power adequate to attain national ends turns into a quest for maximum power irrespective of circumstances." Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, 106.

[74] Organski, *World Politics*, 364.

status quo states.[75] Thus, although perceived relative power theory presents a more complete model, it incorporates a number of common concepts from the existing literature. Figure 4 depicts the expected national objectives for states in each phases of perceived relative power.

Figure 4: Relative Power Perceptions and National Objectives

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: Extensive Expansion	Phase 3: Extensive Consolidation
Weak	Phase 1: Limited Expansion	Phase 4: Limited Consolidation

Ways: Security Strategies

Once leaders decide upon national objectives, their next task is to identify the strategy best suited to accomplish these objectives. B. H. Liddell Hart suggests that strategy is, "The art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy."[76] Thus, strategy is the way that a state uses its means to accomplish its objectives.[77] Strategy can include many factors, but here it varies along two axes regarding the amount of territory under control and the degree of control exercised. First, a state can adopt either a control or denial strategy. Second, a state can

[75] Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 10.

[76] Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York, NY: Meridian, 1991), 321.

[77] This aligns with Arreguín-Toft's description of strategy as "an actor's plan for using armed forces to achieve military or political objectives." Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," 99.

pursue either an offensive or defensive strategy. Each of these concepts, and the model's predictions, are explained below.

Control and denial refer to the existence of sustained physical presence, or lack thereof.[78] These terms have typically been used to refer to either the air or sea domains. Naval theorist Julian Corbett explains, "By general and permanent control we do not mean that the enemy can do nothing, but that he cannot interfere with our maritime trade and oversea operations so seriously as to affect the issue of the war, and that he cannot carry on his own trade and operations except at such risk and hazard as to remove them from the field of practical strategy…"[79] Similarly, a definition used in the Strategic Bombing Survey after World War II noted, "It was never completely possible to deny the air to the enemy. It was considered that we had control of the air when the enemy could not operate in it without prohibitive losses in relation to results achieved, while our own planes could operate in it at will and with acceptable risk of loss."[80] Archer Jones described a similar concept among armies as strategies of persistence.[81] Thus, control is defined here as a military strategy designed to exert influence over an area through sustained physical presence.

---

[78] In terms of cyber warfare, one might think of physical presence as the physical infrastructure involved.

[79] Sir Julian Stafford Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy: By Julian S. Corbett* (Longmans, Green and Company, 1918), 102–103. Referenced in Stephen Cobb, *Preparing for Blockade, 1885-1914: Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare*, Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 16.

[80] "United States Strategic Bombing Survey - Summary Report (Pacific War)" (Government Printing Office, 1946), 28.

[81] Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World*, 676–678.

Denial, on the other hand, is an asymmetric strategy intended to prevent an opponent from using a contested area.[82] Samuel Tangredi argues that "perceived asymmetry in strategic force… motivates the defender to specifically focus its resources on denying regional or area access as its primary operational effort."[83] Denial is thus a strategy intended to exert influence without sustained physical presence.[84] Denial can therefore be mutual, creating a no-man's land if neither side is able to access an area. The U.S. military identifies two types of denial—"anti-access" and "area denial"—which differ by the range from one's area of control.[85] One of the few scholars to study the history of denial strategies suggests, "Despite their defensive essence, anti-access and area-denial strategies are not exclusive to a defending or status-quo power or to a tactically weaker opponent."[86] Indeed, both rising and declining powers may use denial strategies to accomplish their objectives.

---

[82] Note that this definition differs from that of Robert Pape, who argues "denial is an inherently expensive coercion strategy, for it requires the coercer to demonstrate the capacity to control the disputed territory by force." Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 32.

[83] Sam J. Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare: Countering A2/AD Strategies* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 14. Tangredi also notes, "the operations involved in area denial—indirect and harassing fires, operational maneuver, deception, strike-move-hide—appear to be techniques that are historically common to all ground combat, particularly by a weaker opponent. It could be assumed that guerrilla warfare is primarily area denial." Ibid., 69.

[84] Samuel Tangredi comments that "optimizing for denial versus control" is not a new concept and defines the terms slightly differently, saying "control implies the ability to dominate a combat space and utilize it for one's own operations. Denial is meant to indicate that the use of the combat space is denied to the opponent but cannot necessarily be utilized by oneself." Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare*, 23.

[85] Anti-access includes "those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area." Area-denial includes "those actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area." Martin E. Dempsey, "Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)" (Department of Defense, 2012).

[86] Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare*, 3.

Strong states pursue control-focused strategies because they hold extensive objectives. Gilpin notes, "as the power of a group or state increases, that group or state will be tempted to try to increase its control over its environment. In order to increase its own security, it will try to expand its political, economic, and territorial control…"[87] Liberman concurs, "control of territory allows the full use of its material and human resources, regardless of national loyalties…"[88] Similarly, Michael Doyle writes about efforts to control the periphery of empire.[89] As these scholars suggest, strong states tend to embrace control strategies.

Weak states, on the other hand, adopt denial-focused strategies because they seek only limited objectives. Although all actors may ultimately prefer to control territory, not all actors can realistically accomplish this objective in the near term.[90] Resource constraints are likely to force weak actors to limit their objectives. As a result, this theory assumes that stronger actors are more likely to seek control of territory, while weaker actors will attempt to deny that control.

---

[87] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 94–95.

[88] Liberman, "The Spoils of Conquest," 127.

[89] Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, Cornell Studies in Comparative History (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1986), 44. Similarly, Robert Jervis writes, "In order to protect themselves, states seek to control, or at least neutralize, areas on their borders." Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 169.

[90] Often conceptualizations of control are domain specific, as is Biddle's theory of military power, which he states applies only to "the mission of controlling territory in mid- to high-intensity continental warfare…" Biddle explains that this excludes "guerilla warfare at the low end, mass destruction warfare involving nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons at the high end… war at sea… and strategic bombing against civilian targets." Biddle also defines "offensive military capability" which he terms "the capacity to destroy the largest possible territory for the smallest attacker casualties in the least time." Conversely, he terms defensive military capability "the ability to preserve the largest possible defensive forces over the largest possible territory with the greater attacker casualties for the longest time." Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6.

To acknowledge that strong states are likely to pursue control strategies while weak states are likely to favor denial strategies is to highlight asymmetries in their underlying aims. As Andrew Krepinevich notes, "asymmetry… will likely exist in terms of competitor goals and objectives."[91] Thus, it is natural for asymmetries to exist in strategies as well. Although some existing theories incorporate denial strategies, such as Barry Posen's notion of deterrent doctrines, these concepts have not been widely adopted.[92] Yet, asymmetry in strategy has not been entirely overlooked, particularly in the stud of non-state actors. As Henry Kissinger said of insurgents, "The guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win."[93] Todd Sechser and T. V. Paul use asymmetry to explains why strong states sometimes fail to compel weaker actors and why weaker powers sometimes initiate conflicts.[94] Jones notes that historically, "raids provided a tactically and strategically offensive means for a weaker adversary to use against a stronger… raids functioned for the weaker adversary as a substitute for the more

---

[91] See Andrew Krepinevich, Military Technical Revolution," 1992, https://archive.org/stream/TechnicalRevolution/Technical%20Revolution_djvu.txt.

[92] Posen writes, "Deterrent doctrines should produce many of the same effects as defensive doctrines… Military forces that are designed to punish aggressors… such forces generally lack defensive, denial capability…" Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 24. See also Robert Art, for whom power serves four functions: "defense, deterrence, compellence, and 'swaggering'" Another approach assumes that militaries analyze "how best to defeat their enemies by identifying their vulnerabilities and implement[] plans based on assessments of enemy strengths and weaknesses." Robert J. Art, "To What Ends Military Power?," *International Security* 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980): 1–10. John A. Gentry, *How Wars Are Won and Lost: Vulnerability and Military Power* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2012), 18.

[93] Henry A. Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1969, 214, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1969-01-01/viet-nam-negotiations.

[94] Todd S. Sechser, "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power," *International Organization* 64, no. 04 (October 2010): 627–60. T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 33 (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Also see P. L. Sullivan, "War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 3 (June 1, 2007): 496–524.

effective and less costly persisting strategies that were beyond their strength…"[95] Thus, the incorporation of control and denial into this theory reflects a synthesis of several related, but often separate, areas of security studies.

Hypothesis 3: perceived strong states adopt control-focused security strategies; perceived weak states adopt denial-focused security strategies.

In addition to choosing either a control or denial strategy, each state must select an offensive or defensive approach. As already noted, offense and defense are familiar concepts to international relations scholars.[96] The most common version of offense-defense balance theory suggests that militaries can pursue either offensive or defensive strategies.[97] Offense and defense are typically taken as independent variables, helping to explain the likelihood, severity, and length of wars, as well as the probability of alliance formation.[98] In this study, however, offensive and defensive strategies are treated as dependent rather than independent variables. Steve Walt defines offensive power as, "the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state

---

[95] Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World*, 676–678.

[96] See Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma"; Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System*. For a compilation of central articles, see Michael E. Brown et al., eds., *Offense, Defense, and War*, An International Security Reader (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004).

[97] See Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics," *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (June 1, 1995): 667, doi:10.1080/09636419509347600.

[98] For example, Van Evera writes that "a cult of the offensive" swept through Europe before World War I as "Militaries glorified the offensive and adopted offensive military doctrines, while civilian elites and publics assumed that the offense had the advantage in warfare, and that offensive solutions to security problems were the most effective." He does not, however, explain where these view came from. Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58. For a competing explanation, see Marc Trachtenberg, "The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990): 120.

at an acceptable cost."[99] Keir Lieber builds on this term by defining offense as, "the use of military force to attack, seize, and hold a portion or all of a defender's territory."[100] Conversely, Lieber describes defense as "using military force to prevent an attacker from seizing territory."[101]

Rising states pursue offensive strategies because offense is necessary to accomplish expansionist objectives. This accords with predictions that, "Expansionist powers will prefer offensive doctrines."[102] Posen explains that expansionist foreign policies require "offensive instruments," while "Status quo states will generally prefer defensive doctrines if geography or technology makes such doctrines attractive."[103] Jack Snyder agrees, "A rational strategist's choice of an offensive or a defensive strategy should depend on national aims (i.e., foreign-policy goals), technological and geographical constraints, and the military balance… A state particularly needs an offensive strategy when it seeks to conquer or coerce others."[104] Thus, rising states are likely to adopt offensive strategies.

Despite the suggestion that status quo states should adopt defensive strategies, many scholars argue that declining states can consolidate power through both offense and defense. Kier contends, "Although revisionist states can require offensive doctrines, both offensive and defensive doctrines can defend the status quo."[105] Posen agrees that "a status quo policy, of

---

[99] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 24.

[100] Keir A. Lieber, "Grasping the Technological Peace: The Offense-Defense Balance and International Security," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (July 1, 2000): 74.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Barry Posen, "Explaining Military Doctrine," 41 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*.

[103] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 78–69.

[104] Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 19.

[105] Kier, *Imagining War*, 11.

course, need not lead to a defensive military doctrine."[106] Scott Sagan points out, "offensive military doctrines are needed not only by states with expansionist war aims, but also by states that have a strong interest in protecting an exposed ally."[107] Waltz explains that a declining state "may have to consider undertaking a preventive war; for if it does not strike when the moment is favorable, it may be struck later when the advantage has shifted to the other side."[108] Theorists from Thucydides to Jack Levy and Dale Copeland agree that declining power may lead states to adopt preventive war doctrines, which logically require offensive strategies.[109] For this reason, Posen suggests, "States will support offensive doctrines when power appears to be shifting against them."[110]

Despite substantial support for the idea that declining states engage in preventive wars, the empirical evidence is mixed. One leading power transition scholar finds, "the preventive motive

---

[106] Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 69.

[107] Sagan, "1914 Revisited," 162.

[108] Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 7.

[109] Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War." Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*.

[110] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 69–70. Robert Jervis concurs, "Arms procured to defend can usually be used to attack. Economic and military preparedness designed to hold what one has is apt to create the potential for taking territory from others." Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 64. In a separate paper, Jervis suggests that a status-quo power "will want offensive arms under any of three conditions. (1) If the offense has a great advantage over the defense, protection through defensive forces will be too expensive. (2) Status-quo states may need offensive weapons to regain territory lost in the opening stages of a war… (3) The state may feel that it must be prepared to take the offensive either because the other side will make peace only if it loses territory or because the state has commitments to attack if the other makes war on a third party." He also notes, Similarly, "aggressors as well as status-quo powers require defensive forces as a prelude to acquiring offensive ones, to protect one frontier while attacking another, or for insurance in case the war goes badly." Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 201–202.

generally has either no effect or actually decreases the probability of war."[111] Schweller and Kydd argue that declining states may seek to maximize security rather than power, which can be accomplished without preventive war.[112] Even Posen notes that defensive approaches may be the most obvious and resource efficient strategies and that "status quo states may prefer defensive doctrines…"[113] Moreover, those declining states that do engage in preventive wars are likely to rely on pre-existing offensive capabilities remaining from when they were rising and bent on expansion. Thus, even those declining states that do not retrench or accommodate are likely to be more defensively oriented as declining states than they were as rising states. Given that perceived relative power theory is focused on changes in defense policies, the hypothesis proposed here is that declining states should be more defensively oriented than rising states.

Hypothesis 4: perceived rising states adopt offensive security strategies; perceived declining states adopt defensive security strategies.

This four-part conceptualization of security strategies is novel, but it does echo some elements of the existing literature. Emily Goldman notes, "The strategy a state pursues is a product of its relative power."[114] She adds, "great powers, by virtue of having more power, more expansive interests that have to be promoted, and more commitments that have to be protected should face

[111] Douglas Lemke, "Investigating the Preventive Motive for War," *International Interactions* 29, no. 4 (October 2003): 288. Other scholars disagree, see D. S. Geller, "Power Transition and Conflict Initiation," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 1–16; Sam R. Bell and Jesse C. Johnson, "Shifting Power, Commitment Problems, and Preventive War," *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 124–32. Powell, "Stability and the Distribution of Power."

[112] Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit," 104. Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing."

[113] Barry Posen, "Explaining Military Doctrine," 42 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*.

[114] Emily O. Goldman, *Power in Uncertain Times: Strategy in the Fog of Peace* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 6–8.

different strategic dilemmas than do lesser powers that exert power only locally or regionally."[115] Nuno Monteiro differentiates between a unipole's defensive or offensive strategy.[116] Yet he notes, "we possess no theory accounting for the specific initiatives than an unbalanced distribution of power creates for rising powers to militarize."[117] Archer Jones distinguishes between persisting strategies and raiding strategies—similar to control and denial strategies, respectively—as well as between offensive and defensive strategies.[118] Arreguín-Toft proposes four strategies, two direct and two (by implication) indirect. Each has an offensive and a defensive component.[119] These similarities are striking, but no existing theory fully captures the full ends-ways-means logic chain.

---

[115] Ibid., 7.

[116] Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 132 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 5–6. Monteiro argues that unipole "can pursue one of three grand strategies: defensive dominance, offensive dominance, or disengagement," depending on three elements of the global status quo, which are "territorial arrangements, international political alignments, and the global distribution of power." Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security* 36, no. 3 (January 2012): 12–14.

[117] Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, 22.

[118] Jones comments, "Defenders too weak to employ a persisting strategy on the defense found a raiding strategy effective because a raiding offensive was stronger than a defensive persisting strategy." Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World*, 84–85.

[119] He categorizes strategic guerilla warfare, strategic bombing, blockade, and siege as indirect strategies, but they might also be termed denial strategies. Direct attack is "the use of the military to capture or eliminate an adversary's armed forces, thereby gaining control of that opponent's values." Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," 100. He calls direct defense "the use of armed forces to thwart an adversary's attempt to capture or destroy values such as territory, population, and strategic resources." Ibid., 103.

Figure 5: Relative Power Perceptions and Security Strategies

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: Offensive Control	Phase 3: Defensive Control
Weak	Phase 1: Offensive Denial	Phase 4: Defensive Denial

Means: Military Investments

The final element of the ends-ways-means hierarchy is the military investments needed to accomplish a given security strategy.[120] This theory focuses not on the level of military spending but on the type of systems procured.[121] States can acquire either sustainable or expendable

[120] This formulation does not include doctrine, which is more closely aligned with strategy than investments, in this theory. For example, there are many ways to categorize military doctrines and strategies. Barry Posen differentiates between offensive, defensive, and deterrent military doctrines. Karen Ruth Adams suggests, "Deterrent operations entail punishment; defensive ones, damage limitation." Karen Ruth Adams, "Attack and Conquer? International Anarchy and the Offense-Defense-Deterrence Balance," *International Security* 28, no. 3 (January 2004): 49. Dan Reiter and Curtis Meek suggest three types of military strategies: maneuver (pursuit of victory through the straightforward defeat of the enemy's military forces), attrition (pursuit of victory through the straightforward defeat of then enemy's military forces), and punishment (inflicting pain until the adversary relents). See Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986. Dan Reiter and Curtis Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903–1994: A Quantitative Empirical Test," *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1999): 365. Posen defines doctrine as follows: "Military doctrine includes the preferred mode of a group of services, a single service, or a subservice for fighting wars. It reflects the judgments of professional military officers, and to a lesser but important extent civilian leaders, about what is and is not militarily possible and necessary. Such judgments are based on appraisals of military technology, national geography, adversary capabilities, and the skills of one's own organization." Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 14.

[121] For a thorough discussion of military spending levels and the rise and decline of states, see Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action." On alliances decisions, see James D. Morrow, "Arms versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security," *International Organization* 47, no. 02 (March 1993): 208. This not to suggest that spending

systems. Sustainable systems are designed to be used in combat through multiple engagements. Most ships, manned aircraft, and ground forces are designed to be sustained in this way. Expendable systems, such as missiles and mines, are consumed or destroyed when used in an engagement. A second decision for states is whether to procure mobile or immobile systems. Mobile systems are categorized by the speed at which the system can move toward and engage an adversary over a variety of distances. Some systems are perfectly immobile, such as landmines and most fortifications. On the other hand, tanks, ships, and aircraft can move rapidly to engage an adversary, so they are highly mobile. Artillery and machine guns are able to relocate, but they move relatively slowly and therefore have moderate mobility.

Strong states typically adopt sustainable systems to satisfy their control-focused strategies. Because control requires sustained physical presence, it requires military systems that are sustainable. This is why Goldman writes, "Hegemons typically invest in sustaining capabilities…"[122] As Bernard Brodie notes, "The key question to be asked is not 'how far from its base can a destroyer go and return?' but rather, 'how long can a destroyer keep the sea in a region say 500 miles from its base?'"[123] The need for sustainable systems substantially increases the complexity of systems, the vulnerability of operations, and overall cost. This why Biddle

---

levels or alliances are unaffected by relative power. Indeed, Robert Powell has described how spending levels and military allocations rise with the investment in offense and risk acceptance. Robert Powell, "Guns, Butter, and Anarchy," *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 1 (March 1993): 115. See also Joshua M. Epstein, *The Calculus of Conventional War: Dynamic Analysis without Lanchester Theory*, Studies in Defense Policy (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1985). Charles A. Kupchan, "Setting Conventional Force Requirements: Roughly Right or Precisely Wrong?," *World Politics* 41, no. 04 (July 1989): 536–78.

[122] Goldman, *Power in Uncertain Times*. xi.

[123] Also see Bernard Brodie, *Sea Power in the Machine Age* (Princeton, London: Princeton University Press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1941), 380–381.

writes, "since at least 1900 continuous technical improvement has made war progressively more complex… The result has been a progressively widening gap in the real military power of organizations that can and those that cannot cope with complexity."[124] Highly complex systems therefore provide a substantial increase in the capability to project power, but this endurance comes at a cost.

Weak states are less likely to bear the high costs of sustainable systems, particularly because they embrace denial-focused strategies.[125] Expendable systems can accomplish denial strategies more cheaply than sustainable systems. Denial systems, such as hidden ditches and caltrops, have existed for millennia, but many denial weapons are recent inventions.[126] Advancements in missiles and mines have enhanced the effectiveness of expendable systems and increased the relative cost of sustaining control. On land, improvised explosive devices have made it more difficult for ground forces to occupy territory. At sea, high-speed missiles threaten aircraft carriers and other surface ships. In the air, missiles menace planes and cruise missiles threaten their airstrips. And in space and cyberspace, critical infrastructure networks are increasingly under attack. In short, technology has made land, sea, air, and space control more difficult. As a result, weak states should have further incentive to adopt expendable systems to accomplish denial strategies.

---

[124] Stephen Biddle, "The Past as Prologue: Assessing Theories of Future Warfare," *Security Studies* 8, no. 1 (September 1998): 4.

[125] Conversely, Ron Hassner and Jason Wittenberg suggest "weaker states have a greater incentive to construct military fortifications along borders with superior neighbors…" Ron E. Hassner and Jason Wittenberg, "Barriers to Entry: Who Builds Fortified Boundaries and Why?," *International Security* 40, no. 1 (2015): 162.

[126] See, for example, those weapons reviewed in Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Evolution of Weapons and Warfare* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980). Also see Michael G. Vickers, "The Structure of Military Revolutions" (Johns Hopkins University, 2011).

Hypothesis 5: perceived strong states adopt sustainable military investments; perceived weak states adopt expendable military investments.

In addition to the sustainability, states must select the degree of mobility desired in their systems. The theory of perceived relative power suggests that rising states pursue mobile systems to accomplish their offensive strategies. Charles Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann put forward a similar theory in noting, "Nearly all advances in military mobility—chariots, horses, cavalry, tanks, motor trucks, aircraft, mobile bridging equipment—are generally considered to have favored the offense, while major countermobility innovations—moats, barbed wire, tank traps, land mines—have favored defense."[127] Thus, when states adopt offensive strategies, as they do when they are rising, they should adopt mobile systems.[128]

It should be noted that the definition of mobility used here focuses on the speed of travel toward an adversary, which means that not all transportation advances substantially enhance mobility. Railroads, for example, are of limited use in exploiting an attack since rail must typically be laid before proceeding forward. Railroads, therefore, may enable less mobility than commonly believed.[129] Jervis agrees with this conception, noting that a purely defensive weapon is unable to

---

[127] Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (April 1, 1998): 63.

[128] A critical part of offense-defense theory is the notion that militaries need successful doctrinal innovation and learning as well as effective training to most efficiently utilize a new weapons system.

[129] Most notably, this weakens the argument made about railroads being an offense-enhancing system in Lieber, *War and the Engineers*. Other observers note, "It was the railroad, much more than the machine gun, that rendered combat on the Western Front so deadly and static. For the soldiers who had managed to penetrate and seize the enemy trench system found, to their dismay, that whereas their supplies and reinforcements had to walk slowly over a cratered and devastated wasteland to get to them, the enemy's supplies and reinforcements moved easily and speedily along the rail system in his rear. "Frederick W. Kagan, "The Rise

penetrate enemy territory.[130] Thus, the categorization of mobile systems used here differs from that in some existing scholarship.

The theory of perceived relative power suggests that declining states should pursue immobile systems to accomplish their defensive strategies. Mobility, after all, is expensive and typically comes at the expense of firepower and protection. One need only recall the famous phrase: "A single shot can sink a ship, while a hundred salvos cannot silence a fort."[131] Thus, pursuing mobility when immobility would suffice is inefficient. While most defensive systems enhance control, some may enable denial strategies. For example, Bernard Brodie writes, "The mine is a stationary torpedo…"[132] To that end, mines can be seen as denial systems, helping weak and declining states to deny and defend against strong opponents. Thus, declining states should invest in immobile systems.

Hypothesis 6: perceived rising states adopt mobile military investments;
perceived declining states adopt immobile military investments.

Where do nuclear weapons fit in this construct? Kenneth Waltz notes, "nuclear weapons do not make lesser states into great powers. Nuclear weapons do enable the weak to counter some of the

---

and Fall of Soviet Operational Act, 1917-1941," in Robin D. S. Higham and Frederick W. Kagan, eds., *The Military History of the Soviet Union* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 81.

[130] Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 203.

[131] Wayne P. Hughes, ed., *The U.S. Naval Institute on Naval Tactics*, U.S. Naval Institute Wheel Books (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2015), 47.

[132] Brodie, *Sea Power in the Machine Age*, 261. On land warfare, see Bernard Brodie and Fawn McKay Brodie, *From Crossbow to H-Bomb*, Rev. and enl. ed, A Midland Book, MB 161 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

measures that the strong may wish to take against them."[133] Ted Hopf argues that nuclear weapons "provide strategic defense dominance."[134] Van Evera agrees that "the nuclear revolution makes conquest among great powers virtually impossible… As a result, even lesser powers can now stand alone against states with far greater resources."[135] Thus, in the conceptualization presented here, nuclear weapons fit best as denial capabilities. Highly mobile systems, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, should be categorized as mobile and expendable. Less mobile systems, such as tactical nuclear weapons, are best categorized as immobile and expendable. Both, therefore, should be sought by weak states. Yet, rising powers should have a preference for strategic nuclear weapons while declining states should prefer tactical nuclear weapons.

Figure 6: Relative Power Perceptions and Military Investments

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: Sustainable Mobility	Phase 3: Sustainable Immobility
Weak	Phase 1: Expendable Mobility	Phase 4: Expendable Immobility

[133] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Peace, Stability, and Nuclear Weapons," 366 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*.

[134] Ted Hopf, "Polarity, The Offense Defense Balance, and War," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 2 (June 1991): 490.

[135] Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990): 13.

Summary

This theory of perceived relative power is rooted in only two independent variables—a state's perceived relative power level and trend—but it makes a large number of falsifiable predictions about defense policies. The dependent variable of defense policies is broken into three components: national objectives, security strategies, and military investments. The predictions below are many, providing a theory that is both parsimonious and potentially powerful.

- *Hypothesis 1*: perceived strong states adopt extensive national objectives;
  perceived weak states adopt limited national objectives.
- *Hypothesis 2*: perceived rising states adopt expansionist national objectives;
  perceived declining states adopt consolidationist national objectives.
- *Hypothesis 3*: perceived strong states adopt control-focused security strategies;
  perceived weak states adopt denial-focused security strategies.
- *Hypothesis 4*: perceived rising states adopt offensive security strategies;
  perceived declining states adopt defensive security strategies.
- *Hypothesis 5*: perceived strong states adopt sustainable military investments;
  perceived weak states adopt expendable military investments.
- *Hypothesis 6*: perceived rising states adopt mobile military investments;
  perceived declining states adopt immobile military investments.

Figure 7: Summarizing the Theory of Perceived Relative Power

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: "Power Projection" *Ends*: Extensive Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Mobility	Phase 3: "Garrison Fortification" *Ends*: Extensive Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Immobility
Weak	Phase 1: "Anti-Access" *Ends*: Limited Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Mobility	Phase 4: "Area Denial" *Ends*: Limited Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Immobility

Research Design

What research design can best evaluate this theory? The best opportunity for falsifying this theory is to examine whether changes in the independent variables (the perceived relative power level and trend) result in the predicted changes in defense policy. This research requires detailed information about the perceptions of national leaders and their decisions about defense policies.

The approach favored here is to study multiple states before, during, and after changes in their leaders' perceptions of relative power. Three types of cases are possible: transitions from Phase 1 to Phase 2 (the shift from perceived weakness to perceived strength), transitions from Phase 2 to Phase 3 (the shift from perceived rise to perceived decline), and transitions from Phase 3 to Phase 4 (the shift from perceived strength to perceived weakness).[136] These perceived power

[136] Although shifts from Phase 4 to Phase 1 are also possible, perceived transitions from declining to rising often correspond to changes in governance, which permit states to aggregate capabilities with their neighbors. Thus, this type of shift is not addressed here, but will be incorporated into future research projects.

shifts are labeled rising, declining, and collapsing, respectively. If a change in relative power perceptions leads to the predicted change in defense policies, then this would serve as confirming evidence. If a change in relative power perceptions has no effect or results in a change not predicted by the theory, then this would serve as falsifying evidence.

The three components of defense policies—national objectives, security strategies, and military investments—represent causal-process observations that should be present if the theory applies. Causal-process observations provide information about context, process, or mechanisms and thereby contribute distinctive leverage in causal inference.[137] National objectives, security strategies, and military investments are auxiliary outcome causal-process observations that are generated if the theory works as proposed.[138] Although causal-process observations do not increase the number of cases, they do aid causal inference by providing additional outcomes that can be tested. Such observations permit comparisons both within and across cases, thereby improving the reliability of process tracing methodology.

Case Selection

What set of cases is best suited to test perceived relative power theory? In choosing cases, the goal should be to create a representative sample with useful variation on dimensions of

[137] David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright, "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology," in Henry E. Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 184–185.

[138] James Mahoney, "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 62, no. 01 (January 2010): 120–47.

theoretical interest.[139] To this end, ideal cases would include shifts in an independent variable, while holding other structural, domestic, and cultural variables constant. Such variation allows process tracing to determine the causal relationship between the variables in question. To conduct process tracing, reliable information on the views of national leaders must be available.

Denial strategies have existed for millennia, but the previous section noted that recent technology has permitted a vast expansion in expendable systems. In particular, the advent of autonomous sensor technologies has permitted a greater variety of expendable systems, such as mines and torpedoes. Although history is replete with denial-focused strategies, including scorched earth policies, these strategies historically relied less on expendable systems and more on adaptation of sustainable systems for the purpose of denial. Therefore, because expendable systems are more available to modern militaries, the theory's temporal scope is limited to the last 150 years.[140] The conclusion addresses these scope conditions in greater detail.

Although this theory could be applied to all states, this study focuses on the most consequential defense policies – those of the great powers.[141] One reason for studying great powers is that they can experience all four phases of relative power, whereas weaker states are unlikely to perceive themselves as relative strong. Additionally, weaker states are more likely to experience rapid changes in assessments of relative power because they must evaluate themselves against a larger

---

[139] J. Seawright and J. Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (February 9, 2008): 296.

[140] For a longer discussion of this argument, see Zack Cooper, "The Control-Denial Balance," 2012 (unpublished).

[141] As a result, transitions from Phase 4 to Phase 1 are not specifically studied here, since these states are by definition weak throughout the entire period in question.

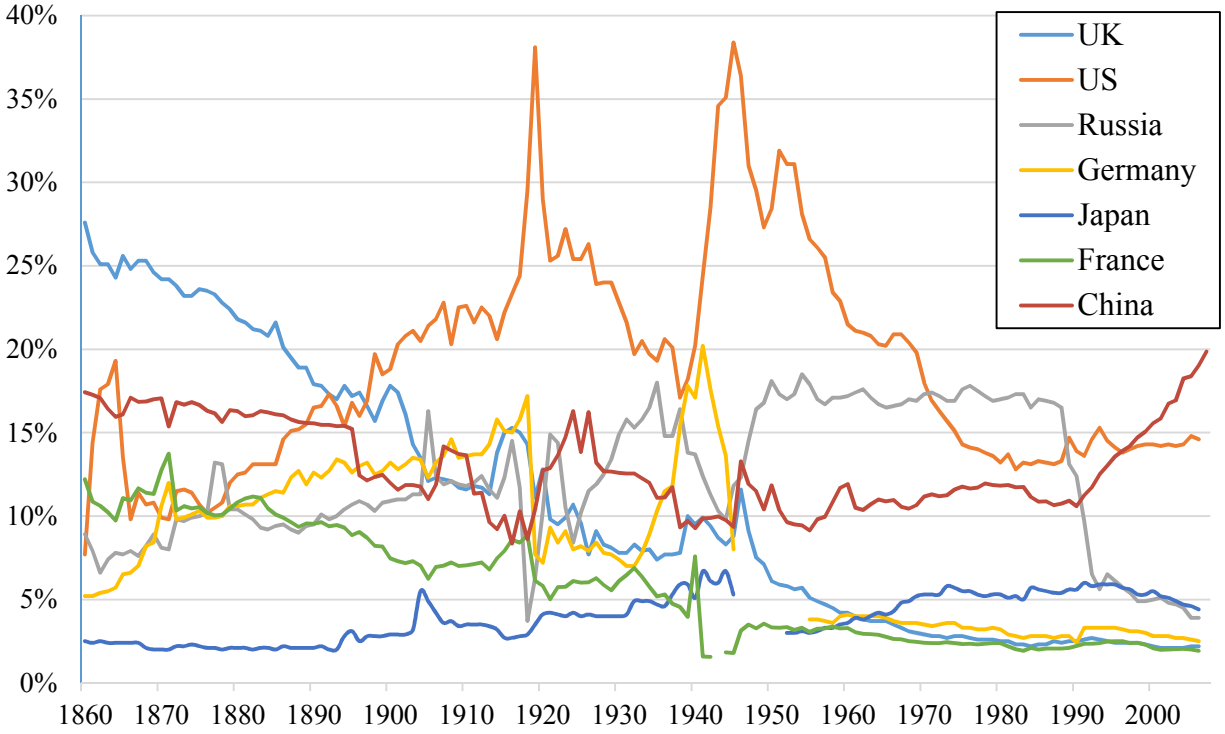
set of potential competitors. This makes assessments of relative power more difficult for weaker powers. Nevertheless, future research should examine the theory's applicability to lesser powers.

What are the candidate great power cases over the last 150 years? During this period, all great powers have experienced periods of rise and decline. To suggest potential candidate cases, Figure 8 plots the relative national power of seven great powers from 1860 to 2010, based on the Correlates of War composite index of national capabilities.[142] Importantly, this data does not measure perception, but simply illustrates potential periods of perceived rise and decline. Thus, the case studies must use the historical record to determine whether, when, and how perceptions of relative power changed. Note also that changes in relative power—power shifts—need not coincide with changes in absolute position—power transitions.[143]

[142] J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey., "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965," in Bruce Russett (ed.) *Peace, War, and Numbers* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), 19-48.

[143] As Daniel Geller writes, "dynamic power balances can be separated into two categories: transitions (a reversal of relative power position) and power shifts (power convergence or divergence)." Daniel S. Geller, "Power Differentials and War in Rival Dyads," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (June 1993): 175.

Figure 8: Relative National Power (1860-2010)



Perceived relative power theory makes predictions for rising, declining, and collapsing states, so at least one case study of each is advisable. In order to include "least likely" or deviant cases, the case selection methodology used here addresses two states in each phase transition.[144] To establish the broadest possible applicability among these six cases, each case examines a different state. Substantial effort has been made to avoid selecting cases by their dependent variables; in fact, the case studies include several outcomes that are directly at odds with the theory presented here.

[144] See Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (June 2006): 455–76. David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 49, no. 01 (October 1996): 56–91. Jack Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (March 2008): 1–18.

To best isolate changes in the independent variable, rapid changes in perceptions of relative power are ideal. According to the data, the United States and Germany experience two of the fastest rises in the late 1800s. Meanwhile, Britain and France undergo clear and sustained declines beginning in the late 1800s. Japan and the Soviet Union both collapse in power during World War II and the late Cold War, respectively. Given that continental and maritime states vary substantial, each set of paired cases included both a traditional continental power and traditional maritime power. Many other cases could be studied, including several of the same states during different time periods, but these six cases provide much important variation.

Each of these six powers experiences crises and conflicts, ranging in magnitude from the Spanish American War to World War II. These cases also include substantial variance in structural, domestic, and cultural, which can help to establish the conditions under which the theory holds. Each case begins with an assessment of national leaders' perceptions of relative power dynamics and then proceeds to trace whether and how changes in perceptions led to changes in objectives, strategies, and investments.

Figure 9: Case Studies

	Rising Powers: Weak to Strong	**Declining Powers**: Rising to Declining	**Collapsing Powers**: Strong to Weak
United States	1890-1910		
Germany	1890-1914		
Great Britain		1888-1914	
France		1918-1938	
Japan			1935-1945
Soviet Union			1980-2000

The chapters that follow examine the theory of perceived relative power in detail. Chapter 3 reviews rising powers transitioning from weakness to strength, beginning with the United States (1890-1910) and followed by Germany (1890-1914). Chapter 4 analyzes declining powers transitioning from rise to decline, focusing on Great Britain (1888-1914) and France (1918-1938). Chapter 5 focused on declining powers transitioning from strength to weakness, first looking at Japan (1935-1945) and then at the Soviet Union (1980-2000). Chapter 6 concludes by evaluating the theory, discussing implications for international relations scholars, and highlighting policy implications by focusing on the applicability to the present day competition between China and the United States.

RISING POWERS

This chapter evaluates perceived relative power theory against the rise of the United States and Germany from roughly 1890 to 1910. The two nations differed in many structural, domestic, and cultural aspects, yet they pursued remarkably similar defense policies. This chapter focuses on the American and German navies, which were the focus of much attention in both capitals during this period. Naval historian Gary Weir explains, "The Americans and Germans were similar both in strategic theory and in their stage of naval growth."[1] At the time, German naval officer Alfred von Tirpitz noted of naval strategy, "Whilst we were discovering these things quite empirically on the 'small practice-ground' by Kiel Bay, the American Admiral Mahan was simultaneously evolving them theoretically from history…"[2] A contemporary observer notes, "In each country navalists fused these shared ideas to particular concepts of national destiny, empire, and the world, which permeated the expansionist discourses among the national intelligentsia in each country."[3] The result was that the two states rapidly developed power projection capabilities, particularly ocean-going navies.

---

[1] Gary E. Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 1. print (Annapolis, Md: Naval Inst. Press, 1992), 26.

[2] Alfred von Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1919), 72.

[3] Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*, The United States in the World (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 24.

Figure 10: Transitions from Weakness to Strength

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: "Power Projection" *Ends*: Extensive Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Mobility	Phase 3: "Garrison Fortification" *Ends*: Extensive Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Immobility
Weak	Phase 1: "Anti-Access" *Ends*: Limited Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Mobility	Phase 4: "Area Denial" *Ends*: Limited Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Immobility

The theory of perceived relative power suggests that similarities in American and German policies were due to their shared status as rising powers—states whose leaders perceived a shift from relative weakness to relative strength. If this theory is correct, then both states should have transitioned from anti-access to power projection policies. National objectives should have extended as this transition occurred. Security strategies should have progressed from denial toward control. Finally, military investments should have shifted from expendable to sustainable systems. These hypotheses are evaluated against the historical record in the pages that follow.

American Rise

> A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength. It might be compared with the effect upon the animal creation of the taste of blood. Ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle. It means an imperial policy, the Republic, renascent, taking her place with the armed nations.
>
> - Editorial, *The Washington Post*, 1898[1]

Prior to the Civil War, U.S. Secretary of the Navy James Dobbin suggested that American naval modernization should reflect "our proper and elevated rank among the great powers of the world… our navy should, at least, be large enough to command our own seas and coast."[2] Yet, the United States emerged from the Civil War an exhausted and largely inward-focused nation. Despite its booming population and economy, the war had destroyed much of the south's infrastructure and shattered U.S. ambitions abroad. Across the Atlantic, Britain was industrializing and acquiring colonies, France was thriving economically, Germany was unifying, and Russia was expanding. Across the Pacific, the Meiji Restoration would soon bring about Japan's own development and modernization. Meanwhile, the United States looked inward as it rebuilt and mended internal divisions.

---

[1] *Washington Post*, quoted in the Congressional Record, 55th Congress, 2nd session, 573, referenced in Albert Katz Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), 289.

[2] 33rd Congress, 1st Session, H. Ex. Doc. No. 1, Vol. III, 297-317 referenced in Harold Sprout and Margaret Tuttle Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power: 1776-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), 141.

Although the U.S. Navy had emerged from the Civil War with over 700 ships, second only to the British Navy, Washington rapidly dismantled this force. The focus was on rebuilding the south, not the army or the navy. Just two decades after the Civil War, the U.S. Navy amounted to only several dozen ships, all of which were outdated compared to foreign competitors. In 1890, the U.S. Navy totaled only 122,000 tons, while the British Navy displaced 802,000 tons, the French 515,000 tons, the Russians 246,000 tons, the Italians 203,000 tons, and the Germans 188,000 tons.[3] The United States had fallen woefully behind in the naval competition.

Yet, within a few short decades, the United States would re-emerge onto the world stage. A new set of American leaders sought an enhanced international role for the United States. American officials not only built a great navy, but openly competed with European powers for military prowess and global influence. Most remarkable is that this transformation took place over just two decades, from 1890 to 1910. This rapid shift was made possible, and indeed personified, by two individuals. The first, Alfred Thayer Mahan, became famous worldwide for his treatises on naval history and served as the world's most prominent proponent of naval power. The second individual, Theodore Roosevelt, was an energetic leader who put in place much of Mahan's vision, first as a young official in the Department of the Navy and then as President of the United States. Together, Mahan, Roosevelt, and their supporters transformed the United States into a global power in just two decades.

The theory of perceived relative power presented here suggests that changing perceptions of America's relative power caused U.S. leaders to alter their national objectives, security strategy,

[3] U.S. Intelligence Office, quoted in the Congressional Record, 59th Congress, 1st session, 6398, May 4, 1906, referenced in Paolo Enrico Coletta, *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 234.

and military investments toward power projection. As the United States rose relative to foreign competitors, U.S. leaders slowly became aware that they were now in a relatively strong position. If perceived relative power theory is correct, then this realization should have motivated U.S. leaders to develop more extensive national objectives. These extensive national objectives, in turn, should have required a security strategy designed to control, rather than simply deny that control to others. Finally, a strategy of control should have required more sustainable military platforms. In short, this theory suggests that as U.S. leaders began to perceive America as a relatively strong state, they should have transitioned toward a power projection force.

American Defense Policy before 1896

> It is not the taking of individual ships or convoys, be they few or many, that strikes down the money power of a nation; it is the possession of that over-bearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive; and which, by controlling the great common, closes the highways by which commerce moves to and from the enemy's shores. This overbearing power can only be exercised by great navies…
>
> A. T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783 (1890)[4]

This section evaluates U.S. defense policy from the 1880s through 1896, when many U.S. leaders came to view the United States as a relatively strong power. The sub-sections that follow address the transformation of American ends, ways, and means, respectively. As these sections explain, some American leaders began to recognize their growing power in the late 1880s, but it was not until the mid-1890s that adherents of this view were able to shape major policy choices.

The limited national objectives that U.S. leaders had previously adopted were in many ways an outgrowth of the Civil War. The United States had largely completed its expansion across the

[4] Also see Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 98.

North American continent in the 1850s and there were indications that it might look further afield once control of the west was consolidated. Yet, after the Civil War, American national objectives became more insular. As Secretary of State Hamilton Fish had noted in 1869, "the acquisition of outlying territory has not been regarded as desirable by us."[5] During the final decades of the 19th century, the United States accounted for roughly one-tenth of world trade, roughly equal to that of France and Germany, which trailed only Britain.[6] The realization of this growing strength eventually brought a new recognition of American might. But it was not until the mid-1890s that U.S. leaders fully embraced more extensive objectives abroad.

Ends: Limited Objectives

In the latter half of the 19th century, most U.S. politicians were focused on internal challenges. By 1848, the United States had expanded from coast to coast. Although there were threats from European powers, North American neighbors, and American Indian tribes, none required projection of power at great distances. There were some who advocated further expansion, such as Walt Whitman who commented, "It is impossible to say what the future will bring forth, but 'manifest destiny' certainly points to the speedy annexation of Cuba by the United States."[7] Yet, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the appetite for such adventurism seemed to have dimmed. Secretary of State William Seward was an exception to this rule, but his acquisition of Alaska for

[5] John Bassett Moore, *A Digest of International Law* I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 431, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 252.

[6] Figures from Bundesarchiv-Militararchiv, Freiburg recreated in Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 190.

[7] Walt Whitman, *I Sit and Look Out*, ed. Emory Holloway and Vernolian Schwartz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 281.

2 cents an acre in 1867 brought substantial condemnation as critics complained of "Seward's folly" and "Seward's icebox." These sentiments made clear that much of the U.S. public was opposed to acquiring additional territory.

Political leadership in Washington echoed the public skepticism of overseas commitments. In 1885, President Grover Cleveland explained, "I do not favor a policy of acquisition of new and distant territory or the incorporation of remote interests with our own."[8] Cleveland reflected a prevailing view that American interests were largely limited to the defense of existing territory. Many naval officers viewed a seagoing navy as unnecessary because limited U.S. military objectives did not require a military capable of projecting power abroad. Thus, the U.S. Navy was far smaller than its rivals. By 1883, Britain possessed 61 armored ships, 186 unarmored ships, and 100 smaller torpedo-boats. France had 58 armored ships, 159 unarmored ships, and 70 torpedo-boats. Against these, the United States had only 91 ships total, with a small proportion of armored ships and only a single torpedo boat.[9] As Secretary of the Navy William Whitney wrote in 1885, "The United States had no vessel of war which could have kept the seas for one week as against any first-rate naval power…"[10]

Even Theodore Roosevelt, who years later would promote American seapower, expressed concern about extensive U.S. goals abroad. In 1886, Roosevelt criticized the idea of Manifest Destiny, noting that it suggested "manifest destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us," and that this theory, "obtained immense popularity among

---

[8] Grover Cleveland quoted in Coletta, *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*, 15.

[9] Congressional Record, 48th Congress, 1st and 2nd sessions, 1425-1426, 1453-1456, 1459, and 1481, referenced in Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy: The Formative Years of America's Military-Industrial Complex, 1881-1917* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979), 49.

[10] Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report*, 1888, iii-ix, referenced in Ibid., 80.

all statesmen of easy international morality."[11] This ethical aversion to expansion and colonialism was a direct response to the European activities of the time, and perhaps to the perceived inability of the weaker United States to secure such claims itself. These critiques were short-lived, however, as a series of American leaders—including Theodore Roosevelt himself—rallied around the Manifest Destiny and Monroe Doctrine concepts.

The writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan had a substantial effect not only on Roosevelt but on other American politicians as well. Mahan was an adequate naval commander, but an exceptional naval historian. In 1885, as a U.S. Navy Captain, he was appointed to serve on the staff of the newly created Naval War College. One year later he would become President of the War College, a position he held twice. During this time, Mahan wrote a series of lectures that would later become the foundation for numerous books, most notably his 1890 classic *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783*.

Mahan was motivated in part by a frustration with the apparent lack of appreciation for the critical role that navies had played throughout history. Mahan argued, "As the United States has at present no aggressive purposes, and as its merchant service has disappeared, the dwindling of the armed fleet and general lack of interest in it are strictly logical consequences."[12] Nevertheless, Mahan foresaw and helped to bring about a rapid change in U.S. naval affairs. He noted, "When for any reason sea trade is again found to pay, a large enough shipping interest will reappear to compel the revival of the war fleet. It is possible that when a canal route through

[11] Theodore Roosevelt, *Thomas H. Benton* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 36, referenced in Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, The Albert Shaw Lectures on Diplomatic History 1953 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), 66.

[12] A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, American Century Series S-10 (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957), 26.

the Central-American Isthmus is seen to be a near certainty, the aggressive impulse may be strong enough to lead to the same result."[13]

Almost immediately after Mahan issued his first book, he became a major public figure, not only in the United States but abroad as well. Roosevelt was taken with Mahan's writing and told him, "It is a very good book—admirable; and I am greatly in error if it does not become a naval classic."[14] Roosevelt himself had authored a study of U.S. naval policy in the War of 1812, which had won him praise from many in the naval community. Mahan and Roosevelt's shared vision of a renewed U.S. commitment to a strengthened navy brought about a fundamental change in U.S. objectives. Their desire for expansion came in part from a belief in the emerging strength of the United States, relative to its European neighbors.

By 1892, the United States was a surging global power. U.S. gross domestic product per capita was nearly equal to that of England, 50% higher than that in Germany or France, double that of Spain and Italy, and three to four times that of Japan and Russia.[15] Meanwhile, the U.S. population was booming. Despite the Civil War death toll, the U.S. population doubled between 1860 and 1890, growing to over 60 million people. This amounted to twice the population of England and Wales, and easily surpassed Germany, France, Russia, and Japan as well.[16] Furthermore, the steady addition of new immigrants from Europe and Asia rapidly added to the

---

[13] Ibid.

[14] Kenneth Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet: American Seapower Comes of Age* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998), 48.

[15] The Maddison-Project, http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/maddison-project/home.htm, 2013 version.

[16] "England and Wales, Population Tables," 1891 Census, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp;jsessionid=9656FC53864EA20EB28B2B81A8D71BA3?tab_id=EW1891POP2_M2&u_id=10001043&show=&min_c=6&max_c=10.

American population and slowed population growth abroad. Therefore, by the early 1890s, the United States was the world's top economy as measured by gross domestic product.

Yet, it was not until the mid-1890s that America's newfound strength became apparent to its political leaders. William McKinley's election brought into office a president who recognized U.S. strength and believed that the United States could assert itself on the international stage. McKinley initially remained focused on digging the United States out of the economic depression that followed the panic of 1893. Yet, McKinley and other Republicans also supported calls for, "the acquisition of such territory, far and near, as may be useful in enlarging our commercial advantages, and in securing to our navy facilities desirable for the operations of a great naval power."[17] McKinley was encouraged in these efforts by a group of young leaders with more extensive objectives abroad.

Theodore Roosevelt would serve as McKinley's Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and later as his Vice President. By 1896, Roosevelt had repudiated his earlier comments about the Manifest Destiny concept. He announced, "[I] feel very strong about… Hawaii… I am a bit of a believer in the manifest destiny doctrine… I don't want to see our flag hauled down where it has been hauled up."[18] Roosevelt's good friend Henry Cabot Lodge went further in warning, "If Great Britain can extend her territory in South America without remonstrance from us, every other European power can do the same and in a short time you will see South America parceled out as Africa has been. We should then find ourselves with great powers to the South of us and we

[17] Carl Schurz, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* LXXXVII, 1893, 738, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 252–253.

[18] Theodore Roosevelt to James S. Clarkson, April 22, 1893, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 47.

should be forced to become at once a nation with a powerful army and navy with difficulties and dangers surrounding us."[19]

These sentiments demonstrated a renewed interest not only in operating abroad, but in directly confronting European powers and their powerful militaries. This was a clear break from past U.S. objectives, strategy, and investments.

Ways: Denial Strategy

As the United States grew in power and sought to expand, military leaders transformed the nation's security strategy. This change is most evident in the U.S. Navy, which served as the primary overseas force. In the decades following the Civil War, the navy had primary practiced sea denial. Rather than attempting to meet foreign navies head-to-head, the U.S. Navy intended to deny its opponents sea control. The United States had prepared to engage in commerce raiding using cruisers and other fast sailing ships to prey on foreign trade. To this end, U.S. vessels were equipped to operate far from the U.S. coast—particularly in the Atlantic and Caribbean—but they could act only against foreign merchant ships, not foreign warships. Meanwhile, the navy practiced coastal defense in order to deny opponents the ability to carry out raids from the sea. These longstanding elements of American naval strategy changed dramatically around the turn of the century.

American naval strategy was rooted in the U.S. Navy's first operations, which had relied on privateers to carry out raids against enemy ships. As historian J. H. Patton noted in 1860, "The

[19] Henry Cabot Lodge to Blackwell, December 20, 1895, referenced in Ibid., 51.

American privateers maintained the honor of the nation as much as the regular navy."[20] Commerce raiding was a denial strategy, but it was by no means defensive. Commerce raiding represented an asymmetric form of offense well suited to weaker actions, thereby aligning with George Washington's dictum that "offensive operations oftentimes are the surest, if not in some cases the only means of defence."[21] Yet, these operations were limited in scope because U.S. forces were weak relative to the traditional European powers. Thus, many early U.S. maritime successes came against smaller actors, such as the Barbary pirates. As Thomas Jefferson noted, the United States could not have enjoyed "a better cause nor against a weaker foe."[22]

The U.S. Navy grew substantially after the War of 1812, but the navy's rapid demobilization after the Civil War left Washington with a small and antiquated force. By 1880, the House Naval Committee reported, "Small as the number of our naval vessels is as compared with the other navies of the world, it is infinitely smaller in real fighting power, and it is time for Congress and the country to face the fact."[23] U.S. naval strategy was still oriented toward sea denial, despite America's growing strength. In 1881, the Naval Advisory Board had recommended "construction of cruisers and gunboats rather than battleships, because it decided that the purpose

---

[20] J.H. Patton, *The history of the United States of America from the discovery of the continent to the close of the first session of the Thirty-fifth Congress* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1860), 598; in Mark R. Shulman, Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893 (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 11.

[21] Jared Sparks, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, XI (Boston: American Stationer's Co., 1858), 443 referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 385.

[22] Thomas Jefferson, December 13, 1784 in *The Writings of Jefferson*, Vol. IV, 87-90 referenced in Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 17.

[23] Referenced in Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 1.

of the navy was protection of commerce, 'showing the flag' in foreign ports, and coastal defense, not major fleet actions against other naval powers."[24]

Throughout the 1880s, leaders in Washington insisted that sea denial should be the navy's primary goal. This view was rooted not in America's expanding interests, but in its perceived weakness as a naval power. As one observer noted, "A strong mobile navy in the age of steam necessitated overseas bases and coaling stations, and the seaborne commerce needed to sustain a country's wealth and strength required overseas markets and sources of raw material."[25] Such an extension of activities overseas appeared dangerous to many. Indeed, the early 1880s witnessed a renewed push for coastal defenses. Congressman George Robeson commented in 1883, "It is ridiculous to build an offensive navy to go out and strike at the commerce of foreign nations if you have nothing to defend your harbors and seaports; if you have the accumulated capital and property in the maritime cities at the mercy of any ironclad that may come in."[26] The push for strengthened coastal defenses resulted in a major 1886 study. The resulting Endicott Board recommended improved coastal defenses because it assumed that the navy would shun sea-going ships that "would act offensively and not be confined to the defense of ports."[27]

Yet, America's growing international role forced its leaders to consider new missions, such as defending expanding U.S. trade and interests abroad. With business booming from 1880 to 1890,

---

[24] Ibid., 9.

[25] Ibid., 61.

[26] George Robeson in the Congressional Record, January 24, 1883, 1559 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 105.

[27] 49th Congress, 1st Session, H. Ex. Doc. No. 49, Pt. I, 9 referenced in Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 199–200.

total wealth increased 50% in nominal terms.[28] Trade expanded in line with economic growth. Although high tariffs took a toll on trade, particularly after the economic scare of 1893, manufacturing trade continued to grow. From 1890 to 1900, manufacturing exports jumped from 20% to 35% of U.S. exports.[29] By 1900, the United States was importing $885 million in goods, but exporting $1428 million, with over one-third of this total going to Europe. Growing reliance on trade increased the necessity of protecting U.S. shipping.

Strategic transformation took hold incrementally as U.S. trade expanded. The first step was the desire to protect U.S. trade and directly confront adversaries at sea. As Mahan wrote, "the government should make itself felt, to build up for the nation a navy which, if not capable of reaching distant countries, shall at least be able to keep clear the chief approaches to its own… In order to do this, the enemy must be kept not only out of our ports, but far away from our coasts."[30]

Yet, resistance was substantial. In 1890, Congressman William McAdoo argued, "Mr. Jefferson, as is well known, advocated strenuously that the first step to be taken was the defense of our coasts; he held that the main line of action for us, being not an offensive, but a defensive naval power, was to protect our 12,000 miles of seacoast. This is good sense now as then."[31] Most U.S. coastal defenses took the form of small unseaworthy ships designed not to control the coasts but to deny operations adversaries the ability to linger near the coasts themselves. Therefore,

---

[28] Figures from the "Historical Statistics of the United States: 1789-1945," U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1949, 9-11.

[29] Douglas A. Irwin, "Historical Aspects of U.S. Trade Policy," NBER, 2006, http://www.nber.org/reporter/summer06/irwin.html.

[30] Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, 87.

[31] *Congressional Record*, April 8, 1890, 3168-3169 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 131–132.

traditional U.S. coastal defense strategy was a form of defensive denial using immobile and relatively unsustainable forces.

The other U.S. strategy was commerce raiding, which was a form of offensive denial. The tradition of commerce raiding was ingrained not only in the navy's strategy but in its mobile but unsustainable ships. Construction of larger and more advanced ships was underway by the 1890s, but they were designed for speed over fighting power. Secretary of the Navy William Whitney noted, "When the ships in course of construction and those authorized shall have been completed, the United States will rank second among the nations in the possession of unarmored cruisers, or 'commerce destroyers,'… We can not at present protect our coast, but we can return blow for blow, for we shall soon be in condition to launch a fleet of large and fast cruisers against the commerce of an enemy, able to inflict the most series and lasting injury thereon."[32] As Whitney's comments demonstrate, the navy's main focus in the early 1890s remained commerce raiding, using advanced cruisers to attack enemy trade.

Nevertheless, naval strategists slowly came to prefer a shift toward sea control. Mahan's growing influence and his description of sea control as the dominant naval strategy helped turn the tide. In 1890, Mahan wrote that the United States was "weak in a confessed unpreparedness for war… [lacking] war-ships of the first class, without which ships no country can pretend to control any part of the sea."[33] Offense and sea control were inextricably connected in Mahan's mind. He insisted, "In war, the defensive exists mainly that the offensive may act more freely. In sea

[32] Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report*, 1888, iii-ix, referenced in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 80–81.

[33] Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, 34.

warfare, the offensive is assigned to the navy…"[34] Mahan further expounded, "The offensive element in warfare is the superstructure, the end and aim for which the defensive exists, and apart from which it is to all purposes of war worse than useless. When war has been accepted as necessary, success means nothing short of victory; and victory must be sought by offensive measures, and by them only can be ensured."[35] To Mahan, any strategy other than sea control represented a defensive approach, and thus one incapable of winning victory.

Mahan described his favored offensive strategy, sea control, in detail in 1893. Mahan advised, "the control of the seas, and especially along the great lines drawn by national interest or national commerce, is the chief among the merely material elements in the power and prosperity of nations."[36] Control of the sea required attacks on the enemy's fleet and concentration of effort, "whereas for commerce-destroying diffusion of effort is the rule."[37] Sea control need not be total, Mahan explained, since "control of the sea, however real, does not imply that an enemy's single ships or small squadrons cannot steal out of port, cannot cross more or less frequented tracts of ocean, make harassing descents upon unprotected points of a long coastline, enter blockaded harbors. On the contrary, history has shown that such evasions are always possible, to some extent, to the weaker party, however great the inequality of naval strength."[38] Thus, although Mahan realized that total control of the sea was outside the navy's grasp, he made clear that even partial sea control was preferable to the pre-existing sea denial strategy.

---

[34] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 71.
[35] Ibid., 309–310.
[36] Ibid., 286.
[37] Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, 31.
[38] Ibid., 14.

How could the United States shift its strategy from sea denial to sea control? Mahan explained, "Military control depends chiefly upon two things, position and active military strength."[39] Regarding position, Mahan advised, "it is imperative to take possession, when it can be done righteously, of such maritime positions as contribute to secure command."[40] Enhanced positions, however, would only be useful if the United States could turn its military potential into active military strength. This need was reinforced by naval officer Harris Lanning, who wrote in 1895 that the United States "was attempting to become a great Naval power… as we changed from being primarily agricultural to industrial, our people had to compete with other nations and a larger Navy was necessary to ensure us free use of the trade routes across the sea."[41]

The move towards a larger navy was afoot, but its pace was not to the liking of many navalists. Roosevelt warned, "The American people must either build and maintain an adequate Navy or else make up their minds definitely to accept a secondary position in international affairs…"[42] In 1896, he admitted, "It is very difficult for me not to wish a war with Spain, for such a war would result at once in getting a proper Navy."[43] The next year, Roosevelt told a friend in confidence, "I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one."[44] The purpose was not just the enhancement of the navy, but as historian Howard Beale later observed, "Roosevelt had

[39] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 103.

[40] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power (*Cambridge: University Press, 1897), 21, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 259.

[41] Harris Laning, *An Admiral's Yarn* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1999), 30-32 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 87–88.

[42] Theodore Roosevelt, speech to the Naval War College, 1897, referenced in Coletta, *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*, 105.

[43] Theodore Roosevelt to A. R. Cowles, January 19, 1896, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 37.

[44] Theodore Roosevelt to Francis V. Greene, September 23, 1897, referenced in Ibid.

been preoccupied with theories of the spread of civilization through the expansion of control by 'superior races' over 'backward' areas."[45] This strategy of control, and the naval expansion it required, would become a major political issue during Roosevelt's presidency.

Means: Expendable Investments

As American objectives became more extensive and U.S. naval strategy shifted toward sea control, a novel shipbuilding plan was needed. The maritime revolution was already underway abroad, with new construction shifting from wood and sail to iron and steam. Yet, Washington was slow to adopt these modern elements. Once U.S. leaders awoke to their changing naval needs, however, the revolution in American shipbuilding rapidly took hold. Rather than producing ships designed to operate near shore for short intervals, the U.S. Navy became one of the leading builders of large battleships that could be sustained at a distance for long periods.

Before this revolution in American naval affairs began, the U.S. Navy consisted largely of coastal defenders and commerce raiders. The Naval Affairs Committee of 1880 admitted, "We cannot expect at once to build up a Navy powerful enough to meet in mid-ocean and successfully contend with the monster iron-clads of England, France, and Italy, nor do we desire that the attempt should be made."[46] Instead, the United States focused on *Monitor*-class ships designed for coastal protection over seaworthiness, and a small number of fast but under-armed cruisers. One reason for this trend was that few Americans believed war was likely in the 1880s. Naval officer Bradley Fiske noted the "absolute conviction in the minds of everybody that the United

[45] Ibid., 254.

[46] House Naval Affairs Committee, 1880, referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 97.

States would never go to war again, and that our Navy was maintained simply as a measure of precaution against the wholly improbably danger of our coast being attacked."[47]

With a navy designed to prevent attacks on coastal cities, there was little need for seagoing ships. The *Monitor*-class, which proved valuable in the Civil War, was unable to go to sea or travel substantial distances. Admiral David Porter commented, they were "simply useless… [and could] not go to sea without being towed."[48] Interest in modernizing the navy was growing along with American ambitions, but the rationale for a new shipbuilding scheme remained unclear. In 1882, the *New York Times* quoted Lieutenant Commander Henry Gorringe, who wrote, "It would be folly for us to build a fighting fleet to match that of England, and it would be still greater folly for us to build a fighting fleet inferior to those of England, France or Italy."[49] Nonetheless, the United States began the first steps in its naval revolution with the Navy Act of 1883.

The so-called ABCD ships—named for the USS Atlanta, USS Boston, USS Chicago, and USS Dolphin—represented the beginning of a new age of American shipbuilding. These ships had steel hulls and both sail and steam power. Although they took years to come into service, the ABCD ships eventually formed the basis for the "squadron of evolution" that would help launch the "New Navy." Yet, these ships were in no way intended for sea control. Rather, the ABCD ships were built for commerce raiding, fulfilling the wishes of Secretary of the Navy William Chandler. In 1883, Chandler explained that the ships were needed, "In order to be prepared, not merely by the potentiality of our immense resources, but also by an actual armament, to assert at

---

[47] Bradley Fiske, *From Midshipman to Rear Admiral* (New York, The Century Co., 1919), 133 referenced in Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 198.

[48] 47th Congress, 1st Session, H. Ex. Doc., No. 1, 96 referenced in Ibid., 172.

[49] *The New York Times*, April 25, 1882, 4 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 106.

all times our natural, justifiable, and necessary ascendancy in the affairs of the American hemisphere…"[50] Thus, the ABCD ships represented the first steps toward a modern navy.

Although the first elements of the new navy were under construction, these ships would not permit the navy to project power at a distance. In 1886, House Naval Affairs Committee chairman Hilary Herbert lamented, "we have not a single vessel of war that could keep the seas against a first-class vessel of any important power. Such a condition ought not longer to continue."[51] For example, the *Monitor*-class ships were unable to sail to meet ships at sea. Indeed, historians Harold and Margaret Sprout observe that they, "were utterly unsuited to the one role [coastal defense] for which they had been created… their slow speed, inadequate fuel capacity, and general lack of seaworthiness, seriously handicapped every squadron to which they were attached."[52] To rectify this problem, the Naval Affairs Committee suggested construction of two sea-going armored vessels "capable of keeping the sea for long periods."[53] This represented the first move toward truly sustainable ships, but it would take years to gain traction.

Despite some early support for seagoing ships equipped for heavy fighting, many experts continued to believe that capital ships were unnecessary. In 1886, F. M. Barber described U.S. strategy and noted, "Since the United States is eminently a nation of peace, its defenses should be made invulnerable, for its power of offense will never be great, except possibly towards the

[50] "Annual Report," Secretary of the Navy, 1883.

[51] *Congressional Record*, July 24, 1886, 7474-7475 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 122.

[52] Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 420.

[53] 49th Congress, 1st Session, H. Report No. 993, 8 referenced in Ibid., 199.

end of a long war."[54] Two years later, Lieutenant Commander W. W. Reisinger argued, "We do not think that we shall have, perhaps shall never need, the large fleets of heavy ironclads… [rather] a fleet of powerful vessels with the latest and best torpedo outfits… and high-powered guns, will prove the best coast defense, supplemented by the fast sea-going torpedo boats."[55] Without a significant threat, arming for war with a major power seemed unnecessary to some.

Moreover, without a significant threat, Congress would only permit a modest seagoing fleet. Between 1886 and 1889, a limited number of battleships were developed, including some with sufficient armor and guns to compete with various European powers. These ships, although capable of deploying at greater distances, remained far slower than other modern fleets. As Mahan later warned, "[the slow fleet] must inevitably be defeated by a faster fleet of equal power, and can be defeated even by a faster fleet of less power."[56] While acquiring this new fleet of battleships, the United States continued to invest in new coastal defenses. Mahan objected to such expenditures, noting that "fortified posts, by land or by sea, however strong or admirably situated, do not confer control by themselves alone."[57] Yet, Mahan also admitted that some

[54] F. M. Barber, "A Practical Method of Arriving at the Number, Size, Type, Rig, and Cost of the Vessels of which the United States Navy should Consist in time of Peace," *Proceeding of the U.S. Naval Institute* 12, no. 3 (1886), 421 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 102.

[55] W. W. Reisinger, "Torpedoes," *Proceedings* (1888), 521, referenced in Robert William Love, *History of the U.S. Navy* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992), 412.

[56] "Big Battleships of High Speed," Letter from U.S. Commander William S. Sims to Admiral Sir John Fisher, November 3, 1906 in Peter Kemp, ed., *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher* (London: Navy Records Society, 1960), 352.

[57] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 287.

spending on coastal defenses, most notably "guns, lines of stationary torpedoes, and torpedo-boats," could complement "a navy able to keep the sea in the presence of a probable enemy..."[58]

In 1889, Benjamin Harrison entered office and set out to rectify U.S. naval weakness. Admiral Stephen Luce had written that year, "The battleship is the very foundation of the Navy. The United States has no battleships, therefore she has no Navy."[59] Addressing this criticism, Harrison announced at his inauguration, "the construction of a sufficient number of modern warships should progress as rapidly as is consistent with care and perfection in plans and workmanship."[60] Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy the commissioned a Policy Board, which endorsed just this sort of plan. Tracy testified, "The best ship in the world is the cheapest at any money—I don't care what it costs. The people of this country, in my judgment, will never approve and take pride in any second-class ship…"[61] The Policy Board recommended what one historian of naval engineering calls "coast-defense battleships of 'limited coal endurance,' since the nation was not yet prepared to take the full leap to an ocean-going fleet."[62] The ships were not funded because the Board's recommendations proved politically unrealistic, but they indicated the direction of future naval construction.

Coastal defense battleships eventually represented the first steps toward an oceangoing battlefleet. Displacing nearly 10,000 tons and carrying up to 1,600 tons of coal (although usually

---

[58] Ibid., 133.

[59] Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 63.

[60] Benjamin Harrison quoted in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 85.

[61] Benjamin Tracy, testimony to the House Naval Affairs Committee, January 15, 1890, 3-4 referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 129.

[62] John D. Alden, "Growth of the New American Navy," in Randolph W. King, ed., *Naval Engineering and American Seapower* (Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1989), 43.

given only 400 tons) these ships provided a substantial improvement in maritime power projection capability.[63] At the time, the navy included just 4 "first rate" armored cruisers of 6,000 to 8,100 tons; 6 protected cruisers of 3,700 to 4,500 tons, 4 "second rate" cruisers between 3,000 and 3,200 tons; 3 "third rate" cruisers of 2,000 tons, 5 *Monitor*-class vessels between 3,800 and 4,000 tons, 6 gunboats of 1,000 to 1,700 tons, several smaller gunboats and torpedo boats below 1,000 tons, and a harbor defense ram.[64] To simplify the fleet, Secretary Tracy proposed just three major ships types, "First, the armored battleship of 10,000 or more tons; second, the armored cruiser of from 8,000 to 9,000 tons; and third, the commerce protecting and destroying cruiser, of extreme speed, of 7,500 tons."[65] This suggestion demonstrated the desire for larger, faster, and more sustainable ships of all classes.

From 1890 onward, Mahan's growing popularity brought additional political support to the quest for seagoing battleships. Mahan argued, "the backbone and real power of any navy are the vessels which, by due proportion of defensive and offensive powers, are capable of taking and giving hard knocks. All others are but subservient to these, and exist only for them."[66] In 1892, Secretary Tracy won support for what one observer calls "his first ocean-going capital ship, although it was still described as a 'sea-going coast-line battle ship' in the authorizing legislation."[67] The ability to deploy these ships and sustain them, however, improved only

[63] John D. Alden, "Growth of the New American Navy," in Ibid., 44.

[64] Data from the *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1890* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), 17.

[65] Tracy quoted in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 105.

[66] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 132.

[67] John D. Alden, "Growth of the New American Navy," in King, *Naval Engineering and American Seapower*, 45.

gradually. Although an 1893 test experimented with coaling at sea, no further tests were attempted until after the Spanish-American War.[68]

The United States continued to invest in smaller coastal defense vessels, even as it sought advanced seagoing battleships. Grover Cleveland noted, "If we are to have a Navy for war-like operations, offensive and defensive, we certainly ought to increase both the number of battleships and torpedo boats."[69] Secretary Hilary Herbert asserted that he would do just that.[70] Mahan admitted, "Coast defense, when adequate, assures the naval command-in chief that his base of operations… is secure."[71] Yet, Mahan favored torpedo boats because he saw them not as simply defensive but as the, "offensive element of coast defense… It must be kept distinct in idea from the sea-going fleet, although it is, of course, possible that the two may act in concert."[72] This struggle between the supporters of an oceangoing fleet and a commerce raiding or coastal defense fleet would turn dramatically after William McKinley was elected in 1896.

[68] John D. Alden, "Growth of the New American Navy," in Ibid., 48.
[69] Grover Cleveland quoted in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 113.
[70] Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 377.
[71] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 129.
[72] Ibid., 130.

American Defense Policy after 1896

> The offensive in naval war, as has been said, is the function of the sea-going navy – of the battleships, and of the cruisers of various sizes and purposes, including sea-going torpedo-vessels capable of accompanying a fleet, without impeding its movements by their loss of speed or unseaworthiness. Seaworthiness, and reasonable speed under all weather conditions, are qualities necessary to every constituent of a fleet.
>
> - A. T. Mahan, The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future (1897)[73]

Under William McKinley, Republicans sought to dramatically reshape not just the navy but U.S. ambitions abroad. For the next two decades, leaders in Washington gradually opened the United States to a greater global role and reshaped its naval forces. By the time William Howard Taft took power in 1909, the United States was no longer seen as a weak nation. Rather, the United States had transformed into a strong and internationally-engaged power.

By the latter half of the 1890s, some leading figures were embracing American strength and openly advocating an expansionary U.S. agenda. In 1895, Roosevelt declared, "No amount of material prosperity can atone for lack of national self-respect; and in no way can national self-respect be easier lost than through a peace obtained or preserved unworthily, whether through cowardice or through sluggish indifference."[74] The next year Roosevelt insisted, "the United States… should be dominant in the Western Hemisphere."[75] And by 1897, Roosevelt looked beyond the Americas as he told Mahan, "As regards Hawaii… If I had my way, we would annex

[73] Also see Ibid., 132.

[74] Theodore Roosevelt, "The Issues of 1896," *Century*, November 1895, 71-72, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 45–46.

[75] Theodore Roosevelt to H. White, March 20, 1896, referenced in Ibid., 33.

those islands tomorrow."[76] In response to concerns that annexation of Hawaii might provoke a foreign response, Roosevelt declared, "The United States is not in a position which requires her to ask Japan, or any other foreign Power, what territory it shall or shall not acquire."[77]

Roosevelt's new tone reflected his vision for how the United States should act now that it had achieved great power status. Roosevelt, who become Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897, desired that the United States, "take the position to which it is entitled among the nations of the earth."[78] James Bryce, later British ambassador to the United States, observed that Roosevelt was motivated by "the notion that it is a fine thing for a great country to have vast territories, and to see marked as her own, on the map of the world, dominions beyond her natural borders."[79] This accorded with Mahan's position that "Whether they will or no, Americans must now begin to look outward."[80] But Roosevelt worried that the American people were too slow to realize the dangers around them, commenting, "It is very difficult to make this nation wake up… I sometimes question whether anything but a great military disaster will ever make us feel our responsibilities and our possible dangers."[81]

---

[76] Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 89.

[77] Theodore Roosevelt, Speech to the Ohio Naval Reserves, *New York Tribune*, July 27, 1897, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 57–58. Also see Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 92.

[78] Theodore Roosevelt to John D. Long, August 7, 1897, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 39.

[79] James Bryce, "The Policy of Annexation for America," *Forum*, XXIV, 1897, 392 referenced in Ibid., 25.

[80] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power (*Cambridge: University Press, 1897), 21, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 259.

[81] Theodore Roosevelt to Baron Hermann Speck von Sternburg, January 17, 1898, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 56–57.

When the sinking of the USS *Maine* dragged President McKinley into war with Spain, many proponents of U.S. strength saw the Spanish-American War as an opportunity to demonstrate America's power. The war also presented an opportunity for political leaders to reaffirm the urgency of defense reforms. The result was a rapid shift in defense policy that embraced more extensive national objectives, a more control-focused strategy, and more sustainable military systems. In short, U.S. leaders rapidly adopted a defense policy of distant power projection.

Ends: Adopting Extensive Objectives

It is impossible to assign a specific date to U.S. leaders' recognition of their country's newfound strength, but the Spanish-American War put U.S. power on display. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt used the prospect of war as an opportunity to prepare the navy for global power projection. When Secretary of the Navy John D. Long took a day off shortly after the sinking of the USS *Maine*, Roosevelt became acting Secretary for the day, and he took advantage. Roosevelt put the navy on a war footing by ordering coaling ships to be prepared for action and arranging for the purchase of auxiliary cruisers. He also ordered the commander of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron, George Dewey, to prepare for operations against Spanish forces in the Philippines. When Secretary Long was informed of Roosevelt's actions, he was disturbed, but chose not to rescind the orders. Just two months later, the war with Spain was underway, and the U.S. Navy was well positioned due to Roosevelt's actions.

Against a stronger adversary, the United States would have been badly beaten. In 1898, the navy was in no way prepared to take on a strong colonial power such as Britain or France, but Spain was a relatively easy target. Spanish warships were old and Spanish decision-making was hampered by the long distances involved. The collapsing Spanish Empire attempted to maintain

all its possessions and in so doing allowed a limited U.S. fleet to gain the advantage in both the Caribbean and the Pacific. With Roosevelt's foresight, Washington was able to use its fleet to best advantage. U.S. ships had superior firepower and implemented a blockade of Cuba that allowed them to remain relatively close to the U.S. coastline, which helped to offset their limited sustainability. Thus, the Spanish-American War both exaggerated U.S. strength and motivated leaders in Washington to capitalize on America's newfound glory.

War with Spain was fed by and reinforced the desire for overseas territories. The first target was Hawaii, a vital coaling station for travel to Asia. President McKinley noted, "We need Hawaii just as much and a great deal more than we did California. It is manifest destiny."[82] Roosevelt declared, "We did not create the Hawaiian Islands, they already exist. We merely have to face the alternative of taking them ourselves and making them the outpost for the protection of the Pacific Coast or else of seeing them… transformed into the most dangerous possible base of operations against our Pacific cities."[83] This description of U.S. activities as inherently defensive would pervade Roosevelt's speeches for years. He continued, "We cannot help Hawaii's being either a strong defense to us or a perpetual menace. We can only decide whether we will now take the islands when offered to us as a gift, or by force try to conquer them from the first powerful nation with which we may become embroiled."[84] Despite this pacific justification, the July 1898 seizure of Hawaii was a demonstration of extensive and expanding U.S. objectives.

---

[82] Charles S. Olcott, The Life of William McKinley (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), 379, referenced in

[83] Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in the *New York Sun*, February 13, 1898, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 58–59.

[84] Ibid.

By the time Hawaii was taken, Admiral Dewey had soundly beaten the Spanish at Manila Bay and the United States set about landing ground troops to gain control of the Philippines. Yet, not all Americans were supportive of the seizure of Spanish territory. Roosevelt's former supervisor, Navy Secretary Long, argued, "If I could have my personal preference… I would… be rid of the Philippines and of everything else except our own country."[85] Roosevelt shared concern about the costs of taking and maintaining the Philippines, especially with Japan on the doorstep. Nevertheless, the United States was bent on extension overseas and when the Treaty of Paris was concluded, Washington now controlled Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

Proponents justified expansionism in several ways. Mahan endorsed a broad view of American interests, noting that "if a plea of the world's welfare seems suspiciously like a cloak for national self-interest, let the latter be accepted frankly as the adequate motive which it assuredly is. Let us not shrink from pitting a broad self-interest against the narrow self-interest to which some would restrict us."[86] Roosevelt insisted, "peace must be brought about in the world's waste spaces… Peace cannot be had until the civilized nations have expanded in some shape over the barbarous nations."[87] In another speech, Roosevelt commented, "Every expansion of civilization makes for peace. In other words, every expansion of a great civilized power means a victory for law, order, and righteousness. This has been the case in every instance of expansion during the present century, whether the expanding power were France or England, Russia or America."[88] Clearly,

---

[85] Quoted in L. W. Walker, "Guam's Seizure by the United States in 1898," *Pacific Historical Review* (1945), 1-12 referenced in Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 402.

[86] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 285.

[87] Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life," Speech to the Hamilton Club, Chicago, April 10, 1899, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 32.

[88] Theodore Roosevelt, "Expansion and Peace," *The Independent,* December 21, 1899, http://www.bartleby.com/58/2.html.

Roosevelt now viewed the United States as equal to the traditional great powers and suddenly was willing to contemplate colonialism. He explained, "In every instance the expansion has been of benefit, not so much to the power nominally benefited, as to the whole world. In every instance the result proved that the expanding power was doing a duty to civilization far greater and more important than could have been done by any stationary power."[89]

Roosevelt was unapologetic about expansionism and the importance of America's new strength. He won personal distinction leading the Rough Riders up Cuba's Kettle Hill, which soon propelled Roosevelt into political office. By 1899, he admitted, "I am an expansionist and believe that we can go on and take our place among the nations of the world."[90] In a speech entitled "Expansion and Peace," Roosevelt declared, "…our whole national history has been one of expansion. Under Washington and Adams we expanded westward to the Mississippi; under Jefferson we expanded across the continent to the mouth of the Columbia; under Monroe we expanded into Florida; and then into Texas and California; and finally, largely through the instrumentality of Seward, into Alaska."[91] Roosevelt was not content to stop at the edge of the Pacific, justifying further claims by noting, "In North America, as elsewhere throughout the entire world, the expansion of a civilized nation has invariably meant the growth of the area in which peace is normal throughout the world… The same will be true of the Philippines."[92]

---

[89] Ibid.

[90] Theodore Roosevelt to C. Spring Rice, August 11, 1899, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 79.

[91] Theodore Roosevelt, "Expansion and Peace," *The Independent,* December 21, 1899, http://www.bartleby.com/58/2.html.

[92] Ibid.

In 1900, Roosevelt's popularity drove him from the New York governorship to the ticket of sitting President William McKinley. During the race, Roosevelt continued to advocate a broader conception of American objectives. Roosevelt argued, "No friendliness with other nations, no good will for them or by them, can take the place of national self-reliance. No alliance, no inoffensive conduct on our part, would supply, in time of need, the failure in ability to hold our own with the strong hand."[93] He insisted, "We must work out our own destiny by our own strength. A vigorous young nation like ours does not always stand still. Now and then there comes a time when it is sure either to shrink or to expand. Grant saw to it that we did not shrink, and therefore we had to expand when the inevitable moment came."[94] After winning the vice presidency, he noted, "Our people are neither cravens nor weaklings and we face the future high of heart and confident of soul eager to do the great work of a great world power."[95]

Roosevelt's vision of strength and expansion attracted adherents. His longtime friend, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, commented, "A great nation must have great responsibilities. It is one of the penalties of greatness. But the benefit of responsibilities goes hand in hand with the burdens they bring. The nation which seeks escape from the burden also loses the benefit."[96] This echoed Roosevelt's insistence that although, "A nation's first duty is within its own borders… it is not thereby absolved from facing its duties in the world as a whole; and if it refuses to do so, it merely forfeits its right to struggle for a place among the peoples that shape the destiny of

---

[93] Theodore Roosevelt, "Grant," Speech in Galena, Illinois, April 27, 1900, http://www.bartleby.com/58/13.html.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Theodore Roosevelt to John Barrett, October 29, 1900, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 38.

[96] Congressional Record, 56th Congress, 1st session, 2629, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 313.

mankind."[97] This belief in the importance of the United States to mankind aligned with another Senator, Albert Beveridge, who suggested, "God has been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration… He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world."[98]

America's triumphant rise, as savior of the people of the world, had been announced. In Roosevelt's words it was Admiral "Dewey's canon, that waked the world, that bid the older nations know that the young giant of the West had come to his glorious prime."[99] As regarded American claims abroad, Lodge explained, "We make no hypocritical pretense of being interested in the Philippines solely on account of others. While we regard the welfare of these people as a sacred trust, we regard the welfare of the American people first…"[100] Meanwhile, Roosevelt rejected the idea that seizure of territory abroad amounted to imperialism. "The simple truth is there is nothing even remotely resembling 'imperialism'… involved in the present development of that policy of expansion which has been part of the history of America from the

[97] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), 16-17, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 34.

[98] Congressional Record, 56th Congress, 1st session, 711, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 308.

[99] Theodore Roosevelt quoted in *New York Tribune*, October 27, 1900, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 67.

[100] Official Proceedings of the Twelfth Republican National Convention, 1900 88, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 313.

day she became a nation. The words mean absolutely nothing as applied to our present policy in the Philippines."[101]

American control of the Philippines resulted in an insurgency that raged for years, but Roosevelt was unwilling to give up the new territory. Echoing earlier concerns about Hawaii, he explained, "The question now is not whether we shall expand for we have already expanded—but whether we shall contract. The Philippines are now part of American territory. To surrender them would be to surrender American territory."[102] Resolute in his view that the United States should expand, Roosevelt pushed for a more global role. Later, Roosevelt would observe that the United States was increasingly "becoming, owing to our strength and geography, more and more the balance of power of the whole globe."[103] British naval attaché C. L. Ottley commented, "The successful issue of the war with Spain in 1898 has given an added impetus to the policy of naval expansion in the United States, of which the earliest indications were apparent in 1883… the country in general is in favor of a fleet commensurate with the wealth of the nation and strong enough for all purposes."[104]

Roosevelt made comparisons to other great nations a key part of his speeches, noting "at the dawn of a new century we wish this giant of the West, the greatest republic upon which the sun

---

[101] Theodore Roosevelt quoted in *Chicago Journal*, September 8, 1900, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 68.

[102] Theodore Roosevelt quoted in *New York Sun*, September 6, 1900, referenced in Ibid., 69.

[103] Gordon Carpenter O'Gara, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of the Modern Navy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 8, referenced in Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 443.

[104] Pro, Adm. 231/31, "United States, Fleet &c. 1899," Capt. C. L. Ottley, March 1900 in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 164.

has ever shone, to start fair in the race of national greatness."[105] Roosevelt assumed the presidency in September 1901, when President McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist. The next year, Roosevelt went so far as to publicly endorse the Monroe Doctrine, commenting that "if the Monroe Doctrine did not already exist, it would be necessary forthwith to create it."[106] In 1904, Roosevelt announced, "the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power."[107] The next year, he was more direct in correspondence with his brother-in-law, warning of his desire to "spank some little brigand of a South American republic."[108]

Roosevelt's transformation is captured in an address in San Francisco during the early years of his presidency. "Before I came to the Pacific Slope I was an expansionist, and after having been here I fail to understand how any man… can be anything but an expansionist," Roosevelt explained, "In the century that is opening, the commerce and the command of the Pacific will be factors of incalculable moment in the world's history."[109] As one observer reflects, "expansionism was not the advocacy of a permanent or indiscriminate policy of aggrandizement

---

[105] Theodore Roosevelt quoted in *Salt Lake City Tribune*, September 20, 1900, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 77.

[106] Theodore Roosevelt to A. Shaw, December 26, 1902, referenced in Ibid., 431.

[107] See Serge Ricard, "The Roosevelt Corollary," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36 (1) (2006), 24, also referenced in Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 428. Also see Congressional Record, 58th Congress, 2nd session, 9-10, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 428.

[108] Theodore Roosevelt to Douglas Robinson, August 31, 1905, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 35.

[109] Theodore Roosevelt, "Address at Mechanics' Pavilion," San Francisco, May 13, 1903, referenced in Ibid., 172.

but merely of the attainment in an unsought war of safeguards against future wars."[110] Yet, the expansionist tendency was seemingly unstoppable. In 1902, Woodrow Wilson warned, "This great pressure of a people moving always to new frontiers, in search of new lands, new power, the full freedom of a virgin world, has ruled our course and formed our policies like a Fate."[111] Senator Beveridge concurred, "Our rapidly-increasing power determined [the need for colonial administration]; our commercial needs determined it; more than either, geography determined it; and, most of all, our duty to the world as one of its civilizing powers determined it."[112]

During his time in office, Roosevelt fundamentally reshaped American objectives. By this point, work was underway on the Panama Canal, which was necessary to allow the United States to field a navy capable of defending either of its coasts. Roosevelt declared, "We have definitely taken our place among the great world powers, and it would be a sign of ignoble weakness, having taken such a place, to shirk its responsibilities. Therefore, unless we are willing to abandon this place, to abandon our insistence upon the Monroe Doctrine, to give up the Panama Canal, and to be content to acknowledge ourselves a weak and timid nation, we must steadily build up and maintain a great fighting navy."[113] Roosevelt likened the American hesitance to expand to the English aversion to continental politics. He predicted, "The same feeling that made England believe that it did not have to take part in any European concert… makes this country

---

[110] Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 24.

[111] Woodrow Wilson, "The Ideals of America," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1902, 726, referenced in Ibid., 1.

[112] Senator Beveridge to American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1907, referenced in Ibid., 277.

[113] *Net York Times*, August 27, 1907, referenced in James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 124.

feel that it can be a law for itself… There will be an awakening, but it will be gradual."[114] By 1909, the United States has transitioned from limited to extensive goals abroad. Roosevelt himself explained that the United States now "came in as a strong man and not as a weakling."[115]

Ways: Adopting a Control Strategy

New U.S. objectives required a reassessment of U.S. strategy. In fact, Roosevelt's insubordination as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1898 was intended in part to alter the navy's strategy. Roosevelt increased dry dock capacity, refit older vessels with modern equipment, and ensured the availability of coal for the Asiatic Squadron. Moreover, he ordered the Asiatic Squadron to coal and be prepared to conduct "offensive operations" in the Philippine Islands against Spanish forces. As one modern naval historian observes that Secretary Long "was shocked to discover that in his absence, his assistant had initiated a series of actions that had the potential to shift the basic mission of the U.S. Navy from coastal defense to power projection."[116]

The navy was not yet sufficient to deter a fight with Spain, but Roosevelt noted, "If we have a great fighting fleet… in point of numbers rising more nearly to equality with the greatness of our people; if we have such a fleet, capable, of offensive no less than of defensive work, there will be small chance that our people will be forced to fight…"[117] After the war it was clear that U.S. naval efforts were bearing fruit. In 1899, British director of Naval Intelligence L. A. Beaumont

---

[114] Theodore Roosevelt to Henry White, November 27, 1907, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 254.

[115] Theodore Roosevelt to Maria Longworth Storer, October 28, 1899, referenced in Ibid., 337.

[116] Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 22.

[117] Theodore Roosevelt, "The American Need of a Strong Navy," Speech on Lincoln Day, February 13, 1898, referenced in Samuel Fallows (ed.), *Life of William McKinley* (Chicago: Regan Printing House, 1901), 381-382.

noted, "the United States mean to be the strongest Naval power [along their eastern coast] and it will be difficult to prevent it."[118] Secretary of the Navy Hilary Herbert was somewhat more circumspect, "It is not contended that we should attempt to compete in numbers with the great navies of England and France, but we ought surely to move up steadily into a higher rank than we now occupy, and into the pace of nations whose necessities are far less than ours."[119] Congressman Richmond Hobson would later suggest a more specific strategy, "America's true naval policy… simple, inevitable, with no idea of aggression upon anyone… [was] to have always in the Atlantic a fleet equal to the German Navy and to have always in the Pacific a fleet equal to the Japanese Navy."[120]

The navy's revival accelerated after the turn of the century. Politicians such as Chester A. Arthur argued, "I cannot too strongly urge upon you my conviction that every consideration of national safety, economy, and honor imperatively demands a thorough rehabilitation of our navy."[121] As the president of Bethlehem Steel would later note, "In 1902, the United States Government launched us on a larger and modern naval program."[122] This modern navy rapidly caught up with many of its European competitors. Yet, the objective was not to bring about a conflict with the strongest powers in Europe. Although historian Craig Symonds writes that early 19th century

---

[118] "Comment on Foreign Office Request for Admiralty Views Regarding Revision of Clayton-Bulwer Treaty," L. A. Beaumont, February 6, 1899 in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 164.

[119] Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report,* 1900, referenced in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 135.

[120] Congressional Record, 63rd Congress, 2nd session, 7147, 7380.

[121] Quoted by James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* IX (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1902), 463, referenced in Coletta, *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*, 27.

[122] Eugene C. Grace quoted during Hearing before the Committee on Naval Affairs, 64th Congress, 1st session, referenced in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 166.

navalists, "yearned for empire," he notes that "To them a naval fleet was physical evidence of national adulthood."[123]

With its growing navy, sea control was now an achievable strategy. Although the U.S. Navy still trailed the British, French, and Russian navies in overall tonnage, by 1900 it had surpassed Italy and nearly equaled Russia and France. U.S. warship tonnage jumped from 240,000 to 333,000 in the ten years before 1900, but in the ten years after 1900 the United States added nearly 500,000 tons of modern warships. Only Germany was able to keep up with this percentage increase in warship tonnage.

Despite the growth in overall tonnage, U.S. navalists remained constrained by geography. Mahan's vision of sea control required a unified fleet, but the United States had to simultaneously exercise sea control in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Indeed, when Roosevelt considered shifting vessels to the Atlantic in 1902, Mahan warned, "To remove our fleet—battle fleet—from the Pacific would be… a confession of weakness… It would mean a reversion to a policy narrowly American, and essentially defensive."[124] Defending both coasts became an even more difficult task after 1905, when Japan's vanquishing of Russia and alliance with Great Britain permitted the Japanese navy a freer hand in the Pacific. Roosevelt's answer was the Panama Canal, but he was not content simply to build the canal. Instead, Roosevelt desired that it

[123] Craig L Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1980), 12., Referenced in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 2.

[124] Robert Seager II and Doris McGuire, eds., *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 86. Referenced in Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 428.

be "wholly under the control of the United States, alike in peace and war."[125] To that end, experts suggested, "fortified naval bases could be established in Cuba and Puerto Rico… our Navy can control the Caribbean."[126]

This new focus on sea control, and its extension far beyond the coasts of the United States, represented the maturation of the navy's new control-focused strategy. Congressman Richmond Hobson wrote in 1902, "The finger of fate is pointing forward. America will be the controlling World power, holding the scepter of the seas, reigning in mighty beneficence with the guiding principle of a maximum of world service. She will help all the nations of the earth. Europe will be saved by her young off-spring grown to manhood."[127] Roosevelt support this strategy in office, noting that "If the American nation will speak softly and yet build and keep at a pitch of the highest training a thoroughly efficient navy, the Monroe Doctrine will go far."[128]

As Harold and Margaret Sprout note, "Mahan's philosophy of sea power entered the White House in the person of Theodore Roosevelt…"[129] In 1903, the General Board suggested, "a) a forty-eight-battleship fleet… b) an American policy to be automatically conditioned by naval development abroad… c) a fleet always stronger than likely enemies, and d) a commensurate increase of personnel as well as materiel."[130] No longer would the United States accept a role as a weak state at the mercy of stronger powers. Instead, one naval historian observes, "under

---

[125] Theodore Roosevelt, Memorandum after Yonkers Conference, February 12, 1900, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 103.

[126] General Board, 1901, referenced in Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 426.

[127] Richmond Hobson, "America, Mistress of the Sea," *North American Review*, October 1902, 557, referenced in Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 4.

[128] Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 26.

[129] Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 250.

[130] "Brief Account of the General Board," October 26, 1903, General Records of the Navy Department, referenced in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 165.

Theodore Roosevelt, the dream of the innovators came true. Commerce raiding and coastal defense strategy were discarded and a forward strategy was adopted in which a fleet powerful enough to defeat any potential enemy fleet would do so far out at sea."[131] The United States had constructed a sea control strategy, the challenge now was to develop the requisite fleet.

Means: Adopting Sustainable Investments

More extensive objectives and pursuit of sea control required sustainable naval systems than existed before the Spanish-American War. In 1897, Secretary of the Navy Long proclaimed, "our naval power has more than doubled within the last few years… the case of an emergency beyond our present resources is the very rare case…"[132] Yet, the range of U.S. battleships was still limited. One historian writes, "Prior to 1898, battleships had been needed only for coastal continental defense. The government now realized that it needed battleships with greater range to protect its newly acquired territories and foreign interests… Ships with higher speeds and greater cruising radius were needed in sufficient numbers… construction of coastal defense battleships [was] discontinued."[133] The answer came in part with the transition from coal to oil, which increased the range of ships, given that half a ton of fuel oil was equivalent to one ton of coal.[134]

---

[131] Coletta, *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*.

[132] *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* 13, 6268-6269, in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 136.

[133] John J. Fee, "The Rise of American Naval Power," in King, *Naval Engineering and American Seapower*, 69.

[134] Ibid., 79.

In 1899, Congress required that new capital ships have "great radius of action," although they still designated as "coast line" the new batch of battleships.[135] Naval architect J.J. Woodward asserted, "The most important question of general interest to the naval service of the United States at the present moment, is that concerning the necessity of the adoption by this country of a definite naval program…"[136] The definite naval program arrived in the form of larger and more expensive ships. These in turn came at a cost, namely the smaller cruisers and other ships that were not sustainable at sea. Roosevelt explained to the chairman of the House Naval Committee, "Heavy cruisers were very well in their way, but heavy battleships are what we need. We do not need light cruisers at all."[137] Mahan argued "against commerce-destruction by blockade, the recourse of the weaker maritime belligerent is commerce-destruction by cruisers on the high sea."[138] Now a strong state seeking sea control, politicians in Washington sought battleships that could directly confront potential adversaries.

President Roosevelt accelerated the push for large battleships. He argued, "the main reliance, the main standby, in any navy worthy of the name must be the great battleships, heavily armored and heavily gunned."[139] In 1904, Navy Secretary William Moody announced, "We have advanced one step in comparison, having slightly passed Italy, and are now fifth in the rank of naval powers of the world, based upon this comparison. But we have under construction and

---

[135] Navy Yearbook, 1917, 147, referenced in Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 248.

[136] J. J. Woodward, "The Necessity of a Definite Program of Naval Construction," Naval War College lecture, September 25, 1902, referenced in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 164.

[137] Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 188.

[138] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 95.

[139] *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* 15, 692 in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 143.

authorized by the Congress a greater tonnage than has any other nation in the world except Great Britain. If that tonnage were completed today, and it will not be for more than four years, we should pass Russia and Germany and be surpassed only by Great Britain and France."[140] In 1905, Roosevelt attested, "When I became President three years ago I made up my mind that I should try for a fleet with a minimum strength of forty armor-clads; from year to year I have now reached my mark… This navy puts us a good second to France and about on a par with Germany; and ahead of any other power in point of material, except, of course, England."[141]

Roosevelt's interest in battleships crowded out many of the smaller ships, but he remained interested in fielding a variety of vessels. In particular, Roosevelt commented, "I have become greatly interested in submarine boats. They are in no sense substitutes for above water torpedo boats, not to speak of battleships, cruisers and the like, they may on certain occasions supplement other craft, and they should be developed."[142] Yet, battleships remained the focus because of the difficulty of deploying and sustaining smaller ships at a distance. According to a naval historian, torpedo craft "did not have the endurance or stability to be useful away from American shores…"[143] Visionary Commander William Sims acknowledged, "a fleet of small vessels would have considerably less coal endurance than a fleet of large ones, when both are maneuvering at the speed of the former, and that the fleet of large vessels, while avoiding decisive action and

[140] Moody speech, February 16, 1904, referenced in Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy*, 171.

[141] Theodore Roosevelt to Major General Leonard Wood, March 9, 1905, referenced in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 144.

[142] Theodore Roosevelt to Charles Joseph Bonaparte, August 28, 1905, referenced in Ibid., 152.

[143] Ibid.

preventing its enemy from proceeding in any given direction, can ultimately attack when the latter is obliged to abandon the open sea."[144]

After the British developed the dreadnought, Roosevelt recognized its value in battle. He commented, "ordinary ships will be absolutely powerless before these ships."[145] Roosevelt argued, "In my judgment we are not to be excused if we build any battleship inferior to those now being built by other nations… We cannot afford to fall behind and we shall fall behind if we fail to build first-class battleships ourselves…"[146] The dreadnought was not only heavily armored and heavily gunned, but also fitted with engines capable of high speed. The United States followed suit. As Captain C. W. Dyson later suggested, "high speed was more desirable than cruising radius, and the latter was sacrificed…"[147] Yet, he also observed, "The areas to be covered are great and the distances to bases and from base to base in some cases are magnificent. Fuel economy is of the highest value, even predominates over speed…"[148] This tension grew, but both speed and cruising radius increased rapidly during Roosevelt's tenure.

From 1907 to 1909, the Great White Fleet cruised around the world. This marked a clear demonstration that U.S. ships were not only well-armed, but also sustainable at sea. In this

---

[144] "Big Battleships of High Speed," Letter from U.S. Commander William S. Sims to Admiral Sir John Fisher, November 3, 1906 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 352.

[145] Theodore Roosevelt to Sims, October 13, 1906, in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 145.

[146] Theodore Roosevelt to George Edmund Foss, January 11, 1907, referenced in Ibid., 146.

[147] Captain C. W. Dyson, "The Development of Machinery in the U.S. Navy During the Past Ten Years," *Journal of the American Society of Naval Engineers* 29 (1917): 217, referenced in William M. McBride, *Technological Change and the United States Navy, 1865-1945*, Johns Hopkins Studies in the History of Technology (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 90.

[148] Captain C. W. Dyson, "The Development of Machinery in the U.S. Navy During the Past Ten Years," *Journal of the American Society of Naval Engineers* 29 (1917): 217, referenced in Ibid.

endeavor, the navy learned a great deal about sustaining a force at sea, and the importance of colliers and distant outposts. This lessons was vital because earlier observers had noted, "The United States have never deemed it needful to their national life to maintain impregnable fortresses along the world's highways of commerce."[149] At the time, the United States was building two colliers, but had no more. In 1909, *Scientific American* wrote, "Undoubtedly, the greatest need of the navy to-day is a fleet of large and fairly fast colliers, built expressly for naval purposes."[150] The next year another five colliers were added to the budget. This development supplied the final missing piece in the shift from a coastal defense force to a navy with global power projection capabilities.

In many senses, Roosevelt's departure from office marked the completion of the navy's transformation from an unsustainable coastal defense force into a sustainable oceangoing navy. The nation had acquired overseas territories and distant coaling stations. The navy had built first-class battleships and demonstrated the ability to deploy them anywhere on earth. These trends continued after Roosevelt departed, but they had come to pass under Roosevelt's leadership. Observers note that William Howard Taft created "a still more 'top-heavy' navy. A balanced fighting fleet should have included not only first-class battleships, but also fast scout cruisers, destroyer flotillas to protect the capital ships… Forced to make compromises at every turn, the Administration had sacrificed cruisers, destroyers, and the other essential components of a

[149] John Bassett Moore, *A Digest of International Law* I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 432, referenced in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 261.

[150] "Lessons and Results of the Battleship Cruise," *Scientific American*, February 20, 1909, 146, referenced in Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 161.

fighting fleet…"[151] This was is many ways a continuation of Roosevelt's policies. Thus, by the beginning of World War I, the United States had one of the world's largest battlefleets and it was oriented almost entirely toward control of distant seas.

Conclusion

> Nations that expand and nations that do not expand may both ultimately go down, but the one leaves heirs and a glorious memory, and the other leaves neither.
>
> - Theodore Roosevelt, 1899[152]

U.S. foreign policy transformed from the last decade of the 19th century through the first decade of the 20th century. When U.S. leaders viewed the United States as relatively weak, even later advocates of power projection—such as Theodore Roosevelt—rejected extensive objectives. Yet, expansion became the avowed policy of the day as American leaders recognized their new economic and political position.

There is no doubt that other forces were also at work. Yet, most structural and cultural explanations struggle to explain why the United States altered its ends, ways, and means so dramatically in the 1890s. U.S. leaders did seek to emulate stronger powers across the ocean, but the imitation hypothesis suggests that this tendency should have been a constant. On the other hand, although geography itself did not change, the fact that the United States had expanded from coast to coast does provide a rationale for U.S. development of naval capabilities. Stability on the North American continent also allowed U.S. leaders to look abroad. In a sense, the United

[151] Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 293.

[152] Theodore Roosevelt, "Expansion and Peace," *The Independent,* December 21, 1899, http://www.bartleby.com/58/2.html.

States became more of a naval power when it acquired a second coast. On the other hand, technological explanations fail to explain why Roosevelt and his subordinates pursued naval systems. They do not appear to have been driven by assessments of the offense-defense balance or other technological factors. Similarly, if U.S. strategic culture remained constant, it cannot explain the change in U.S. objectives, strategies, and investments over time.

Another group of possible explanations relates to domestic politics. Although the United States entered the 1890s as a rapidly growing economy, it remained largely focused on the North American continent and its navy was ill prepared even for coastal defense and commerce raiding. Yet, Washington's appetite for international engagement and even territorial expansion grew with the realization that the United States was no longer a weak state relative to the traditional European powers. Domestic support for the navy expanded around this time, but as Roosevelt's time as Assistant Secretary of the Navy shows, this support had to be nurtured. Meanwhile, Mahan's writings won additional political support for American activities abroad. These set "the American ship of state upon the much bolder and more comprehensive program of politico-naval imperialism which was envisaged and justified in Mahan's larger philosophy of sea power."[153] Mahan's personal influence, along with that of Roosevelt, certainly shifted funding toward the navy and distant projection of power. These factors combined with the growing recognition of U.S. strength to dramatically alter U.S. defense policy.

Although some might argue that Roosevelt and Mahan were individually responsible for changing U.S. objectives, it is important to remember that Roosevelt was initially opposed to entanglements abroad. It was not until Mahan wrote in 1893, "we have come upon the sea… in

[153] Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 222.

our natural, necessary, irrepressible expansion…" that Roosevelt became far more supportive of extending U.S. objectives.[154] Moreover, he came to power after the United States seized Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, Palmyra Island, the Philippines, Wake Island, and American Samoa in 1898 and 1899. Thus, given the confluence of factors in the U.S. case, no single factor can explain all U.S. actions, but the fact that U.S. objectives, strategy, and investments shifted so rapidly after the recognition of U.S. strength certainly aligns with the predictions of perceived relative power theory.

Perhaps Mahan's most important and lasting contribution to the U.S. Navy was his insistence that it adopt a sea control strategy. After acquiring territories in the Pacific, the United States was now in a position to operate far beyond North America.[155] The growing rivalry between Britain and Germany allowed the United States to exercise more authority not only in the Americas, but in the Pacific as well. There too, sea control was the strategic aim. Roosevelt forecast in 1897 that in a prospective war, "The determining factor would be the control of the sea… I think our objective should be the Japanese fleet."[156] The result was that the U.S. Navy nearly quintupled its warship tonnage in the course of twenty years, simultaneously transforming from a relatively large but backwards navy into a modern fighting force. The rapidly growing U.S. Navy made sea control a realistic objective against most potential adversaries.

---

[154] A. T. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future,*" (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 35-36 in Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*, 82.

[155] Charles E. Hughes, *Our Relations to the Nations of the Western Hemisphere* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1928), 19, in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, 400.

[156] Theodore Roosevelt to Captain Caspar F. Goodrich, June 16, 1897, referenced in Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 265.

Executing this sea control strategy required not only a larger fleet, but ships capable of being deployed and sustained at a distance. Building these ships was one of Mahan and Roosevelt's chief goals. They drove the transition from *Monitor*-class coastal defenders and commerce raiding cruisers to oceangoing battleships. Coastal defenses and commerce raiders remained in the U.S. arsenal for some time, but Washington's focus fully shifted toward the battleship. American investments favored sustainable ships, first in the form of coastal battleships and then oceangoing battleships. Not only were these ships capable of traveling and operating at great distances from their home waters, but they practiced doing so. In 1907, Roosevelt justified the Great White Fleet as "absolutely necessary for us to try in time of peace to see just what we can do in the way of putting a big battle fleet in the Pacific."[157] Such actions seemed to shrink the world, making the ends of the earth more reachable to U.S. forces. The *New York Times* wrote, "The visit of so large a part of our navy to the remote Pacific colony seems to bring Honolulu and Hawaii closer to us."[158] Indeed, after leaving office, Roosevelt reflected, "the most important service that I rendered to peace was the voyage of the battle-fleet around the world."[159]

[157] Gordon Carpenter O'Gara, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of the Modern Navy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 77, referenced in Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 440.

[158] *New York Times*, July 18, 1908, referenced in Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 88.

[159] Theodore Roosevelt, *Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), in Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 163.

Table 1: Estimated Warship Tonnage (1890-1910)[160]

	1890	**1900**	**1910**
Britain	679,000	1,065,000	2,174,000
France	319,000	499,000	725,000
Russia	180,000	383,000	401,000
United States	240,000	333,000	824,000
Italy	242,000	245,000	327,000
Germany	190,000	285,000	964,000
Japan	41,000	187,000	496,000

In reflection, the 1890 Policy Board set many of these changes in motion. That group noted, "We fear no encroachments upon our territory… But there are not wanting indications that this comparative isolation will soon cease to exist… our Navy is insignificant and totally disproportionate to the greatness of the country…"[161] The Policy Board's prophesy would come true in just two decades. America's adoption of novel ends, ways, and means are perhaps best described by a contemporary historian who wrote, "American statesmen used the U.S. Navy's newly constructed battle fleets to establish, defend, and expand the American sphere of influence… The growth of the U.S. Navy's power and size merely paralleled the concurrent increase in American political and economic influence."[162]

[160] Table reproduced and adapted from Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 203.
[161] Report of the Policy Board, 1890.
[162] Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*. xiv.

German Rise

> We realize that without power, without a strong army and a strong navy, there can be no welfare for us. The means of fighting the battle for existence in this world without strong armaments on land and water… have not yet been found. In the coming century the German nation will be either the hammer or the anvil.
>
> - Chancellor Bernhard von Bulow, speech to the Reichstag (1899)[1]

At the turn of the 20th century, the German economy was booming and Berlin's political influence and military power was growing rapidly, much like that of the United States. In 1888, William II succeeded his father on the Prussian throne, ushering in a new era. During the first 25 years of his reign, German imports and exports tripled.[2] William basked in the glory of Germany's newfound might and proclaimed, "The German Empire has become a world empire."[3]

What made Germany's rise all the more impressive was that only thirty years earlier, Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had succeeded in his mission to unite Germany. As Bismarck famously remarked in 1862, "Prussia has to coalesce and concentrate its power for the opportune moment… it is not by speeches and majority resolutions that the great questions of the time are decided… but by iron and blood."[4] Over the next decade, Bismarck engineered wars with

---

[1] Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 415.

[2] W. O. Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power, 1834-1914* (London: Temple Smith, 1975), 239. Also see Paul Michael Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism: 1860-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 291–292.

[3] Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and the Birth of the German Battle* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1993), 29.

[4] Otto von Bismarck, September 30, 1862, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=250.

Denmark in 1863, Austria in 1866, and France in 1870. The result was a unified Germany, led by Prussia's king and defended by one of the world's greatest armies.

In the forty years that followed, German trade expanded as the German merchant fleet grew from under 100,000 tons to over 5,000,000 toons.[5] Its expanding merchant fleet helped Germany's share of world shipbuilding jump from 7.3% to 13.8% in only fifteen years.[6] German leaders now attempted to transform the Reich from a continental leader into a global power. Although Prussia had traditionally been focused on ground forces, German leaders built one of the world's great navies. In 1897, William II appointed Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz to lead the navy's development. In 1899, the navy budget was 133 million German marks, but it would grow to 467 million German marks within fifteen years.[7] As William II explained a decade later, "Germany is a young and growing empire… Germany must have a powerful fleet to protect that commerce and her manifold interests in even the most distant seas."[8]

The following sections trace this evolution from the late 1800s until the eve of World War I. The theory of perceived relative power described here suggests that German leaders' perceptions of the Reich's growing relative strength should have motivated them to adopt new national objectives, security strategies, and military investments. If this theory accurately explains German actions, its leaders should have set their sights on extending Germany's international objectives beyond its borders. To accomplish these extensive aims, the Reich required the ability

---

[5] Holger H. Herwig, *"Luxury Fleet": The Imperial German Navy, 1888-1918* (London ; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 2.

[6] Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power, 1834-1914*, 198–199.

[7] See Table 17 in Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*.

[8] Giles MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), 311.

to project and sustain power at a distance. The corresponding security strategy would have to rely on control of distant territory, and be supported by new military investments. Although its army remained supreme on the continent, only a large navy would be capable of securing foreign trade routes and confronting maritime challengers such as Great Britain. In short, as German leaders became more confident in their power, they extended their national objectives, adopted a sea control naval strategy, and developed a sustainable ocean-going battlefleet.

German Defense Policy before 1895

> Throughout my whole career I have always had to oppose two ideas, especially beloved of the lay mind—the idea of a special coastal defense, and that of a cruiser fleet.
>
> - Tirpitz, *Memoirs*[9]

William II ascended to the German throne in June 1888, after his father and grandfather died in a span of three months.[10] William was only 29 at the time, but he was eager to put his stamp on German history. And yet, young William was not enthusiastic about foreign entanglements. In his first speech to the Reichstag on June 25, 1888, William announced, "Germany needs neither glory in war nor any form of conquest now that it has finally won the fight to be entitled to stand as an independent nation."[11] This initial vision of Germany as a pacific nation aligned with the views of William's closest advisors. Over the next decade, however, William would abandon both this initial dictate and his foremost advisor.

---

[9] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:119–120.

[10] Hereafter, William II is referred to simply as "William".

[11] J. C. G. Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck* (London: London Batsford, 1967), 43. Also referenced in MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 139. Also see William II, "First Declaration of Policy," Berlin, June 25, 1888, reproduced in Christian Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances* (New York: Scribner's, 1915), 38.

Ends: Limited Objectives

In 1888, William inherited not only the throne but also his grandfather's powerful chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck had masterminded German unification, an effort he justified by noting, "Prussia's mission is to extend itself… All of us want the Prussian eagle to spread his wings…"[12] Once Prussia reigned supreme over Germany, however, Bismarck focused on consolidating the Reich's power rather than expanding it further. For much of his chancellorship, Bismarck sought to avoid overseas commitments. He commented in 1870, "I do not want colonies. They are only suitable as supply bases… this colonial business for us would be similar to the silken pelts of Polish noble families who do not possess even shirts."[13] He remarked that "From the start I have not been a colonial person… As long as I am chancellor we will carry on no colonial policies."[14]

Nevertheless, as German power grew in the decades after unification, Bismarck's opposition to colonial policies softened. Under pressure from nationalist groups in the mid-1880s, Bismarck began to actively support German colonization efforts. In 1884 and 1885, Germany acquired South-West Africa, Togoland, Cameroon, German East Africa, New Guinea, and the Marshall Islands. Before the end of the 19th century, the Reich would add Nauru, Palau, the Mariana Islands, Kiaochow, and Samoa.[15] These early colonies often operated as supply bases rather than economic engines, but they began the trend of German expansion abroad. Thus, William's 1888

[12] Referenced in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 14.
[13] Quoted in Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 95.
[14] Ibid., 96.
[15] See Tables 21 and 22 Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*.

speech to the Reichstag represented a somewhat more modest vision of the Reich's overseas ambitions.

When William took the throne, he appeared most concerned about German overexpansion. One solution lay in an alliance with Great Britain, which could help protect Germany's vulnerable coasts and permit the acquisition of German colonies abroad. Both states feared the threat from a combined French and Russian attack. Germany dreaded a two front land war, while Britain expressed concern about a naval conflict against united French and Russian fleets. The stage was thus set for William's suggestion to British leaders, "We ought to form an Anglo-German alliance, you to keep the seas while we would be responsible for the land; with such an alliance, not a mouse would stir in Europe without our permission…"[16] Speaking in Britain, William commented, "we are strong and mighty, we should reinforce the peace together; you with your strong fleet and us with our great army can do this…"[17]

Yet, William's ties with Britain were complicated from birth. He harbored great resentment for and envy of Britain. William's own mother, Empress Frederick, was the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria, and retained strong ties to her homeland. But William blamed his mother and her British doctors for injuring his arm during birth, and for the premature death of his father. When the time came to marry, William's choice brought objections from his mother. Such family strife extended beyond William's relationship with his mother to include his grandmother. Queen Victoria complained on his accession, "It is too dreadful for us all to think of Willy and

[16] John VanDerKiste, *Kaiser Wilhelm II Germany's Last Emperor* (Stroud [u.a.]: Sutton, 1999), 111.

[17] William quoted in 1888, referenced in MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 110.

Bismarck and Dona [William's wife] – being the supreme head of all now! Two so unfit and one so wicked."[18]

Despite these tensions, British royalty tried to engage William. He was made an admiral of the British navy in 1889. At the time, William commented, "Germany possesses an army which answers to her needs, and if the British nation possesses a fleet sufficient for the needs of England, this in itself will be considered by Europe in general as a weighty factor in the maintenance of peace."[19] Notwithstanding family infighting, it appeared that an Anglo-German alliance was still possible.

If Bismarck had remained in power, such an alliance might well have been accomplished. Although the British did not trust Bismarck, they knew he was a pragmatist. Bismarck was well aware that the British fleet remained supreme on the seas. Despite his pursuit of colonies in the late 1880s, Bismarck was largely focused on continental aims. An alliance with a continentally focused Germany might have been appealing to British leaders. Yet, Bismarck was also proud of Germany's growing power and had no intention of negotiating an alliance out of weakness. He insisted, "We have a desire for peace but we will also not shrink from a decision to take up arms if that is forced upon us. We Germans fear God, but nothing else in the world."[20] Queen Victoria, on the other hand, was unwilling to delegate continental policy to Germany. Years earlier she had commented that England "must not stand aloof; England must show the world that she is not

[18] VanDerKiste, *Kaiser Wilhelm II Germany's Last Emperor*, 59.

[19] William II, "The English Fleet and the German Army," Sandown Bay, Great Britain, August 5, 1889, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 48.

[20] MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 106–107.

prepared to abdicate her position as a great Power."[21] Thus, Bismarck and Victoria had similar strategic interests, but could not conclude an alliance before the window closed.

In 1890, Bismarck's reign came to an unanticipated end. William, seeking to exercise his prerogative as Kaiser, argued with Bismarck over control of the government. The resulting conflict ended in a scathing resignation letter from Bismarck and William's "dropping the pilot." The end of the 75-year old Bismarck's time as chancellor ushered in a new era of "personal rule" that the chancellor himself had foreseen. Bismarck had commented of young William in 1886, "Some day that man will be his own chancellor."[22] When that day came, William surprised Berlin by selecting a general and former chief of the imperial navy, Leo von Caprivi, to take Bismarck's place.

Meanwhile, William was growing increasingly concerned about Germany's place on the world stage. Bolstered by the confidence that "we have succeeded in the difficult task of welding the German race into a strong union," William now considered German ambitions abroad.[23] William increasingly saw the British navy as a threat, commenting "my attention was called to our dependence upon England, owing to the fact that we had no navy and that Heligoland was in English hands."[24] This concern was due in part to the German desire for expansion. As William explained, "To be sure, there was a project to extend our colonial possessions under the pressure of necessity, but all this could happen only with England's permission. This was a serious matter

---

[21] Richard Millman, *British Foreign Policy and the Coming of the Franco-Prussian War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 33, referenced in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 25.

[22] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918* (New York: Narper & Brothers, 1922), 4.

[23] William II, "The Emperor's First Army Bill," Berlin, July 4, 1893, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 79.

[24] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 11.

and certainly an unworthy position for Germany."[25] By 1893, he lamented that the German military "compares still more unfavorably with that of our neighbors than it did last year."[26] William panicked, saying "Our prestige is at an end, if we can take no leading part. World-power—without that, a nation cuts a deplorable figure! What are we to do?"[27]

Chancellor Caprivi, despite having led the German navy, was a Prussian army officer and he remained determined to strengthen the Reich's continental defenses. As one naval historian writes, "Caprivi's concern for using the navy as an instrument of national defense (in an imminent Continental war) is contrasted with the navalists' belief that it could serve as a means of imperialist expansion…"[28] With tensions growing between William and Caprivi, the latter's tenure as chancellor lasted only four years. In 1894, Caprivi's chancellorship was given to the Prince of Hohenlohe (Caprivi's role as prime minister had already passed to Botho Eulenburg in 1892). Unlike Caprivi, Hohenlohe made a direct connection between Germany's newfound great power status and its expanding interests abroad. The new chancellor presaged a change in German policy, noting, "Unless we are prepared always to give way and to abandon our status as a World Power, we must be respected… And to impress the seafaring Powers we need a fleet."[29]

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] William II, "The Emperor's First Army Bill," Berlin, July 4, 1893, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 77.

[27] Emil Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II* (London: G. P. Putnam's sons, ltd., 1926).

[28] Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914*, Studies in Central European Histories (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2002), 129.

[29] Hohenlohe, III, 154, referenced in Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck. by Röhl (J.C.G.)*, 167.

Ways: Denial Strategy

As German leaders came to recognize their nation's newfound strength, they not only expanded their aims, but also adopted a novel military strategy. The Kaiser's primary tool for implementing this strategy was the German navy, which had traditionally been assembled for coastal defense and commerce raiding. Increasingly, however, the navy was called on to deploy abroad and to exercise sustained sea control at great distances. This required naval power projection capabilities and transformed the fleet from a small locally focused force into a true blue water navy in just 20 years. From 1870 through 1890, the navy embraced more offensive strategies, which enabled the pursuit of control-focused strategies in 1890.

When a young Alfred Tirpitz joined the navy in April 1865, one historian records, "The navy he entered was weak…" and oriented toward defense.[30] Historian Rolf Hobson notes that in the early 1870s, "The navy's tasks were to defend the coast, prevent an invasion from the sea, and protect trade."[31] Yet as German power grew, leaders in Berlin contemplated an offensive posture. Officials noted the need for "development of our own offensive potential, not only to destroy enemy sea trade, but also to attack enemy coasts and harbors. To carry out the defensive part of our mission we need to be able, under certain circumstances, to seize the offensive."[32] A naval historian observes of the growing German fleet, "The first conundrum was the 'mission' of the navy. Was it coastal protection, defense of trade, or naval supremacy, at least in the Baltic?"[33]

---

[30] Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 22.

[31] Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 115.

[32] Lieber papers translated in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 142.

[33] Ibid., 19.

The initial steps toward a more offensive navy occurred around 1870 under Albrecht von Stosch, a general who would serve as the first head of the Imperial German Navy. In 1871, he directed, "We need ships that are also suitable for the offensive protection of the merchant fleet, and the squadrons that we station in distant lands must also contain such ships."[34] This emphasis on operating at a distance presented the fleet with a major new mission. Yet only two years later, Stosch wrote, "The mission of the battlefleet is the defense of the coasts of the nation… Against larger seapowers the fleet has only the significance of a 'sortie fleet'. Any other objective is ruled out by the limited naval strength that the law provides."[35] Thus, German power was only sufficient for sea denial rather than sea control.

Unlike Stosch, many early German naval theorists were influenced more by the French than the British. French and German leaders shared a similar dilemma with regard to the British fleet. How could a weak continental navy deter a larger force, such as the British? The French provided an answer, which a prominent naval historian characterizes as "two distinct strategies, depending on who the enemy was: *La grande guerre* against an inferior naval power; coastal defense and commerce warfare by cruisers against a superior opponent."[36] This equated to a strategy of control against weak states and denial against strong ones. A German naval historian notes, "weaker naval powers now seemed capable of successfully challenging Great Britain, by adopting a guerre de course strategy which mainly relied on fast cruisers and highly sophisticated torpedo boats."[37] Many German leaders favored this approach.

---

[34] Stosch to Gustav Freytag, December 3, 1871, referenced in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 114.

[35] Stosch memorandum, 1873, quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 145.

[36] Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 99.

[37] Michael Epkenhans, *Tirpitz: Architect of the German High Seas Fleet*, Military Profiles (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2008), 20.

Young William, however, claimed that the French "had not read their Mahan…"[38] Tirpitz also said he, "did not believe in this strategy."[39] In the 1870s, a young Tirpitz had endorsed theories of fleet warfare, noting "It is characteristic of battle on the open sea that its sole goal is the annihilation of the enemy. Land battle offers other tactical possibilities, such as taking terrain, which do not exist in war at sea. Only annihilation can be accounted a success at sea."[40] Tirpitz supported Stosch and his ideas of distant power projection, crediting him with being, "way head of his time in the energy with which he drove our sea power forward after centuries of neglect…"[41] Although not yet senior enough to implement his ideas, Tirpitz endorsed Stosch's naval strategy and expanded German aims, which he claimed included, "that we had to have colonies and that we could not exist for long without expansion."[42]

Stosch was succeeded in 1884 by Leo von Caprivi, who initially agreed that "Wherever there is struggle for control of a part of a sea, one cannot dispense with armored ships and heavy artillery… A navy which concentrates on the land or on the coast no longer deserves its name."[43] Yet, Caprivi took quite a different approach than Stosch. Caprivi presciently warned, "For Germany, now and in the immediate future, the only naval question is how small our Fleet can be—not how big."[44] He wished to ensure that Germany could face France and Russia with the

---

[38] William quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 237.

[39] Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 20.

[40] Tirpitz quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 49.

[41] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:23; Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 66.

[42] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:23; Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 66.

[43] Ivo Nikolai Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914* (Boston, Mass. [u.a.]: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 7.

[44] Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 131.

strongest army possible, so Caprivi favored cheap coastal defenses and commerce raiding. In 1887, more commerce raiding cruisers were built. The rationale of naval experts was, "Against naval powers with considerable sea trade… cruiser war, even if slow in its effects, can none the less become decisive."[45] Caprivi also sought to build a more robust coastal defense fleet. In fact, Tirpitz would later credit Caprivi with helping "to prepare a strong coastal defense for the next war against Russia and France."[46]

When William II took the throne in 1888, he immediately made his displeasure with Caprivi's naval policy known.[47] A month after William came to power, Caprivi resigned and was replaced by Admiral Alexander von Monts. He lasted only a year, dying in 1889, after which time the Admiralty was split into two sections. The High Command would handle strategy and fleet command while the Imperial Naval Office would manage warship construction and political support. Both would report directly to the Kaiser. The result was a strengthened role in naval affairs for William, but constant bureaucratic infighting between various navy leaders. Admiral Eduard von Knorr would head the High Command and Admiral Friedrich von Hollmann would lead the Imperial Naval Office. Soon a third position was added, Chief of the Naval Cabinet, with its head Admiral Gustav von Senden-Bibran reporting directly to the Kaiser.

During this period, German war planners suggested that protection of the coast, "will always and best be solved through the defeat of hostile naval forces on the high seas; control of the sea then

---

[45] Hallman, *Der Weg*, 35, referenced and translated in Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 9.

[46] Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 24 referenced in Ibid., 6.

[47] See Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2012), 162–163.

involves the security of the coast."[48] German leaders did not discuss "whether a significantly weaker German fleet should try to avoid what would be inevitable defeat in battle and instead try to exert some influence as a fleet-in-being, or to carry out a more effective coastal defence against the intruder than it could after having been mauled on the high seas."[49] Instead, the emphasis was on offensive action.

In 1893, Count Alfred von Schlieffen argued, "the fundamental laws of combat remain the same, and one of those laws is that one cannot defeat the enemy without attacking… One must attack when one has the means in hand to do so, and one must attack so as to annihilate [the enemy] to the greatest possible extent."[50] Similarly, leading naval officers such as Captain Alfred Stenzel asserted, "At all times it is necessary to press for the offensive; without the offensive a fleet has no function…"[51] This leads to an important question posed by historians: "why the almost mindless concentration on the offensive in the 1890s, and why the almost total blindness to the virtues and strengths of the strategic defensive?"[52] Naval strategist Curt von Maltzahn suggested at the time that this idea of the offensive, "comes from the thought, that for the officer corps a certain exaggeration of the offensive side must create a counterweight against the recent tone of resignation to the inevitable… [Aggressive rhetoric] was only designed to spring us loose from our coasts…"[53]

---

[48] Gholz memorandum of October 16, 1889, in Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 42–43.

[49] Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 264. Referenced in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 91.

[50] Schlieffen quoted in Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 139.

[51] Stenzel quoted in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 143.

[52] Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 91.

[53] Curt Freiherr von Maltzahn quoted in Ibid.

German leaders were certainly thinking in more offensive terms, which set the stage for a fundamental shift in naval strategy toward sea control. In 1892, Tirpitz wrote a memo that prioritized defense of the German coast and waters against hostile attack. He explicitly referenced the need for control of the sea, noting that coastal warfare was possible only "when the struggle for the control of the sea had ended and one or the other of the hostile fleets has been definitely defeated."[54] Invoking the comparison with the army, Tirpitz later reflected, "the strongest power at sea has a greater advantage than the strongest power on land, owing to the unlimited area that it controls."[55]

Opponents of sea control remained powerful in the early 1890s. By 1893, Caprivi was chancellor and he continued to insist that a smaller navy oriented toward local rather than distant sea control could accomplish German objectives. He commented, "We do not need the armored ships to seek adventure abroad but to ensure our existence in a land war; for if we cannot count on imports during a war, our existence can be dangerously threatened."[56] Yet, the time for Caprivi's more limited strategy had passed. By 1894, a consensus was forming that the navy required large armored ships, shifting the navy "from the coastal-defense idea to the High Sea Fleet."[57] Coastal defense would no longer suffice because as Captain Stenzel commented, "Our harbors and our coast can only be protected by a fleet which seeks out the enemy at sea and fights…"[58] Admiral Alexander von Müller said in 1896, "Caprivi's policy, now denigrated to a degree, would have

[54] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 70.
[55] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:234.
[56] Caprivi quoted in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 125.
[57] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:67.
[58] Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 147.

received its historical justification had not the German people risen to a completely different understanding of its ability and duty to expand…"[59]

Means: Expendable Investments

The rapid development of the German battleship fleet is perhaps the most well-known aspect of the Reich's pre-World War I naval build-up. Surprisingly though, the ships that had the most tactical success in World War I were the smaller vessels (particularly U-boats) that navy leaders sacrificed in order to fund battleship construction. In this sense, the story of German fleet development is one of missed opportunities. The national drive for expansion and sea control dominated other strategic considerations. The result was a blue water navy capable of global power projection, but which was unable to leave the North Sea due to the superior British fleet.

Early German fleet design focused on small ships capable of limited coastal defense and periodic commerce raiding. In the 1860s, the Prussian navy included armored batteries and gunboats for coastal defense, and a small commerce raiding fleet. The only ships designed for fleet action were lightly armored frigates.[60] This began to change in the 1870s, but the initial moves were toward cruisers rather than battleships.

In time, however, Germany's rise led its leaders to seek a more offensively-oriented strategy, which altered ship design. Admiral Stosch wrote in 1871, "We need ships which are suitable to secure the merchant marine through offensive action, and the squadrons which we station on remote shores must also comprise such ships."[61] This sort of offensive sea denial strategy

[59] Quoted in Ibid., 131.
[60] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 2.
[61] Ibid., 5.

required cruisers rather than battleships. As Stosch explained, "I consider large battleships still to be erroneous and superfluous for our conditions, since we cannot for a long time be called to fight a naval battle."[62] The resulting plan aimed for 8 armored frigates, 6 armored corvettes, 7 armored monitors, 2 floating batteries, 20 corvettes, 18 gunboats, and 28 torpedo-boats.[63]

Throughout the 1880s, the German navy debated its core mission, resulting in a muddled acquisition program. Stosch wanted commerce raiding cruisers. Caprivi favored coastal defense ships, gunboats, and torpedo-boats. Caprivi explained, "The torpedo-boats are a weapon that is of particular value for a power that is weaker on the high seas."[64] A third faction, led by Tirpitz and other young officers, proposed battleships for fleet action. By 1888, William was frustrated, noting "Whereas, at my accession to the throne, I had found the army in a condition which merely required development upon the foundations already laid, the navy, on the other hand, was only in the first stage of development."[65]

William's first task was to devote additional resources for construction and personnel to the navy. In 1888, the German army included over 485,000 men, while the navy had only a peacetime strength of 15,480.[66] Indeed, the German navy was headed by an army officer until 1888. By 1890, Chancellor Caprivi was in a position to directly influence fleet development. He ordered, "We must therefore always depend first on protecting our coast through armored ships and torpedo-boats in order to keep the entrance into harbors open for our ships… We do not need

---

[62] Stosch quoted in Ibid., 4.

[63] Ibid., 5.

[64] Ibid., 8.

[65] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 223.

[66] Michael Epkenhans, "Wilhelm II and 'his' navy, 1888-1918," 22 in Annika Mombauer and Wilhelm Deist, eds., *The Kaiser New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the armored ships to conduct adventures, but to secure our existence during a land war."[67] To that end, Germany constructed four *Brandenburg*-class battleships and eight smaller coastal defense battleships, each of limited endurance. The navy's high command reported that this construction was necessary because the existing investments "had not been able to prevent both the relative and absolute strength of the fleet from declining significantly since the mid-1880s."[68]

Coastal forces were far too defensive for Germany's confident leaders. William grumbled, "The war-like preparations of the two Powers were far ahead of ours, their navies far more modern and powerful than that of Germany, which consisted of a few old ships, almost without warfighting value."[69] Admiral Hollmann, Admiralty Chief of Staff, critiqued Caprivi's plan by noting, "With coastal vehicles and torpedo-boats one can defend the coast; against a blockade only an offensive fleet can protect us…"[70] Tirpitz admitted, "If England underestimates our naval power, if she particularly makes light of our only true asset, i.e. of our torpedo boats… It would be conceivable that we should repel a badly executed English offensive…"[71] Yet, Tirpitz realized that against a blockade, torpedo boats were of limited value and that battleships were necessary. Eckart Kehr writes, "Out of the blockade-breaking fleet grew the theory that saw in the fleet an instrument that would raise Germany to a dominant position in the world."[72]

---

[67] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 60.

[68] Admiral Knorr to William II, November 28, 1895, reproduced in Matthew S. Seligmann, ed., *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, Publications of the Navy Records Society 161 (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 15.

[69] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 78.

[70] See Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 9.

[71] Tirpitz to Stosch, February 13, 1896, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 40.

[72] Kehr quoted in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 127.

Tirpitz had initially gained fame for, of all things, his role as a leading advocate of the torpedo. He developed and tested the technology behind the torpedo and initiated studies into the torpedo's tactical and operational effects. As his thoughts on naval warfare developed though, Tirpitz's vision for the German fleet came to match that of the Kaiser. As one naval historian writes, Tirpitz replaced older leaders whose "ideas had perpetuated the navy's coastal defense role, a position that seemed outworn as German *Weltpolitik* developed during the reign of Wilhelm II."[73]

By the mid-1890s, William and Tirpitz both wanted battleships, but for different reasons. William often mentioned the prestige associated with a true blue water navy. Kehr observes, "The fleet preference of Wilhelm II reflected no insight into either the political or economic necessities of overseas power politics, but was mere games-playing."[74] Tirpitz favored battleships for their fighting power, arguing, "a naval battle is a fight of one ship against another; the decisive technical factor is rather the concentration of force in the individual ship than the actual number of ships."[75] In his memoirs, Tirpitz recounts, "I demanded sea-going vessels which could fight in the North Sea, and the struggle between the advocates of sea-going ships and those who supported the coast-defense scheme continued through all my activities…"[76] The push to redirect German naval policy was just beginning.

---

[73] Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 20.

[74] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 31.

[75] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:129. Also see Peter. Padfield, *The Great Naval Race: The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry, 1900-1914* (New York: D. McKay Company, 1974), 113.

[76] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:54.

German Defense Policy after 1895

> Germany is a great and growing Empire. She has a world-wide commerce which is rapidly expanding, and to which the legitimate ambition of patriotic Germans refuses to assign any bounds. Germany must have a powerful fleet to protect that commerce, and her manifold interests in the most distant seas. Germany looks ahead. Her horizons stretch far away. She must be prepared for any eventualities.
>
> - William II, speaking in England (1908)[77]

The transformation of German defense policy began in earnest around 1895. As German aims evolved, the navy transitioned from a secondary service into a first-class fleet. Aware that the Kaiser desired to strengthen the navy, one senior naval officer suggested that William appoint the relentless Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz as State Secretary of the Imperial Navy Office. The officer noted, "The whole country is ignorant about the purpose and tasks of the navy… An energetic man with a broad vision as State Secretary must bring about change, perhaps Tirpitz."[78] Tirpitz was just the man for the job as he had an innate understanding of political dynamics. Samuel Huntington noted of Tirpitz, "he was generally viewed by the other admirals as an essentially political figure."[79] Tirpitz later explained his mission as "development of our commerce, transition to *Weltpolitik* and especially the creation of a German fleet…"[80]

---

[77] Wilhelm, Interview with Col. Stuart-Wortley, Daily Telegraph, October 28, 1908.

[78] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 117. Also see Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 115.

[79] Huntington, Soldier and the State, 102, referenced in Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 22.

[80] Quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 225.

Ends: Adopting Extensive Objectives

Use of the term *Weltpolitik*—world policy—reflected William's view that, "The German Empire has become a world-empire."[81] William first used the word in 1891, apparently to differentiate his policies from the *Realpolitik* approaches of Bismarck's reign. William continued to insist that he sought only peace, suggesting, "Far be it for me to use this strength for aggressive purposes. Germany needs neither warlike glory nor acquisitions in any part of the globe…"[82] By 1896, however, William was beginning to chart a new path forward, noting in a speech, "In relation to other navies our own navy is still small, is in the budding stage; but through our discipline we must become strong…"[83] As German historian Holger Herwig writes, "Wilhelm II desired to raise Germany to world-power status (*Weltmacht*, a term that he first used publicly on 18 January 1896) with a navy completely dependent upon him."[84] Tirpitz later noted, "About 1896 the British navy began to have the feeling that we were competitors…"[85]

In 1897, Bernhard von Bulow was appointed State Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Bulow was also a supporter of *Weltmacht* and he commented, "the days when the German happily surrendered the land to one of his neighbors, to another sea, and reserved for himself the heavens… Those days are over… We don't want to put anyone in the shade, but we too demand our place in the

[81] William II, "The Beginning of World Politics," Berlin, June 16, 1896, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 102. Also see Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 16.

[82] Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 60.

[83] William II, "To the Recruits for the Navy," Wilhelmshaven, February 21, 1896, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 103.

[84] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 18.

[85] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:73.

sun."[86] Focusing on Germany's internal dynamics, Bulow admitted, "Only a successful foreign policy can help to reconcile, pacify, rally, unite."[87]

Together, William, Tirpitz, and Bulow reshaped German foreign policy, but they also reflected the changing views of the German public. The German people were "coming to accept an entirely different opinion of their ability and indeed their duty to expand than that expressed in our naval and colonial policy so far," observed Admiral von Müller.[88] He insisted, "our motto must be all or nothing. *Either* we harness the total strength of the nation quite ruthlessly, even if this means accepting the risk of a major war, *or* we confine ourselves to continental power alone."[89] Indeed, the public support for international activism was so high that one observer suggests William desired to "overthrow the status quo internationally in order to preserve it at home."[90]

Although the leadership was united in pursuit of more extensive objectives, any new spending required the Reichstag's approval. Convincing the lawmakers, who had heretofore been opposed to large naval expenditures, was a challenge. Socialists like August Bebel critiqued the proposed naval law, warning "to believe that with our fleet, yes, even if it is finished to the very last ship demanded in this law, we could take up the cudgels against England, is to approach the realm of

---

[86] Bulow quoted in Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 59–60. Also see Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 30.

[87] Bulow to Eulenburg, December 26, 1897, referenced in Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck. by Röhl (J.C.G.)*, 252.

[88] Emphasis in original. See Ibid., 162.

[89] Emphasis in original. See Ibid.

[90] Volker R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1973), 53. See Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*, 9.

insanity. Those who demand it belong not in the Reichstag but in the madhouse…"[91] Tirpitz believed that only a foreign policy catastrophe would win the Reichstag's support. He noted that a crisis with Britain would be "useful to open the eyes of our wrong-headed politicians… First that it would definitely dampen Anglophilia. Second, it would dispose the nation to create a fleet..."[92]

As the debate over the navy law continued, German activity abroad expanded. Several years earlier, the Kaiser had sent Tirpitz to China to choose the location for a new German settlement. William later sent his brother on a mission to China that was to be "nothing more than the first expression of the newly united and newly arisen German Empire in its tasks beyond the seas… it is my duty to follow up the new German Hansa and to give it the protection which it has a right to expect from the empire and the Emperor."[93] William insisted that the German empire could only develop "properly and securely if it feels itself safe under the power of the empire. Imperial power means sea power, and sea power and imperial power are so interdependent that the one cannot exist without the other."[94] In 1898, Germany signed a 99-year lease for Kiaochow and began to build Tsingtao into an economically successful colony. Tirpitz also looked beyond China to the island of Langkawi in the Malacca Straits, which he called essential for "our future

[91] August Bebel, March 24, 1898, quoted in Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 194–195.

[92] Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 114.

[93] "The Chinese Situation and the Mailed Fist," letter from William II to Prince Henry, December 15, 1897, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 188.

[94] "The Chinese Situation and the Mailed Fist," letter from William II to Prince Henry, December 15, 1897, reproduced in Ibid., 120.

further expansion in East Asia."[95] The effort to develop a Germany colonial policy in China was later identified by Bulow as "the first practical step on the way to *Weltpolitik*."[96]

Back in Berlin, William and Tirpitz insisted on a new naval law. One of William's advisors, Baron Holstein, said in describing the Kaiser's mission, "the Navy Question now takes precedence over everything… The Kaiser wants a fleet like that of England—with 28 first-class battleships—and wants to direct his whole domestic policy to that end, i.e., to a fight."[97] William announced to the Reichstag, "The development of our battle fleet has not kept up with the tasks with which Germany is compelled to present to its maritime force. Our fleet is not sufficiently strong to secure our homeports and waters in the events of hostilities and to prevent a blockade or extensive operations by the enemy."[98] Critics argued that the navy law would usher in an era of unlimited spending, but William and Tirpitz responded that the navy law would simply put Germany on a more sustainable path toward a defensive fleet. Opponents worried that the Kaiser would not be restrained, commenting "If Neptune's trident belongs in our fist, then for the great Reich with its great fist a little fleet is not enough…"[99] At various points, William debated launching a coup against the Reichstag to ensure that the navy receive its funding. The threat of a coup shaped the political debate in the Reichstag, which finally passed the law in April 1898.

William, Tirpitz, and Bulow were in no way satisfied. The first naval law had provided funding for a basic force, but a second law was needed to fund a true battlefleet. By late 1898, Tirpitz

---

[95] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 101.

[96] Ibid., 99.

[97] Holstein to Paul von Hatzfeldt, April 14, 1897, referenced in Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 20.

[98] Quoted in Ibid., 16–161. Also referenced in Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 29.

[99] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 194. Also see Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 64.

was looking forward to the day when "Such a mass of seapower… will enable Your Majesty to pursue overseas policy on a grand scale."[100] In 1899, Tirpitz explained to William, "great states become greater and stronger and small states become smaller and weaker… The development of Germany into an industrial and commercial power is irresistible like a law of nature… Naval power is essential if Germany does not want to go under."[101] Bulow speculated, "in every century there will be a great conflict, a major liquidation in order to re-allocate influence, power and territorial possessions on the globe. Are we just about to witness another redistribution of the earth…?"[102] If Germany was to prepare for such a war, Tirpitz warned that it was vital to use this "window of opportunity" to build up its navy.[103]

William was determined not to squander any opportunity to construct his fleet. In an infamous 1899 speech, he proclaimed, "bitterly do we need a powerful German fleet."[104] William noted "the sense of power and energy which the German people are capable of… how necessary it is that we should have powerful support and that we can no longer continue without increasing our fighting strength upon the seas."[105] Attacking adversaries in the Reichstag, William continued, "I insistently requested and warned [the fleet] must be strengthened in the first eight years of my reign, and if these requests had not been continually refused, and refused in ways which heaped scorn and ridicule upon me, we would have been able to advance our growing trade and our

---

[100] Tirpitz letter to William II, referenced in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 178.

[101] Tirpitz to William II, September 28, 1899, referenced in Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 139. Also see Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 31.

[102] Bulow, *Reden*, I 98, referenced in Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 35.

[103] Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 179.

[104] William II, "Bitterly we need a Powerful German Fleet," Hamburg, October 18, 1899, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 150–151.

[105] Ibid., 151.

oversea interests far differently."[106] Finally, William concluded that, "the Fatherland is great and powerful… proud of its greatness… conscious of its inner worth… Let it make the sacrifices which our position as a world-power demands."[107]

Germany, however, was in a particularly precarious position. Its navy was far too weak to compete directly with Great Britain, but its construction was starting to arouse London's fears. In a particularly revealing comment, Bulow warned, "in view of our naval inferiority, we must operate so carefully, like the caterpillar before it has grown into the butterfly."[108] The Kaiser, however, was unable to constrain himself. William unashamedly announced, "in distant areas, no important decision should be taken without Germany and the German Kaiser."[109] Tirpitz was similarly boastful, noting that "a battle fleet is for Germany an absolute necessity without which Germany will meet her ruin. Four world powers: Russia, England, America and Germany…"[110]

A larger navy required a broader base of support. The creation of the German Fleet Association was a critical step. Its mission was "the arousing, cherishing, and strengthening in the German people of understanding for and interest in the meaning and purpose of a navy…"[111] Echoing Tirpitz, the charter noted, "The Navy League considers a strong German navy a necessity, especially for security the coasts of Germany against the danger of war, [and] for maintaining

---

[106] Ibid., 152–153.

[107] Ibid., 153.

[108] Bulow on July 26, 1899 in Kennedy, German World Policy (2).

[109] William II, Wilhelmshaven, July 3, 1900, referenced in Mombauer and Deist, *The Kaiser New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany*, 16. See also Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 239.

[110] Tirpitz, Denkschrift zum Immediatvortrag, September 28, 1899 in Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 82.

[111] Die Flotte, no. 1, January 1900, 15 referenced in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 166.

Germany's position among the world powers…"[112] The public's view of Germany's role was changing rapidly. Scholar Adolph Wagner wrote, "The German is again emerging as the major people. If anyone is to be first among equals, then it will be he and not the Frenchman or the Briton."[113] A German naval historian notes, "Through organizations such as the Colonial League and the Navy League, young Germans expressed a desire to expand beyond the Continent. Wilhelm II became the spokesman for this age."[114] In fact, the German Fleet Association's mantra was, "For German strength and German tongue there must be room still on this earth!"[115]

Budding public support for the navy, orchestrated in no small part by Tirpitz himself, led directly to expansionist policies. Bulow commented, "The question is not, whether we want to colonize or not, but that we must colonize, whether we want it or not… We can't do anything other than carry out *Weltpolitik*."[116] Tirpitz wrote to Bulow, "I should be content with the knowledge that I have been able to provide for you the tools you need for the development and expansion of Germany."[117] William also insisted that Germany, "had great tasks to accomplish outside the narrow boundaries of old Europe" and that her future was "less in Europe than in the entire world."[118] Admiral von Müller, noted British domination and commented that if a war occurred it would "have the aim of breaking England's world domination so as to lay free the necessary colonial possessions for the central European states who need to expand."[119]

---

[112] Ibid.
[113] Quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 310.a
[114] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 3.
[115] See Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 311.
[116] Referenced in Ibid.
[117] Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 423.
[118] See Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 311.
[119] Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck. by Röhl (J.C.G.)*, 163.

As the fight over the second naval law came to a head in 1900, it became politically necessary to focus on the fleet's defensive rationale. When Bulow was asked to explain the meaning of the term *Weltpolitik*, he said, "We have no intention at all of carrying out an aggressive policy of expansion. We intend only to protect the important interests which, through the natural course of events, we have acquired in all parts of the world."[120] In another venue Bulow argued, "We must never fail to insist that our naval construction has no offensive purpose behind it but is intended only to create a steady increase in the risk which any power threatening our peace must take to attack us."[121] Albert Ballin commented, "Without a strong fleet Germany will be very much reduced as a power for friend and foe alike in a future war… In the brutal struggle of nations for light and air, strength alone counts in the final analysis."[122]

Nevertheless, the desire of German leaders for expansion, colonies, and an offensive fleet was difficult to hide. William's own advocacy was overtly expansionist. "How powerfully the wave beat of the ocean knocks at the door of our people," he remarked, "and forces it to demand its place in the world as a great nation; drives it on, in short, to world politics. Germany's greatness makes it impossible for her to do without the ocean…"[123] In another speech William proclaimed, "I shall carry through to its completion the work of reorganizing my navy in order that it may stand justified at the side of my army and that through it the German Empire may also be in a

[120] Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 480.

[121] Ibid., 113.

[122] Ballin quoted from February 27, 1900 in *Nachrichten,* referenced in Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 90.

[123] William II, "The Ocean Knocks at Our Door," Kiel, July 3, 1900, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 162.

position to win outwardly the place which she has not yet attained."[124] Meanwhile, the German admiralty warned, "If we wish to promote a powerful overseas policy and to secure worthwhile colonies, we must be prepared first and foremost for a clash with England or America."[125]

Naval advocates prevailed in June 1900, when the second naval law passed the Reichstag. The law dramatically increased the size of the navy, including the foreign fleet. William explained the need for a foreign fleet by noting, "The German people is of one mind with its princes and its Emperor in the feeling that in its powerful development it must set up a new boundary post and create a great fleet which will correspond to its needs."[126] Tirpitz suggested several years later, "If we want to become a great people, we must advance forward. If our language, our German character, our faith and our morals are worthy to stand, as equals, next to those of other peoples, we must make them accessible to foreign peoples."[127] Reflecting on the conditions around 1900, one leading German historian concludes, "Given how the world looked at that time, a nation like Germany, in its narrow and, due to its expansion, increasingly narrowing existence, had necessarily to come to the conclusion that the creation of a larger colonial empire was indispensable to secure its future."[128]

With a larger German fleet under construction, the Anglo-German competition began to take shape. After Bulow shifted from State Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Chancellor in October

---

[124] William II, "On the Threshold of the New Century," Berlin, January 1, 1900, reproduced in Ibid., 157.

[125] Quoted in Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 43.

[126] William II, "Net Boundary Posts," Berlin, February 13, 1900, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 158.

[127] Tirpitz to his daughter, July 10, 1900, referenced in Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*, 36.

[128] Michael Epkenhans, "Wilhelm II and 'his' navy, 1888-1918," 22 in Mombauer and Deist, *The Kaiser New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany*.

1900, he and other leaders used public concerns to rouse support for further investments. Bulow directed the press to explain "How necessary the increase of the fleet has been. No successful overseas policy without a strong fleet."[129] William triumphantly announced, "we have conquered for ourselves a place in the sun. It will now be my task to see to it that this place in the sun shall remain our undisputed possession..."[130] Several years later, a German warplanner stated, "If we want to pursue overseas policy and secure valuable colonies in the future, we need to be primarily prepared for a confrontation with either England or America."[131] In 1904, William insisted, "The Fleet alone gives me the prestige I require in England."[132]

William's inconsistency on his aims proved problematic. In 1904, he noted, "if ever, in the future, history should tell of German world-dominion or a Hohenzollern hegemony, neither of these things should have been founded on conquests by the sword, but on the mutual confidence of nations animated by a similar ambition…"[133] Yet, William still desired colonies abroad. As one scholar explains, "he ordered Hohenlohe to annex Formosa and to acquire Mozambique so as to free Germany from her dependence on British coaling stations."[134] One consistent trend was growing confidence in Germany's economy and fleet. Adolf Wagner wrote, "The decisive fact is the principle of power, of force, the right of power, the right of conquest, and this must

[129] Bulow in Kennedy, *German World Policy* (2).

[130] William II, "A Place in the Sun," Hamburg, June 18, 1901, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 181.

[131] Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*, 61.

[132] Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 248.

[133] Ibid., 252.

[134] Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck. by Röhl (J.C.G.)*, 130.

continue to be decisive."[135] In 1905, Tirpitz noted, "There was no other way to world power except to build a fleet. The greatest achievements are never granted to a people for nothing."[136]

In May 1906 and March 1908, the Reichstag authorized new amendments to the naval laws. The 1906 amendment added large cruisers to the foreign fleet, as well as new torpedo boats. The 1908 amendment increased the replacement rate for battleships and initiated the construction of battlecruisers. These investments were needed because the British had "taken an immense step forward with the construction of the 3 *Invincible*-class cruisers."[137]

By this time, London was genuinely worried about its waning naval supremacy. The British military attaché to Germany advised, "Germany has a high mission to carry out with the right to Colonies for the expansion of its growing population and the hegemony of the world's trade, as well as—if the people will be willing to make the pecuniary sacrifices necessary to build a sufficient Navy—the command of the sea."[138] The British Admiralty believed the German fleet, "is now a question which has gone beyond the personal ambition of one or two men… The expansion must go on until it meets a force stronger than itself, or until the policy directing the State ceases to be of a sufficiently virile nature to stimulate growth and encourage prosperity."[139]

---

[135] Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 311.

[136] Tirpitz, November 23, 1905, quoted in Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 22.

[137] Imperial Navy Office, "Memorandum concerning the Development of our Battleship and Large Cruiser Types," August 30, 1906, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 215.

[138] Col. Trench to Lascelles, August 21, 1908, referenced in Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 192.

[139] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, ed. Peter Kemp, vol. 2 (London: Navy Records Society, 1964), 347. Also see Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 310.

As Germany's strength grew, its willingness to openly challenge British power increased. In 1908, the German General Staff suggested, "Germany must follow offensive aims. Her ever-growing population points to colonial expansion, along a way that will certainly intersect England's path of world domination."[140] The cost of these policies was tremendous, and difficult for even the German economy to bear. Bulow cautioned William, "We cannot at one and the same time have the biggest army and the biggest navy. We cannot afford to engage in a Dreadnought competition with a far healthier England. The disparity between ourselves and England in battleships would probably remain much what it was for a considerable time."[141] By the spring of 1909, Bulow was struggling to obtain the funding necessary for ship construction. William advised that a negative vote on a new naval bill in the Reichstag would require Bulow's resignation. When Bulow failed, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg took his place.

Although Bethmann-Hollweg was intent on improving relations with Britain, he was swimming against a fast flowing tide. In 1910, William remarked to the American ambassador to Germany, "We do not want their colonies nor the dominion of the sea, we only want to have our rights respected. Germany is now almost as rich as England… What we want is an equal chance… It is the Germanic race… who are to lead the civilization of the world."[142] Tirpitz reflected, "With the growing strength and dignity of the German Empire, and particularly with the rise of its sea-power, even Germandom abroad began to feel itself once more a qualified and pledged member

[140] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 361.

[141] MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 308.

[142] David J. Hill, memorandum of February 4, 1910, Rochester University Library, Hill Papers, referenced in John C. G. Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941: A Concise Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 125.

of the great body of our State in blood and civilization."[143] "One does not lightly abandon the idea of great power status," commented Under Secretary of State Wilhelm Stemrich.[144]

Tirpitz warned William, "Because it is the backbone of Your Majesty's naval policy that the German fleet must be so strong that British attack becomes a risky undertaking. The position of the German Empire as a world power rests on this risk, as does the effect our fleet has in maintaining the peace."[145] In 1911, Tirpitz explained, "The purpose and aim of our naval policy is political independence from England—the greatest possible security against an English attack—and a promising chance of defense if war should come. To accomplish this purpose and this aim, we must diminish the military distance between England and ourselves."[146] Accurately portraying conditions in Berlin, two British authors writing shortly before World War I noted, "naval policy has outrun Germany's present economic development, and far exceeds the needs of German maritime interests."[147] Nevertheless, they commented, "it yet remains a fact that Germany has a great stake on the seas, and therefore that the development of the German Fleet cannot be condemned as an exotic policy prompted solely by ambitions of aggrandizement and greed."[148] The logic of German expansion was not simply William's craving, but was rooted more deeply and would prove more difficult to manage.

---

[143] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:108.

[144] Wilhelm Stemrich, October 1909, quoted in Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 92.

[145] Tirpitz quoted in Epkenhans, *Tirpitz*, 44. Also see Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 258.

[146] Tirpitz to Bethmann Hollweg, October 5, 1911 in Arthur Jacob Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 274.

[147] Sir Archibald Hurd and Henry Anson Castle, *German Sea-Power: Its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis* (Murray, 1913). x.

[148] Ibid. x.

British efforts to avert a clash culminated in the February 1912 Haldane mission. Leaders in both Berlin and London were aware of the risks they were running, but were ultimately unable to negotiate a slower naval buildup. William observed, "The 'Haldane episode' is characteristic of England's policy. The whole maneuver, conceived on a large scale, was engineered for the sole purpose of hampering the development of the German fleet."[149] He complained that "simultaneously, in America—which had an almost negligible merchant fleet; in France—whose navy was superior in numbers to the German; in Italy; in Russia—which also had ships built abroad—vast construction programs were carried out without eliciting one word of protest from England."[150]

Instead of slowing construction, German leaders feared a British trap and announced a new amendment to enhance the existing naval law. The new navy law increased the number of battleships, cruisers, and torpedo boats, while also adding a substantial number of submarines. Frustrated with the failed negotiations, Grey remarked, "The German Emperor is ageing me; he is like a battleship with steam up and screws going, but with no rudder, and he will run into something some day and cause a catastrophe."[151]

On December 8, 1912, William met his military leadership for an infamous discussion on the prospects of war. At the meeting, General von Moltke commented, "I regard a war as inevitable and the sooner the better…"[152] Tirpitz, on the other hand, requested a "postponement of the great

---

[149] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 156.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Grey quoted in Jonathan Steinberg, "Diplomatie als Wille und Vorstellung: Die Berliner Mission Lord Haldane sim Februar 1912," 263-282, in Schottelius and Deist, 269, and translated in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 335.

[152] See MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 335.

struggle by 1.5 years."[153] This assessment matched the view of other navy leaders that by "autumn of 1914… our naval armament will have achieved its purpose."[154] Moltke was concerned that "the Navy would not be ready then either and the Army's position would become less and less favorable; the enemies were arming more rapidly than we do, as we were very short of money."[155] Soon after the war council, William commented, "England can't bear it that Germany is becoming the most powerful state on the continent and that [Europe] will unite under her leadership!"[156]

As war approached, German leaders appeared increasingly willing to risk a fight. In late 1913, Tirpitz commented, "In the end it would seem more worthy of a great nation to fight for the highest objective and perhaps to perish with honor, than ignobly to renounce the future."[157] The more cautious Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg responded, "Certainly we must pursue a bold foreign policy, but in every diplomatic situation to rattle our swords when neither the honor, security nor future of Germany is at stake, is not only madly brave, it is criminal."[158] Nevertheless, William noted prophetically in 1914, "Either the German flag will fly over the fortifications of the Bosporus or I shall suffer the same sad fate as the great exile on the island of

[153] Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 169.

[154] Admiral Holtzendorff, Commander-in-Chief of the High Seas Fleet, October 26, 1911, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 324.

[155] Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 169.

[156] MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 337.

[157] Tirpitz, October 9, 1913, referenced in Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941*, 148.

[158] Referenced in MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 345.

Saint Helena."[159] As he foresaw, the final result of Germany's quest for expansion was World War I and William's abdication and exile following the Reich's collapse.

Ways: Adopting a Control Strategy

Long before Germany moved to challenge Britain, its leaders recognized that their new aims would require a strategic revision. As early as the 1890s, William agreed with naval leaders that a shift away from coastal defense was needed, but he was unsure about the new strategy that Germany should adopt. Two options were conceivable: an offensive sea denial strategy of commerce raiding or an offensive sea control strategy of fleet action. The former required cruisers while the latter required battleships.

According to Tirpitz, William initially "intended to speak unreservedly in favor of a cruiser war."[160] The decision was difficult though, and one observer writes, "For the first nine years of his reign, he wavered between a battleship and a cruiser navy. He could change his mind from one to the other virtually overnight."[161] Tirpitz insisted, "since exclusive cruiser war from the beginning renounces the strongest means which naval war offers it can gain validity only in specific cases and cannot therefore be the purposeful major aim for the development of a great naval power. It is, rather, the last and only means of the vanquished or originally important power at sea…"[162] Tirpitz maintained that sea control should be Germany's ultimate aim because, "However one may plan in the specific case of waging war at sea, strategically

[159] William II quoted in Fischer, *Krieg*, 488, in Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 144.
[160] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:76.
[161] Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 82.
[162] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 76.

offensively or defensively, by limitation to squadron war or through the addition of cruiser war, the struggle for control of the sea is decisive and its major outcome will be achieved today as always through battle."[163]

German naval strategy in this period is best captured by Tirpitz's Directive (*Dienstschrift*) IX of 1895. The memo ushered in a fundamental change in German naval strategy, which would persist until World War I. No longer would coastal defense or commerce raiding suffice, instead Germany's fleet would seek a main battle action at sea. The motivation, in Tirpitz's mind, was the need for Germany to expand its influence. Directive IX noted, "A state that has maritime interests, which amounts to the same thing as world interests, must represent them and make its power tangible beyond its territorial waters. The worldwide protection of national trade and industry… are impossible without a fleet capable of the offensive… Therein lies the most important purpose of the fleet."[164] Directive IX contained a section entitled "The Natural Purpose of a Fleet Is the Strategic Offensive" that argued, "when the sea became the best highway for commerce… the acquisition of sea supremacy became the first mission of a fleet; for only when sea supremacy is achieved can the enemy be forced to conclude peace."[165]

Implementing Directive IX would require political support, but opposition in the Reichstag was substantial. As Tirpitz later reflected, "Two lines of thought were emerging at that time: the tactical necessity for a battle fleet… and the political necessity of establishing a protecting navy for Germany's maritime interests… Without sea-power Germany's position in the world

[163] Ibid.
[164] Dienstschrift IX, 3 Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 93.
[165] Ibid., 92.

resembled a mollusk without a shell."[166] Tirpitz wrote to Admiral Hollmann, head of the Imperial Naval Office, of the need "to turn our navy into the power factor which Germany sorely needs in peace as in war if it is not to relinquish its position among the Great Powers."[167] Conversely, Schlieffen worried, "Germany in a war against England unfortunately has no fleet which is strong enough to carry out the battle of destruction against the hostile fleet… The rest of the task of the war will fall to the German army."[168] In this climate, the heads of the three naval offices struggled to build the political support necessary to pass the first naval law.

As William looked for new leaders to implement his vision, his focus settled on Tirpitz. In 1895, William asked Tirpitz, "How should we craft a program for the expansion of the navy in order to form a basis for the future?"[169] Later that year, Tirpitz wrote to Stosch, "I believe that Germany will rapidly decline from its position as a great power in the next century unless the growth of these general sea interests is taken in hand energetically, immediately and systematically."[170] Who was to carry out this mission? Tirpitz himself. He was effective in spreading the desire for a stronger fleet and a new naval strategy throughout the German population. Only a few years later, an observer noted, "What had been the closely guarded plan of an inner cabal in January 1896 had become the wish of a substantial majority of the Reichstag by March 1898."[171]

---

[166] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:77.

[167] Tirpitz to Hollmann, February 14, 1895, referenced in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 216.

[168] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 210–211. Also referenced in Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 127.

[169] Senden to Tirpitz, December 17, 1895, quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 109.

[170] Tirpitz to Stosch, December 21, 1895, quoted in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 222.

[171] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 193–195.Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 24.

The first naval law not only provided funds for the German navy to implement its new approach, but the legislation also justified the strategy. The explanation accompanying the law noted, "To protect Germany's sea trade and colonies in the existing circumstances there is only one means: Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even for the adversary with the greatest sea power a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil her position in the world."[172] German navy documents still insisted, "the French North Fleet and the Russian Baltic Fleet are our probably enemies," but German leaders were clearly shifting focus to Great Britain.[173] The decision to invest in the fleet was driven in large part by the Kaiser, but the resulting tension with Great Britain was not his intent. Bulow later recalled, "What William II most desired and imagined for the future was to see himself, at the head of a glorious German Fleet, starting out on a peaceful visit to England… No German and, above all, no English pacifist was filled with a profounder or more honest love of peace than was William II. It was his own and our misfortune that his words and his gestures never coincided with his real attitude in the matter."[174]

William's actions before World War I suggest that the Kaiser did not actually desire war with Great Britain. Yet, William's statements indicated otherwise. The Kruger telegram supporting the Boers was the most public offense. When William privately requested British support in obtaining colonies, he was refused and reflected, "I realized unless I had a Navy sufficiently mighty that even you would have to think a little bit before you told me to 'go to hell…' my

[172] Hurd, *German Fleet* (I), Appendix.
[173] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 78.
[174] Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 513.

commerce would not progress."[175] He warned, "Only when we can hold out our mailed fist against his face, will the British lion draw back, as he did recently before America's threats."[176] The Kaiser's own mother commented, "William's one idea is to have a Navy which shall be larger and stronger than the British Navy."[177] Bethmann-Hollweg would say of William, "His fundamental idea is to break England's position in the world to Germany's advantage. For this he needs a fleet…"[178] British politician Benjamin Disraeli lamented, "The balance of power has been entirely destroyed, and the country which suffers most, and feels the effect of this great change most, is England."[179]

Although Germany's offensive naval strategy now posed a serious threat to Britain, William complained, "Only an evil will could interpret a fleet capable of defending the coastline as an instrument of malign intention."[180] General Alfred von Waldersee attested in 1897, "The emperor is, as I have known for some time, by no means a man to take the offensive."[181] William managed to ignore the main result of his chosen policy, hoping that a strong German fleet would make the Reich an attractive ally for Great Britain without incentivizing competition or an arms race. Bulow suggested in 1898, "If in our naval competition we laid more stress on defense, the principal reason for tension between us and England would be removed, and possibly it would

---

[175] Mark Edward Frederic Kerr, *Land, Sea, and Air;: Reminiscences of Mark Kerr* (Longmans, Green and Co, 1927), 162–167. Quoted in MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 307.

[176] Referenced in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 224.

[177] William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York: Knopf, 1951), 428. Also referenced in Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 33.

[178] MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 274–275.

[179] Quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 27.

[180] MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 219.

[181] Ibid., 230–231.

also be better for our own security."[182] Yet, William's military leaders remained focused on beating the British navy at sea. Admiral Knorr wrote, "The most important of our navy's tasks in war is to assure its unconditional command of the sea in the Baltic and in the North Sea to the Channel, which includes the task of beating the enemy in open battle in these waters."[183]

Many in the Reichstag remained skeptical of the navy's new plan, but British actions provided the cover for a new naval law. In 1899, the British stopped two German commercial ships in pursuit of contraband headed to the Boers. William and Tirpitz were overjoyed. Tirpitz reportedly exclaimed, "Now we have the wind we need for bringing our ship into port. The Naval Law will go through. Your Majesty must present a medal to the captain of the English ship in gratitude for having put through the Naval Law."[184] William later released the text of a telegram that noted, "I hope that events of the last few days will have convinced ever-widening circles that not only German interests but also German honor must be protected in distant oceans, and that to this end Germany must be strong and powerful on the seas."[185] William later recalled that he "ordered up champagne" and "drank joyously to the new law, its acceptance and the future German fleet…"[186] When the second naval law passed in 1900, the navy finally had the political support it required to execute its new strategy.

The first major German action abroad came in China. When Baron Clemens von Ketteler was killed in China by Boxers, William was determined to make his mark. "Just as a thousand years ago the Huns under their King Attila made a name for themselves, one that even today makes

---

[182] Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 255.
[183] Knorr memorandum, May 2, 1897, referenced in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 231.
[184] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 228.
[185] Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 305.
[186] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 228.

them seem mighty in history and legend, may the name German be affirmed by you in such a way in China that no Chinese will ever again dare to look cross-eyed at a German."[187] William sent a detachment to China, but the mission's objective was unclear. On his way to China, Allied Supreme Commander Waldersee—who years earlier had been a leading candidate to follow Bismarck as chancellor—commented, "We should pursue world policy, if only I knew what that should be. For the moment it is only a slogan."[188]

Regardless of William's intent, German overseas activity was attracting attention. By 1902, British writers were concerned about the German fleet, noting, "The force comes today as a friend, but in future it may come as an enemy --- for Germans have openly avowed the purpose of building a fleet to destroy the British naval predominance."[189] In 1903, Harald Dähnhardt, an advisor to the German navy, suggested that it should be "sufficiently strong against our most powerful opponent at sea."[190] A confidential British memorandum warned, "In view of the fact that the whole of the German fleet is always within striking distance of our shores it is no longer safe to dispense with a modern and powerful fleet in Home waters. The maintenance of a large fleet in the Mediterranean and the China Seas does not guarantee us against German attack."[191] In a speech criticizing the British, a German conservative leader commented in 1905, "The

---

[187] Translated by Thomas Dunlap from Johannes Prenzler, ed., *Die Reden Kaiser Wilhelm II.* [*The Speeches of Kaiser Wilhelm II*]. 4 volumes. Leipzig, 209-12.

[188] Waldersee, *Memoirs*, quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 233.

[189] Ignotus, "Another 'Graceful Concession'" *National Review*, May/June 1902 in Arthur Jacob Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905 : The Anatomy of British Sea Power* (London: Putnam, 1940), 462.

[190] July 1903 memo quoted in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 252.

[191] "Notes on a Visit to Kiel and Wilhelmshaven," August 1902.

German people now knows, when it seeks expansion and the place in the sun which is its right and its destiny where is the State which thinks it can decide these matters!"[192]

By this point, the strategic debate in the navy was largely over. Tirpitz bragged that they navy, "has won the confidence of the Reichstag and of the larger and better-informed part of the German people that our initiatives in fleet development are suited to the needs and circumstances of the Reich, and we have been consistent. This confidence has brought us to the position that naval proposals meet hardly any resistance."[193] The Navy League had played an important part. As Tirpitz noted, "The Navy League, aided by recent political events, has managed to inspire a part of our public opinion with enthusiasm for the submission of a so-called major navy request."[194] A German naval observer commented in 1907, "Let us build ships and as many as we possibly can, but do not let us talk about them; we have the right to build them, we threaten no one but we wish to be strong."[195] After all, another expert had noted a year earlier, "Germany carefully keeps away from British spheres of interest… [But] what is not a British sphere of interest? ... I am first waiting until when and where London will find a German attempt at expansion 'justifiable'."[196]

As Tirpitz consolidated control of the navy and executed his fleet build-up, the focus shifted to developing a plan to fight the British at sea. Attacking the British fleet directly was risky. Tirpitz remarked as late as 1905, "Raising offensive perspectives at the present moment is to be

---

[192] Albertini (5), 334.

[193] Tirpitz, May 17, 1907, quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 282.

[194] Tirpitz to the Chancellor, November 18, 1905, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 179.

[195] G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (London: H.M.S.O, 1926), 10.

[196] Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 414.

regarded as irresponsible."[197] The Admiralty concurred, "we will not be able to wage an offensive war on the enemy coast with any chance of success, but will rather have to await the enemy in our own waters."[198] In October 1910, Admiral Müller stated in a report to the Emperor, "We acknowledge English supremacy on the sea. England has to claim it on account of her colonies and her commerce. However, we cannot accept a supremacy so overwhelming that England can attack us at any time without real risk… We want a navy strong enough to knock about the English Navy sufficiently in case of attack so that other nations do not have to fear it any more. That is the present status of the fleets."[199]

This line of thinking paralleled Tirpitz's famous risk theory. Forcing the British to accept risk required an offensive war plan. Indeed, the 1911 Admiralty plan for war with England was almost entirely offensive. It directed, "1) The task of the High Seas Fleet is to come to battle with the enemy as soon as possible, even involving all the forces at its disposal. 2) The North Sea, including the Skagerrak, is the operation area under normal conditions. 3) If the war is not to be fought offensively, His Majesty will provide special directives."[200]

Some Germans continued to ask whether the navy was really willing to confront the British fleet, which had been strengthened by Jackie Fisher. In October 1911, Tirpitz responded, "When the current naval policy was embarked upon, all relevant decision-making factors were clear about the fact that we would have to pass through a danger zone. Then the ultimate question was: either

---

[197] Tirpitz to the Chancellor, November 18, 1905, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 182.

[198] Chief of the Admiralty Staff, "Memorandum concerning Warfare against England," March 1906, reproduced in Ibid., 188.

[199] Müller's report to the Emperor, October 18, 1910 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 223.

[200] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 390.

to abdicate as a world power or to take risks."[201] Yet, naval leaders were not satisfied with posing a risk to the British, they wanted to compete for control of the seas. Admiral August von Heeringen stated, "It is in the long run completely impossible that our fleet can live with the idea that our purpose is only to be a risk for England… To maintain our morale our fleet needs a military feasible chance of victory against England."[202]

By 1912, Tirpitz's relationship will William was deteriorating. Tirpitz's critics worried that the German navy had bit off more than it could chew. In 1913, some British leaders explained why they were willing to bear such a high cost for naval supremacy, noting "The Navy is our one and only means of defence and our life depends upon it and on it alone."[203] The same was not true of Germany, they argued. As war neared, German naval leaders realized they had not equaled the British fleet and that a fleet action would likely be suicidal. Even Tirpitz admitted, "The English navy is developing so strongly that the risk principle and thus the basis of our naval policy are in danger."[204] As Admiral Eduard von Knorr had advised years earlier, "the war-time tasks of the Navy… must be confined to the strategic defensive."[205]

Immediately before war broke out in 1914, German naval plans were, "1) To damage the Engl[ish] through the guard [and] blockade forces in the German Bight by a mine and U-boat offensive extending to the British coast. 2) After the power relationship has been evened through

---

[201] Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 108.

[202] Heeringen quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 199.

[203] Eber Malcolm Carroll, *Germany and the Great Powers, 1866-1914: A Study in Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (Octagon Books, 1975), 676. Referenced in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 416.

[204] Tirpitz to William II, May 17, 1914, reproduced by Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 411.

[205] Admiral von Knorr, May 10, 1897, quoted in Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 121.

such waging of war and the English forces have been weakened through mines, destroyers and submarines, it is to be attempted under favorable circumstances to engage our fleet in battle through the preparation and involvement of all its strength."[206] Ironically, Directive IX had foreseen Germany's strategic challenge in World War I. The directive noted, "Enemy ships need not stay close to our coasts… but they can stand out to sea far from one's own works. Then our own fleet would have only the choice between inactivity, i.e., moral self-annihilation, and fighting a battle on the open sea."[207] The navy chose the former, with the exception of its late U-boat campaign and the battle at Skagerrak. In the end, the battlefleet's longest foray was to Scapa Flow, where its captains scuttled their ships at the close of the war in 1919.

Means: Adopting Sustainable Investments

Germany's sea control strategy would not have been possible had Tirpitz and his supporters not turned the tide of naval construction in the late 1890s. According to a member of the Imperial Naval Office in 1895, "A state with maritime or global interests (which in this respect comes to the same thing) must be in a position to back up these interests and make its power felt beyond its territorial waters… Therein lies the fleet's prime justification."[208] But the Germany fleet came too late for some. William complained in 1896, "It now again becomes evident how foolish it was ten years ago to launch a colonial policy without possessing a fleet, and to develop this

[206] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 422.
[207] Dienstschrift IX, 3 quoted in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 92–93.
[208] Ernst Levy von Halle quoted in Eckart Kehr, *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 10.

policy without keeping equal pace in the development of the fleet. We now have the liability of a large colonial possession which has become the Achilles' heel of Germany."[209]

In 1897, Tirpitz advised, "The military situation against England demands battleships in as great a number as possible."[210] He announced, "our fleet must be so constructed that it can unfold its greatest military potential between Heligoland and the Thames."[211] Doing so required a sea-going force. Tirpitz requested that ship designs "allow for a load of coal adequately large to enable them to operate off Brest or Cherbourg."[212] Watching from the British Admiralty, Lord Selborne warned, "the German Navy was being constructed with a view to being able to fight the British Navy; restricted cruising radius, cramped crew quarters, etc., meant that the German battleships were designed for a North Sea fleet and practically nothing else."[213]

Tirpitz himself explained just such a rationale for German ship design. He said, "In the distinctions between one class of ship and another, and in the choice among ship designs within the various classes, the most difficult situation in war into which our fleet can come must be used as a basis…"[214] Tirpitz was unwilling to spend on smaller craft because he still believed, "Commerce raiding and transatlantic war against England is so hopeless, because of the shortage of bases on our side and the superfluidity on England's side, that we must ignore this type of war

---

[209] Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 35.

[210] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 127.

[211] Tirpitz quoted in Ibid., 126.

[212] Tirpitz memo on "General Criteria for the Establishment of Our Fleet According to Ship Classes and Ship Designs," July 1897, in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 42.

[213] Selborne to Marder, quoted in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 464.

[214] Tirpitz memorandum on "General Considerations on the Constitution of our Fleet according to Ship Classes and Designs," June 1897, reproduced in Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 209–221.

against England in our plans for the constitution of our fleet… Gunboats and vessels of other description… are without importance for the political significance of our fleet."[215]

In 1898, the first naval law ushered in the era of the German battleship. The law authorized construction of 19 battleships, 8 armored cruisers, and 42 other cruisers by 1904.[216] Tirpitz wrote, "The task of the battle fleet is the defense of the coasts of the nation. Number and size of ships have been exclusively determined according to this principle. Against larger sea powers, this fleet has merely the significance of a 'sortie fleet'. Any other objective is ruled out by the limited naval strength, which the law provides."[217] This was to some degree an intentional misdirection. Tirpitz noted in his memoirs, "We therefore made it appear that by this first step we were not effecting anything more than Stosch's scheme for the foundation of a fleet. The whole procedure was not to appear as a break with the past. The coast-defense idea was mentioned, partly for the sake of its historical connection and partly to prevent ourselves being charged with offensive intentions…"[218] Looking back on the first naval law, Tirpitz noted, "The fundamental idea of this draft centered round a foreign-service fleet."[219]

By the second naval law in 1900, there was no longer a desire to hide the purpose of the fleet. The law itself announced, "For the protection of sea trade and colonies there is only one means: a strong battle fleet."[220] It authorized construction of 38 battleships, 20 armored cruisers, and 38

---

[215] Ibid.
[216] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 42.
[217] Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent*, 146.
[218] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:149.
[219] Ibid., 1:119.
[220] Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 240.

light cruisers, 13 of which were intended for an overseas flotilla.[221] The doubling of the number of battleships was an unmistakable message, and came at the expense of the cruiser fleet, torpedo craft, and submarines. Of these ships, 5 battleships, 4 cruisers, 4-6 gunboats, and a torpedo-boat flotilla were to be stationed in Asia. Another 5-6 cruisers and 1-2 gunboats were devoted to the Americas.[222]

Several years later, specifications for new ships were ordered to include greater coal capacity. The justification was that given "our strategic objectives, the State Secretary basically considers it appropriate to provide for a few per cent less of coal capacity than the English."[223] This direction resulted in an increase in the range of German battleships from 4,500 nautical miles at 10 knots in the early 1890s to 8,000 nautical miles at 12 knots (and 4,000 nautical miles at 18 knots on oil) before World War I.[224] Similarly, unarmored cruisers went from 2,810 nautical miles at 15 knots to 5,500 nautical miles at 12 knots (and an additional 1,000 nautical miles at 25 knots on oil).[225] These were dramatic increases intended to permit distant sea control.

Despite his experience with torpedo development, Tirpitz remained a submarine skeptic until the eve of World War I. Tirpitz believed submarines, "can serve well in specific local and secondary purposes, but they will never bring about a great revolution…"[226] William agreed, albeit with murky login, when he commented, "We needed our fleet for coast defense and the protection of

---

[221] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 42.

[222] See Tirpitz to William II, September 28, 1899, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 56.

[223] Meeting minutes from Imperial Navy Office, September 22, 1905, Ibid., 175.

[224] See Table 1-16 in Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*.

[225] Ibid.

[226] J. E. Sutton, The Imperial Navy: 1910-1914, doctoral dissertation, unpublished, Indiana University, 1953, 301 in Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 179.

our commerce; the lesser means of defense, such as U-boats, torpedo-boats and mines, are not sufficient for the purpose."[227] This was contrary to the Admiralty's assessment that "we can hold the English fleet at our coast and subject it to the weakening effect of a blockade assignment... [via] night attacks by our cruisers and torpedo boats against enemy battleships and cruisers, the results of which may significantly increase our chances in the decisive battle."[228] Nonetheless, William complained, "the coast batteries on the Baltic were so antiquated and miserably equipped that they could have been razed within forty-eight hours by the massed fire of the heavy guns of modern battleships. Thus, our Baltic coast was practically defenseless. To protect it the fleet was necessary."[229]

German critics of the battleship did periodically raise their voices. In 1907, Vice Admiral Karl Galster issued a pamphlet called "Which Type of Naval Armament Does Germany Need?" which supported a submarine or commercial war strategy.[230] In December 1907, the liberal newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt* expressed concern about the naval build-up. It noted, "The tasks of our fleet consist of the protection of our overseas trade, the safe-guarding of Germans abroad, and the defense of our coasts. It will never be able to fulfill the first two tasks, for the last, however, our forces suffice."[231] Instead of the existing shipbuilding plan, the paper suggested, "An improvement of our coastal fortifications, the creation of a strong submarine arm and

---

[227] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 156–157.

[228] Chief of the Admiralty Staff, "Memorandum concerning Warfare against England," March 1906, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 195.

[229] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 156–157.

[230] See Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 97.

[231] J. E. Sutton, The Imperial Navy: 1910-1914, doctoral dissertation, unpublished, Indiana University, 1953, 308 in Padfield, *The Great Naval Race*, 179.

numerous mines are enormously more commendable for the purpose than the over-hasty construction of our fleet of capital ships which will hardly come to action against the British."[232]

Undeterred, Tirpitz rejected U-boats, commenting, "The U-boat is, at present, of no great value in war at sea."[233] Tirpitz later explained his focus on the battlefleet and power projection by noting, "I refused to throw money away on submarines so long as they could only cruise in home waters, and therefore be no use to us..."[234] One historian writes, "Tirpitz also hesitated, no doubt, because the submarine had no part in his beloved risk theory."[235] In 1908, noting the need for a re-evaluation, Admiral Hugo von Pohl commented, "a show-fleet, a prestige-policy, was what Tirpitz chiefly wanted; so the small cruisers and the torpedo-boats have fallen below standard in size and armament."

By the time Jackie Fisher took over as First Sea Lord, the British Admiralty had accurately concluded, "The more the composition of the new German fleet is examined, the clearer it becomes that it is designed for a possible conflict with the British fleet."[236] The German navy budget rose from 20% of the army budget in 1898, to over 35% in 1905, and 54.8% by 1911.[237] In 1908, British assessments by their naval attaché in Berlin predicted that Germany had or was building 28 battleships, 8 coastal defense ships, 15 armored or protected cruisers, 31 small

---

[232] Ibid.

[233] Quoted in Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 52.

[234] Tirpitz, *Memoirs* (2) 1, 138.

[235] Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 52.

[236] Memorandum from Selborne, February 26, 1904, quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 270.

[237] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 75.

cruisers, 81 destroyers, 47 torpedo boats, and 1 submersible.[238] Several years earlier the estimated number of submarines completed or under construction worldwide included 39 in France, 19 in Britain, 15 in Russia, 8 in the United States, and 3 in Italy, but only 1 in Germany.[239] A few years later, the comparison would show 58 submarines for Britain and 28 for Germany, although only one-eighth of British submarines were labeled offensive as compared to one-third of Germany's.[240]

German skepticism of submarines is remarkable considering their wartime effectiveness. One observer writes, "Tirpitz's dogmatism rendered him blind to the possibilities of the U-boat. He classified the submarine as a defensive weapon and a minor auxiliary to the battleship."[241] Bulow asked in late 1908, "whether the best course would not be to specialize on improving our coast defenses, increasing our stock of sea-mines, and creating a strong fleet of submarines, instead of concentrating exclusively on increasing the number of battleships." [242] Yet Tirpitz insisted, "Naturally we would have little chance against a stronger opponent without Kleinkrieg [submarine warfare]; but without a battlefleet we would have no chance at all."[243] Tirpitz commented, "We can double and triple our torpedo-boat system and submarines, we can spike our entire coast with cannon, but this part of our naval power can in no way have a pacific influence. Without a battle fleet we would be exposed to every insolence on the part of

---

[238] Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 128.

[239] "Fleets (Great Britain and Foreign Countries)" London, 1904, referenced in Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 85.

[240] See Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 426.

[241] Weir, *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*, 198.

[242] Bulow to Tirpitz, December 25, 1908, reproduced in Seligmann, *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*, 291.

[243] Tirpitz, March 17, 1909, referenced in Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 355.

England."[244] Tirpitz opposed coastal submarines even after the war, commenting, "I refused to throw away money on submarines so long as they could only cruise in home waters, and therefore be of no use to us; as soon as sea-going boats were built, however, I was the first to encourage them on a large scale…"[245]

In 1912, expecting war with Britain, William began to suggest the need for "submarine warfare against English troop transports in the Scheldt or by Dunkirk [and] mine warfare in the Thames making it an imperative to ensure a 'speedy build up of U-boats etc.'"[246] Tirpitz finally agreed on the principle that the new U-boats be able to sail greater distances and thus qualify as offensive rather than defensive assets. William's explanation after the war was that "U-boats, unfortunately, could not be pushed forward before the war to an extent commensurate with my desires… it was necessary to collect further data from experiments. Tirpitz believed that the types with which other nations were experimenting were too small, and fit only for coast defense." [247] According to William, Tirpitz argued "Germany must build seagoing submarines capable of navigating the open sea; that this necessitated a larger type… The result was that, at first, in 1914, there were only a small number of seaworthy submarines in readiness."[248]

By the eve of World War I, therefore, Germany had a great battleship fleet, but it still trailed the British navy. William had succeeded in building a fleet of sea control ships for long-distance

---

[244] Tirpitz to Bulow, January 4, 1909, referenced in Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 297.

[245] Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*, 1:179–180.

[246] Matthew Stibbe, "Germany's 'last card'. Wilhelm II and the decision in favour of unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917," 221 in Mombauer and Deist, *The Kaiser New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany*.

[247] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 236–237.

[248] Ibid.

power projection, but despite attempting to compete symmetrically with the British, Germany had failed to match their numbers. Although Tirpitz insisted after the war that he had not sought parity with the British, evidence exists to the contrary. Before the war, Tirpitz wrote, "a fleet of equal strength to England's was Germany's natural and single aim [which] could not be admitted in the past two decades but could only be kept in mind if Germany's trade and industry and colonies expanded further."[249] Without such a fleet, the British could stand watch in the North Sea with confidence that a German attack was unlikely. A German memo from 1902 had warned of just this risk, noting "We must keep in mind that the enemy's most dangerous tactic is to blockade us from a distance and to avoid any offensive actions."[250]

An asymmetric strategy might have given Germany more naval options, particularly if U-boats had been constructed in large numbers before the war and used for offensive purposes. However, as Tirpitz had observed in 1905, "we cannot avoid passing through the stages of a completely insufficient fleet and then of a mere defensive fleet… Whether we will be able to realize the German Fleet Association's hope for an offensive fleet, it is impossible to foresee at the moment…"[251] For all his efforts, the fleet was not yet sufficient in 1914.

[249] The quote was revised in Tirpitz's autobiography, but remain unaltered in German archives. See Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 422.

[250] Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*, 320.

[251] Tirpitz to William II, 1905, quoted in Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, 256.

Conclusion

> For a growing people there is no prosperity without expansion, no expansion without an overseas policy, and no overseas policy without a Navy.
>
> - Prince Adalbert of Prussia[252]

The German political and military transformation in the decades before World War I was remarkable. As this chapter has shown, a small group of German leaders shifted the Reich from a largely inward-focused regime to an internationally engaged world power. Germany's more extensive national objectives required a novel strategy, particularly for the navy. In just two decades, the navy shifted from a strategy of sea denial utilizing coastal defenses and commerce raiders to a distant sea control strategy relying on a battlefleet. The restructuring of the German navy highlighted the centrality of sustainable battleships. As one historian writes, Germany's "entire enterprise was an extreme example of a regional strategy of maritime control."[253]

What are the potential alternate explanations for Germany's shifting ends, ways, and means? Most structural and cultural explanations do not stand up to scrutiny because they cannot explain why Germany changed its approach around 1895. The hypothesis that states imitate the system's strongest power accords with Germany's mimicking of British naval policy, but does not explain why Berlin pursued coastal defenses and commerce raiding beforehand. Geography does not explain why a continental state like Germany would shift so much investment from its army to its navy. Technological explanations also fail to explain this change, since little evidence exists

[252] Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 95–96.

[253] Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*, 121.

that German engagement abroad was triggered by technological innovation. Strategic culture also struggles to explain why German policy changed so rapidly in just two decades.

Perhaps the best alternate explanations are rooted in domestic politics. There is no doubt that German support for the navy changed around 1900. However, this appears to have been more of an effect than a cause. In fact, public support was encouraged by William and Tirpitz through their support of interest groups to further pre-existing political objectives. These groups arose only after German leaders had determined that the nation's strength required a reinvigorated navy. Regarding bureaucratic explanations, navy leaders before 1890 had actually argued against the most prestigious types of ships. Moreover, rather than the navy growing in strength over time, its leaders' bureaucratic power was actually decreased during this period by William's division of the Imperial Navy's leadership into three separate and competing positions.

Another alternate argument for German actions is rooted in individual leadership. Yet, here again there is conflicting evidence. Extension of German objectives overseas has begun under Bismarck, but when William came to power in 1888, he immediately rejected overseas adventures. To argue that William drove many of the changes in the navy is to acknowledge that something changed his mind about the importance of naval power. William himself explained, "Germany had been poor, she was now growing rich…"[254] He announced, "we see the empire, although still young, growing strong within itself from year to year… this is that world-empire which the German spirit strives for."[255] William's lieutenants echoed his confidence, with Tirpitz

[254] Quoted in MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 349.

[255] William II, "The Old Order Changeth," Aix, June 19, 1902, reproduced in Gauss, *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*, 205.

proclaiming, "The German people [were] nearing the zenith of maturity."[256] Even after the war William reflected, "The general situation of the German Empire in the period before the war had become increasingly brilliant… The curve of our development tended steadily upward."[257]

Furthermore, the changes that took place in Germany were larger than just the Kaiser and his admirals. Hohenlohe commented, "It is always said the navy is a whim of the emperor's. And yet it cannot be denied that it is the German people's fault – or if you like, their merit – that we possess a navy… the German people; they wished to form a united whole, and play a part in the world…"[258] Where did this desire for a fleet come from, if not William himself? Hohenlohe argued in 1900, "The history of the past century shows that the call for a fleet has inevitably arisen whenever the desire for the unification of Germany became prominent, or the realization of this desire seemed possible or probably."[259]

Why did the Reich pursue an offensive fleet so doggedly, despite the growing danger of a conflict with Britain? The answer appears to lie in the nature of Germany's rise and the perceived requirement for overseas capabilities. Germany's expansive national objectives required an offensive strategy. German leaders could not simultaneously call for expansion of Germany's aims abroad and purchase an immobile fleet capable only of defending Germany's coasts. British enmity was not desired, but it could not be avoided either. After all, German observers worried that Britain sought, "to sentence the other capitalist states, and especially the

[256] Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 247.

[257] William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*, 298.

[258] Hohenlohe, *Memoirs*, II, 472-473, referenced in MacDonogh, *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*, 233.

[259] Ibid., 239.

strong, young, and lusty German capitalist empire, to perpetual inferiority upon the seas and thereby preserve England's hegemony over the waves forever."[260]

In the end, the core tension between Britain and Germany was whether the current balance of power reflected the distribution of benefits in the system. Efforts to avoid war without confronting this challenge were unlikely to succeed. Bulow, for example, claimed that he suggested, "The political situation would be very much facilitated for me if in our new constructions the large ships would not be given so much prominence and the emphasis would be placed on cruisers, also on torpedoes and on coastal fortifications."[261] However, as Paul Kennedy reflected, "the British desired the preservation of the status quo, the German (or, at least Wilhelm, Tirpitz and other navalists) believed that it should be altered. At the root of the naval race lay two conflicting assertions about the contemporary strategic balance and the world order."[262]

In hindsight, the clash appears inevitable. The Reich's leaders and its subjects supported the new fleet because their view of Germany had changed, and with it their objectives and the strategies and investments required to meet those objectives. Indeed, war seemed unavoidable for some leading figures at the time too. General Waldersee's prophetic final entry in his diary before his death in 1904 was: "I pray God that I may not have to live through what I see coming."[263]

---

[260] Quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 330.

[261] See Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*. Also see Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*, 159.

[262] Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 418.

[263] Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 357.

DECLINING POWERS

This chapter examines strong powers undergoing the shift from relative rise to relative decline. Many states experienced relative decline in the 20th century, but perhaps the greatest declines among the great powers were those of Britain and France. Leaders in London and Paris enjoyed unparalleled power in the 19th century, but by the turn of the 20th century they were being surpassed by competitors in Germany, Russia, and the United States. British and French leaders responded in very different ways to this change in relative power. British leaders before World War I largely continued with many of their pre-existing policies, whereas French leaders after World War I drastically altered their objectives, strategy, and investments. This chapter examines the behavior of both states and seeks to explain their different reactions to a similar predicament.

Figure 11: Transitions from Rise to Decline

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: "Power Projection" *Ends*: Extensive Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Mobility	Phase 3: "Garrison Fortification" *Ends*: Extensive Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Immobility
Weak	Phase 1: "Anti-Access" *Ends*: Limited Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Mobility	Phase 4: "Area Denial" *Ends*: Limited Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Immobility

As outlined above, the theory of perceived relative power suggest that Britain and France should have transitioned from power projection to garrison fortification defense policies as their relative decline became apparent. The theory predicts that this shift should have included a move from expansion to consolidation of national objectives, adoption of more defensive strategies, and pursuit of less mobile systems. As the pages that follow explain, this was very much the path that French leaders followed in the interwar period. British leaders, on the other hand, pursued a different set of policies, generally reinforcing existing power projection policies. Explaining why British and French leaders adopted different policies is key to understanding the conditions under which the theory of perceived relative power applies.

British Decline

> Is it contended that the weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of her fate, and that we have not the strength to sustain the burden of the empire?
>
> - Joseph Chamberlain (1897)[1]

The 19th century marked the height of Pax Britannica. In the decades following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, the British economy surged, its colonies flourished, and its navy ruled the seas. For the remainder of the century, the British Empire was without peer. Yet, these circumstances began to change as industrialization spread throughout Europe and beyond. Initially, British leaders feared a coalition of hostile continental powers, such as France and Russia. Meanwhile, Germany united and industrialized, as did the United States across the Atlantic and Japan astride the Pacific. Through the 19th century, leaders in London viewed Britain's position as fundamentally favorable. After all, Britain was strong relative to its competitors. Yet, leaders in London also recognized the Empire's declining relative position.

In examining Britain's shift from a rising to a declining power, this chapter focuses on the period from 1888 to 1914. Although individuals experienced Britain's declining relative power at different times and in different manners, perception of relative decline entered the public consciousness most clearly in the 1880s. As Lord Bolingbroke observed, "The precise point at which the scales of power turn… is imperceptible to common observation… They who are in the sinking scale… do not easily come off from the habitual prejudices of superior wealth, or power,

[1] Alexander Mackintosh, *Joseph Chamberlain: An Honest Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 217.

or skill, or courage, nor from the confidence that these prejudices inspire."[2] There was no precise moment at which British perceptions changed, but after 1905, British leaders became much more concerned about Germany's rise and the possibility that Germany might surpass Great Britain.

The theory of perceived relative power suggests that perception of relative decline should have caused British leaders to shift their national objectives, security strategy, and military investments. British national objectives should have evolved from expansion to consolidation. Consolidation should have stimulated British strategy to move from offense to defense.[3] Finally, a more defensive strategy should have encouraged the British military to rely more on immobile forces.

Yet, the predicted shift from a power projection to a garrison fortification defense policy did not occur. This is not to say that British leaders did not constrain their objectives, focus more on defense, or invest in immobile forces at all. In fact, some elements of this approach may have been attempted immediately before the outbreak of World War I. Overall, however, the magnitude of change in British defense policy remained limited. Explaining why British leaders did not adopt the expected policies is central to understanding the conditions under which the theory of perceived relative power holds.

British Defense Policy before 1905

> We are not a young people with an innocent record and a scanty inheritance. We have engrossed ourselves, in time when other powerful nations were

[2] From Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, 29 referenced in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 15.

[3] Although British leaders at the time tended to use the term "military" to discuss the Army, without reference to the Navy, the term here and throughout this chapter is used in its modern incarnation as applying to both ground and maritime forces.

> paralysed by barbarism or internal war, an altogether disproportionate share of the wealth and traffic of the world. We have got all we want in territory, and our claim to be left in the unmolested enjoyment of vast and splendid possessions, mainly acquired by violence, largely maintained by force, often seems less reasonable to others than to us.
>
> - Winston Churchill (1914)[4]

In 1880, Britain's percentage of world trade was declining, but the British Empire still accounted for 23.2% of world trade.[5] France, the United States, and Germany hovered around 11.2%, 10.1%, and 9.7% respectively.[6] British economic strength was rooted in a capable army, a dominant navy, and an Empire on which the sun never set. As late as 1883, the British navy nearly outnumbered the rest of the world in capital ships, maintaining 38 battleships as compared to 19 for France, 11 for Germany, 7 for Italy, 3 for Russia, and none for the United States or Japan.[7]

Yet, Britain's circumstances were changing. The rate of manufacturing growth in Britain was significantly lower than that in Germany, the United States, Russia, France, and Italy.[8] Figures compiled by the League of Nations show that the United Kingdom and Ireland saw only 1.6%-1.8% average yearly growth in manufacturing from 1881 to 1913, as compared to 4.2%-5.2% for the United States, 4.0%-5.1% for Germany, 4.8%-6.6% for Russia, and 2.5%-3.5% for France.[9]

---

[4] Churchill's memorandum of January 10, 1914 quoted in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 322–323.

[5] Figures from Bundesarchiv-Militararchiv, Freiburg recreated in Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 190.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 209.

[8] League of Nations, *Industrialization and Foreign Trade*, League of Nations. Series of Publications. II. Economic and Financial (United States: League of Nations, 1945), 56.

[9] Ibid.

However, the British people did not have access to these figures because trade and manufacturing data of this sort was not disseminated.

Public concern about Britain's relative growth rate emerged due to a series of successive shocks. Paul Kennedy writes, "The era of inexpensive maritime supremacy came to a sudden end in 1884" when British competitors began to build large naval forces.[10] By 1886, the signs of British decline were more apparent, with the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry reporting, "We cannot, perhaps, hope to maintain, to the same extent as heretofore, the lead which we formerly held among the manufacturing nations of the world… our supremacy is now being assailed on all sides."[11] These shocks aroused concern about Britain's relative position, although they did not result in a fundamental change in British objectives or strategy. The pages that follow trace this process in the years before 1905.

Ends: Expansive Objectives

The first signs of British decline emerged in 1884, when the *Pall Mall Gazette* highlighted concerns about French shipbuilding and forced the government to spend an additional £5.5 million on naval ships, ordnance, and coaling stations.[12] As France and Russia grew closer, British leaders fretted about having to fight a combination of the two. The French and Russian navies would pose a challenge to the British position in the Mediterranean, particularly if their forces were allowed to combine. Meanwhile, British concerns about Russian activities in Afghanistan and French endeavors in Africa created a need for deployable ground forces.

[10] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 178.
[11] "Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry: Final Report," 1886, xxiv.
[12] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 178.

These same concerns re-emerged again in 1888 when a second panic arose in London. "Confidence in the ability of the Navy was weakened by extensive building programmes in France and Russia," writes one observer, who notes that as a result, "a general overhaul of naval and military machinery was carried out."[13] This resulted in the Imperial Defence Loan of 1888 and the Naval Defence Act of 1889, as well as construction of defensive fortifications for London. Britain also adopted a two-power standard, intended to ensure that the British navy always equal or surpass the strength of the next two strongest navies. Modern observer Andrew Lambert writes that the 1889 Naval Defence Act shows, "Britain was re-asserting her sea control strategy."[14] He suggests that Britain intended to "blockade her main enemy, France, with a fleet of ocean-going battleships capable of fighting on the open ocean, supported by a large force of cruisers, for close blockade and commerce protection…"[15]

As British leaders and the public came to recognize the Empire's declining position relative to its continental competitors, they initiated a debate about the scale of British ambitions. Over the past century, the Empire had expanded rapidly, acquiring Egypt, Singapore, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Afghanistan, and Burma. In addition, India was now under direct control of the British crown, as were large and growing areas of sub-Saharan Africa. In short, the 19th century has been a time of unparalleled global reach and rapid territorial expansion for the British Empire. Yet,

---

[13] J. K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force* (London: Methuen, 1938), 12.

[14] Andrew Lambert, "Royal Navy and the Defence of Empire, 1856-1918," 118 in Greg Kennedy, *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856-1956*, Cass Military Studies (London: Routledge, 2008).

[15] Andrew Lambert, "Royal Navy and the Defence of Empire, 1856-1918," 118 in Ibid.

facing growing challenges from France, Russia, Germany, and the United States, questions arose about the wisdom of continuing to pursue such an expansionary policy.

At issue was not whether Britain should change its policies in Europe. "The continental policy of England, thenceforth, was fixed," wrote Jacques Pirenne, "It was to be pacific, mediating, favourable to a balance which should prevent any power from having a hegemony on the continent or controlling the Channel coasts."[16] Outside Europe, however, British leaders were raising questions about the need to consolidate power. "It is ridiculous to assert that our occupation of the Mediterranean brings us any corresponding benefit of a substantial kind," wrote the retrenchment favoring historian and journalist Sir William Laird Clowes in 1895.[17] Instead, referring to Gibraltar and Suez, Clowes insisted, "We shall effect our true object – the defence of our world-wide empire – if, as we withdraw, we take measures that will enable us, in case of necessity, to shut and bolt the two narrow doorways of this long passage."[18]

Nevertheless, supporters of continued expansion pressed their case. Foreign Secretary Lord Rosebery argued, "It is said that our empire is already large enough, and does not need extension. That would be true enough if the world were elastic, but unfortunately it is not elastic, and we are engaged at the present moment, in the language of mining, 'in pegging out claims for future.'"[19] Rosebery also noted, "We have to consider not what we want now, but what we shall want in the future. We have to consider what countries must be developed, either by ourselves or

[16] Jacques Pirenne, *Tides of History* (London: Routledge, 2006), 429.

[17] Clowes, "The Millstone round the Neck of England," (Nineteenth Century, March 1895) in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 211.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Lord Rosebery, Colonial Institute speech, 1893 in Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 77–78.

some other nation."[20] Famed imperialist Cecil Rhodes was even more vigorous, suggesting that, "The people of England… have all become Imperialists. They are not going to part with any territory… The English people intend to retain every inch of land they have got, and perhaps they intend to secure a few more inches."[21] The desire for empire would prove difficult to relinquish even as British power waned.

Meanwhile, concern about Britain's declining relative position increased. In 1893, the *Daily News* wrote, "The panic mongers are abroad and venerable Admirals are joining juvenile politicians in their attempts to prove that the British fleet, if it has not already gone to the dogs, is at least on its way to them."[22] Fears arose that any move toward retrenchment would be a boon to Britain's adversaries and a threat to its holdings around the world. Another British newspaper announced in 1898, "Imperial defence means not merely the holding of what we have. It means a great deal more than that – it means, as in Africa and China, that a vigilant eye must be kept upon the future. The Powers… have to be firmly faced."[23] Retrenchment also worried British leaders in India who warned, "A defensive attitude in India would undoubtedly lead to very grave internal troubles… it would destroy the confidence of the native army and civil population, and undermine our prestige and supremacy in the East."[24] For these reasons, First Lord of the Admiralty Frederick Richards argued, "The only true policy lies in unquestioned superiority."[25]

---

[20] Ibid.

[21] Vindex, *Cecil Rhodes; His Political Life and Speeches* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1900), 642 in Ibid., 79.

[22] *Daily News*, October 1893 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 174.

[23] Sheffield Daily Telegraph, January 22, 1898 in Ibid., 302.

[24] From Roberts memo, August 1888, in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 227.

[25] Frederick Richards in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 299.

Indeed, British policy in the late 19th century held fast to expansive objectives. Historian Paul Kennedy writes, "The decline in Britain's position as a world power and the consequent reduction of her naval strength throughout the globe began, as we have seen, a little before the Diamond Jubilee year of 1897."[26] Yet, Kennedy argues that, "In retrospect the historian can perceive that the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of 1897 did not denote the zenith of Britain's power, but constituted rather the defiant swan-song of a nation becoming less and less complacent about the increasing threats to its world-wide interests."[27] The British people became not less attached to Empire, but more focused on how to maintain what they had obtained.[28]

Rather than decreasing defense spending, British leaders increased defense spending despite concerns expressed by the Exchequer. From 1887 to 1913, both army and navy expenditures rose, albeit at different rates. Army expenditures increased from £17 million in 1887 to £27 million in 1912 (hitting a high of £94 million in 1901 due to the Boer War).[29] Navy expenditures, on the other hand, rose from £13 million to £45 million over the same period.[30] During this 25 years, the navy saw over 5% yearly growth in its budget as compared to under 2% yearly growth for the army. Although defense spending increased only slightly as compared to other government expenditures (rising from 34.9% to 38.4%), the navy share of defense spending rose from 42% to 62%.[31]

---

[26] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 323.

[27] Kennedy, *Imperial Defence*, 209.

[28] Humphrey Hugh Smith, *A Yellow Admiral Remembers* (Edward Arnold, 1932), 54.

[29] Bernard Mallet, *British Budgets 1887-88 to 1912-13* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1913), 502–503.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 505.

These spending patterns suggest that British leaders were not retrenching, but were instead expanding their capabilities to act abroad. After all, naval assets are typically more mobile and thus better equipped to operate abroad, especially for an island nation such as Great Britain. Yet, British leaders also viewed the navy as the primary force for home defense. The continental powers had large populations and enormous standing armies, which Britain could not hope to match. Their navies, however, remained quite inferior to Britain's. British naval strength prevented continental challengers from entertaining notions of a successful invasion across the English Channel.[32] As one retired military expert wrote, "Should Great Britain be shorn of her Colonies, her existence would still demand a Navy of the strength it is to-day; the need for an Army, on the other hand, would disappear."[33]

Despite the need for a strong navy for defense from invasion, the Boer War resulted in huge expenditures on the army between 1899 and 1902. Following the war, the Earl of Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, commented on the difficulty of the British position, "It is a terrific task to remain the greatest naval Power, when naval Powers are year by year increasing in numbers and in naval strength and at the same time to be a military Power strong enough to meet the greatest military Power in Asia."[34] By 1904, pressure was mounting to decrease military expenditures. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, warned, "however reluctant we may be to

---

[32] An alternate argument is that for many years the British navy saw its role more as a protector of global trade. As Vice-Admiral Humphrey H. Smith later reflected, "I don't think we thought very much about war with a big W [War]. We looked on the Navy more as a World Police Force than as a warlike institution. We considered that our job was to safeguard law and order throughout the world…" Ibid., 504.

[33] Percy Arthur Baxter Silburn, *The Colonies and Imperial Defence* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1909), 250.

[34] Selborne to Curzon, January 4, 1903, quoted in George W. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 110.

face the fact, the time has come when we must frankly admit that the financial resources of the United Kingdom are inadequate to do all that we should desire in the matter of Imperial defence."[35] Questions about how Britain should respond to changing relative power trends would sharpen as the German challenge intensified after 1905.

Ways: Offensive Strategy

For at least a century before World War I, expansive British aims had required an offensive strategy to project power around the globe. The British military had long focused on using its army and navy to control distant territory and waters. The army had been required to prevail against both continental rivals and colonial challengers. Meanwhile, as renowned historian Arthur Marder writes, "The navy was the defensive force of the empire. Its power, however strong, ended with the enemy's shore. It could never end a war. A strong military force [army] was necessary to secure the result of naval victory and make the war decisive. Once the success of the navy had cleared the sea for military transport, the army, the real offensive weapon of the nation, was set free for action."[36] In this sense, both the army and the navy were required for power projection abroad and both retained critical roles in an offensive strategy.

The British navy had evolved from a commerce raiding fleet into an offensive power projection force over several hundred years. Much like the German navy, the British navy had, "transformed from a short-range, Narrow Seas, almost a coastal-defence, force into a high-seas

[35] Cabinet Memorandum, April 28, 1904 in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 89–90.
[36] Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 70.

fleet capable of operating at long range as an ocean-going force."[37] From the late 1880s onward, however, British leaders began talking more about the wisdom of defense, particularly in home waters. Nevertheless, British strategy and investments remained largely offensive and mobile, even as London's relative power declined.

Britain's strategic position relied on the difficultly of invading the British Isles. To do so would require transportation of tens or hundreds of thousands of troops from the continent across seas controlled by the British navy. The British could therefore defend the Isles either on land or at sea. The advantages of defending at sea were numerous. First, Britain retained a substantial maritime edge over its continental adversaries, who had to build armies to protect themselves against invasion by other neighbors. Second, Britain could use either sea control or sea denial to prevent an invasion. Third, Britain was a trade based economy and required substantial food imports, so a continental power in control of its maritime approaches could simply blockade Britain rather than invade her. As Admiral Fisher argued, "The Navy is the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th… *ad infinitum* Line of Defence! If the Navy is not supreme, no Army however large is of the slightest use. It's not invasion we have to fear if our Navy is beaten, IT'S STARVATION!"[38]

The belief that Britain needed to exercise sea control was central to its longstanding naval strategy. As the head of the cabinet's Colonial Defence Committee would later observe, "the maintenance of sea supremacy has been assumed as the basis of the system of Imperial defence against attack over the sea. This is the determining factor in shaping the whole defensive policy

---

[37] R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: The Emergence of the English Nation,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 343. Referenced in Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 25.

[38] Fisher, 1904 cited by Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 65.

of the Empire…"[39] Many British thinkers also noted Alfred Thayer Mahan's observation, "the possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive; and which, by controlling the great common, closes the highways by which commerce moves to and from the enemy's shores. This overbearing power can only be exercises by great navies…"[40] Mahan's influence in Britain was substantial and many accepted his conclusion, in Paul Kennedy's words, that "large battlefleets, and a concentration of force, decided control of the oceans…"[41]

For these reasons, British leaders and politicians remained committed to ensuring sea control. Sea control in turn required that Britain build a fleet capable of seeking out and destroying its opponent in an offensive engagement. Not only that, but an offensive strategy demanded mobile vessels. An 1896 Directorate of Military Intelligence memo suggested that purely defensive dispositions in the Mediterranean, "would chain our vessels to the Italian waters, and deprive them of that mobility which is essential to the principles of our naval strategy."[42] In the minds of many, British strategy was permanently set. Naval records proclaimed, "British fighting policy [is] to take the offensive, and bring on action with the enemy at the earliest possible moment."[43] Others suggested, "Strategic freedom of maritime transit is the primary and indefeasible condition of the defence of the British Empire. Every fleet capable of impairing that freedom must be defeated or 'contained' in the military sense; so blockaded, that is, that it cannot leave its

[39] "Military Needs of the Empire in a War with France and Russia," August 12, 1901, 18 in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 185. Also quoted in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 75.

[40] Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, 13138.

[41] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 182.

[42] Memorandum on Naval Policy, October 13, 1896 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 577.

[43] Notes for Navy Debates, 239 in Ibid., 111.

port of shelter without fighting an action against a superior force."[44] Admiral Jackie Fisher wrote, "Our maritime frontier must be the territorial waters of the enemy."[45]

It became clear around 1900, however, that emerging technology might permit alternative strategies. France, for example, had adopted a different naval policy that relied on sea denial and submarines. French leaders openly admitted that Britain had a stronger navy. In a 1900 letter to Joseph Chamberlain, Admiral Fisher quoted French Admiral Dompierre d'Hornoy as stating, "There is no doubt whatever that England still has the finest Navy, and that it is superior to the French in regard to the capacity of the officers and men, and also in material."[46] Against this British strength, French strategists believed that sea denial could best accomplish their objectives. An 1899 assessment by the British naval attaché in France noted that after destroying British commerce, the French policy would seek to counter a British blockade through "successful attacks of torpedo and submersible boats, and possibly by fire from the shore batteries… Using submersible torpedo boats, not only for defending their home ports and naval bases abroad, but also in the Channel for attacking our ships in their own ports."[47]

British experts, on the other hand, discounted the potential of such a denial strategy. The Director of Naval Intelligence countered, "Undoubtedly the French have done much to strengthen their position in the Western Mediterranean by means of fortified bases and torpedo boats… but it is

---

[44] George Sydenham Clarke Clarke and James R. Thursfield, *The Navy and the Nation; Or, Naval Warfare and Imperial Defence* (London: J. Murray, 1897), 149.

[45] The Personal Papers of Lord Rendel (London, 1931), 241 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 68.

[46] Fisher to Joseph Chamberlain, 1900 in Reginald Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Admiral of the Fleet*, vol. 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), 189.

[47] April 1899 memorandum in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 338.

difficult to believe that they can have in their present state a decisive influence on the War."[48] Other experts asserted, "The French coast of the Channel is now studded with torpedo-boat stations, and this development of what is known as the 'Defense Mobile' has for its object to make it impossible for British battleships to blockade any of the French naval ports owing to the danger to which they would be exposed by torpedo-boats and submarines."[49] Admiral Fisher warned of the danger posed by French torpedo boats, stating that "So long as torpedo-boats from these stations [in France near the Channel] have a free range they would practically deny all passage of the Straits of Dover by night to merchant ships, and except in very clear weather, even to men-of-war."[50] Yet, the British navy was not interested in submarines at the time.

Although French objectives were certainly different than those of Britain, naval officers began to ask whether a sea denial strategy could accomplish Britain's objectives.[51] One reason to consider sea denial was that technological breakthroughs were being made on submarine development. In 1903, Director of Naval Intelligence Admiral Battenberg noted that the French, "point out with pride that the existence of submarines as part of the defense mobile makes any attempt at invasion of French territory the act of lunacy. They are quite right and the argument cuts both ways."[52] The Board of Admiralty's H. O. Arnold-Forster suggested, "the introduction of this new weapon, so far from being a disadvantage to us, will strengthen our position. We have no desire

---

[48] Ibid.

[49] Selborne, "Navy Estimates, 1901-1902," January 17, 1901, 5-6 in Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, Studies in Maritime History (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 28.

[50] Notes for Navy Debates, 111-114 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 165.

[51] Although French strategy appeared defensive, other disagreed. One naval leader suggested, "It must, however, be remembered that up to a comparatively recent date the French naval preparations were defensive rather than offensive – that is, they seemed to *fear* attack on themselves rather than making it on us." Quoted in Ibid., 518.

[52] Ibid., 370–371. Also see Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 64.

to invade any other country; it's important that we ourselves are not invaded. If the submarine proves as formidable as some authorities think is likely to be the case, the bombardment of our ports, and the landing of troops on our shores will become absolutely impossible."[53]

Yet, a sea denial strategy seemed to many an unnecessary strategy. Moreover, it challenged British naval culture and would not fulfill the expansive aims to which British leaders clung. Admiral Edmund Freemantle's memoirs exemplify common views of the submarine. Freemantle cited Lord St. Vincent in saying that anyone who supported submarine development was, "the greatest fool that ever existed, to encourage a mode of war which they who commanded the seas did not want, and which, if successful, would deprive them of it."[54] Thus, command of the sea remained the chosen strategy.[55] The submarine and torpedo were unable to accomplish sea control and thus they were initially seen by most in London as threats rather than opportunities.

The British navy remained opposed to not only denial strategies but defensive schemes as well. Paul Kennedy argues that Britain could "simply stand on the defensive… a stalemate in the North Sea was the most secure strategy imaginable for Britain… Neither the British public, led by the Press to expect great deeds from the navy, nor the service itself, which has for years been preparing for *Der Tag*, were prepared to accept such a tame policy, however."[56] In fact, in 1902 the Admiralty required that "the world 'defense' not appear. It is omitted advisedly, because the primary object of the British navy is not to defend anything but to attack the fleet of the

---

[53] "Value of Submarines in War," enclosed in Arnold-Forster to Selborne, August 1901 referenced in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 50.

[54] Cited in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 351.

[55] The Director of Naval Intelligence defined command of the sea as requiring that it, "be possible to transport across the waters commanded a large Military Expedition without risk of serious loss." Cited in Ibid., 65.

[56] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 243.

enemy."[57] In an earlier letter, Admiral Fisher had written, "Success in war depends upon the concentration of an overwhelming force upon a given spot in the shortest period time, and, as the attacking power has the privilege of selection, the advantage is generally on that side."[58]

Admiral Fisher took over as First Sea Lord in 1904 and upon assuming office he unveiled a scheme to overhaul the British navy and solidify its place as the world's commanding force. Fisher sought traditional sea control with his development of the Dreadnought and battlecruiser. He also made clear on numerous occasions that he favored an offensive strategy for the navy. On the other hand, Fisher was one of the earliest supporters of sea denial capabilities, such as submarines and torpedo craft. Yet, investments in denial capabilities increased only marginally in the early 1900s, while power projection systems attracted substantial funding surges.

One major change in British defense policy during Fisher's reign was the recalling of British capital ships to home waters. Fisher raised questions about British naval forces overseas and changed naval posture to be more geographically associated with defense of the British Isles. Fisher justified the move in offensive terms, however, noting "association with certain lands has led to a tacit belief that those particular squadrons are for the protection of the lands they frequent, and not generally for the destruction of the enemy's fleet wherever it may happen to be."[59] Despite the justification, this move amounted to a recognition that it might be necessary to consider scaling-back British ambitions. According to naval historian Nicholas Lambert, "From

---

[57] Custance, "Memorandum on Sea Power and the Principles Involved in it," July 1902 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 54.

[58] Fisher to Selborne, December 1, 1900 in Arthur Jacob Marder, ed., *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 167–168.

[59] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 36.

about the beginning of 1902, historians have agreed, Britain statesmen instructed the armed forces to lower their strategic horizon. The Board of Admiralty at once complied by jettisoning commitments in the less vital regions of the globe and concentrating the fleet at home."[60]

The centralization of capital ships in home waters did not entirely prevent Britain from exerting control over critical maritime chokepoints abroad. Fisher's justification for this policy echoed Mahan, "we ought to consider the fundamental principle of war, which is to concentrate your force on the vital point of the war! We are weak everywhere and strong nowhere! We have dissipated our naval forces all over globe."[61] In 1904, Fisher noted, "Five keys lock up the world! Singapore. The Cape. Alexandria. Gibraltar. Dover. These five keys belong to England, and the five great fleets of England will hold these keys!"[62] Yet, by recalling capital ships to home waters, Britain was forced to use smaller craft to "lock up" four of the five keys. Fisher even began to openly express interest in a French-style "Defence Mobile" using torpedo boats and submarines.

This strategy therefore relied on sea denial outside home waters and it worried many British naval experts. In fact, increased discussion of defensive measures triggered a forceful response from some naval advocates. Lord Selborne responded firmly, "We will never adopt any word or phrase implying defence. The word should be struck out of the Navy's vocabulary. Offence, always offence, and nothing but offence."[63] Association of defense with weakness was frequent

---

[60] Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 4.

[61] Fisher to the Earl of Rosebery, May 10, 1901 in Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 190.

[62] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 161.

[63] Ibid., 101.

in British strategic thinking.[64] Thus, although British strategy was becoming more balanced, British leaders remained clearly committed to offensive sea control.

Means: Mobile Investments

As British leaders considered strategic alternatives, they had to weigh various missions. Naval forces would be needed for at least three purposes: 1) defending the home islands against attack, 2) defending colonies and trade routes against attack, and 3) transporting troops to the continent for a European conflict.[65] The latter two objectives required substantial mobility. Thus, through at least 1904, British leaders remained committed to highly mobile forces, which they saw as necessary for the global projection of power.

Decisions about mobility were directly related to the question of how to best divide the missions of the army and navy. Army officers argued that the army was the only force capable of repelling

[64] A 1902 Admiralty memorandum to the Royal Commission on Food Supplies argued, "a dispersion of strength for [attack or defense of commerce] is the strategy of the weak and cannot materially influence the ultimate result of the war." Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 97.

[65] In 1898, the British Regular Army included roughly 19,000 cavalry, 40,000 artillery, 8,000 engineers, 150,000 infantry, and several thousand others. This compared to over 600,000 in the German army alone. For this reason, the influential Stanhope Memorandum made clear in 1891 that, "it will be distinctly understood that the probability of the employment of an Army Corps in the field in any European war is sufficiently improbable to make it the primary duty of the military authorities to organize our forces efficiently for the defence of this country." General Annual Returns of the British Army for the year 1898 referenced in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*, 26. Data translated by Adam Blauhut in "Strength of the German Army (1890-1914)," German History in Documents and Images from Gerd Hohorst, Jürgen Kocka, and Gerhard A. Ritter, eds., "Social History Workbook: Materials on Kaiserreich Statistics 1870-1914," Munich, 1975, 171-172. Stanhope Memorandum, June 1, 1891, Appendix A in Ibid., 127.

attacks on British territories abroad.[66] As Commander-in-Chief General Lord Wolseley argued, "I know of nothing that is more liable to disaster and danger than anything that floats on the water…"[67] However, there was little appetite for increased spending on the army. Winston Churchill noted in 1901, "As to a stronger Regular Army, either we had the command of the sea or we had not. If we had it, we required fewer soldiers, if we had it not we wanted more ships."[68] In 1903, the Admiralty went so far as to contend "that the Navy will entirely suffice to protect the United Kingdom from any attack or invasion…"[69] Later that year, the influential Lord Esher argued pointedly, "The Navy can deal with Home Defence."[70]

---

[66] It is worth noting that at the beginning of the 20th century, the British army was not one force, but a combination of multiple services. The Regular Army was the primary body and it was intended for use either at home or abroad. The Auxiliary Force was secondary and included the Volunteer Force, the Yeomanry, and the Militia. In 1898-1899, Britain retained 212,393 in the Regular Army, 231,624 in the Volunteers, 11,891 in the Yeomanry, and 103,647 in the Militia. The Regular Army was well trained, but the Volunteers, Yeomanry, and Militia were not viewed as effective fighting forces. Each element had a different purpose. One respected former military officer explained, "The Regular Army—with or without the Reserves—would fight small wars… The Regular Army, with the Reserves, might fight a continental war… The whole Army, the Regular Army with the Auxiliary Forces, might be called upon to resist an invasion of England." The Auxiliary Forces were seen as distinct elements from the Regular Army. The Militia, for example, was viewed by supporters as "a totally different Army raised under totally different circumstances for a totally different purpose—namely for home defence." Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*, 31–59. Earl of Wemyss to the House of Lords, February 18, 1898 referenced in Ibid., 42.

[67] General Lord Wolseley, Perth, December 8, 1896 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 65.

[68] Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*, 156–158.

[69] War Office, "Provision of Land Forces for the Defence of the United Kingdom" and "Admiralty Remarks on the Military Paper," February 14, 1903 referenced in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 56.

[70] Esher Journals, December 15, 1903 referenced in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*, 169–171.

Thus, the navy had to create a force capable of fighting both at home and abroad. Navy leaders pointed out that this would require more funding. In 1903, Secretary of State for War Arnold-Forster criticized the army by noting, "I do not find that any definite instruction exists as to what is the exact purpose for which the Army exists, and what duties it is supposed to perform."[71] The next year, Arnold-Forster pressed his argument, "If the Admiralty are right, then we need not maintain an Army for Home Defence, capable of resisting serious invasion. If the Admiralty are wrong, then no Army we can maintain will be sufficient to protect us from hostile attack. If we have command of the sea, we can prevent any invading Army landing. If have not command of the sea, it will not be necessary for an enemy to land, it can starve us into submission."[72] These arguments resulted in the British navy winning a larger share of defense funding.

Whether the British navy would use its increased funding to defend the approaches to the home islands was a separate issue. For defending colonies and sea lines of communication abroad, mobile naval forces would be necessary. For this reason, it was commonplace for experts to argue, "The relative strength of Navies depends almost entirely on their relative strength in battleships."[73] By this measure, Britain was easily the strongest naval power in the world and barring a combination of several continental powers, it had little to fear in the near term. Yet, battleships may not have bene the most effective means of defense against an invasion. Moreover, storm clouds were on the horizon, not only for Britain but for the battleship as well.

---

[71] Arnold-Forster to Balfour, October 27, 1903 in J. McDermott, "The British Army's Turn to Europe," in Paul M. Kennedy, ed., *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 100.

[72] Arnold-Forster, Proposed Army Organization Scheme, Command Paper 1910, August 1, 1904 in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*, 179–180.

[73] Thomas Allnutt Brassey, *The Naval Annual, 1896* (Adamant Media Corporation, 2000), 68.

Historian Arthur Marder writes that the Admiralty concluded, "while the torpedo-boat was essentially the weapon of the weaker naval powers, and not one to be cultivated by a great naval power with an offensive naval strategy, none the less, an antidote must be found against the torpedo-boat in the restricted zones where it could operate in time of war."[74] First Lord of the Admiralty George Hamilton argued as early as 1885 that although Britain needed to do much catching up in naval technology, "We are in a period of transition… To spend enormous sums in the construction of vessels or of fortifications at the present moment, with the knowledge that the experience of a few years may prove such expenditure to have been misapplied, is not a policy which any sincere or far seeing friend of the Navy would advocate."[75] As Marder concluded, "Although the submarine, aircraft, the torpedo, and the mine all antedated World War I, few students of naval warfare appreciated the immense possibilities for attack latent in these new unproved weapons."[76]

There were, however, some innovators and visionaries in the navy.[77] When Admiral Fisher became First Naval Lord (and renamed the position First Sea Lord) in 1904, he proposed that that the navy "be absolutely restricted to four types of vessels, being all that modern fighting necessitates. (a) Battleships of 15,900 tons. 21 knots speed. (b) Armoured Cruisers of 15,900 tons. 25.5 knots speed. (c) Destroyers of 900 tons, and 4-inch guns. 36 knots speed. (d)

---

[74] Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 167.

[75] Quoted in Ibid., 126.

[76] Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 328.

[77] Churchill would later say of Fisher, "His great reforms sustained the power of the Royal Navy at the most critical period in its history. He gave the Navy the kind of shock which the British Army received at the time of the South African War." Winston S. Churchill and Martin Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 50.

Submarines of 350 tons. 14 knots surface speed."[78] Tracing the evolution of these ship classes, and the attitudes toward coastal defenses, shows two major changes in British naval investments. First, the entire fleet was expanded and rapidly modernized due to a growing budget (largely won at the hands of the army). Second, the navy shifted from a focus on capital ships to a more diverse fleet. These changes are evident in the struggles over the development and acquisition of three groups of vessels: 1) large surface ships, including battleships and cruisers; 2) smaller surface ships, such as destroyers and torpedo boats; and 3) undersea systems, namely submarines and mines. Each class of vessel underwent substantial and revealing changes during this period.

British naval policy was largely focused on modernization of battleships and cruisers until 1904.[79] The challenge for the Admiralty before Fisher arrived was to field as many modern battleships and cruisers as possible, despite the budgetary limits put in place by the Exchequer. Immediately upon taking office, however, Admiral Fisher initiated a series of far-reaching reforms. The most well-known of these reforms was the creation of the dreadnought, a new form of battleship with greater speed, big gun armament, and enhanced armor protection. Completed in just one year, the first dreadnought forced Britain's competitors to pause and re-evaluate their own shipbuilding plans.[80] In explaining the dreadnought, Fisher wrote, "In any war in which we may engage our national existence depends on our retaining the command of the sea, and to do

---

[78] Fisher notes on new proposals to the Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 22.

[79] "It is utterly impossible, in a country with 10,000,000 tons of floating commerce, to protect that floating commerce thoroughly by any number of fast cruisers which the taxpayers of this country would be willing to provide," bemoaned an admiral in 1888. Admiral Hood, Accounts and Papers, XIII, 1888, minutes of evidence, 34 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 96.

[80] The concept behind the dreadnought favored primacy. As one leader noted, "Whatever type the French have, we must go one better…" Bacon, Fisher (4) 1, 170 citing J L Garvin.

that we must find and fight the enemy's fleet whenever it puts to sea."[81] Fisher also stated that Britain, "builds simply and solely to maintain the command of the sea against other Powers."[82]

Fisher established a Committee on Designs that also proposed a newly upgraded armored cruiser, which came to be called a battlecruiser. The battlecruiser more closely resembled a battleship than a cruiser, having the armor and guns of a battleship and the speed of a cruiser. Fisher believed that only a large and well-armed cruiser could effectively scout the enemy fleet, so the battlecruiser was designed with this in mind. In addition, the battlecruiser would fight alongside battleships in a fleet engagement. Fisher explained that speed was a major consideration because while, "The range of eyesight has remained constant, that of gunfire has increased. Speed is a necessity to ensure safety, armour protection to ensure vision… Every vessel that has not high scouting speed, or the highest defensive and offensive powers, is useless for fighting purposes."[83]

The tremendous cost of highly mobile dreadnoughts and battlecruisers required sacrifices elsewhere. Fisher decided to retire over one hundred old ships, which he viewed as having little military value, despite their high upkeep and manning costs. The savings from selling and retiring these vessels allowed Fisher to show a budgetary decrease despite his new and expensive development plan. Yet, opposition to dreadnoughts and the retiring of old vessels was substantial. Respected experts like naval architect Sir William White raised the danger of putting "all one's naval eggs into one or two vast, costly, majestic, but vulnerable baskets."[84] But in

---

[81] Naval Notes in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 317.

[82] Fisher, *Records*, 109 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 143–144.

[83] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 42–43.

[84] William White quoted in Manning, *White*, 466 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 536.

Fisher's mind, the old ships were of little value anyway, and now so too were the outdated battleships and cruisers of Britain's adversaries. "We must retain the command of the lines of communications," Fisher argued, "and the mere fact of the enemy's ships being outside their port renders this command doubtful until they have been beaten."[85]

Yet, even after having initiated the dreadnought revolution, Fisher was looking to the next move in the military competition. "It was solely from the fact that the battleship was unassailable by any vessel except a battleship that made the command of the sea by battleships a possibility! Hence battleships came to symbolize naval sea strength and supremacy," Fisher explained.[86] Yet, Fisher viewed the torpedo as a potential antidote to the mighty battleship. He warned, "To build battleships merely to fight an enemy's battleships, so long as cheaper craft can destroy them, and prevent them of themselves protecting sea operations, is merely to breed Kilkenny cats unable to catch rats or mice… what use is a battle fleet [against a fleet] possessing no battleships, but having fast armoured cruisers and clouds of fast torpedo craft?"[87] Therefore, as early as 1904, Fisher was considering the value of small surface combatants.

In the late 19th century, the torpedo was still a new invention, having been fielded by most European powers only in the 1870s. Initial versions of the torpedo were unreliable, but its potential was clear. By 1888, maneuvers in British waters convinced one observed that torpedo boats, "would be of far more value to the blockaded squadron than to the blockaders. Torpedo-boats, if not capable of keeping the sea independently, under all conditions of weather, would inevitably prove a cause of embarrassment and anxiety to an Admiral commanding a blockading

[85] Naval Notes in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 318.
[86] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Ibid., 41.
[87] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Ibid.

fleet, and would be subject to endless casualties… They are admirably adapted for purposes of defense."[88] To British admirals still focused on blockading French ports and practicing offensive sea control, this development was seen as a threat. Concern about development of torpedo technology was high, with First Lord George Goschen noting of the gyroscope, "We as the stronger nation, and who have done so much to perfect existing systems, are clearly sufferers from such a new invention."[89] In 1901, the First Lord of the Admiralty noted of the torpedo's improvements, "It is no exaggeration to say that the perfecting of this application, which is now an accomplished fact, has made the torpedo a four-fold more dangerous weapon of offence than it has previously been."[90]

The British response was torpedo destroyers, so named by Admiral Fisher. Fisher, then Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean, sought to use destroyers to counter the growing torpedo threat to British bases. Fisher hoped that a destroyer screen could keep the torpedo boats away from the main fleet, thereby preventing a surprise attack. First Naval Lord Walter Kerr was critical, however, writing "it must be remembered that destroyers were not intended to accompany the Fleet as sea, but were designed to operate from bases against the torpedo boats of the enemy operating also from a base [within the 120-mile radius of torpedo-boats]. He is using them in a way which it is properly the role of gunboats and 3rd class cruisers to fill."[91] By late 1904, however, Fisher had assumed Kerr's role as First Naval Lord and his Committee on

---

[88] Quoted in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 108.

[89] Minute by Goschen, January 17, 1897 in Katherine C. Epstein, *Torpedo: Inventing the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 47.

[90] Selborne, "Naval Estimates, 1901-1902," January 17, 1901, 8, Colonial Defense Committee papers in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 78.

[91] Kerr quoted in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 399.

Designs sought to remedy the destroyer's weakness. The Committee suggested two types to the Cabinet: a traditional "coastal service destroyer" and an "ocean-going destroyer" capable of staying at sea. Fisher explained the purpose of the coastal destroyer as "effectively dealing with the large majority of foreign torpedo craft against which we have to provide, and this is accomplished at a moderate cost."[92] On the other hand, the ocean-going destroyers would be "designed to accompany fleets in all weathers, anywhere and to any part of the world."[93]

Building torpedo destroyers was not the British navy's only answer to the development of the torpedo. Fisher also sought to build more torpedo boats. Earlier in 1904, Lord Selborne had written to Fisher, "the programme stands as follows: 5 battleships, 8 armoured cruisers, 8 scouts, 28 destroyers, 20 submarines, 6 auxiliary vessels… I should like to build more destroyers or torpedo-boats and more submarines, but the total for new construction cannot be increased."[94] Where would money come from for these ships? One possibility, which had been proposed by Captain George Egerton the year earlier, was that the army's floating port defenses could be turned over to the navy and "submarines and torpedo-boats could take the place of submarine mines."[95] Now Fisher pushed for the Admiralty to become involved in defending ports. He argued, "Thirty years ago the Admiralty adopted the policy of entirely disowning any responsibility with regard to the defense of coasts and harbours, holding the Army absolutely responsible for all such defence… But times have so changed that, in spite of everything, local

[92] Fisher to Cabinet, December 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 221–222.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Earl of Selborne to Fisher, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*. xviii
[95] Captain George Egerton, February 6, 1903 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 58.

floating defences have sprung up in the shape of submarine boats and torpedo boats."[96] Before Fisher, the Admiralty had insisted that land fortifications were "a better form of local defense, as a rule, than stationary ships."[97] But Fisher took a different approach, arguing that "modern development has also totally altered offensive methods. Thirty years ago torpedo craft did not exist, blockade mines were unknown, submarine boats were undreamed of…"[98]

Later in 1904, a Fisher disciple wrote that the navy should take over the army's job of port defense altogether. "Divided control of defence of naval ports [is] impossible… there should be an entire transference of the whole of the Garrison Artillery from Army to Navy, as well as the responsibility for all ordnance."[99] Lord Selborne was not convinced, instead asking, "Is the armament of our fortresses and coaling stations sufficiently heavy, and is the armament arranged so as to offer no dead points to a hostile fleet in the absence of our fleet? … Have we not a lot of old Navy reserve guns which we could perfectly well hand over to the Army for use in increasing the armament of those fortresses and coaling stations?"[100] Yet, Fisher would not end his critiques of the army, arguing, "If we are not safe from invasion then make us so. Spend money on submarines, destroyers, etc., but don't waste money on an armed mob."[101]

---

[96] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 68–69.

[97] Admiralty, "Remarks on M.I.D. Paper 13A," July 14, 1903 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 57.

[98] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 70.

[99] Attachment sent from Fisher to Earl of Selborne, October 19, 1904 in Ibid., 11.

[100] Earl of Selborne to Fisher, number 3, July 2, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*. xxiii.

[101] Fisher to Prince of Wales, October 16, 1907 quoted in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 174.

In the end, Fisher was not successful in taking over coastal defense responsibilities from the army, but his support for torpedo craft was clear. He argued, "Is it conceivable that with these never absent, always ready, irresistible weapons of attack, able to commit unutterable havoc amongst helpless thousands crowding the transports, the masses of transports necessary to effect the operation of an invasion, or even the lesser number obligatory for a raid, would dare to emerge from the German ports until these vessels have been swept away?"[102] He continued, "But who is going to sweep them away? We have 123 destroyers and forty submarines. The Germans have 48 destroyers and one submarine!"[103] Defensive torpedo craft were attracting ample attention, and with it the funding needed to develop and improve these smaller vessels.

Submarines were another means of denying Britain's opponents the ability to attack her shores. The submarine, however, was even more controversial than the torpedo boat. British experts frequently associated undersea systems such as submarines and mines with weakness and defensiveness, neither of which won support from the Admiralty. Writing in 1897, two British experts argued, "to a weak naval Power whose commerce must be thrown over in time of war, mines are admissible allies… To a Power independent of its commerce in war, and able, therefore, to block its ports, submarine mines may also be an economical form of defence…"[104] To a strong and offensive power, however, submarines and mines appeared a fool's errand.

Nevertheless, British attitudes on the submarine slowly began to change. When First Lord of the Admiralty George Goschen described the submarine as "the weapon of the weaker power," H. O. Arnold-Forster responded, "this argument about the weapon of the inferior power seems

[102] Memorandum by First Sea Lord, "Invasion and Raids," August 22, 1907 in Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Clarke and Thursfield, *The Navy and the Nation; Or, Naval Warfare and Imperial Defence*, 301–302.

absolutely meaningless."[105] Several months later, Goschen wrote, "I do not think we should confine ourselves so absolutely to the doctrine that it is only in order to ascertain the best means of meeting foreign submarine boats that we wish to buy five boats from the United States. They may be useful to us in many places, like torpedo boats."[106]

This new combination of torpedo craft and submarines was seen as so reliable that British leaders considered reductions in other forces to fund coastal defenses. In 1903, Prime Minister Balfour asked whether Bermuda "might not be made almost impregnable at a small cost by strengthening the naval defenses, and whether, in this case, the existing garrison might not be reduced?"[107] By early 1904, Balfour wrote Fisher that "the substitution of submarines for mines, and the defense of places like Malta, Gibraltar and Bermuda by submarines" had been practically agreed upon.[108] Just days later Balfour wrote to Selborne, "I wish we had more submarines… They are, after all, cheap, and their peculiarity is that, inasmuch as they cannot be attacked by other submarines, the type does not get antiquated… existing submarines will never become obsolete as against the types of vessels with which they are intended to fight."[109]

Submarines could also be useful for defending the British Isles. Director of Naval Intelligence Battenberg said in 1903, "The establishment of submarine stations along the South Coast of England ought to go a long way towards dispelling the ever-recurring fears of invasion… the existence of [French] submarines as part of the *Defense Mobile* makes any attempt at invasion of

---

[105] Parliamentary Debates, 4th Series, 86, 33, July 17, 1900 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 47.

[106] Note by Goschen, October 24, 1900 in Ibid., 46.

[107] Meeting minutes, November 25, 1903 in Ibid., 66.

[108] Balfour to Fisher, January 3, 1904 in Ibid.

[109] Balfour to Selborne, January 7, 1904 in Ibid., 67.

French territory that act of a lunatic."[110] In a speech that year, Fisher predicted, "Look at the submarine boat and wireless telegraphy. When they are perfected, we do not know what a revolution will come. At their inception they were weapons of the weak. Now they loom large as the weapons of the strong. Will any Fleet be able to live in narrow waters? Is there the slightest fear of invasion with them even for the most extreme pessimist?"[111] Submarine advocate Captain Reginald Bacon agreed, "The risks of allowing a large ship to approach such a port are so great that I unhesitatingly affirm that in war time it should never be allowed…"[112]

Furthermore, naval leaders were attracted to the potential of mobile submarines. Such vessels could be useful because existing mines were "fixed defences which have absolutely no mobility… there is no function that the minefield might fulfill that cannot be better performed by a mobile defence such as a submarine."[113] Submarines were indeed more mobile than stationary mines, but the coastal submarines of the time had very limited mobility and almost no ability to sustain themselves at sea. Director of Naval Intelligence Battenberg wrote that submarines could not track enemy vessels, which would "seriously militate against their value. Their radius of action is also very limited."[114] If submarines were relatively immobile, then they were useful only for defense not offense.

---

[110] Battenberg, October 1903 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 370.

[111] Fisher, Speech to the Royal Academy, May 14, 1903 in Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Admiral of the Fleet*, 2:202.

[112] Bacon, March 13, 1903 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 363.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Admiralty, "Memorandum on Possibility of Invasion During Temporary Loss of Command of the Sea in Home Waters," March 31, 1903 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 60.

Thus, before 1905, British objectives remained expansive and its strategy largely offensive, which led to investments in mobile systems. Although the majority of the British navy's focus was on power projection with highly mobile dreadnoughts and battlecruisers, there was some growing interest in torpedo boats and submarines. However, proponents of these vessels were constrained by their defensive nature, which limited their attractiveness to British policymakers.

British Defense Policy after 1905

> Our only probable enemy is Germany. Germany keeps her whole Fleet always concentrated within a few hours of England. We must therefore keep a Fleet twice as powerful concentrated within a few hours of Germany.
>
> - Admiral Jackie Fisher to King Edward (1906)[115]

Until roughly 1905, British leaders were forced to divide their attention between a number of potential competitors. In April 1904, France and Britain signed the Entente Cordiale, essentially neutralizing the threat from France and preparing the way for an alliance. Shortly thereafter Russia suffered a severe blow as Japan won a series of naval engagements culminating in the sinking of eight Russian battleships at the Battle of Tsushima. Japan, a British ally since the signing of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Treaty, was left in a dominant position in Asia. The new British alignment with France and Japan, and the destruction of the Russian navy, left Britain in a much more secure position. In particular, British holdings in East Asia, India, the Middle East, Africa, and the Mediterranean were made more secure nearly overnight.

A new era of British strategic thinking occurred as military concerns about France and Russia faded. British leaders recognized that as France, Russia, and Japan fell from the British list of

[115] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 102–103.

threats, only Germany and the United States could pose a direct challenge to British supremacy. Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defense Charles Ottley warned Prime Minister H. H. Asquith that, "The resources of this Country simply cannot compete with the resources of such a power as the American plus Germany… we must renounce (as unattainable) the Two Power Standard vis-à-vis the U.S.A."[116] Indeed, the British insistence on a two-power standard eventually dissipated as Britain focused on Germany.[117] Jackie Fisher wrote, "it is now recognized as a cardinal feature of British foreign policy that war between Great Britain and the United States is not a contingency sufficiently probable to need special steps to meet it."[118] By the end of the decade, Britain had turned its full attention to Germany. Diplomat Eyre Crowe explained, "The building of the German fleet is but one of the symptoms of the disease. It is the political ambitions of the German Government and nation which are the source of the mischief."[119]

As British leaders fixated on the German threat, politicians in London were able to more clearly identify changing power dynamics. This might have led to a wholesale reexamination of British strategy. However, such a reassessment never occurred. Despite some shifts in British objectives, strategy, and investments, Britain remained on largely the same course it had followed for the better part of a century.

---

[116] Ottley to Vaughan Nash, May 26, 1909 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 184.

[117] In November 1904, a special committee recommended that Britain should maintain a significant superiority of battleships and armored cruisers of the "most likely combinations against us… in order of probability, 1. Germany and Russia; 2. France and Russia; the United States being regarded throughout as friendly." Battenberg committee report in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 510.

[118] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:83.

[119] Memorandum from Eyre Crowe, October 20, 1910 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 105.

Ends: Rejecting Consolidation Objectives

By 1905, signs emerged that British power was declining relative to that of Germany, and that this trend was likely to worsen in the years ahead. The theory of perceived relative power suggests that British leaders should have consolidated their objectives and focused on holding the territory they had acquired. Although British aims did shift somewhat, there was no clear decision to consolidate national objectives.

British leaders largely avoided direct discussion of whether to limit the Empire's aims. Rather, these decisions were most evident in the objectives set for military commanders. Through the first decade after 1900, British war plans still sought expansive objectives and emphasized the need for offensive sea control.[120] The plans argued, "naval warfare has for its end and its means the control of sea communication. That is to say, control of sea communication afloat has exactly the same value as conquest of territory ashore."[121] The Admiralty continued to equate defense with weakness, noting, "the superior fleet will always take the offensive—will seek to attack and get a quick and final decision. The inferior fleet, on the contrary, will seek to avoid action… The commonest aspect of our old naval wars is a British fleet endeavouring to force an unwilling enemy to action by an attack in general chase."[122] The plans continued, "They being the weaker Power at sea, will act strictly on the defensive, and our strategy must be directed to making them

[120] Note that these plans were created in part to defend Fisher against attacks from his critic Charles Beresford, and may not reflect Fisher's true desires for a warfighting construct.
[121] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:320.
[122] Ibid., 2:326.

abandon this attitude and come out to attack us in a position of our choosing and under conditions agreeable to us."[123]

Command of the sea was seen as critical because British leaders were unwilling to scale back their objectives. In particular, the vulnerability of Britain's long sea lines of communications was of great concern in London.[124] British planners aimed for wars in which an opponent, "cannot seriously interfere with our trade or oversea operations and that he cannot carry on his own trade or oversea operations except at such risk and hazard as to remove them practically from strategic calculation."[125] Despite this insistence on sea control, some parts of the war plans revealed that appetites for expansion had faded. The plans stated, "It is not necessary for us to risk a single man by operations on the coast, except perhaps that it might be advisable to seize an island as a base for our torpedo craft."[126]

This tension between offensive and defensive strategy was never fully resolved, in part because beliefs about Britain's long-term position varied substantially. The Admiralty maintained that the British navy was far superior to the German navy and would remain so for the foreseeable future. In 1906, Fisher wrote that the British navy's "present margin of superiority over Germany (our only possible foe for years) is so great as to render it absurd to talk of anything endangering our naval supremacy, even if we stopped all shipbuilding altogether."[127] Fisher insisted, "Our

---

[123] Ibid., 2:351.

[124] "Command of the sea means nothing but control of maritime lines of passage and communication. It may exist locally or generally, temporarily or permanently, but it can never be absolute," the plans explained. Ibid., 2:320.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 2:360.

[127] Fisher to Tweedmouth, September 26, 1906 in Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 91.

superiority over Germany is so overwhelming and the superiority of our personnel and gunnery practice is so great that the Germans know it would be madness for them to provoke a war."[128] Indeed, the British Naval Attaché in Berlin forwarded an article from a German newspaper which noted, "The German does not like the defensive, but in a future war our fleet cannot do better than to confine itself to the defensive if it does not wish to experience another Tsushima and disappear."[129]

In 1907, Fisher wrote to King Edward that German Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, "has privately stated in a secret paper that the English Navy is now four times stronger than the German Navy! And we are going to keep the British Navy at that strength… But we don't want to parade all this, because if so we shall have Parliamentary trouble."[130] Far from scaling back, Foreign Secretary Edward Grey and Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George made clear to German Ambassador Paul Wolff Metternich, "Every Englishman would spend his last penny on maintaining British supremacy at sea."[131] In discussing naval armament limitations, the Admiralty even noted, "our present relative naval position is so good that we might express our adhesion to the principle" of limiting future arms procurement.[132]

---

[128] Fisher memo, War Arrangements in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 465.

[129] *Schlesische Volkszeitung*, July 15, 1906 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 128.

[130] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 141.

[131] Metternich to Bulow, July 16, 1908.

[132] "Memorandum on Limitation of Naval Armaments…" January 29, 1907 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 133.

Given British confidence about London's naval superiority, it is surprising that the Admiralty was not more concerned about a German sea denial strategy.[133] First Sea Lord Admiral Arthur Knyvet Wilson did warn, "the principal things we should have to guard against are: 1. Minelaying in the approaches to our harbours. 2. Torpedo attacks on our shipping, either at anchor or at sea. 3. The escape of commerce destroyers from German ports to prey on our trade."[134] Yet, Wilson immediately dismissed these dangers, "Attacks of this kind might cause loss and annoyance, but with ordinary care they are not likely to do us any vital injury."[135] One reason for this confidence was that as late as 1914, British leaders believed that submarines would not sink ships without prior warning. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill reportedly said, "this would [n]ever be done by a civilized Power."[136] In a series of well-regarded lectures on international law, a British expert concurred, "no submarine would dare to touch a vessel without the proper visit and search being made… the civilized world would hold up its hands in horror at such acts of barbarism as a submarine sinking its prey."[137]

Eventually the Admiralty adopted revised war plans that called for "an immense cordon of submarines and destroyers, supported by the battle fleet, from the coast of Norway to a point on

---

[133] Some did foresee torpedo attacks on shipping, warning, "when night comes on [a torpedo-boat] will unobserved, close with the steamer and send to the bottom cargo, crew, and passengers, not only without remorse but proud of the achievement…" Brassey, 1890, iv in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 87.

[134] Admiral Wilson, "Remarks on War Plans" in Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:454.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Churchill and Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*.

[137] S. S. Hall to Fisher, April 26, 1914 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 364.

the east coast of England."[138] Yet, Churchill believed such a plan unsound. He quoted Napoleon, who had noted in 1809, "these long thin cordons of troops are good enough to stop smuggling, but after fourteen years of war one does not expect to see such follies."[139] Instead, Churchill suggested, "vigorous offence against the enemy's warships wherever stationed, will give immediately far greater protection to British traders than large numbers of vessels scattered sparsely about in an attitude of weak and defensive expectancy."[140] Churchill continued, "The very essence of our naval strategy is to hunt out and destroy the enemy… The protection of commerce will then not be a matter of essentially guarding trade routes, but the dogging, hunting down, and destruction of every enemy's Cruiser. The dogging to continue, if necessary, to the world's end."[141] This disagreement about whether to use highly mobile offensive forces or more stationary defensive forces went to the heart of the question of British aims. The German threat could be contained by either sea control or by sea denial, but only sea control would permit global power projection during peacetime and wartime. Churchill and others believes that despite the changing military balance, they could still maintain a superior offensive fleet for some time.

Another reason that British leaders favored an offensive strategy is that the Admiralty believed a war would be short. Fisher insisted, "Judging from past history, modern naval wars are unlikely to last more than two years, at most…"[142] Yet, other Admirals suggested, "In case of war

---

[138] Churchill and Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*. Also see Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 163.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Churchill memorandum on "Trade Protection on and after the Outbreak of War," August 23, 1913 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 365.

[141] Fisher to Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 162.

[142] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:26.

between this country and Germany, alone, neither nation has much opportunity of doing the other any vital injury, and if other nations did not intervene, the war might drag on indefinitely…"[143] Despite this prediction of a naval stalemate, the author noted, "If, however, we went to war as the ally of France, the result would depend entirely on the military operations on the French frontier… To content ourselves with blockading German ports while the country of our ally was being overrun by German troops would be too humiliating a position to be accepted."[144] As the Admiralty papers had earlier admitted, "The fact is that after a long peace each Power is prepared to fight for what it considers its legitimate aspirations. It will only yield when exhausted by war…"[145]

In short, British leaders essentially held strong to their extensive objectives before World War I, rather than adopting more consolidationist objectives. The theory of perceived relative power would have predicted a more substantial revisions of British aims. London did grow increasingly concerned about the challenge from Berlin, but the concerns were not so significant as to force a total reassessment of national objectives and defense policy. British leaders were ultimately correct that they could manage the German threat at sea without sacrificing their ability to project power globally, but they took significant risk in doing so. If Germany had avoided war for a number of years, it might have been able to directly challenge the British navy. Yet, at least through World War I, the Admiralty proved that it did not need to compromise British global objectives to maintain the local military balance.

---

[143] Wilson, June 27, 1905 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 504.
[144] Ibid.
[145] The Peace Conference 1898-1900, *Admiralty Papers*.

Ways: Rejecting a Defensive Strategy

British leaders clearly preferred offensive strategies, even as changing power dynamics forced some reconsideration of more defensive approaches. The tendency toward offense was encouraged by Britain's long history with offensive naval power, by the navy's cultural preference to seize the initiative through offensive action, and by the perception that defense was a symptom of weakness. Some British leaders came to entertain the notion that a more defensive strategy would fit Britain's national objectives, particularly if the British navy simply needed to prevent a German invasion. The navy pursued submarines and torpedo craft that made it possible for Britain to utilize a defensive strategy. Yet, the shift from offense to defense was not a complete one. The navy's largely offensive strategy required highly mobile shifts, so it brought capital ships back to home waters. This decision left Britain highly dependent on offensive power projection during World War I.

As Britain's other strategic concerns dissipated, its leaders were free to focus on Germany's rise. In 1901, Lord Selborne wrote, "The naval policy of Germany is definite and persistent. The Emperor seems determined that the power of Germany shall be used all the world over to push German commerce, possessions, and interests. Of necessity it follows that the German naval strength must be raised so as to compare more advantageously than at present with ours."[146] Yet, German attitudes toward Britain were not so good-natured. Prince von Bülow concluded, "The British politicians know little of the Continent… The country exhales wealth, comfort, content, and confidence in its own power and future. It is clear that the people have never seen an enemy

[146] "The Navy Estimates and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Memo on the Growth of Expenditure," November 15, 1901 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 107.

in their country and simply cannot believe that things could ever go really wrong, either at home or abroad."[147] In a prediction of events to come, von Bülow warned, "If the British public clearly realized the anti-British feeling which dominates Germany just now, a great revulsion would occur in its conception of the relations between Britain and Germany."[148]

London slowly awoke to the German threat, particularly Berlin's naval construction program. The German ambassador to Britain wrote in 1904, "Most of the papers regard every step in the progress of our fleet as a menace to England… The sight of the German fleet at Plymouth reminds Great Britain that she must be sufficiently armed to uphold absolutely her supremacy at sea."[149] The British navy, long the master of the seas, had no intention of ceding that role to a continental power, particularly a Germany determined to challenge Pax Britannica. Invoking Alfred Thayer Mahan, the British Admiralty insisted, "Naval history demonstrates the truth of this general principle: that the command of the sea is essential for the successful attack or defense of commerce, and should therefore be the primary aim."[150] Indeed, in 1905, Admiral Fisher suggested to King Edward, "if you want to smash up the German Fleet, I am ready to do so now. If you wait five or six years, it will be a much more difficult job."[151]

Despite growing concern about Britain's strength relative to Germany, the Admiralty still believed it held a substantial edge in naval power. This perceived naval edge was compounded by the turning of France and Russia against Germany. "Previous studies of the question of war

---

[147] Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 332.

[148] Ibid.

[149] *Die Grosse Politik*, XIX, 194-195 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 479.

[150] Admiralty statement to the Royal Commission on Food Supply in War Time, 1904 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 84.

[151] Quoted in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 113.

against Germany have all been based on the assumption that Germany was supported by powerful maritime allies, such as France or Russia," wrote Director of Naval Intelligence Charles Ottley in 1905.[152] He insisted that now, "the situation is entirely different, and our maritime preponderance would be overwhelming, as we should have the French Fleet acting in our own support, and the Russian Fleet, even if assisting the enemy, has for the time being ceased to be a factor of importance."[153]

The British insistence that the threat from Germany was manageable helped to avoid a total reassessment of British ends, ways, and means. In 1906, Chancellor of the Exchequer H. H. Asquith appealed to Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman arguing against further naval spending. "Our naval supremacy is so completely assured," he wrote, "that there is no possible reason for allowing ourselves to be hastily rushed into these nebulous and ambitious developments."[154] Only two years later, Asquith was promoted to Prime Minister and he insisted, "Our naval position is at this moment, as I believe, one of unassailable supremacy, and such it must remain. The command of the sea however important and however desirable it may be to other Powers is to us a matter of life and death. We must safeguard it…"[155]

With Germany rapidly building its navy, a scare occurred in 1909. "Genuine alarm was excited throughout the country by what was for the first time widely recognized as a German menace,"

[152] Ottley in response to June 24, 1905 note from Fisher in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 502–503.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Asquith to Campbell-Bannerman, December 30, 1906 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 138.

[155] M. Macdonald, *The Times*, March 3, 1908.

recalled Winston Churchill.[156] He noted, "a deep and growing feeling, no longer confined to political and diplomatic circles, that the Prussians meant mischief, that they envied the splendor of the British Empire, and that if they saw a good chance at our expense, they would take full advantage of it."[157] Asquith observed, "nobody here can understand why Germany should need, or how she can use, twenty-one Dreadnoughts, unless for aggressive purposes, and primarily against ourselves. They are clearly not the least necessary for the defence of her coasts, nor for the protection of her own sea commerce, which latter is the function of cruisers."[158] The British navy sought additional funding for new warships, but the question was how many were required rather than what types of ships they should include. Churchill would later reminiscence, "In the end a curious and characteristic solution was reached. The Admiralty had demanded six ships: the economists offered four: and we finally compromised on eight."[159] Thus, the scare had caused an increase in funding for large ships, but not a reassessment of defense policy priorities.

The one sign of a retrenchment of British naval strategy was the return of its capital ships to home water. Even this, however, was couched in offensive terms. From 1897 to 1912, the number of British capital ships outside the Home Fleet fell from 24 to 2. Simultaneously, the number of capital ships in the Home Fleet rose from 11 to 33.[160] In 1912, Fisher explained his thinking to Churchill, "we cannot have everything or be strong everywhere. It is futile to be strong in the subsidiary theatre of war and not overwhelmingly supreme in the decisive

---

[156] Churchill and Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*, 23.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Asquith to McKenna, January 1, 1909 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 120.

[159] Churchill and Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*, 23.

[160] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 228.

theatre."[161] In Fisher's mind, it was increasingly clear that the decisive theater would be the North Sea. This accorded with Mahan's comment that, "for Great Britain there is defensive need as well. Her Empire imposes such a development of naval force as makes it economically impracticable to maintain an army as large as those of the Continent. Security against invasion depends therefore upon the fleet."[162] Yet, Fisher justified this move in offensive terms.

In short, British leaders simply would not accept a secondary position in the naval realm.[163] As Foreign Secretary Edward Grey warned, "If we alone, among the great Powers, gave up the competition and sank into a position of inferiority, what good should we do? … We should cease to count for anything among the nations of Europe, and we should be fortunate if our liberty was left and we did not become the conscript appendage of some stronger power. That is a brutal way of stating the case, but it is the truth."[164] Naval supremacy was the objective and funding for the British army was cut to provide for maritime forces. In November 1911, First Lord of the Admiralty Churchill explained, "The maintenance of naval supremacy is our whole foundation. Upon it stands not the empire only, not merely the commercial property of our people, not merely a fine place in the world's affairs; upon our naval supremacy stands our lives and the

---

[161] Fisher to Churchill, June 24, 1912 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 469.

[162] Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, 315.

[163] As late as October 1911, Fisher wrote "Never in our whole history have we been so powerful or so feared as at the present moment." Fisher, October 1, 1911 in Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Admiral of the Fleet*, 2:133.

[164] E. L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1935), 230–231. On the other hand, a retired military expert argued, "any deviation of a policy which centres the control of the Empire's first line of defence in the United Kingdom would be fatal to the Empire, though not necessarily fatal to the Colonies or to England." Silburn, *The Colonies and Imperial Defence*, 149.

freedom we have guarded for nearly a thousand years."[165] As 1914 approached, the strategy of British leaders was clear: to maintain sea control and power projection capabilities at all costs.

Means: Rejecting Immobile Investments

As the German threat became clear, British military investments came under the microscope. Lord Cawdor, then First Lord of the Admiralty, suggested that submarines could be used for defense. He argued, "We must also not neglect the possibility of certain waters being denied to large ships, from the danger of being attacked in daylight by submarine boats, and at night by torpedo craft. The only way, at present, of meeting such an investment is by following suit, and denying the waters in turn to the enemy, thereby neutralising these areas for offensive operations."[166] Writing to Prime Minister Arthur Balfour in 1905, Fisher appears to have argued for a different conceptualization of offensive action that would include submarine and flotilla craft. "Offensive strategy," Fisher wrote, "must be held to include the circumspection of the free movements of the enemy, any activity that limits their free movement is an action of offence."[167] This redefinition permitted Fisher to pursue immobile capabilities under the guise of an offensive strategy.

Yet, many navalists continued to view submarines and flotilla craft as too immobile for offensive action.[168] In 1905, a widely read article quoted Mahan on the two vital characteristics of

---

[165] Churchill, November 10, 1911 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 15.

[166] Admiralty, "Submarine Boats," March 1905 in Ibid., 122.

[167] Fisher to Balfour, August 23, 1905 referenced in Ibid., 121.

[168] Sea power definitions often dismissed the notion of sea denial, as one Admiral argued, "Sea power is the power of using the sea for one's own purposes and depriving the enemy of its use – a totally different thing." Richmond to Keyes, June 29, 1942, *Keyes Papers*, ed. Paul

concentrated forces. Mahan had noted the importance of "force, which is gained by concentration of numbers; and mobility, which is the ability to carry the force rapidly as well as effectively, from the centre to any outlying field where action, offensive or defence, becomes necessary."[169] Submarines and flotilla craft were not able to travel long distances, so they failed the second criteria.[170] A sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence found, "if we permanently lose command of the sea, whatever may be the strength and organization of the Home force, the subjection of the country to the enemy is inevitable."[171] British leaders were clearly unwilling to accept a sea denial strategy that appeared to give less assurance of safety from German attack or blockade.

With the naval budget booming, some British strategists asked whether the army might be able to defend the home islands itself. Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, argued in 1906, "We live on an island, and our coasts are completely defended by the Fleet. Our Army is wanted for purposes abroad and overseas…"[172] The Haldane Reforms that followed ushered in a major change in the British army, namely the creation of a smaller but more mobile force more capable

---

Halpern (London, 1981), 251 referenced in Christopher M. Bell, *The Royal Navy, Seapower and Strategy between the Wars* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Company, 2000), 189.

[169] "British Naval Policy and German Aspirations," from *Fortnightly Review*, September 1905 in Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:306.

[170] Admiralty war plans suggested, "it is now usually stated almost as an axiom that the power of gaining the command of the sea depends upon battle fleets. Ultimately and practically it does. But… The truth is that for the actual and direct control of either commercial or military lines of passage and communication battle fleets are unnecessary and unsuitable. The actual control is exercised by cruisers and flotillas." Ibid., 2:321.

[171] Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 350.

[172] Army Debates, 1906 and Army Estimates, 1906-1907 referenced in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*, 247–250.

of limited offensive operations abroad. The reforms restated British army strategy as "to protect the distant shores of that Empire from the attacks of the invader. We want therefore an Army which is very mobile and capable of rapid transport."[173] In 1907, Haldane issued a memorandum that outlined a plan to, "divide the forces of the Crown into two categories and two only… The Field Force is to be so completely organized as to be ready in all respects for mobilization immediately on the outbreak of a great war… The Territorial Force will, therefore, be one of support and expansion…"[174]

One reason for these reforms was the growing acknowledgement that Britain would need to fight alongside France if they were allied against Germany. Haldane later reflected, "we should have an Expeditionary Force sufficient in size and also rapidity of mobilizing power to be able to go to the assistance of the French Army in the event of an attack on the Northern or North-Eastern parts of France."[175] Going to France's aid at the outset of a conflict required mobility. This was a different objective than simple defense of Britain. Former Prime Minister Balfour explained in 1910 that the difficulty of defending Britain against a superior force was, "If you drilled every man in this country to the picture of perfection now possessed by the German Army… what would it avail you if the sea was not free and open to bring to these shores raw material and the food upon which we depend?"[176] In 1913, Foreign Secretary Grey wrote, "Germany has the biggest Army in the world as well as her Navy, but the Navy is our one and only means of

---

[173] Ibid.

[174] Haldane, "Memorandum upon the Military Forces in the United Kingdom," Command Paper 3297, February 25, 1907 in Ibid., 279.

[175] Haldane, "Autobiography" referenced in Ibid., 241–242.

[176] Balfour at York, January 13, 1910 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 358.

defence and our life depends on it and upon it alone."[177] The army's reorientation toward power projection put a premium on sea control to transport the British army to the continent.

The army's need of transportation empowered opponents of smaller naval platforms. Reginald Bacon, an early proponent of the submarine and torpedo craft, was well aware of the criticism, noting, "Considerable prejudice has always existed against England developing torpedo craft, chiefly on account of the seductive formula stating that torpedo craft were 'the arm of the weaker power.'"[178] Yet, Fisher saw the need for a new perspective on naval ships, "The battleship of olden days was necessary because it was the one and only vessel that nothing could sink except another battleship. Now, every battleship is open to attack by fast torpedo craft and submarines… A battle fleet is no protection to anything, or any operation, during dark hours, and in certain waters is no protection in daytime because of the submarine."[179] Not all were convinced, however. Lord Selborne explained, "Fisher believed that the torpedo as used by torpedo-boats and the submarine was going to make the narrow seas (they widely interpreted) impossible for battleships, that the torpedo was going to be the lord and master of the narrow seas under all conditions. I never believed anything of the kind."[180] Yet, Fisher pressed his case, asking "what is the use of battleships as we have hitherto known them? NONE!"[181]

---

[177] Sir Edward Grey to Sir Rennell Rodd, January 13, 1913 quoted in Ibid., 272.

[178] Bacon, "Report on Running of Submarine Boats," May 31, 1903 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 54.

[179] Fisher notes to the Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904 in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 31.

[180] Selborne to Balfour, August 23, 1905 quoted in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 93.

[181] Fisher, October 20, 1904 memorandum for Lord Selborne in Kemp, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, 25.

Figure 14: British Military Spending (1895-1913)[182]

	Percentage Spent on Naval Construction				***Gross Naval Expenditure***	***Gross Army Expenditure***
	Battleships	Cruisers	Flotilla	Submarines		
1895	54%	33%	12%	0%	£21,264,377	£18,471,518
1896	35%	45%	20%	0%	£23,886,177	£18,997,917
1897	41%	47%	11%	0%	£22,547,844	£18,481,661
1898	50%	42%	9%	0%	£26,145,598	£20,209,526
1899	52%	37%	11%	0%	£28,478,842	£20,901,675
1900	46%	43%	11%	0%	£33,302,260	£44,107,399
1901	43%	53%	4%	0%	£34,994,553	£92,424,671
1902	37%	50%	11%	3%	£35,525,731	£94,165,905
1903	38%	52%	8%	2%	£40,503,873	£70,248,523
1904	39%	49%	9%	3%	£41,696,313	£39,653,034
1905	41%	47%	5%	7%	£38,175,045	£31,559,638
1906	37%	50%	9%	5%	£35,693,850	£29,129,574
1907	47%	36%	13%	4%	£33,950,169	£28,365,987
1908	57%	21%	15%	7%	£34,775,752	£26,716,612
1909	47%	27%	21%	5%	£37,385,460	£26,338,073
1910	45%	33%	20%	2%	£43,903,499	£26,624,098
1911	51%	30%	15%	4%	£46,793,789	£26,922,908
1912	55%	24%	16%	6%	£48,742,182	£27,328,810
1913	59%	21%	15%	6%	£52,920,960	£27,633,380
Average 1895-1904	**44%**	**45%**	**11%**	**1%**	**£30,834,557**	**£36,225,311**
Average 1905-1913	**49%**	**32%**	**14%**	**5%**	**£41,371,190**	**£27,846,564**

[182] Data compiled and reproduced from Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 306; Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Mallet, *British Budgets 1887-88 to 1912-13*, 504.

Despite Fisher's criticism of the battleship and dreadnought, Figure 14 demonstrates that they continued to receive robust funding in the years before World War I. Thus, the offense-favoring admirals got an offensive navy. The Admiralty even tried to reassure Balfour of this fact, noting, "power of offence is the chief quality of a battleship, its design must be considered primarily from this point of view."[183] But there is some evidence that Fisher believed the real power of the British navy would come not from dreadnoughts or battlecruisers but from torpedo craft and submarines.

Fisher was not the only adherent to this view. As World War I approached, Admiral Bacon pressed home the importance of torpedo boats. "In the old days the battleship was the conception of a ship which nothing else on these waters could sink," said Bacon, "but now the battleship is no longer the ultimate power on the sea: it may be sunk by the smallest vessel afloat."[184] At the same time, however, Fisher put forward war plans that seemed to conflict with his flotilla defense plan. In the words of a leading scholar, the Admiralty war plans envisaged, "the massing of overwhelming naval strength on the very doorstep of the enemy, beating in all his naval and coastal defences, and opening the enemy's seaboard to the possibility of a British military descent. The danger from mines, from submarines, from torpedo boats, from coastal defences, is brushed aside as virtually of no consequence."[185] In short, "The war plans of 1907 were out of date even before they appeared in print… The submarine, the mine, and the torpedo were by then

[183] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:270.
[184] Reginald Bacon, March 1913 quoted in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 199.
[185] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:316.

too powerful as weapons to justify such adventures."[186] With this in mind, First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna wrote to Foreign Secretary Edward Grey in 1910, "it must be remembered… that our destroyers and submarine flotillas, which are the true defense against invasion will be stationed on the East Coast."[187]

One possible explanation for the contradictory nature of Fisher's plans and his private correspondence is that the notoriously secretive Fisher intended the plans to be misleading. Fisher was pressured to update the plans when Charles Beresford began a campaign to have Fisher ousted from the Admiralty.[188] Yet, Fisher had never believed in preparing and distributing plans before a war. Instead he intended to order the fleet to its stations and provide instructions only at the outset of a conflict, which would protect the plans' secrecy. The war plans Fisher created might therefore have been intended to dispel Beresford's fears of overly defensive war plans and simultaneously to mislead German spies. There is some anecdotal evidence that confirms this thesis. For example, Fisher and his adherents continued to support flotilla craft, noting the value of patrol flotillas in "restricted and local spheres of action."[189] Admiral Mark Kerr reinforced this view in 1913 when he observed, "it is impossible that the capital ships can escape the attack of the flotilla either by day or night. It is apparent, therefore, that capital ships are only of value in the open sea out of the radius of action of the flotilla…"[190]

---

[186] Ibid., 2:317.

[187] McKenna to Asquith, December 17, 1910 quoted in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 195.

[188] On this argument, see Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*.

[189] First Sea Lord Battenberg instructed that they be called "'defense mobile' (to use the French term) or simply coast defence flotillas." Battenberg, "Memorandum on coastal defence" in Ibid., 286.

[190] Kerr, "Greek Naval Construction Policy," September 1913, referenced in Ibid., 290.

After Fisher retired from the Admiralty in 1911, Arthur Marder writes, "destroyers were assigned an essentially defensive role, in contrast with the Fisher period, when they had been conceived of as primarily offensive vessels."[191] Critics worried that, "torpedo craft, which cannot keep at sea like great vessels, and must every three or four days return to port for rest and replacement, have no base nearer than Harwich, 280 miles away. The operation of controlling the debouches from the Heligoland Bight by means of flotillas would require twice the number of oversea torpedo craft than we now possess."[192] Nevertheless, naval historian Nicholas Lambert concludes, "Fisher developed a new theory of sea power—the concept of 'flotilla defense.' This was a sea denial strategy intended to protect the British Isles from the possibility of invasion in the absence of the main fleet."[193]

Although submarines fit British needs, the tendency to favor offense over defense led ship designers in conflicting directions. Reginald Custance argued, "The most effective method of defending our ports and preventing invasion is a rigorous offensive against the floating force of the enemy, and that the submarine should be developed with that in view—as an offensive and not defensive weapon."[194] Why not use the submarine for defense? Custance wrote that under such a strategy, "large sums of money will be diverted from the offensive to the defensive… The fact is that naval opinion is and has been for years saturated with the ideas of defense not withstanding the efforts of a small minority to counteract them."[195] Even Fisher agreed that submarines should be used for offense, writing to a colleague, "I consider [the paucity of

[191] Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 336.
[192] Admiralty memorandum quotes in Ibid., 371.
[193] Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 10.
[194] Custance to Selborne, September 31, 1904 in Ibid., 60.
[195] Custance to Selborne, September 31, 1904 in Ibid.

submarines] the most serious thing at present affecting the British Empire! … you have the astounding audacity to say to me, 'I presume you only think they (the submarines) can act on the defensive'!... Why, my dear fellow, not take the offensive?"[196]

The debate about which side was advantages by mines and submarines was not yet over. A discussion between Prime Minister Balfour and the Admiralty is instructive. Balfour wrote to the Admiralty skeptical of the value of mines to Britain, "These mines are in favour of the weaker antagonist, and, therefore, on the balance, detrimental to us. If we were blockading the enemy's ports, we should probably not scatter mines at the mouths of his harbours, for, so long as he did not put to sea, these would be a greater danger to us than to him."[197] In response, the Admiralty wrote, "our great object is to destroy his ships. The quickest and most certain way of doing so is by a second Trafalgar, a great fleet action, in which our superior strength in ships will assure us victory."[198] Yet, as an second-best alternative, the Admiralty argued, "It is not the blockade mines that we lay that will keep us miles away from an enemy's ports. It is the blockade and other mines which he may lay (far out in the offing), or, still more to be feared, a mere glimpse of the periscope of a submarine boat."[199]

---

[196] Fisher continued: "I have not disguised my opinion, in season and out of season, as the essential, imperative, immediate, vital, pressing urgent (I can't think of any more adjectives!) necessity for more submarines at once… In all seriousness I don't think it is even faintly realized – the immense impending revolution which the submarines will effect as offensive weapons of war." Fisher to Admiral William H. May, April 20, 1904 in Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 308–309.

[197] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:90.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid., 2:92.

Balfour next asked whether, "A weak Power, quite incapable of blockading one of our naval bases, might render it extremely dangerous for our battleships either to enter or leave them merely [by] sending a merchantman some dark night and sowing the fairway with mines."[200] The Admiralty responded, "Another favourite shibboleth regarding automatic mines is the dictum that they are the weapon of the weaker naval power. In point of fact the relative strength of two naval antagonists affords no true measure of the advantage each will reap from the use of automatic mines."[201] Further, the Admiralty wrote, "The submarine boat question is a useful reminder to us. We put off too long the adoption of these boats on the plea they were only defensive weapons… as seems likely to be the case with the automatic mine, it is highly probable that the submarine boat can be made capable of being towed at high speed to great distances, which will permit of its use by us for offensive purposes."[202]

Why did the Admiralty insist that submarines could be used for offensive purposes when the only submarines in existence had limited mobility, particularly when submerged? The reason for Fisher's confidence was that a second type of submarine was being contemplated. Fisher argued that an "oversea" submarine would allow the British to successfully wage war "with any power, particularly with any European power, on account of the narrow waters of the North Sea and Baltic, English Channel and Mediterranean, being denied to large ships of war until the submarine is cleared out."[203] In late 1908, the British seagoing submarine HMS D1 began her

[200] Ibid., 2:93.
[201] Ibid., 2:99.
[202] Ibid., 2:106.
[203] Fisher, "The Submarine Question," November 1908 quoted in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 182.

trials and promised to be able to maintain itself at sea, "unaided, for long periods."[204] By the summer of 1910, maneuvers of the HMS D1 reportedly, "opened the eyes of the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, to the offensive possibilities of submarines which he had hitherto regarded as defensive vessels."[205]

Fisher's persistent aggravator Charles Beresford continued to press his attack, saying "The submarine is always in a fog."[206] Marder suggests that Beresford saw the submarine as "merely a defensive weapon, and therefore unsuitable for use in an offensive fleet like the British."[207] In the five years leading up to World War I, however, the tides were turning. The Admiralty proposed to deploy two classes of submarines, "The eleven submarine boats of the 'B' class would be stationed at Dover, where their superior speed and seagoing qualities make them more effective than the 'A' class as a means of closing the Straits to the enemy's squadrons. The remainder will be divided equally between the three naval ports for local defence…"[208] In early 1912, the Admiralty suggested a new submarine, "a high buoyancy ship-shaped vessel of sufficient speed to accompany a battle-fleet… capable of keeping the sea for extended operations. The speed required to carry out the role of 'fleet' submarine should be at least the speed of the fleet—at present about twenty knots."[209]

---

[204] Ibid.

[205] Keyes, *Memoirs*, 23 referenced in Ibid., 207.

[206] Beresford in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 196.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Great Britain. Admiralty, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*, 2:380.

[209] Keyes, "Memorandum for Successor," April 6, 1914 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 232.

Not only were submarines growing in importance, but some scholars believe that seagoing submarines were set to rival battleships as the core element of the fleet. The submarine design committee recommended an oversea submarine, "capable of accompanying a modern fleet to sea…"[210] Churchill concurred and encouraged the pursuit of greater mobility, for "if the submarine is to be a substitute for battleship strength or battleship preponderance, not merely a substitute for destroyers, it must possess strategic speed which will enable it effectively to overhaul or circumvent a battle fleet."[211] Churchill hoped that such a submarine could serve "as a decisive weapon of battle and as such must count in partial substitution of battleship strength."[212]

Not only could submarines be used to prevent attacks against port facilities or invasion attempts, recognition grew about their ability to deny the sea to an adversary's battleships and even its commerce. Fisher's certainty in the sea denial capabilities of the submarine were evident when he told the Committee of Imperial Defence he had, "absolute confidence in the power of the submarine and did not believe that any heavy ship was safe from them in narrow waters. Therefore if we had an adequate flotilla of submarines and destroyers, at Malta, Gibraltar and Alexandria, no battleship could move in the Mediterranean."[213] The strategic situation had changed so dramatically that a sub-committee on North-East Coast Defences reported, "Owing to recent improvements in submarine mines, submarine boats, torpedo-craft, and torpedoes, the passage of the Straits of Dover and the English Channel by the ships of a Power at war with the

[210] Keyes, "Commodore S Minute on Submarines," August 15, 1913 referenced in Ibid., 282.
[211] Churchill to Fisher, August 30, 1913 quoted in Ibid., 293.
[212] Churchill, "First Lord's Minute on Submarines," July 20, 1913 referenced in Ibid., 283.
[213] Minutes of 177th meeting of the CID, July 4, 1912 referenced in Ibid., 259.

United Kingdom would be attended with such risks that for practical purposes the North Sea may be regarded as having only one entrance, the northern one."[214]

Through World War I, opponents still insisted that efforts to "employ submarines on the work of blockade of the enemy's ports," were "in spite of Mahan's theory of naval warfare."[215] Beresford expressed this belief in 1914, when he criticized submarine supporters who believed, "We are going to have a new British tradition, and a new British doctrine, that the main fleet is to remain in harbour because the fleet is in danger at sea! … Nelson would turn in his grave."[216] Yet, the very next month Vice Admiral Frederick Tower Hamilton took over as Second Sea Lord and recommended, "The time has come when the proportion of torpedo craft (especially submarines) to battleships should be increased—It is understood that it is proposed to commence this process this year by substituting for some of the approved programme certain extra torpedo craft…"[217] Churchill wrote that this would "add to our naval power. We should get better value for money out of the small craft."[218]

Nicholas Lambert argues that the Fisher intended to compete asymmetrically with Germany by launching a surprise submarine-building plan in the summer of 1914. He notes that Fisher wrote to the famous naval theorist Julian Corbett in June 1914 expressing frustration that Fisher

---

[214] "Report and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the North-East Coast Defences," November 29, 1912 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 424.

[215] Jack Sandars to Balfour, October 16, 1912 in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 278.

[216] Beresford, May 1914 quoted in Ibid., 165.

[217] Doveton Sturdee, "What is the Rison d'etre of a Polyphemus at the present time?," July 24, 1914 in Ibid., 301.

[218] First draft of Churchill and Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*. Referenced in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 301.

disciple Percy Scott has made too clear the value of the submarine to German experts. Fisher noted that the "Triple alliance will lavish their money on vessels that will be securely blockaded by our submarines, as the Mediterranean and the North Sea will be securely locked up."[219] In short, by the onset of World War I, the focus of many in the British navy had shifted from dreadnoughts to submarines and torpedo craft. This change is evident in Lord Esher's 1912 suggestion to Arthur Balfour that British naval strength should be measured by: "(1) personnel; (2) submarines; (3) destroyers; (4) large armoured cruisers; (5) armoured cruisers; (6) battleships—in that order."[220]

Conclusion

> Because of that formidable and threatening Armada across the North Sea, we have almost abandoned the waters of the Outer Oceans. We are in the position of Imperial Rome when the Barbarians were thundering at the frontiers. The ominous word has gone forth. We have called home the legions…
>
> - The Standard (1912)[221]

In the decades before World War I, Germany's rise and Britain's relative decline altered the balance of power in Europe and around the world. Perceived relative power theory predicts that British national objectives, security strategy, and military investments should have changed as a result. However, while there were certainly efforts to consolidate British objectives, adopt more defensive strategies, and pursue less mobile systems, the end result was largely a continuation of earlier policies. In short, British leaders clung to naval power projection as their power waned.

---

[219] Fisher to Corbett, June 22, 1914 quoted in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 303.
[220] Esher to Balfour, July 23, 1912 in Ibid., 254.
[221] *The Standard*, May 29, 1912 referenced in Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 205.

What sort of policy adaptation did occur? Naval construction data highlights several changes in military investments.[222] First, British spending on battleships and dreadnoughts increased over this period. Second, despite the frequent discussion of the importance of battlecruisers to Fisher's naval plans, spending on all types of cruisers declined substantially after he took office. While 45% of naval construction was devoted to cruisers before Fisher came into office, only 32% went toward them afterward. Third, spending on flotilla craft and submarines increased from 12% to 19% of construction. This aligns with Jackie Fisher's 1904 comment that, "It is astounding to me, perfectly astounding, how the very best amongst us absolutely fail to realize the vast impending revolution in naval warfare and naval strategy that the submarine will accomplish!"[223] Overall, the data shows a slight shift in spending from highly mobile systems, such as cruisers, to less mobile systems, such as flotilla craft and submarines. Yet, the magnitude of this shift is much smaller than that seen in other perceived relative power transitions.

Why did British leaders hold fast to their existing policies? There are several possible explanations. Many structural, domestic, and cultural explanations are applicable to the British case. Among structural factors, one possible explanation is that Britain's geographic position mandated naval power projection. An island nation like Britain was reliant on trade for survival.

---

[222] Spending trends in the British army were another matter. Britain continued to invest in ground force mobility, even decreasing the army's size to maximize its ability to deploy abroad. Yet, the army was shrinking in part to allow for the growth of the navy, which was the defensive arm of the British military. As British naval spending ramped up, First Lord Goschen announced, "These are not Estimates of provocation – they are estimates of self-defense… If foreign countries look at these Estimates they must not compare them with what they spend upon their navies. They must consider comparatively what they spend on their armies, because the squadrons which we send to sea are the *corps d'armee* that we place upon our frontiers as they place *corps d'armee* upon theirs." Goschen, in Hansard, March 2, 1896 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 264.

[223] Fisher, April 1904 in Ibid., 355.

Moreover, the alliance with France required the ability to land troops on the European continent. In the words of Edward Grey, the British army was "a projectile to be fired by the Navy."[224] Simply providing coastal defense through sea denial would not protect British sea lines of communication nor allow transport of the army to the continent during a major war.

Alternatively, organizational and cultural explanations may explain British decisions. The historical record shows that naval leaders clung to the status quo and worried that any decision to abandon prestigious weapons would undermine the navy's hard won bureaucratic influence. Large offensive weapons, such as the dreadnought, may also have been preferred because they fit the navy's view of itself as master of the seas. These mobile forces also permitted more flexible doctrines. Thus, even discussing defense was often viewed as defeatist because opponents worried that Britain would be seen as unnecessarily sacrificing hard won interests abroad.[225]

Moreover, British strategic culture had developed over centuries as Britain had ruled the seas. As Director of Naval Intelligence Reginald Custance wrote, "Naval opinion has been and is now under the influence of the traditions of the Napoleonic wars, when we had such a great superiority over the forces opposed to us that we were able to blockade them in their ports, and they were forced to evade us wherever they put to sea. We are deeply imbued with conceit that

[224] Grey quoted in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 385.

[225] As the Naval and Military Record concluded in 1901, "…certain limitations must hamper the expansion of a naval Power… [Singapore] requires a large garrison. Thus, the limitations of seapower begin to be felt when territorial expansion can no longer be safeguarded exclusively by the guns of the fleet, backed by minor garrisons." *The Naval and Military Record* (London), December 26, 1901 in Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 198.

the enemy must and will still evade us. This idea is a relic of the past."[226] Abandoning power projection may simply have been unthinkable for a navy that had grown accustomed to being the world's leading force during the Pax Britannica.

Finally, another possibility is that although British leaders were worried about Germany's rise, they also remained highly confident that their current defense policies could manage the German threat in the near term. When war did come in 1914, British naval leaders were proven correct that Britain's mastery at sea was sufficient to deter a major battle for most of the war. If British leaders could afford not to make hard choices, then this may explain why the forces pushing for reform and those favoring existing policies fought to a draw. Reform minded leaders were hampered by the prevailing, and ultimately accurate, view that offensively-oriented British naval forces were still sufficient to meet the German threat.

In summary, Britain's experience with relative decline is surprising in several important and instructive ways. British leaders, while slow to recognize their nation's relative decline, largely held to their existing objectives, strategies, and investments.[227] Although the British pursued some of the expected changes in defense policies, their reforms were more limited than perceived relative power theory expected. British confidence that the navy could handle the

---

[226] Upon the completion of Fisher's scheme, Britain shifted nine fleets from the Mediterranean and Chinese fleets to the Channel and the new Atlantic fleets. Custance, June 2, 1902 in Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, 518.

[227] This is not to suggest that this more locally concentrated force was properly prepared for war. Admiral Sir Percy Scott reflected, "we had no up-to-date mine layers, nor an efficient mine; no properly fitted mine sweepers; no arrangements for guarding our ships against mines' no efficient method of using our guns at night; no anti-Zeppelin guns; no anti-submarine precautions; no safe harbour for our Fleet… Our torpedoes were so badly fitted that in the early days of the war they went under the German ships instead of hitting them." Percy Scott, *Fifty Years in the Royal Navy* (London, 1919), 201 in Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*, 435.

growing German challenge likely weakened reformists and limited the sense of political urgency necessary to overcome bureaucratic inertia. Geographic, bureaucratic, and cultural explanations may also have played important roles in moderating British behavior. Therefore, this case provides important insights into the limits of perceived relative power theory and the conditions under which it holds. As will be discussed in the conclusion, these findings are particularly instructive for modern policymakers.

French Decline

> What dominates everything are the awful threats that hang over France… Alone, exhausted, ruined, without government, without compass, living from day to day, haphazardly. The future is terrifying. I believe German revenge inevitable, unavoidable and close.
>
> - Marshal Lyautey (1921)[1]

France emerged triumphant from World War I, but its victory came at a tremendous cost. The French Republic lost 1.4 million men in the war, amounting to 10.5 percent of its active male population.[2] Germany, despite its ultimate defeat, experienced a slightly less devastating 9.8 percent loss of its active male population.[3] Moreover, for much of the war Germany occupied land in northeastern France, which accounted for half of French coal, iron, steel, cotton, and other manufacturing production.[4] By the end of the war, 7 percent of French territory had been damaged by war, resulting in a 37 percent decrease in coal production and a 60 percent reduction in steel production.[5] As Winston Churchill later remarked, "Victory was to be bought so dear as to be almost indistinguishable from defeat."[6]

The devastation of France left its political and military leaders determined to limit Germany's ability to wage war in the future. Realizing that French power relative to Germany was likely to

---

[1] Anthony P. Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France's Bid for Power in Europe, 1914-1940* (London: Arnold, 1995), 64.

[2] Judith M. Hughes, *To the Maginot Line: The Politics of French Military Preparation in the 1920's*, Harvard Historical Monographs 64 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 12.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Anthony P. Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939* (London: Cass, 1977), 5.

[5] Alistair Horne, *To Lose a Battle: France 1940* (London: Penguin, 2007), 58.

[6] Churchill and Gilbert, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*.

decline in the years ahead, French delegates drove a hard bargain at Versailles. French leaders insisted on massive reparations, territorial adjustments, and military limitations designed to rebuild France while preventing Germany from launching another world war. Tensions emerged with London and Washington, but Paris succeeded in imposing severe penalties on Berlin. By the early 1920s, France fielded a 350,000 man standing army, as compared to 100,000 for Germany.[7] Allied leaders also controlled large portions of German territory and received much of Germany's economic production in the form of reparations.

This momentary French advantage, however, concealed the reality that German power was likely to recover in the years ahead. In 1922, French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré warned of "the truly frightening prospect of Germany economically hegemonic and capable of realizing all the objectives it would have gained had it won the war."[8] By the late 1920s, it was clear that demographic and economic trends were in Germany's favor. Indeed, over the next two decades, population growth rates differed substantially. In 1920, France's population was 39 million compared to Germany's 43 million, but Germany had 14 million more people than France by 1928, and 26 million more by 1938.[9] From 1929 to 1938, French industrial production declined 24 percent while German production increased 16 percent.[10] By the late 1930s, Germany was producing 351 million tons of coal as compared to just 47 million tons for France.[11]

---

[7] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 162.

[8] Denise Artaud, "Reparations and War Debts: The Restoration of French Financial Power, 1919-1929" in Robert W. D. Boyce, ed., *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940: The Decline and Fall of a Great Power* (London: Routledge, 1998), 95.

[9] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 162.

[10] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 142.

[11] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 4.

According to the theory of perceived relative power presented here, France's relative decline should have caused its leaders to alter their national objectives, security strategy, and military investments. Indeed, this chapter suggests that the French experience from 1919 to 1939 closely aligns with these predictions. As its relative power waned, France sought to conserve its strength by consolidating its national objectives. These less expansive national objectives permitted France to shift from an offensive security strategy to a defensive approach. This defensive security strategy relied not on mobile forces but on largely stationary units, leading to French military investments like the Maginot Line. This is not to suggest that French policies were effective—they ultimately failed to protect against a German invasion—but they did accord with the expectations of the theory of perceived relative power.

French Defense Policy before 1927

> France victorious must grow accustomed to being a lesser power than France vanquished.
>
> - French diplomat Jules Cambon (1918)[12]

While France's eventual defeat in World War II is often attributed to poor military strategy, many French defense policy decisions appeared logical in light of its relative power. Through the mid-1920s, France was in a strong position compared to Germany, and its economic position appeared to be strengthening. With the German economy burdened by reparations, territorial losses, and depression, French leaders were determined to use their upper hand to constrain Germany's rise. Initially, Britain and the United States also appeared committed to ensuring that

[12] Anthony Kemp, *The Maginot Line: Myth and Reality* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 11.

German power remain contained. As a result, through at least 1927, most French leaders embraced expansive objectives, offensive strategies, and mobile investments.

Ends: Expansive Objectives

French leaders emerging from World War I were immediately faced with the difficult question of how to heal the nation's wounds and capitalize on the allied victory. Before the war, various political forces had pushed for colonial expansion, seeking to compete economically and militarily with other European states. According to scholar Anthony Adamthwaite, "Expansionist pressures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from soldiers, businessmen and missionaries rather than governments and the public."[13] After the war, however, the forces that had pushed for expansion were drowned out by a war weary public. As a result, French governments increasingly focused on security at home rather than conquest abroad. Adamthwaite suggests that France followed three postwar policies, "enforcement of the peace treaties and payment of reparations; support for the League of Nations and collective security; [and] the creation of alliances in central and eastern Europe."[14] In short, the challenge for French leaders after the war was to exploit their advantage in relative power before it eroded.

French security first required a plan to slow Germany's economic resurgence in order to prevent Berlin from launching another bid for mastery of Europe. Ensuring that the post-war settlement would simultaneously rebuild France and constrain Germany was atop French minds. Massive economic reparations and territorial adjustments were viewed as necessities. Both measures would have the advantage of weakening Germany while helping France to rebuild. French

[13] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 6.
[14] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 17.

negotiators pushed for enormous reparations and although their initial demands were not met, France won 52% of all German reparations to the allies. In the end, however, Germany would pay only a fraction of the initial allied request of 226 billion Marks. Regarding territory, Germany lost all its overseas possessions and over 13% of its territory on the continent. France gained Alsace and Lorraine, parts of Togo and Cameroon, and occupied the Rhineland along with other allied forces. Defending France's considerable economic demands, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau explained, "After expending the greatest effort, and suffering the greatest sacrifices in blood in all history, we must not compromise the results of our victory."[15]

With its economic plan in place, French leaders sought to impose restrictions on the German military and strengthen alliances with Germany's neighbors. The German navy had already been scuttled at Scapa Flow, but France and Britain won restrictions on naval vessels that prevented Germany from fielding submarines or vessels above 10,000 tons.[16] The German army was limited to 100,000 men, although France failed to force Germany to adopt a conscript army that might have proven more difficult to reconstitute. All fortifications east of the Rhine were to be dismantled. In addition, Germany was prevented from retaining or constructing military aircraft. France also entered into alliances with Belgium in 1920, Poland in 1921, Czechoslovakia in 1924, Romania in 1926, and Yugoslavia in 1927. Meanwhile, Paris sought continued commitments that London, Washington, and Moscow would meet any future German threat.

The final element of the French plan was institutional. American and British leaders pushed a compromise that might permit an early German reintegration into the international system. Yet,

---

[15] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 40.

[16] See "The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part V," The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partv.asp.

collective security mechanisms, such as the League of Nations, required German cooperation and therefore conflicted with Paris's focus on slowing German reentry into the political and economic community. Clemenceau framed the French predicament by noting, "America is far away and protected by the ocean. England could not be reached by Napoleon himself. You are sheltered, both of you; we are not."[17] French institutional obstructionism—and the hard line Paris pushed on reparations, territory, and military concessions—led to deteriorating relations with London and Washington. At one point, expressing displeasure with lack of inclusion in U.S. postwar planning, Clemenceau inquired of Lloyd George, "Have you ever been asked by President Wilson whether you accept the Fourteen Points? … I have not been asked."[18] Herbert Hoover articulated the view of many in both London and Washington when he stated, "France always goes through this cycle. After she is done and begins to recuperate… she gets rich, militaristic and cocky; and nobody can get on with her until she has to be thrashed again."[19]

French leaders were not satisfied that reparations, territorial concessions, military limitations, renewed alliances, and institutional arrangements would contain the German threat. Although France was strong relative to Germany in the immediate aftermath of the war, the German population was growing quickly. In 1920, a French industrial expert foretold, "Our enemy, regardless of all treaties, will certainly find a way of reconstituting its military power. Given the density of its population, we will be able to field equal numbers against it only by drawing

---

[17] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 40.

[18] Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 13, in P. M. H. Bell, *France and Britain, 1900-1940: Entente and Estrangement* (London: Longman, 1996), 114.

[19] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 135.

heavily… on our allies."[20] Clemenceau warned, "The Treaty means nothing if France does not agree to have many children… for if France renounces large families, we will have taken all the guns from Germany for nothing."[21] Ferdinand Foch, victor of 1918, said of Versailles, "This is not peace… it is an armistice for twenty years."[22] Foch's prescient view drew broad support among Parisian government leaders and military officers.

By the early 1920s, Germany's inability to pay reparations created a political struggle among the allies. France and Belgium, in need of funds to rebuild their economies in the wake of Germany's wartime occupation, sought to use their military leverage to ensure German compliance. The British and Americans hoped to lessen the burden on Germany by decreasing the size and pace of reparations. French leaders urged an occupation of the Ruhr region, Germany's primary manufacturing area. Military officers had long advocated an occupation of the entire Rhineland, with Foch arguing, "If we do not hold the Rhine permanently, no neutralization, or disarmament, or any kind of written clause can prevent Germany… from sallying out of it at will."[23] French diplomat, Jacques Seydoux explained, "It is a violent solution, but is will settle everything. We will become the masters of Germany, independent of England, and an industrial power of the first rank."[24] By 1922, Paris believed that Berlin was testing the allies' resolve by cutting off timber (and later coal) deliveries. Under pressure from France and Belgium, the Inter-Allied Reparations Commission announced that Germany was in default, and a month later France and Belgium occupied the Ruhr.

---

[20] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 83.

[21] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 8. Also see Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 21.

[22] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 59.

[23] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 63.

[24] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 89.

The occupation of the Ruhr showed that France was still strong relative to Germany and that Paris was willing to use its military might to accomplish political objectives. French leaders were so determined that their British counterparts began to worry more about Paris than Berlin. Lloyd George exclaimed, "France is full of the idea that she is going to control, overwhelm and keep under Germany… It is only France who could give us trouble now."[25] Most British leaders were angered by French actions, but some officials were more sympathetic. John Maynard Keynes, British representative to the Versailles peace conference, defended the French by noting that "it was essential to rectify the situation unilaterally created by the occupation and the devastation of northern France. The occupation of the Ruhr restored that equilibrium."[26] Immediately thereafter in 1923, Germany experienced hyperinflation and economic stagnation, which prompted the allies to establish a committee under Charles Dawes to negotiate a solution. In 1924, the Dawes Plan restructured German reparations and arranged an end to the allied occupation of the Ruhr. Thus, 1925 marked the end of French control over the Ruhr and ushered in reduced reparations, substantially strengthening Germany vis-à-vis France.

By the late 1920s, it was becoming clear that relative power trends would erode France's relative position. Economic realities and political limitations forced the army to shrink and diminished its ability to invade Germany. Foreign Minister Aristide Briand announced in 1925, "we will not go beyond our zone… we are possessed by no spirit of conquest… we should be acting in a criminal fashion if we entertained the least ulterior motive of dragging our country into bloody adventures

[25] Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, edited by Keith Middlemas, I, (London, 1969), 116-117, referenced in Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 3.

[26] Denise Artaud, "Reparations and War Debts: The Restoration of French Financial Power, 1919-1929" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 97.

in pursuit of a conquest that we couldn't even digest."[27] Historian Judith Hughes writes of future Minister of National Defense and War Jean Fabry, "As late as 1927 he had exhorted his colleagues to organize the army in such a fashion that its standing units would be capable of immediate action. Less than two years later the terms of the discussion had changed… With one-year military service and the evacuation of the Rhineland impending realities, the point at issue for Fabry was no longer what the active army might initiate but rather how it should be equipped to withstand a German attack."[28] Thus, French leaders began to shift from a strategy of imposing their will on Germany to one of consolidating control over their existing holdings.

Ways: Offensive Strategy

For decades before World War I, French military leaders debated the merits of offensive and defensive strategies. Alistair Horne suggests that in 1870, "France had lost a war through adopting too defensive a posture and relying too much on permanent fortifications… In reaction against this calamitous defeat, France had nearly lost the next war by being too aggressive-minded."[29] As early as 1874, General Séré de Rivières noted the desire "to create a barrier stretching from Calais to Nice, and behind it a general defensive scheme in depth as far as Paris… for the purpose of providing a cover during the mobilization, concentration and formation of troops in battle order, of controlling the invasion routes and of providing strong defensive points."[30] Some advocates, such as B. H. Liddell Hart, suggested defensive approaches before World War I, arguing that France should be "defensive politically and militarily:

---

[27] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 163.

[28] Ibid., 205.

[29] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 32.

[30] Vivian Rowe, *The Great Wall of France: The Triumph of the Maginot Line* (New York: Putnam, 1961), 21.

politically, because it is only on this condition that we can count on the intervention of our allies; militarily, because we are forced to it by the relative rate of mobilization of the respective armies, and also by the nature of the ground on the frontier."[31] Yet, France favored offense over defense in World War I, resulting in a tremendous number of casualties.

World War I rekindled the belief in the value of defensive fortifications. Many French leaders emerged from the war believing that defense was superior to offensive. Yet, many military leaders advocated offensive capabilities in the immediate aftermath of the war. Barry Posen records, "French civilians did not complete their drift to an overwhelmingly defensive doctrine until the end of the 1920s."[32] Elizabeth Kier explains, "Not until the late 1920s did the advocates of a continuous line of fortifications dominate the debate; until then, a more offensive conception for the use of fortified regions held sway."[33]

In the early 1920s, France developed a series of offensive war plans. Between 1920 and 1929, Plan T (transitional), Plan P (provisional), and Plan A all called for offensive action against Germany.[34] General Adolphe Guillaumat reflected prevailing views when he commented, "It is dangerous to let the false and demoralizing notion spread that once we have fortifications the inviolability of our country is assured, and that they are a substitute for the labor of preparing wills, hearts and minds."[35] Indeed, Guillaumat argued, "The Wall of France is a dream financially speaking, and from the military point of view can be a danger… It would be better to

---

[31] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 58.

[32] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 117.

[33] Kier, *Imagining War*, 41.

[34] J. E Kaufmann and H. W Kaufmann, *Fortress France: The Maginot Line and French Defenses in World War II* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2007), 3.

[35] Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 57.

build a strong army capable of going on the offensive. Whatever money is remaining—if any does remain—could be used to construct fortifications that would serve as a base of departure."[36]

Initial fortification concepts provided avenues for French forces to invade Germany. Simultaneously, fortifications would form a backstop against a German attack, thereby allowing time for mobilization and a French military response. In 1923, the Frontier Defense Commission suggested fortified regions could act "as a real instrument of maneuver at the disposition of the command-in-chief."[37] Making use of these positions for offensive purposes would require French mobile units capable of invading Germany. To that end, Marshal Émile Fayolle wrote in 1925 of the need for "forces capable of decisive strikes into Germany such that Germany will be required to maintain the mass of her forces in face of us and to fight on her territory."[38]

As late as 1927, General Paul-Emile Tournoux argued that, "Even in the event of an army's withdrawal behind the front, the commander would still retain the possibility of giving battle in depth without losing the support of this fortification."[39] According to one observer, "even Marshal Foch did not dissent. Indeed, throughout the discussions of defensive works, he sided with Guillaumat and consistently saw fortifications as offering support to the army's maneuvers."[40] Yet, the late 1920s would witness a major change in French strategy. As French power and objectives contracted, this offensive orientation would soon give way to a defensive focus. By the late 1930s, it would not even permit France to uphold its treaty commitments.

---

[36] Guillaumat quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 42.

[37] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 201.

[38] Fayolle quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 44.

[39] Martin S. Alexander, "In Defense of the Maginot Line: Security Policy, Domestic Politics and the Economic Depression in France" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 170.

[40] Ibid.

Means: Mobile Investments

Although many observers believe that France abandoned mobility after World War I, Elizabeth Kier argues, "It was only later, in the late 1920s and especially the 1930s that the lesson of World War I became dominant."[41] The post-war environment called for mobile forces to ensure that Germany could be forced to pay reparations. Kier notes, "Although the memory of World War I was etched in France's collective memory, the French army did not leave World War I convinced that the only possible doctrinal orientation was a defensive one reminiscent of the trench warfare in northern France."[42]

It is true that the French experience in World War I highlighted the costs and limits of infantry attacks on fixed positions. General André Beaufre commented, "We had been haunted by the tenacity of the German machine-guns, and the impossibility in which we found ourselves of breaking the enemy front."[43] A French tactical manual made clear, "firepower had given a remarkable strength of resistance to improvised fortifications."[44] As Anthony Adamthwaite wrote, "The lessons of the First World War were codified in an official manual, the *Instruction on the Tactical Use of Major Units,* which as late as 1936 insisted that despite post-1918 technical advances the guiding concepts of 1918 remained valid."[45] Thus, the memory of the recent war gave French leaders good reason to abandon the concept of mobility.

---

[41] Kier, *Imagining War*, 45.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 71.

[44] Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32.

[45] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 152.

Yet, mobility was required for strategic purposes and French military leaders such as General Edmond Buat insisted, "The appearance of the motor on the battlefield once again gives mobility and movement its full importance."[46] In 1920, French infantry regulations announced, "Inspired with an offensive spirit… infantry and its supporting forces will never let themselves be stopped by the fear of incurring a few losses, which it would be… chimerical to hope to avoid completely."[47] The Germans were also exploring mobile forces, with German General Hans von Seeckt commenting in 1921, "The whole future of warfare appears to me to be in the employment of mobile armies, relatively small but of high quality, and rendered distinctly more effective by the addition of aircraft…"[48]

How could France make use of mobile forces in the early 1920s? French military leaders were not ready to adopt highly-mobile combined arms warfare utilizing tanks and mechanized infantry, which would eventually make the German Blitzkrieg possible. Instead, André Maginot suggested in 1923 that France pursue "protective operations of limited range, carried out with prudence."[49] Pétain commented in 1927 of the need for "a mobile force near the frontier and to make sure of its swift advance into Belgium."[50] Without a mobile force, Foch worried, "If we don't have the tool, [fortifications] will not be the umbrella that will protect the country."[51] Yet, French offensive techniques were still hampered by what Barry Posen called "The simplest lessons of World War I… The French always stressed firepower over maneuver. The requirement for a heavy firepower offensive with a massive preliminary bombardment fostered a

[46] Buat quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 43.
[47] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 71.
[48] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 89.
[49] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 139.
[50] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 75.
[51] Foch quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 42.

slow and deliberate style of warfare. New techniques and machines were fitted to this model."[52] General Maurice Gamelin later acknowledged this change when he noted that the initial line, "did not consist of the organization of a defensive front, but instead was to prepare, at the edge of the frontier, a mobile force and to ensure its rapid transfer into Belgium."[53]

As the late 1920s advanced, French politicians grew increasingly concerned about Germany's resurgence. French military leaders responded by embracing the lessons of World War I. After all, "Marshal Philippe Pétain, who had exclaimed 'Ils ne passeront pas!' (They shall not pass!) in the heat of the battle, attributed his success in stopping the enemy advance mainly to the fortress ring of Verdun… As a result, the French High Command, remembering its successes and failures at Verdun, would later place its faith in the superiority of fixed defenses."[54] Initially Maginot envisioned "extremely mobile defensive organizations… a kind of fortification on wheels…"[55] In the years ahead, however, these defenses lost their mobility. After all, French attacks into German territory seemed less plausible and funding was evaporating for a large, well-trained French force capable of offensive action. The result was that by 1927, French political and military leaders were prepared to embrace a decisive shift away from mobile forces toward largely immobile fixed defenses.

French Defense Policy after 1927

> Our moral position, our political, geographic, demographical and financial position, made not only aggression but even the initiative in attack absolutely

[52] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 131.

[53] Gamelin quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 43.

[54] J. E. Kaufmann and H. W. Kaufmann, *The Maginot Line: None Shall Pass* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 6–7.

[55] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 215.

> impossible… The army corresponding to our policy could only be one organized for an initial defensive to precede the general strategic counter-offensive.
>
> - General Victor Bourret[56]

As French power began to decline in the late 1920s, France rapidly altered its objectives, strategy, and investments. This change is defense policy has sometimes been attributed to changing internal political dynamics, and those were no doubt an important factor. However, changes in French defense policies also correspond directly to the recognition of France's declining power relative to Germany. By the late 1920s, Germany's economy was beginning to recover as its population swelled. Moreover, Britain and the United States had proved unwilling to force Germany to pay its full share of reparations. Therefore, it was clear to French leaders that dynamics were beginning to turn against them.

How could France prevent another invasion by Germany? Scaling back French ambitions was the first step. This would not require a large standing army, which was already difficult politically. With internal tensions growing, particularly due to the spread of communism, Daladier warned, "we do not want any professional shock Army, more dangerous than one could believe for the security of the country."[57] Instead, France would have to make do with a smaller and less well-trained army. Such a force would be capable of limited defensive maneuvers, but not large offensive actions. Scholar Barry Posen argues, "French military doctrine was defensive, stagnant… Both operationally and politically, it looked backward to World War I. Stationary,

[56] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 89–90.
[57] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 117.

defensive, attrition warfare, waged in the company of a powerful coalition, was both the French fear and the French aim."[58]

Ends: Adopting Consolidation Objectives

The conceptual shift in French defense policy that began around 1927 was embodied by André Maginot. Maginot had served as a soldier in World War I and had been wounded at Verdun. After entering politics, Maginot served as Minister of War three times. He was determined to prevent a recurrence of war on French territory. Speaking before parliament, he proclaimed, "We are always the invaded, we are always the ones to suffer, we are always the ones to be sacrificed… After all we have suffered, we have the right to demand certainties."[59]

With the German economy growing, French leaders were determined to protect the border. In 1927, conservative politician Michel Missoffe advised of the need "to defend the frontier… in an efficient fashion, for three or four months, and to give the country time to attain its full potential, both at home and in the colonies, of men, of armaments, and of provisions."[60] Maginot wanted full protection again Germany, but noted "it is going beyond the possibilities of human nature to expect our people to rebuild the regions that remain exposed to the risks and calamities of a new invasion."[61] As France increasingly discussed defense of its borders, concern grew in Belgium that such actions would force Germany to attack France through Belgium if war occurred. As a result, British leaders viewed French actions as a "deliberate inducement to compel us to

[58] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 102.
[59] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 17.
[60] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 178.
[61] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 17.

intervene on land in order to safeguard an area which we have regarded as vital for centuries."[62] Leaders in Paris reassured them that France would "earmark most of her mobile forces for a defensive maneuver into Belgium."[63]

Redirecting an attack from the Franco-German border into Belgium was no oversight. Rather than fortifying its own northern border, French leaders sought to move into Belgium and fortify positions there. War hero Philippe Pétain contended, "The northern frontier can only be defended by advancing into Belgium."[64] One reason was that fortifying the border with Belgium would imply that France was essentially sacrificing its ally Belgium to Germany. As Minister of War Paul Painlevé wrote in 1928, "The fortification of the Belgian frontier will be less important, because we cannot build up impregnable defenses in the faces of our friends the Belgians."[65] Another rationale, however, was that France desired to ensure that any German invasion would have to go through Belgium and thereby bring Britain into the war. Along these lines, some scholars suggest the purpose of the Maginot Line was "to incite the Germans to invade through Belgium… to alienate England and to lead the Belgians to intervene."[66] Posen agrees that "The main goal was to get others to share the costs of French defense. Until such cooperation could be assured, French military doctrine would aim to limit possible damage to France and to the French

[62] British Committee of Imperial Defense, 1938, quoted in Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 114.

[63] Martin S Alexander, *The Republic in Danger: General Maurice Gamelin and the Politics of French Defence, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 189.

[64] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 46.

[65] Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 20.

[66] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 114.

Army."[67] Defending forward had the added advantage of fighting on Belgian rather than French territory, thereby avoiding the destruction of France's most critical industrial areas.

The French, feeling abandoned by Britain in negotiations over reparations and territory, were willing to tolerate British anger. Not only that, but French perseverance undermined the German government, prompting German Chancellor Gustav Stresemann to remark, "I gave and gave and gave until my followers turned against me… If they could have granted me just one concession, I would have won my people. But [the French] gave nothing… That is my tragedy and their crime."[68] Tensions rose again in 1930 when the allied Young Plan further reduced the German payment schedule. When the date for the return of the Rhineland was shifted from 1935 to 1930, Maginot called it "a veritable crime against the country."[69] Later he explained, "the fortification of the north-eastern frontier is essential to replace the protection that was afforded us by the occupation of the Rhineland… this frontier organization will underline the defensive nature of our military system."[70]

By the early 1930s, Germany's rising power and its desire to rearm was becoming obvious to all. In 1930, Jean Fabry acknowledged, "fear of another invasion… dominates all France's military policy."[71] Prime Minister Édouard Herriot warned in 1932, "I am convinced that Germany wishes to rearm… We are at a turning point in history. Until now Germany has practiced a policy of submission… Tomorrow it will be a policy of territorial demands backed by a

---

[67] Ibid., 102.
[68] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 65.
[69] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 48.
[70] Ibid., 50.
[71] Quoted in Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: Norton, 1994), 244–245.

formidable means of intimidation: its army."[72] At the time, however, France was still strong relative to Germany. In 1931, Arnold Toynbee commented that France was "the dominant military power in Europe in the air as well as on land."[73]

In the early 1930s, Army Inspector General Maxime Weygand suggested, "Why not a preventive war? Today France still has military superiority. Soon she will have lost it."[74] This was a logical question, but by this time most French leaders were unwilling to entertain the notion of offensive action against Germany. French objectives may have been more expansive in the 1920s, yet by the 1930s French leaders were firmly committed to consolidating their position. As a result, the idea of an offensive against Germany—even one in response to German provocations—was rejected. Maginot said, "As a people we threaten nobody. We have undertaken never to commit an act of aggression against anybody. We wish only to live in peace."[75]

In January 1933, Adolph Hitler was sworn in as German chancellor. Later that year, Prime Minister Daladier commented, "If Germany continues to rearm, France will increase its armaments so as to maintain its current superiority."[76] Some French leaders pushed for negotiations through the Geneva Disarmament Conference. On this point, the French military attaché in Berlin noted, "If Hitler is sincere in proclaiming his desire for peace, we will be able to congratulate ourselves on having reached agreements; if he has other designs or if he has to give

---

[72] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 187. Also see Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 231.

[73] He also noted, "the Bank of England was shocked to find itself dependent on the Bank of France, and the Federal Reserve Bank to find itself not altogether independent of French goodwill." Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 137.

[74] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 29.

[75] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 57–58.

[76] Joseph A. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: How the Arms Race Drove the World to War, 1931 - 1941* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 81.

way one day to some fanatic we will at least have postponed the outbreak of a war and that is indeed a gain."[77] Unfortunately, Hitler withdrew from the conference and the League of Nations. Despite this setback, head of the General Staff Maurice Gamelin insisted, "The French Army staff believes that it has a considerable margin of superiority over Germany. We will see how long it will take for the Germans to catch up with the 20 billion we have spent on armaments!"[78]

Unfortunately, funding for French military construction was limited. In 1934, Pétain announced, "I insist on the immediate voting of these credits. They correspond to the profound feeling of the population which wishes to live in peace behind solid frontiers. The fortifications are the inscription on the ground of that will."[79] Daladier agreed and noted, "If we want to ensure that France retains its position among the great states and if we want the ideas for which she stands to endure… we must be resolved to make the necessary sacrifices and to accept the necessary risks."[80] The trends were in the wrong direction though. Adamthwaite notes, "1934 was the last year in which the military chiefs freely acknowledged that the balance of forces favored France."[81] The next year a plebiscite in the Saar resulted in Germany reasserting control over the region. Minister of War Jean Fabry admitted in 1936, "from the point of view of material, Germany is on the verge of surpassing us."[82] Edouard Herriot, President of the Chamber of Deputies, said that France "could no longer regard herself as a great power of sufficient military strength or human resources to maintain her position in central and eastern Europe and bring

---

[77] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 30.

[78] Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, 90.

[79] Martin S. Alexander, "In Defense of the Maginot Line: Security Policy, Domestic Politics and the Economic Depression in France" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 178.

[80] Peter Jackson, "Intelligence and the End of Appeasement" in Ibid., 250–251.

[81] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 39.

[82] Ibid.

effective support to her allies."[83] Diplomat Alexis Léger, who would later be awarded a Nobel Prize, admitted that "France could only react to events, she could not take the initiative."[84]

Germany, on the other hand, was taking the initiative. Hitler began openly reconstructing his military and in 1936 he remilitarized the Rhineland. This violation of the Treaty of Versailles (and the Locarno Treaties) presented an opportunity for French leaders to use their strength while they still retained a military edge. Hitler himself commented, "If the French had then marched into the Rhineland we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs, for the military resources at our disposal would have been wholly inadequate for even a moderate resistance."[85] In 1936, however, the French were unwilling to contemplate a new conflict. The U.S. Embassy cabled back to Washington, "France wants peace, fears war, does not conceal that fear, and will be forced to take the consequences."[86]

France was suffering from a weakening economy and a financial crisis, but Popular Front leaders, such as Léon Blum, remained confident in French military superiority. In 1936, Blum insisted, "We believe our position stronger than a few months ago. France does not tremble in the face of war, but she does not want war."[87] The Minister of War commented, "have no fears… We shall make sure the North will never be invaded and occupied again. Our frontier shall be inviolable."[88] The unavoidable reality, however, was that German military manpower was increasing rapidly. By the mid-1930s, yearly conscription classes were over 450,000 men for

---

[83] FRUS 1937, I, 89, referenced in Ibid., 61.
[84] Ibid., 88.
[85] Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (London: Odhams, 1952), 135.
[86] Quoted in Weber, *The Hollow Years*, 146. 5-81
[87] Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, 178.
[88] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 93.

Germany and under 200,000 for France.[89] Even worse, the French strategy was thrown into disarray on October 14, 1936, when Belgian King Leopold III revoked the Franco-Belgian Treaty and returned Belgium to neutrality. France was now trailing economically, suffering from slow population growth, and losing allies while Germany was expanding its territory. Herriot noted that if disarmament negotiations with Germany failed, "There would be only one recourse left… an armaments race… Germany's chances, with its dense population, with its heavy industry… Imagine what the relative situation of the two countries would become."[90]

By 1938, French leaders were openly commenting that they could only defend French territory, which might violate commitments in Eastern Europe. The chief of French military intelligence suggested that not opposing Germany in Eastern Europe would "only delay an eventual Franco-German conflict… One would have to know nothing of the German mentality to believe otherwise."[91] Yet, Winston Churchill remarked, "Having regard to the disparity of the population of France to that of Germany, the Maginot Line must be regarded as a wise and prudent measure."[92] French leaders were frustrated with their British allies. Foreign Minister Georges-Étienne Bonnet noted that to London, "the French army constitutes a covering force which allows the British empire to gain the necessary time to go from a peacetime state to a war footing, without having to modify too drastically the social and economic organization of the country…"[93] Bonnet's predecessor Yvon Delbos confessed, "England had embarked on a policy

---

[89] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 76.

[90] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 234–235.

[91] Peter Jackson, "Intelligence and the End of Appeasement" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 235.

[92] Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, The Second World War (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 373. Referenced in Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 111.

[93] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 251.

of turning over central and eastern Europe to Germany," and as a result "it would be possible for France to retire behind the Maginot Line."[94]

Resigning to defense of French borders required a major change in mindset.[95] General Gamelin noted, "The question which must be addressed is whether France wishes to renounce its status as a European Great Power and abandon to Germany hegemony of not only central but all of eastern Europe."[96] A French diplomat commented, "It makes us no more than a strictly western and colonial power… What is certain is that we French cannot retreat any more, we have reached the extreme limit at which the slightest hesitation, the weakness would bring disaster."[97] Gamelin warned Prime Minister Daladier that France must resist Germany or risk becoming a "second class power" within a decade.[98] U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau agreed and asked, "Who, in France, would have imagined in 1930 that in less than 10 years this great democratic nation would become a second-rate power shorn of its influence in central Europe and dependent on a stubborn and demanding ally for its own security?"[99]

War with Germany remained unthinkable for many French leaders. When Hitler threatened Czechoslovakia, De Gaulle commented, "As usual, we surrender without a fight to the insolent demands of the Germans and deliver our allies, the Czechs, to the common enemy… This

---

[94] Foreign Relations of the United States - 1938, I, 28, referenced in Ibid., 75.

[95] French troops on the continent assumed a "protective posture for the defense of the national territory." Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 193.

[96] Peter Jackson, "Intelligence and the End of Appeasement" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 250.

[97] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 258.

[98] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 214. Also see Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 226.

[99] J. M. Blum, ed., *From the Morgenthau Diaries* (Boston, 1959), 525, referenced in Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 140.

surrender will give us a brief respite, like old Madame du Barry with her head on the block begging: 'Just a few more seconds, Mr. Executioner.'"[100] Bonnet admitted, "If France declared war against Germany her position would be weaker than at any time since 1919."[101] The French army's orders demonstrated the low priority placed on helping France's eastern allies. Gamelin described the military's main tasks as: "1. the defense of France and her empire; 2. offensive action against Italy on the Alps and in Africa; 3. if possible and at a convenient time offensive action against Germany in order to divert part of the German forces for the benefit of our Central European allies."[102]

When Hitler invaded Poland, France declared war but made only a token effort to help its ally. General Gamelin reportedly wrote, "More than half our regular divisions in the north-east are in action… we have made some headway… I have thus fulfilled in advance my promise to start the offensive with my main forces a fortnight after the first day of French mobilization. It was impossible for me to do more."[103] As he suggests, the French offensive was a farce, and the British could do little more. Earlier in 1939, Daladier said the Queen was "ready to sacrifice every other country in the world in order that she might remain Queen Elizabeth of England… England had become so feeble and senile that the British would give away every possession of their friends rather than stand up to Germany and Italy."[104] Later In 1939, Daladier would complain, "The English, behind the Channel… have the possibility of conserving their energies

[100] Ibid., 201.

[101] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 221.

[102] Ibid., 62.

[103] Gamelin letter quoted by Field Marshal von Manstein, 1940, referenced in Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 112.

[104] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*., xv.

so as to last out, to wait for the Americans, perhaps the Russians. But as for us, we risk becoming, after the Czechs, after the Poles, the prey of the Reich."[105]

As World War II approached, conflict with Germany appeared unavoidable. By spring 1940, Germany had 1,400 bombers, 342 dive-bombers, 1,000 fighters, and 500 reconnaissance and scout planes. This compared to at most 175 bombers, 54 dive-bombers, 700 fighters, and 400 reconnaissance and scout planes for France, plus a British force of 220 bombers, 130 fighters, and 50 reconnaissance and scout aircraft in France.[106] Daladier suggested, France has to choose "between a slow decline or a renaissance through effort… there could be no greater tragedy than to see one's country, through a falling birth rate, the slowing down production, disordered finances and the undermining of its currency, running the risk of sinking to a second class power."[107]

France's opportunity for rebirth had passed, however. When war with Germany began, Alistair Horne recounts that France "found herself in the war she had dreaded for so long, with no allies but Britain and Poland, Belgium neutral and the Maginot Line incomplete between Longwy and the sea, her Army strong on paper but weak in fact, her Air Force hopelessly outclassed, and the nation divided."[108] War came on May 10, 1940. By May 15, French Premier Reynaud admitted

[105] Bell, *France and Britain, 1900-1940*, 230.

[106] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 233.

[107] Alexander Werth, *France and Munich: Before and After the Surrender* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1939), 141, in Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 107–108.

[108] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 137.

to Winston Churchill, "We are beaten; we have lost the battle."[109] French decline had occurred over a period of decades, but France's shocking defeat took only days.

Ways: Adopting a Defensive Strategy

That French strategy was offensively oriented through most of the 1920s is well established, but is somewhat counterintuitive given that French military planners had studied fortifications as early as 1919. Some military leaders had argued for defensive approaches in the immediate aftermath of World War I. Posen notes that Marshall Henri Pétain and French political leaders began "long-term planning for French security, based on defensive warfare in fortified positions."[110] In 1921, Pétain wrote, "Modern defensive systems can no longer be anything else than battlefields for armies, pre-arranged in times of peace."[111] In 1922, France initiated a study of defensive organization, the findings of which were presented by the Frontier Defense Commission in 1926. The next year France launched an Organizing Commission for Fortified Regions.[112] Yet, until 1928, French war plans remained offensively focused.

For many years, others leaders such as Ferdinand Foch and Joseph Joffre "were unwilling to translate this experience into an endorsement of defensive over offensive tactics and operations."[113] In the late 1920s, however, Pétain's arguments finally gained ground. In 1928, the French army stated, "The military organization of the country has as its essential objective the

---

[109] Winston Churchill and Winston Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, The Second World War, v. 2 (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 36–39.Bell, *France and Britain, 1900-1940*, 233.

[110] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 106–107.

[111] Pétain, "Note on a Defensive Organization for the Country," 1921, in Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 24.

[112] Ibid., 59–60.

[113] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 106–107.

safeguarding of the integrity of the national territory."[114] Then, from 1929 to 1939, France adopted five defensive war plans, named Plan B, Plan C, Plan D, Plan E, and Plan F.[115] French leaders systematically abandoned offensive notions and chose to emphasize the defensive value of fortifications.

The cause of the defensive shift in French strategy remains highly contentious among scholars. Elizabeth Kier argues that the changing balance of power had little to do with the French decision to shift toward a defensive strategy. Kier suggests that Paris was weak relative to Berlin throughout the interwar period, yet its "relative weakness during the interwar period led to the endorsement of an offensive orientation during the 1920s and a defensive orientation in the 1930s."[116] Kier writes, "the French army switched to a defensive doctrine long before Germany began to rearm… the French army did not connect the rise of German power with the adoption of a defensive doctrine."[117] Evidence of her argument includes a 1920s report that suggested, "An offensive conception is the only one that would permit us to compensate for the inescapable causes of our weakness, which result from the inferiority of our population and industrial strength."[118] Rather than the balance of power, Kier argues "the French army's endorsement of a defensive doctrine after 1929 is partly attributable to its being part of [a] larger package that

[114] Martin S. Alexander, "In Defense of the Maginot Line: Security Policy, Domestic Politics and the Economic Depression in France" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 167.

[115] Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *Fortress France*, 3.

[116] Kier, *Imagining War*, 12.

[117] Ibid., 54.

[118] Ibid., 53.

allowed the army to retain what it most treasured, a small (and relatively autonomous) professional force."[119]

The evidence presented here, however, suggests that French power did in fact deteriorate through the 1920s and that perception of relative decline drove French leaders to abandon their offensive strategy. As Michael Desch argues, "the reasons France made the fateful strategic decisions it did actually had little to do with the domestic political crisis of the Third Republic or even with its defensive military doctrine… not only can a realist theory account for changes in French military doctrine between the wars, but it provides a better explanation for the outcome of the Battle of France."[120] The growing German population relative to France, the end of occupation of German territories by France, the limitations on German reparations to France, and the withering of French alliances all weakened Paris at the exact moment that its leaders began to consider more defensive strategies. Kier does acknowledge, "France's position in the international system changed from the 1920s to the 1930s…"[121] Nevertheless, Kier maintains, "despite compelling and well-understood international constraints, French civilians did not behave as expected by balance-of-power theory. When deciding on the army's organizational form, French civilians responded to domestic, not international, threats."[122]

Contrary to Kier's insistence, historian Judith Hughes notes of relative power dynamics, "In fact the discussions of military policy in 1928 and 1929 were suffused with such an awareness. Even those who for a decade had been staunch advocates of safeguarding their country's armed

[119] Ibid., 16.
[120] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 162–163.
[121] Kier, *Imagining War*, 53–54.
[122] Ibid., 7.

strength now echoed the defensive commonplaces of the ideological opponents."[123] Barry Posen explains, "The French Army accepted a defensive doctrine because it reduced uncertainty in three ways. First, it helped the army protect what it perceived to be a vulnerable political position in the aftermath of World War I. Second, a defensive doctrine would allow the army to fight the kind of battle it had learned to fight in the earlier war. French officers would not have to 'retool.' Third, French officers distrusted the military skills and morale of one-year conscripts. Defensive operations would put the least stress on what were perceived to be poor human resources."[124]

The French manpower shortage worsened its military position. In 1930, General Antoine Targe remarked, "only a professional army could go beyond our frontiers… a militia army is apt for the defensive at prepared positions, but is not apt for maneuver."[125] The reality is that the military had "helped to construct a military system based upon the complex mobilization of large reserve forces, buttressed by the couverture, the Maginot Line, and the nation's economic might. These forces were capable of exclusively defensive action."[126] Hughes notes, "The French had relinquished the notion of maintaining on active service a superior military force, and while this shift in power justified and stimulated the construction of fortifications, concreate bastions could not re-establish the preponderance that had existed in the immediate postwar years."[127]

A defensive strategy required not just fortifications but also an army capable of waging defense. Maginot noted, "We could hardly dream of building a kind of Great Wall of France, which

---

[123] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 205.

[124] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 118–119.

[125] Kier, *Imagining War*, 75.

[126] Philip Charles Farwell Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 122.

[127] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 205.

would in any case be far too costly. Instead we have foreseen powerful but flexible means of organizing defense, based on the dual principle of taking full advantage of the terrain and of establishing a continuous line of fire everywhere."[128] In 1929, a retired French officer argued, "the part played by the passive defense of the frontier must always be much less than that of the active defense… let's remember that, much more than the expensive permanent works of fortification, success in the event of war will be found once again in a good allround preparation of the army (discipline, training, armaments, materials)."[129] Fortifications would strengthen French defenses by serving three purposes, "Firstly, to protect the frontiers against a surprise attack… Secondly, in case of a formal declaration of war, to protect the frontiers during the vital three weeks needed for mobilization… Thirdly, after mobilization had been completed, to provide a core for resistance and to ensure the integrity of the nation and its industrial potential."[130] Later, General Joseph Maurin would wonder, "How can anyone believe that we are still thinking of an offensive, when we have spent billions on setting up a fortified barrier."[131]

A defensive strategy had serious implications for French allies. Maginot would not build on the Belgian border, noting "it is not possible decently to construct a strong defensive system opposite the territory of this friendly nation."[132] Yet, this would inevitably draw Germany into Belgium. In the early 1930s, Belgian leaders grew increasingly worried about French plans. The Belgian ambassador to Paris warned against using "Belgian bodies alone to oppose the march of

---

[128] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 49.

[129] Martin S. Alexander, "In Defense of the Maginot Line: Security Policy, Domestic Politics and the Economic Depression in France" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 168–169.

[130] Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 24.

[131] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 248. Also see Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *Fortress France*, 4.

[132] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 52.

German," and suggested it would be imprudent for France to leave its "northern door wide open."[133] A weakened France recognized its need for allied assistance. The École Supérieure de Guerre noted, "In a future war, an initially defensive strategy would similarly serve to elicit military contributions from France's allies at a minimum cost to France."[134] Alistair Horne notes, "in the event of any German aggression, it was part and parcel of French strategy to 'go into Belgium' and to fight an offensive war of movement against the enemy there."[135] Gamelin argued that defenses within Belgium would make use of "the Meuse, with cliffs on both banks, the flooding of the Dyle and the Nete," but added that "the front Namur-Antwerp diverted the war from our northern province… If one considers the devastation that a modern battle entails in the region where it takes place, isn't this argument even more convincing?"[136]

Belgium was not the only undefended portion of the border; the Ardennes was also unfortified. French General Lanrezac had said of the Ardennes in 1914, "All this country is imminently suitable for the defensive and for ambushes… you will not enter into this region and if you do you will not return from it."[137] In the interwar period, military experts believed that the Ardennes was "un-tankable."[138] Pétain himself noted in 1934, "Beginning at Montmédy are the Ardennes forests. They are impenetrable if certain dispositions are made… As this front would have no depth, the enemy will not deploy there. If he should, we shall close the pincers as he emerges from the forests. This sector, therefore, is not dangerous."[139] In 1940, Hitler would slice through

[133] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 223.
[134] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 111.
[135] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 75.
[136] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 218–219.
[137] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 242.
[138] Nicholas Atkin, *The French at War, 1934-1944* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 34.
[139] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 61. See also Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 19.

both Belgium and the Ardennes in a period of weeks, essentially bypassing the Maginot Line, and striking directly into the heart of the small, immobile, and poorly trained French army.

By 1935, the offensive had been bled from the French psyche. General Maurin wondered, "Would we be mad enough to advance beyond this barrier upon goodness knows what adventure!"[140] The next year, Gamelin insisted, "The Quai d'Orsay must understand that the present organization of our army is such that, without mobilization, we can occupy our defensive lines, stop an attack, but any offensive action in enemy country is out of the question."[141] Unfortunately, this left Paris unable to respond when Berlin remilitarized the Rhineland. French generals told political leaders, "The idea of sending quickly into the Rhineland a French expeditionary force, even if only a token force, was a chimera… no offensive actions could be undertaken until the twelfth day of mobilization."[142] Churchill later reflected, "If the French government had mobilized, there is no doubt that Hitler would have been compelled by his own General Staff to withdraw, and a check would have been given to his pretensions which might well have proved fatal to his rule."[143]

The inability to confront Germany beyond the Maginot Line demonstrated a downside of defense. Indeed, historian Robert Young recounts, "Pressed by the strategic implications of the Rhineland coup, by the pace of German rearmament and by the deteriorating diplomatic situation, the French were impelled to conduct a kind of stock taking in the second half of 1936.

---

[140] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 80.

[141] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 171.

[142] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 203. Also see Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 54.

[143] Quoted in Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 37. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 170–171.

From the point of view of army doctrine this meant a review of the arguments in favor of an initially defensive strategy."[144] The main advocate of an offensive strategy was Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle recognized the need for mechanized forces, commenting, "The conception of the defensive army which has had priority in France since the Treaty of Versailles has had its day… we must direct our activity so that we have on the ground and in the air powerful forces for immediate unleashing… for modern offensive techniques are alone capable of effectively collaborating with an ally in peril."[145] Martin Alexander writes, "De Gaulle envisaged two parallel paths of development for the army. The first demanded a massive expansion of mobile automotive forces and their permanent peacetime establishment as a trained and homogenous shock force. The second was the manning of this battle group or 'ready force' solely by professional career soldiers."[146]

De Gaulle's offensive dreams, however, were unpalatable to political leaders. General Gamelin noted that by the 1930s French politicians "conceived of only a war thrust upon us, therefore a defensive one."[147] In 1938, Daladier underscored the point, "we shall make defensive war. We will not have the French people slaughtered."[148] When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, a French general admitted that the French response, "was simply a token invasion… We do not wish to fight on their territory. We did not ask for this war… Now that the Polish question is liquidated we have gone back to our lines. What else did you expect?"[149] General André-Gaston

---

[144] Robert J. Young, *In Command of France: French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 179.

[145] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 115.

[146] Alexander, *The Republic in Danger*, 37.

[147] Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France.*, 159.

[148] Ibid., 166.

[149] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 143.

Prételat observed that the attack, "could only be a symbolic gesture… The cessation of the offensive of September 1939, followed by a withdrawal to fortified position, made clear to all eyes that France did not possess the army of its policy."[150]

French leaders did not change their strategy even after watching Polish defenses fail in 1939. French General Paul Armengaud observed the German onslaught and warned, "It would be mad not to draw an exact lesson from this pattern and not pay heed to this warning. The German system consists essentially of making a breach in the front with armor and aircraft, then to throw mechanized and motorized columns into the breach, to beat them down to right and left in order to keep on enlarging it, at the same time as armored detachments, guided, protected and reinforced by aircraft, advance in front of the supporting divisions… in such a way that the defense's maneuverability… is reduced to impotence."[151] Nevertheless, General Maxime Weygand took the lessons that, "greater strength [was] required for attack than for the defense, particularly with the help of modern defensive weapons."[152] General Narcisse Chauvineau was also insistent that, "for the attack, three times as much infantry, six times the artillery and fifteen times the ammunition are necessary than for the defense."[153] Hitler, on the other hand, was confident of victory, announcing, "I shall maneuver France right out of her Maginot Line without losing a single soldier."[154] When the invasion finally came, Weygand lamented, "We have gone to war with a 1918 army against a German Army of 1939."[155]

---

[150] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 120.
[151] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 177–178.
[152] Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France.*, 131.
[153] Ibid., 123.
[154] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 94. Also see Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 82.
[155] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 28–29.

Means: Adopting Immobile Investments

Many military strategists have blamed France's World War II defeat on its decision to adopt a defensive strategy reliant on fortifications rather than a more offensive or balanced approach using tanks and mechanized infantry. Scholar Stanley Hoffmann wrote, "The declining Third Republic was blamed for its growing short-sightedness and isolation, its devotion to a policy of defense behind an illusory fortified barrier…"[156] Yet, as the preceding section demonstrated, France's defensive attitude flowed directly from its more limited national objectives and the reality that Germany was again on the rise relative to France.

By 1927, the Maginot Line was coming into view as France adopted an entirely defensive scheme. As the French military transitioned, defensive fortifications were constructed to act as convening areas for launching attacks. In the words of one historian, "infantry complete with field artillery, which could be moved up to counter any threat to a particular fort or group of forts… were intended to compensate for what, by definition, the Line lacked – mobility."[157] Minister of War Paul Painlevé commented in 1928, "We have based the defenses on the lessons of the last war. Our scheme is a combination of two plans. The first is a sort of continuous front line, an organized trench system of concrete and steel, whilst the second is a series of regional strongholds."[158] Fortifications would be built, but the question was where. Jean Fabry noted, "no part of French territory should be undefended against invasion…"[159] The area of greatest concern was the Franco-German border, but the Frontier Defense Commission acknowledged, "The

---

[156] Stanley Hoffmann, "The Trauma of 1940" in Joel Blatt, ed., *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1998), 369.

[157] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 74.

[158] Rowe, *The Great Wall of France*, 45–46.

[159] Fabry quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 67.

fortified regions might possibly, or even probably, divert the attack toward Belgium."[160] Despite construction activity, a French senator commented in 1929, "I fear that in reality the government is not resolved to fortify our northern frontiers."[161] The lack of protection in the north would be one cause of France's eventual defeat a decade later.

In 1930, Maginot argued "concrete is better… and is less expensive than a wall of chests" for stopping an invasion.[162] A publication by a French officer later described the line as including six elements: "1. Cover, so as to hide it completely. 2. Observation points. 3. Obstacles to hold up the enemy on the whichever side they attack. 4. Protection against enemy artillery from whatever direction it may come. 5. Firing facilities against all attacks—e.g., artillery, tanks, aeroplanes, infantry. 6. Communications permitting of the revictualling of the troops and the evacuation of the wounded."[163] Three types of forts would be created, with the largest housing 1,200 soldiers. Those forts included guns as large as 135 millimeters, hidden in steel turrets sunk into the ground.[164] As more of its funds went toward pouring concrete, France embraced the nation that, "Fortification, no doubt, does not win battles, but it can permit armies to avoid losing them."[165]

In the early 1930s, the debate in Paris shifted from a question of the degree of mobility required to the location of the fortifications. The new strategy entirely abandoned the concept of mobile forces. Gamelin noted, "everything has changed. It is no longer a question of mobile equipment,

---

[160] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 213.

[161] Ibid., 214.

[162] Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *Fortress France*, 15.

[163] *The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer)* (London: Duckworth, 1939), 27.

[164] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 73.

[165] Martin S. Alexander, "In Defense of the Maginot Line: Security Policy, Domestic Politics and the Economic Depression in France" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 185.

but instead, the organization of a barrier."[166] De Gaulle warned in 1934 that a passive and defensive army would be "surprised, immobilized and outflanked… it is therefore in maneuvering that France is protected."[167] Regrettably, such a force would have required increased spending, which was politically impossible. Daladier in particular refused, noting "Financial considerations must take precedence over military policy. A balanced budget is the best guarantee of national security."[168]

As French leaders debated how much to spend on fortifications, the German military developed new shock tactics. In 1935, General Maurin explained to the French Parliament that German efforts meant France might suffer a rapid "breakthrough by armored and motorized units moving through the breach at hitherto unknown speed and dislocating our mobilization centers whilst the enemy air forces… sealed off the battle zone to prevent the arrival of our reserves."[169] By the late 1930s, however, there was no appetite for investments in new offensive forces; France's objective was consolidation, its strategy was defensive, and mobile forces simply did not fit with these aims or approaches.

Many French leaders, Gamelin in particular, were still confident in French defenses and therefore push for an even greater percentage of military spending to go toward creation of fixed positions. This is not to suggest that France entirely abandoned armor—indeed it retained large numbers of tanks—but the clear focus of French military investments was immobile systems. Gamelin remarked in 1936 that evidence from Spain showed German tanks had been

---

[166] Gamelin quoted in Kier, *Imagining War*, 43.
[167] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 115.
[168] Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, 86–87.
[169] Alexander, *The Republic in Danger*, 149. Also see Kier, *Imagining War*, 47.

"inadequately protected, fit only for the scrap-heap" and insisted "our information shows that it is our doctrine which is correct."[170] Gamelin maintained, "You cannot hope to achieve real breakthroughs with tanks. The tank is not independent enough. It has to go ahead, but then must return for fuel and supplies."[171] French instructions on armor noted, "In the offensive, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that today the antitank weapon is to the tank what the machine gun was the infantry during the World War."[172] Gamelin agreed, "the antitank weapon has caused the renunciation of [large tank units]… just because the Germans have committed an enormous error does not mean we must do the same."[173] In 1937, after watching the carnage of the Spanish Civil War, Daladier noted that tanks were "pierced like sieves" and the war "had seen the crumbling of immense hopes based on certain machines."[174] Daladier continued, "our fortified works are sufficiently equipped to halt a sudden attack even on Sunday…"[175]

Not only were the French caught off guard by the effectiveness of the tank, they were also ill prepared for aerial warfare. Air Minister Pierre Cot noted that Germany's industrial potential was "incomparably higher" than France's and in 1937, he exclaimed, "We will end up by having the weakest air force because we have spent so little."[176] A French document from 1939 suggested, "The Maginot Line will play a leading part, therefore, in the defense against aerial attack. But it

---

[170] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 117.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Eugenia C. Kiesling, "Resting Uncomfortably on Its Laurels," in *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918 - 1941*, by Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets, Studies in War, Society, and the Military (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 18.

[173] Ibid., 19.

[174] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 116.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 162. Also see Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, 181.

will be reinforced by a veritable Maginot Line in the air."[177] Yet, when war came in 1939, France had only 1,254 aircraft to 3,228 for Germany.[178] Even worse was the operational use of the French air force, which was left largely separate from the ground forces. A 1937 instruction advised, "It is convenient to leave to the Air Force commanders the initiative for launching their attack."[179] The Germans, on the other hand, closely integrated the Luftwaffe with their ground forces, creating a true combined arms capability.

In the face of Germany's larger population, growing economy, and tactical superiority, French leaders entirely abandoned conceptions of mobility by the late 1930s. In early 1936, the Higher Military Committee was informed, "As regards equipment, Germany was on the point of overtaking us outright."[180] Later that year, Minister of War Jean Fabry noted that France had "an even clearer numerical inferiority. From the point of view of materiel, Germany is on the verge of surpassing us; thus our superiority rests… on our fortifications."[181] Unfortified areas would have to be defended or be abandoned at the outset of a conflict. Thus, given the large populations in northern France, a French general explained, "We came to the conclusion that for reasons perhaps more psychological than military, it was essential to vote credits for fortifying the northern areas."[182] Yet, only basic fortifications were prepared for the Belgian border. General Emile Ricard later explained, "effective protection for this part of the front would have

---

[177] *The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer)*, 55.

[178] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 223. From René Girault and Robert Frank, *Turbulente Europe et nouveaux mondes (1914-1941) : Histoire des relations internationales contemporaines, Tome 2* (Paris: Payot, 2004), 242.

[179] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 127.

[180] Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 203. Also see Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 54.

[181] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 250–251.

[182] Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 59.

demanded an effort truly disproportionate to the means we possessed…"[183] Instead, French forces were prepared to move into Belgium and build field fortifications there in the event of a conflict. French defensiveness carried even into North Africa, where a "chain of forts, protected by lines of trenches, ensures the protection of the French African frontier…"[184]

French and German assessments of mobility diverged substantially during this period. Hitler was confident that warfare had changed, noting "The next war will be quite different from the last world war. Infantry attacks and mass formations are obsolete. Interlocked frontal struggles lasting for years on petrified fronts will not return. I guarantee that. They were a degenerate form of war…"[185] Meanwhile, as late as 1939 the French Inspector-General of Tanks remained optimistic that, "Even supposing that the present fortified line were breached or outflanked, it does not appear that our opponents will find a combination of circumstances as favorable for a Blitzkrieg as in Poland. One can see, then, that in future operations the primary role of the tank will be the same as in the past: to assist the infantry in reaching successive objectives."[186] A member of the French General Staff commented, "the tank is finished as an offensive weapon."[187]

While the Germans focused on highly mobile tanks and aircraft, the French military remained attentive to infantry and artillery. As a 1937 instruction on tactical employment of major units suggested, the infantry would be "entrusted with the principal duty in battle. Protected and

---

[183] Martin S. Alexander, "In Defense of the Maginot Line: Security Policy, Domestic Politics and the Economic Depression in France" in Boyce, *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940*, 183.

[184] *The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer)*, 70.

[185] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 94.

[186] Ibid., 179.

[187] Quoted in Weber, *The Hollow Years*, 253.

accompanied by its own guns and by the guns of the artillery, and occasionally preceded by combat tanks and aviation, etc., it conquers the ground, occupies it, organizes, and holds it."[188] Another French account explained, "this permanent line of defense is essentially defensive, both as a supply depot and as a supplementary to the field artillery."[189]

France's inability to fight alongside its eastern allies led French leaders to help Czechoslovakia construct limited defenses. These French-organized defenses were substantial. German General Erich von Manstein said, "had Czechoslovakia defended herself, we would have been held up by her fortifications, for we did not have the means to break through."[190] Hitler too noted, "When after Munich we were in a position to examine Czechoslovak military strength from within, what we saw of it greatly disturbed us; we had run a serious danger."[191] For this reason, when attacking France, Germany sought "a solution elsewhere" rather than directly attacking the Maginot Line.[192] Had the Ardennes—where a gap existed in the Maginot Line—been reinforced by mines, the German attack might have been slowed. However, the Maginot Line, "completely lacked anti-personnel mines, relying mainly on anti-tank barriers, other obstacles and supporting fires to stop the infantry."[193]

French funds went to fortifications instead of mines because France desired to retain control of its territory, rather than simply deny that control to the Germans. This tendency continued even though "Anti-personnel mines would have rendered the Maginot Line extremely difficult to

---

[188] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 118.
[189] *The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer)*, 26.
[190] Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 54.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *The Maginot Line*, 59.

penetrate and would probably have allowed a reduction of interval troops."[194] After the war, Captain Marc Bloch reflected, "If we were short on tanks, aeroplanes, and tractors, it was mainly because we had put our not inexhaustible supplies of money and labor into concrete… we had been taught to put our whole trust in the Maginot Line… only to see it turned, and even pierced, on the Rhine for the simple reason that it had been allowed to stop short on our left flank."[195]

When war finally came in May 1940, Germany mobilized 135 divisions against France, which fielded only 94 divisions (plus 10 British divisions). The German forces included 110 infantry divisions and 10 armored divisions. France and Britain fielded only 93 infantry divisions and 3 armored divisions.[196] Despite this numerical disadvantage, the French were not so badly outnumbered as to make victory impossible.[197] Ernest May has argued that the German war machine had many weaknesses France could have exploited. The difficulty the Wehrmacht had in breaching well-prepared fixed defenses had already been displayed in its invasion of Poland. Indeed, if not for a series of poor decisions and bad luck, the French might well have been able to hold the German advance. Yet, the lack of fortifications in the Ardennes, combined with the poor quality of the troops located there and the limited number of mobile forces available to reinforce gaps in the line, allowed the German troops to largely bypass the famed Maginot Line.

Efforts to extend defenses into Belgium only worsened the situation. As an observer wrote in 1944, "A completely static defense behind a fixed line of fortifications was an understandable

---

[194] Ibid.

[195] Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* (New York: Norton, 1999), 52.

[196] Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *Fortress France*, 133.

[197] See Ernest R. May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

doctrine and a war of movement was an understandable doctrine. The trouble was that the French generals were incapable of choosing either."[198] Deciding to simultaneously hold on the German border while advancing into Belgium to form a forward defensive wall left France badly exposed to the German attack through the Ardennes. British General Alan Brooke commented of the Maginot Line in 1939, "It gives me but little feeling of security, and I consider that the French would have done better to invest the money in the shape of mobile defenses such as more and better aircraft and more heavy armored divisions rather than to sink all this money into the ground."[199] Yet, the money had already been spent and French leaders were fully committed to an immobile force by the late 1930s. After all, why invest in mobile systems when France had adopted a defensive strategy to consolidate control of its existing territory? Judith Hughes explains, "from the outset fortifications were a confirmation of the army's weakened state, a sign of the altered military balance between France and Germany."[200]

Conclusion

> Can it be that France has had her day like Athens, Rome, Spain or Portugal in the past? Is it Germany's turn now?
>
> - Unnamed French military officer (1939)[201]

France emerged from World War I with a defensive mindset and went into World War II with a defensive strategy. Churchill said of France in 1919, "Worn down, doubly decimated, but undisputed masters of the hour, the French nation peered into the future in thankful wonder and

---

[198] Theodore Draper, *Six Weeks War: France May 10 – June 25, 1940* (New York: Viking, 1944), 10, quoted in Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *The Maginot Line*, 112.

[199] Kemp, *The Maginot Line*, 78.

[200] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 205.

[201] Horne, *To Lose a Battle*, 640; Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery*, 224.

haunting dread."[202] Given the lessons of the World War I, it would have been only natural for French leaders to maintain a defensive approach throughout the interwar period. Yet, for most of the 1920s, France adopted an offensive strategy in pursuit of more expansive objectives. As Adamthwaite notes, "It is not true to say that the French army had no offensive plans against Germany. Until 1926 military planning provided for a strong attack against Germany, using the Rhineland as a springboard. The decision to build fortifications was not taken until the end of 1927."[203] Why France adopted an offensive strategy has long been a matter of debate.

France's rapid shifts from an offensive strategy before World War I, to a more defensive strategy during World War I, to a renewed offensive strategy after World War I, and finally to a defensive strategy before World War II is difficult for many scholars to justify. In particular, structural and cultural explanations struggle to account for the frequent changes in French objectives and strategy over such a short time period. Domestic explanations have therefore been the most frequent alternate explanations.

Elizabeth Kier roots French decisions in domestic political constraints. She argues that political concerns limited the size and composition of the French military, thereby forcing France to adopt the Maginot Line. There is no question that the Popular Front's rise led some to suggest, "Better Hitler than Blum."[204] Critics such as Douglas Porch, however, insist "Kier's emphasis on cultural explanations ignores the possibility that France's doctrine may have been a rational response to

[202] Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 6. Quoted in Murray and Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 13.
[203] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 24.
[204] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*., xiii.

France's external circumstances."[205] Historian Robert Young notes, "the Maginot Line unquestionably did symbolize France's defensive posture in the face of the German peril."[206] Even Kier admits, "Germany had virtually no army in the 1920s. And there does seem to be a powerful correlation between German power and French doctrine. When Germany was relatively weak in the 1920s, the French army had an offensive orientation; when Germany was strong in the 1930s, the French army had a defensive doctrine."[207] Moreover, Kier acknowledges that "During the interwar period the demands of the international system were transparent and compelling to French decision makers: Paris feared Germany's relative power and the German army's offensive orientation."[208]

The evidence presented here, and the views of most scholars of the period, connect the French strategic shift to the changing relative balance of power. Stanley Hoffmann asks, "how can one distinguish, in their source, the disaster of May-June 1940 from the disaster of the preceding years – the long long decline, complex and discontinuous, of the period between the wars…"[209] Other observers agree, with Anthony Adamthwaite noting, "By September 1939 France was on the verge of final eclipse as a leading power… France lacked the inherent stamina needed to

---

[205] Douglas Porch, "Review: Military 'Culture' and the Fall of France in 1940: A Review Essay," *International Security* 24, no. 4 (Spring 2000): 173. Porch also argues, "Because Kier confuses strategy and doctrine, she mistakenly exaggerates the impact of military doctrine on the fall of France in 1940… Strategy and policy determine a military organization's offensive or defensive posture, not its doctrine. Doctrine is the way an army organizes to fight, that is, the procedures and methods it applies in combat. Doctrines are important especially for armies whose numerous articulated components must be coordinated to operate in unison. Strategy, on the other hand, is how a nation organizes its strength toward achieving a political goal in war." Ibid., 165–168.

[206] Young, *In Command of France*, 62.

[207] Kier, *Imagining War*, 53–54.

[208] Ibid., 49.

[209] Stanley Hoffmann, "The Trauma of 1940" in Blatt, *The French Defeat of 1940*, 355.

sustain a great power role."[210] As Barry Posen argues, "In the 1930s Germany's population was a third again that of France. A comparison of relative industrial potential for modern war shows Germany with 2.5-3.5 times French mobilization capability by 1937-1938."[211] An estimate of 1937 "world war potential" suggested that Germany controlled 14.4 percent, the United Kingdom 10.2 percent, and France just 4.2 percent.[212] French politician Yvon Delbos said in 1937, "it was clear that France was no longer strong enough to maintain the status quo in Central Europe."[213] In short, as Michael Desch notes, "French military doctrine clearly reflected Europe's changing balance of power… the reasons France made the fateful strategic decisions it did actually had little to do with the domestic political crisis of the Third Republic."[214]

France no doubt adopted an offensive strategy for multiple reasons, but this chapter argues that the central cause was French strength relative to Germany in the first half of the interwar period. In the end, political realities and military objectives interacted to shape French strategy. That both forces pushed France toward a defensive strategy around 1930 may explain why French leaders so readily embraced the Maginot Line. Reflecting on these debates, Eugenia Kiesling concludes the French military was pushed to adopt "a defensive strategy and an army composed largely of poorly trained reservists… The army had to create the safest possible doctrine, one designed to win a defensive war, using the short service conscript army that French citizens were

---

[210] Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 355.

[211] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 1986, 109.

[212] H. C. Hillmann, "Comparative Strength of the Great Power," 446 in Arnold Toynbee and Frank T. Ashton-Gwatkin, eds., *The World in March 1939 – Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs and Oxford University Press, 1952), referenced in Ibid., 235.

[213] FRUS 1937, I, 78, referenced in Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*, 61.

[214] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 162.

willing to provide."[215] The budget limitations were severe, but in 1939 a public pamphlet proclaimed, "The sums spent on its construction, which seemed considerable fifteen years ago, are nothing in comparison with the expenditure in life and material which it will save."[216] The biggest forts of the Maginot Line were estimated to have cost roughly 150 million francs, with middle sized forts costing 50 to 90 million francs and smaller outposts 5 to 20 million francs.[217] All told, a 1939 accounting assessed that 375 millions francs were devoted to the Maginot Line from 1927 to 1929, 750 million between 1929 and 1934, and another 750 million from 1934 to 1938.[218] This tremendous spending was not simply a political decision, it was a military one too, motivated by the reality that France needed to defend against a rising German threat.

There is no doubt that multiple factors, including lessons of the last war and political realities of the day, drove French decisions. Yet, relative power best explains the change in French policies that occurred in the late 1920s. French policy shifts directly correlate to demographic, economic, territorial, and military changes relative to Germany. As Judith Hughes wrote of France before World War I, "the French might thus lay claim not only to the status of a continental power, but also to the title of a world power… [after the war] the French hardly belonged in the company of the four nations that geopoliticians in various foreign offices were designating as the probable world powers of the future. In fact when Germany launched its own drive for a place in the sun, it scarcely considered its western neighbor as serious competition."[219] France's failure was not that it did not recognize its decline relative to Germany, but that its plans and execution were

---

[215] Eugenia C Kiesling, *Arming against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 117.

[216] *The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer)*, 76.

[217] Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *Fortress France*, 91.

[218] *The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer)*, 10.

[219] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line*, 1.

poor. As Philippe Pétain commented when announcing the French surrender to Germany on June 20, 1940, "Less strong than we were 22 years ago, we also had fewer friends. Too few children, too few weapons, too few allies: these are the causes of our defeat."[220]

[220] Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 206.

COLLAPSING POWERS

This chapter analyzes declining powers transitioning from relative strength (Phase 3) to relative weakness (Phase 4). Such transitions often occur rapidly, as was the case with the Japanese collapse during World War II and the Soviet collapse at the end of the Cold War. These types of changes in perception of power can take hold quickly and dramatically alter defense policies in short periods of time. In so doing, the theory of perceived relative power suggests that collapsing states should transition from garrison fortification to area denial defense policies. This shift should include adoption of more limited national objectives, more denial-focused security strategies, and more expendable military investments.

Figure 12: Transitions from Strong to Weak

Perception of Relative Power	**Rising**	**Declining**
Strong	Phase 2: "Power Projection" *Ends*: Extensive Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Mobility	Phase 3: "Garrison Fortification" *Ends*: Extensive Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Control *Means*: Sustainable Immobility
Weak	Phase 1: "Anti-Access" *Ends*: Limited Expansion *Ways*: Offensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Mobility	Phase 4: "Area Denial" *Ends*: Limited Consolidation *Ways*: Defensive Denial *Means*: Expendable Immobility

Japan and the Soviet Union faced very different strategic environments. Japan is a largely maritime state and the Soviet Union's focus was primarily continental. The Japanese collapse

occurred during a conflict, while the Soviet collapse happened without a major power conflict. Moreover, Japan and the Soviet Union had very different governments and strategic cultures. Nevertheless, there are similar patterns of change in the revision of Japanese and Soviet objectives, strategies, and investments. As the pages that follow illuminate, both Japan and the Soviet Union eventually adopted limited ends, defensive ways, and denial-focused means. However, they did so in very different ways and on different, and sometimes unexpected, timelines. Thus, these cases provide interesting variation and are valuable for establishing the conditions under which perceived relative power theory holds.

Japanese Collapse

> By nurturing the nation's strength we should ride the tide of fortune.
>
> - Prince Hirohito, referencing a proclamation on World War I's end (1920)[1]

Japan was one of the world's fastest rising powers for much of the early 20th century. After joining the winning side in World War I, Japan acquired German territories in East Asia. Over the next several decades, historian Louise Young explains that Japan engaged in "a perpetual expansion of the perimeter of defense, fueled by a preoccupation with securing Japan's ever-expanding territorial commitments."[2] Michael Barnhart writes that by the 1930s, "The officers, in their drive to achieve autarky for Japan, and the bureaucrats, in their drive to reform Japan, found common cause."[3] While the Imperial army pushed for territorial expansion, the navy came to believe that expansion would trigger an unavoidable war with the United States.[4] H. P. Willmott notes, "The navy was more realistic than most sections of the army in its appreciation of the realities of power and Japan's strength, but it came to the view that war was inevitable. This being the case, within limits, it was better that war came sooner rather than later."[5]

---

[1] Wetzler, *Hirohito and War*, 133.

[2] Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 428–429.

[3] Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919 - 1941*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 65. See also David C. Evans, ed., *The Japanese Navy in World War II: In the Words of Former Japanese Naval Officers* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986).

[4] Stephen E. Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor; the Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II*, Harvard Studies in American-East Asian Relations 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[5] H. P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982), 57–58.

Japan found that its strength was limited compared to the massive potential of the United States. This is not to suggest, however, that the risk of a prolonged war and its implications for Japan was ignored before the war.[6] In fact, a Japanese colonel in the United States reported in the early 1940s that Japan had only one-tenth the U.S. war production potential.[7] Decades earlier Tetsutarō Satō, a leading Japanese naval strategist, described the "advantage of an ocean-oriented aggressive (offensive) defense over a static land-oriented defense… control of the surrounding seas was all that mattered."[8] He concluded that a defending fleet needed only 70% of the attackers strength, based on research conducted at the Japanese Naval Staff College. Seeking this margin, Japan amassed 10 battleships, 38 cruisers, 9 aircraft carriers, 112 destroyers, and 64 submarines by 1941.[9] With this fleet in place, Japanese navy estimates placed their expected relative strength vis-à-vis the U.S. navy at 70% in 1941. Yet, the strength ratio was expected to fall to 65% in 1942, 50% in 1943, and 30% in 1944.[10] With this asymmetry in mind, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto noted, "If we should go to war against the United States we must recognize the fact that the armistice will have to be dictated from the White House."[11]

---

[6] See, for example, O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *When Japan Goes to War* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1936).

[7] This estimate suggested that Japan had just one-twentieth the U.S. steel production capacity. Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 112.

[8] David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 137.

[9] Hatsuho Naitō, *Thunder Gods: The Kamikaze Pilots Tell Their Story* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989), 229.

[10] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 62.

[11] Masanori Itō and Roger Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 36.

Yamamoto's prediction proved correct. During the war, Japanese shipping losses cut its merchant fleet from over 6 million tons in 1941 to just under 2 million tons in 1945.[12] Although Japan built an additional 2 battleships, 9 cruisers, 16 aircraft carriers, 63 destroyers, and 126 submarines during the war, Japan lost 4 battleships, 23 cruisers, 12 aircraft carriers, 61 destroyers, and 59 submarines in 1944 alone.[13] Japan added 4 million tons of shipping during the war, but lost nearly 9 million tons.[14] Meanwhile, the United States military expanded rapidly. Throughout the war, the U.S. navy commissioned 8 battleships, 13 heavy cruisers, 33 light cruisers, 18 fleet carriers, 9 light carriers, 77 escort carriers, 349 destroyers, 420 destroyer escorts, 203 submarines, and numerous support ships.[15] Japan simply could not compete with U.S. manufacturing, particularly when combined with Japan's limited access to critical resources such as oil, ore, and rubber.

From 1935 to 1945, Japanese leaders perceived two shifts in the Empire's relative power. Until the battles at Midway and Guadalcanal, many in Tokyo believed that Japan was a strong and rising power. From 1942 onward, however, it became clear that Japan was declining. Moreover, by 1944, it was apparent that the Empire was weak compared to the United States. This case describes both of these shifts, focusing primarily on the collapse of Japanese power. The case is distinctive because it examines Japanese defense policy changes occurs during a major war, rather than before or after a major conflict. Thus, in many ways, this case is important to determine the scope conditions for this theory.

---

[12] James B. Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 46.

[13] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 229.

[14] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 53.

[15] Mark Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War* (New York, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2014), 367. See also Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 98.

The theory of perceived relative power predicts that when Japanese leaders perceived their power to be declining, they should have scaled back Japan's objectives by consolidating their aims. As Japanese power collapsed after 1944, its leaders should have limited their territorial objectives even more. As a result, Japan's strategy should have shifted from offensive control to defensive control before 1944, and to defensive denial afterwards. Finally, Japanese military investments should have changed from sustainable mobile systems to sustainable immobile systems before 1944, and to expendable immobile systems afterwards. This amounts to a transformation from power projection to garrison fortification before 1944, and then from garrison fortification to area denial after 1944. The results of the case largely support the theory of perceived relative power.

Japanese Defense Policy before 1944

> The path of a rising nation is always strewn with problems.
>
> - Japanese Foreign Minister Kōki Hirota, speech to the Diet (1934)[16]

This section focuses on the initial change in perceptions from rise to decline through 1944. The next section then addresses Japan's collapse from a strong to a weak power from 1944 through the end of World War II. As the case shows, from 1942 onward Japan's objectives contracted, its strategy became more defensive, and its military investments less mobile.

[16] James Buckley Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938.*, 2015, 196.

Ends: Contracting Objectives

Japan's emergence as a regional power in the late 19th century represented the most rapid ascendance of an Asian power in centuries. Before the Meiji Restoration, Japan had been a largely inward-looking state. In the previous millennia, Japan invaded the Asian continent only twice, in the seventh and sixteenth centuries. Historians David Evans and Mark Peattie note, "Since the dawn of Japan's history… Japan has been both an insular and a continental nation. Insularity was the dominant strategic feature of Japan during the ancient and medieval periods of its history."[17] However, Japan's insularity evaporated as its power rose. With the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, and Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, Japan became the strongest power in Asia.

Jack Snyder notes that many in Tokyo saw "expansion as a prerequisite for self-defense."[18] Initially, Japanese naval forces were "essentially a coast defense force."[19] By the 1900s, however, "growing recognition of the relationship between imperial expansion and national power" drove the modernization and expansion of the navy.[20] Success in the Russo-Japanese war left Japan in a strong position. As Japan rose, "the locus of the projected theater of operations for the decisive battle" pushed eastwards from the Ryukyus across the Pacific.[21] By the 1920s, Japan was expanding and looking to become not just a regional but a global power. One nationalist

[17] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 1.
[18] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 126.
[19] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 9.
[20] Ibid., 19.
[21] Ibid., 291.

wrote, "if the sun is not ascending, it is descending… Japan must conquer Korea, Manchuria, and Russia's Kamchatka peninsula or else be conquered itself."[22]

As the 1930s approached, Japanese leaders generously assessed their own nation's strength. One observer writes that the Japanese navy viewed fighting strength as equal to mechanical strength multiplied by efficiency (the extent of training) multiplied by mental strength. Thus, Japanese leaders "believed that mechanical inferiority could be covered by the troops' efficiency and the men's mental strength."[23] Lieutenant General Torashiro Kawabe later said, "We believed that our spiritual convictions and moral strength could balance your material and scientific advantages."[24] Similarly, Admiral Nobutake Kondo reflected, "Before the war, we had some information which indicated our superiority to the potential enemy in skillfulness of operations."[25]

Japanese leaders assessed the United States as materially strong but mentally weak. John Dower comments, "stereotyped and often blatantly racist thinking contributed to poor military intelligence and planning…"[26] For example, a 1935 War Ministry Pamphlet noted, "Most nations today are wandering in darkness. They struggle with each other, the strong preying upon the weak. This is the natural result of the individualistic civilization which Western nations have

---

[22] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 126.

[23] Jisaburo Ozawa, "Development of the Japanese Navy's Operational Concept against America," in Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, eds., *The Pacific War Papers: Japanese Documents of World War II* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2004), 73–74.

[24] Richard O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II: Axis and Allied Special Attack Weapons of World War II, Their Development and Their Missions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 144.

[25] Nobutake Kondo, "Some Opinions Concerning the War," 1947 in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 307.

[26] John W Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). x.

developed."[27] According to naval historian H. P. Willmott, "the Japanese tempered their assessment of national strength with considerations other than the indices of production and the number of troops under arms… Japan relied primarily on human resources to make up for her material weakness. The most easily tapped resource was the loyalty, discipline and self-sacrifice of an obedient population."[28]

Thus, although it was unlikely that Japan could prevail materially in a long war, Japanese leaders thought that they could compete with Britain and the United States in a short war. Japan developed its military in accordance with its Meiji era slogan: "rich country, strong army." As Barnhart argues, "Japan pursued the status of a great power through expansion abroad and reform at home."[29] In September 1933, Lieutenant General Sadao Araki pushed for a total mobilization plan. Although his ideas were not adopted in their entirety, the army was enlarged to 41 divisions and 142 air groups.[30] The navy also received a substantial increase in funding and by 1936 naval leaders suggested seizing Hainan as a southern base of operations. The next year, Japan combined its Planning Office and Resources Bureau to form a Planning Board. With these steps, the stage was set for a rapid expansion of Japanese activities abroad.

Just three days after Japanese officers engineered the Marco Polo Bridge incident, the army began discussions to establish "a comprehensive productive power expansion plan."[31] Control of resources in China was critical because "neither the home islands nor the empire in Formosa,

---

[27] Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy*, 187.

[28] H. P. Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies, February to June 1942* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1983), 19.

[29] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 17.

[30] Ibid., 38.

[31] David J. Lu, *From the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor a Study of Japan's Entry Into World War II* (Public Affairs Press, 1961), 30.

Korea, and south Sakhalin could provide resources sufficient for waging modern war. The control of richer territories, such as China, was imperative."[32] This is not to suggest that all Japanese political or military leaders supported this more expansive set of national objectives. In 1937, Major General Kanji Ishiwara warned that China would be for Japan "what Spain was for Napoleon… an endless bog."[33] Within a year there were an estimated 1.5 million Japanese troops in China, costing more than $5 million per day.[34] The response from abroad was critical. Franklin Roosevelt assessed, "the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the community against the spread of disease."[35]

External criticism appeared to reinforce Japan's pursuit of autarky. In 1938, the government proposed a budget of 8.36 billion yen, with 4.86 billion yen in military expenditures.[36] This nearly doubled military spending compared to the previous year. Japan's resource limitations, however, were severe. In 1939, the United States accounted for 25% of Japanese imports and exports.[37] Hachirō Arita, originator of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, called for Japanese access to resources, "in territory from which she could not be cut off by belligerent action of third powers."[38] Territory on the mainland could supplant some external resources in a conflict—Manchuria accounted for 14% of imports and exports, Kwantung leased territory for

---

[32] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 23.

[33] Ibid., 88–89.

[34] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 55.

[35] Roosevelt to Leahy, August 22, 1937, referenced in Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 123.

[36] Ibid., 106–107.

[37] Roland H. Worth, *No Choice but War: The United States Embargo against Japan and the Eruption of War in the Pacific* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 1995), 116.

[38] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 132.

12%, and China for 10%—but this would not be sufficient to give Japan an independent war-making capability.

By 1940, Japan and the United States appeared set on a collision course. The war in Europe and Japan's potential alignment with Germany and Italy raised the prospect of a global conflict. Throughout 1940, Japanese actions appeared designed to put pressure on the allies. Japan signed the tripartite pact and forced France to accept Japanese bases in Indo-China. This triggered the most forceful response to date from Washington. U.S. Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew testified that "the time had come to consider, not whether we must call a halt to Japan's expansion, but when… It was in the fall of 1940 that we cast the die and adopted economic sanctions."[39] The U.S. State Department announced that "practically everything" Japan bought in the United States were "munitions of war destined to further Japan's military activities."[40] That year, an American publication suggested that Japan "is not likely to challenge a strong power like the United States" once sales to Japan ended.[41] This assessment was rooted in the expectation that Japan would be vulnerable to economic sanctions because it was unable to arm itself without access to U.S. oil, ore, and rubber.

Unfortunately, rather than discouraging expansion, the sanctions reinforced Japan's desire for autarky. One estimate finds that Japan relied on foreign imports for 88% of steel, 90% of petroleum, 99% of wool, 100% of cotton, 100% of rubber, and nearly 100% of alloy metals.[42] Petroleum from the United States alone amounted to roughly 78% of Japanese oil imports. The

[39] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 177.
[40] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 182.
[41] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 39.
[42] Ibid., 108.

U.S. scrap metal embargo proved damaging as well, given Japan's need for copper (half of which was imported from the United States) to construct shell casings and transmit electricity.[43] Japanese Ambassador to the United States Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura warned, "If the United States refuses to sell us oil and other supplies, we must get them elsewhere."[44] As Herbert Feis writes, "the oil gauge and the clock stood side by side."[45]

The competition intensified in 1941. The United States had authorized construction of 11 battleships, 11 aircraft carriers, 6 large cruisers, 40 smaller cruisers, 115 destroyers, and 67 submarines, although not all of these ships were eventually constructed.[46] Facing the implications of this naval construction, Ambassador Nomura wrote, "the U.S.A. was in the safest condition as far as national defense was concerned, for there was no fear at all of she being attacked by other countries… there was no comparison between the United States and Japan in point of national security."[47] Barnhart explains, "few Americans could conceive of reasonable motives for a nation to engage in territorial expansion or fundamental domestic reordering" given U.S. immunity to foreign pressure.[48] At the same time, 62% of Americans wished "to keep Japan from becoming more powerful, even if this means risking war."[49]

---

[43] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 144.

[44] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 137.

[45] Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War between the United States and Japan*, 1950.

[46] Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)* (Cambridge, MA: Stephens, 1978), 4.

[47] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 153.

[48] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 270.

[49] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 203. In September 1941, Admiral Nomura noted U.S. polling "favoring the checking of Japan's development at the risk of a war has suddenly increased

In February 1941, Secretary of State Cordell Hull advised Roosevelt to "'speak softly' (carefully avoiding any word that might to a wishful thinker imply that we would consider offers of 'compromise'), while simultaneously giving by our acts in the Pacific new glimpses of diplomatic, economic, and naval 'big sticks.'"[50] The United States, Britain, and the Netherlands all froze Japanese assets in their territories. Washington issued an Executive Order freezing Japanese assets in the United States, which brought all financial and trade transactions involving Japanese interests "under the control of the government."[51] The U.S. State Department predicted, "From the point of view of the Japanese, discontinuance of this trade with the United States would be catastrophic. In other words, the United States is today in a position to wreck completely the economic structure of the Japanese Empire."[52]

As the noose tightened, Japanese leaders grew more aware of Japan's vulnerabilities and more determined to break free of American interference. In the summer of 1941, Admiral Osami Nagano, chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff, warned, "With each day we will get weaker and weaker, until finally we won't be able to stand on our feet. Although I feel sure that we have a chance to win a war right now, I'm afraid this chance will vanish with the passage of time… Thus our only recourse is to forge ahead!"[53] Kōichi Kido, the primary interface between

---

from 51% in July to 70% today." "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 178.

[50] Hull to Roosevelt, February 12, 1941, referenced in Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 219. On Hull's arguments for a stronger stance on Japanese expansionism, see Cordell Hull and Andrew Henry Thomas Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (Macmillan Company, 1948).

[51] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 63.

[52] Ibid., 48.

[53] John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (New York: Random House, 1970), 95.

the Emperor and Japanese ministers as Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, wrote in a July 1941 diary entry that the Emperor had stated, "In case a war with the U.S.A. breaks out, the supply of oil would be only sufficient for one and a half years. Under these circumstances, there would be no alternative but to take the initiative in operations against them."[54] Nagano answered, "it was very doubtful whether or not we could win at all, to say nothing of a great victory such as in the Russo-Japanese war."[55] Admiral of the Fleet Hirayasu Fushimi lamented, "If war breaks out, Japan will lose all that has been achieved since the beginning of the Meiji Era. But is seems that there is no way to avoid war."[56]

Efforts to prevent war occupied many internal meetings of the Japanese government during fall 1941. The most famous meeting occurred on September 6, 1941. This Imperial Conference concluded, "In the event that there is no prospect of our demands being met by the first ten days of October… we will immediately decide to commence hostilities against the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands."[57] One scholar writes that the Emperor's approval of this statement may have been "intended as a way to encourage further diplomatic endeavours. For the military, however, the decisions clearly signaled war."[58] Yet, the Emperor surprised his audience when he read a poem written by his grandfather. The Meiji Emperor had written, "All the seas, everywhere, are brothers one to another; Why then do the winds and waves of strife rage so

---

[54] "Extracts from the Diary of Marquis Koichi Kido," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 119.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Rikihei Inoguchi, Tadashi Nakajima, and Roger Pineau, *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978). xiii.

[57] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 245.

[58] Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 160.

violently through the world?"[59] After the Emperor's recitation, Nagano responded, "in the unfortunate event that the opening of hostilities shall be decided and the Imperial Order issued, we shall bravely unleash our swords and will fight to the last man."[60] In the end, the Emperor took a backseat in the policymaking process. Future prime minister Kantaro Suzuki noted, "Political decisions cannot be regarded as the responsibility of the Emperor. Ordinarily speaking, even though He himself may be opposed to the proposed plans or policies, the Emperor will approve them."[61]

Japan's willingness to fight despite its weak long-term position appears surprising in hindsight. After all, as one historian writes, "Japanese economic weakness was more than just a matter of their feeble merchant fleet. In fact, even if their supply of raw materials had been absolutely secure… they still could not have hoped even remotely to match the massive industrial output of the enemy."[62] Nevertheless, Japanese leaders believed that they could prevail in a short conflict. Japanese leaders hoped to knock the United States out of the war early, or to do sufficient damage that they could transition to a defensive strategy after charging across the Pacific. Nagano said at the Imperial Conference, "We can successfully oppose the United States in war for a period of two years. Any longer conflict would tend to be unprofitable for Japan."[63] The risk of a prolonged war was great, but American sanctions were already doing damage to the Japanese economy and its war machine. Nagano noted, "if we do not fight now, our nation will

---

[59] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 99.

[60] Albert Axell and Hideaki Kase, *Kamikaze: Japan's Suicide Gods* (London: Longman, 2002), 28.

[61] Wetzler, *Hirohito and War*, 17.

[62] John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), 443–446.

[63] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 54.

perish. But it may well perish even if we do fight. It must be understood that national ruin without resistance would be ignominy."[64] Thus, as Barnhart suggests, "The only long-term solution to Japan's security quandary was the rapid expansion of Japan's productive capacity."[65]

Back in Tokyo, the Emperor's advisor Kido suggested that Japan could not win a war and that therefore "the people should be told flatly that we now face ten to fifteen years enduring hardships to accomplish our purposes."[66] He reckoned, "Judging from the situation both at home and abroad, war with the U.S.A. would offer little chance of our victory, so we had better reconsider it."[67] Yet, the military was more confident. When Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe said that caution was needed in the face of U.S. superiority in material resources, Army Minister Hideki Tojo responded, "There are times when we must have the courage to do extraordinary things-like jumping, with eyes closed, off the veranda of the Kiyomizu Temple."[68] Tojo told the Prime Minister, "your view is too pessimistic. You know our weak points too well… America has her weaknesses too."[69] Tojo was "not so much an initiator of policies as a promoter of them and propagandist for them" but in late October 1941, Kido advised the Emperor to accept Tojo

[64] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*. xiv.
[65] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 46.
[66] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 109.
[67] "Extracts from the Diary of Marquis Koichi Kido," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 123–124.
[68] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 112.
[69] Ibid.

as the new Prime Minister on the grounds that it might slow the rush to war.[70] The Emperor agreed and commented, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."[71]

Back in Washington, Ambassador Nomura agreed with Tojo's assessment of U.S. weaknesses. Nomura wrote, "America is confronted with the European war on one hand, and the Pacific question on the other, but she has yet many strategically weak points. So I had expected that this would make her more or less cooperative, but, contrary to my expectations, she has stuck on to her own policy up to now, showing no conciliatory attitude."[72] The previous month Nomura had asked Secretary of State Hull why the United States, "advocating as she does the Monroe Doctrine and holding as a matter of fact the leadership of the American continent, should interfere so much in Asiatic affairs."[73] American "interference" led Tojo to comment, "the economic blockage resorted to constitutes a measure little less hostile in character than armed warfare."[74] As a result, General Rikichi Tsukada, said "we just can't maintain the status quo, so there is only one conclusion: we must go to war… This is the moment. If we don't go to war now, we'll have to next year or the year after. This is the moment!"[75] Nomura, however, advised, "I do not think it opportune to wage a great protracted war when the country is in an exhausted condition after the Manchurian Incident and the succeeding four years of the China Affair."[76]

---

[70] Robert J. C Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969).

[71] "Extracts from the Diary of Marquis Koichi Kido," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 129.

[72] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Ibid., 193.

[73] Ibid., 187.

[74] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 144.

[75] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 128.

[76] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, Jun-Dec 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 205.

As autumn 1941 drew to an end, the U.S. State Department concluded, "Japan's aim is to create an economic empire in the Far East which will be self-sufficient and capable of resisting the application of sanctions by any power or group of powers."[77] This was an accurate assessment. Unfortunately, as Barnhart notes, "The immediate consequence of the freeze was what Washington had hoped to avoid: a firm decision in Tokyo to proceed with the Southward Advance."[78] Ambassador Grew wrote to Roosevelt that former Prime Minister Konoe "bears the heavy responsibility for having allowed our relations to come to such a pass and he no doubt now sees the handwriting on the wall and realizes that Japan has nothing to hope for from the Tripartite Pact and must shift her orientation of policy if she is to avoid disaster…"[79] Grew was correct about Japanese concerns. The Japanese Planning Board in October 1941 was considerably more dire about oil supplies than those of the navy earlier in the summer, which expected lower reserves, consumption, and production.[80] Bilateral negotiations, however, proved unsuccessful. By the end of November, Grew warned of the potential for an "all-out, do-or-die attempt, actually risking national hara-kiri, to make Japan impervious to economic embargoes abroad rather that to yield to foreign pressure… While national sanity dictates against such action, Japanese sanity cannot be measured by American standards of logic."[81]

---

[77] U.S. Department of State, "Political Estimate," August 20, 1941 in Worth, *No Choice but War*, 20.

[78] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 239.

[79] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 104.

[80] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 261.

[81] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 132.

On November 26, 1941, the Emperor commented, "Concerning the prospects of the negotiations with America I fear that, to my great regret, we are now confronted by the worst stage."[82] Later that day, the Emperor noted the grave nature of the negotiations and former Prime Minister Reijirō Wakatsuki said, "I have nothing to say about our nation's spiritual power. But how is it in the sphere of our material strength? It well deserves scrupulous study as to whether it will stand a protracted war or not."[83] He added, "it is very dangerous indeed to execute state policy or to make use of the national strength to achieve such conjured-up ideas and ideals as the 'Establishment of the Great East Asia Coprosperity Sphere' or of the 'Stabilizing Power of East Asia.'"[84] The Emperor was also concerned about the probability of success, about which a Japanese military leader commented, "I will say that we can probably win; I don't dare say we can absolutely win."[85]

The same day, Japanese Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo commented that Washington needed to "understand Japan's national requirements and her position in East Asia."[86] Ambassador Nomura conveyed this message to President Roosevelt, who responded, "When we are endeavoring to arrive at a peaceful settlement, the high officials in Tokyo are, on the contrary, advocating the establishment of a new order."[87] Ambassador Grew now warned that Japan was "capable of sudden and surprise action… [traditionally in Japan] a national psychology of desperation

---

[82] "Extracts from the Diary of Marquis Koichi Kido," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 130.

[83] Ibid., 132.

[84] Ibid., 133.

[85] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 97.

[86] Axell and Kase, *Kamikaze*, 24.

[87] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 210.

develops into a determination to risk all."[88] The next day, Hull told Stimson of the failure of negotiations and stated, "I have washed my hands of it, and it is now in the hands of you and Knox—the army and the navy."[89] Days later Kido wrote in his diary, "our country is going to enter upon war against America and Britain, the two greatest powers in the world."[90] On December 1, 1941, Kido recorded simply, "at last war of Japan on the U.S.A. was decided."[91]

Days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Emperor asked his military commanders, "Will you win a great victory? Like the Battle of Tsushima?" When told this was not possible, he commented, "Then the war will be a desperate one."[92] Japanese strategy was designed to "strike the enemy at the outset of the decisive encounter at a distance from which he could not retaliate."[93] Admiral Chūichi Nagumo advised, "If we assure our strategic position from the start, by attacking all the important points and seizing them before America is ready, we can tilt the balance in our favor."[94] In total, 6 aircraft carriers and 353 aircraft would attack Pearl Harbor.[95] The strike had its intended effect. Although U.S. carriers were out of port, the battleship losses crippled the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Japan lost just 29 aircraft compared to 150 aircraft for the United States.[96]

---

[88] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 95.

[89] Stimson diary entry of November 26, 1941, referenced in Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 236.

[90] "Extracts from the Diary of Marquis Koichi Kido," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 135.

[91] Ibid., 23.

[92] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 86.

[93] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 250.

[94] Andrieu D'Albas, *Death of a Navy: Japanese Naval Action in World War II* (Devin-Adair Co., 1957), 17.

[95] Ibid., 23.

[96] Ibid., 35–37.

Japanese optimism and assessments of relative strength peaked in the six months following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Ten days after the war began, Nomura wrote, "The competency and boldness of our naval officers and sailors as demonstrated in the surprised attack on Hawaii and the sinking of the two British battleships have startled the world."[97] Japan's first military objective was "to fence off the periphery of the area she had marked for conquest… Concurrently, secondary operations would be undertaken for the realization of two objectives: (1) control of the major oil fields in the area; (2) consolidation of her positions and the avenues of surface communications…"[98] After attacking Pearl Harbor, Japan took only days to capture Guam, land in the Philippines, capture Wake Island, and invade Thailand and British territories in Asia. According to one account, "The Japanese had expected to suffer between twenty and thirty percent ship losses in the conquest of the Dutch East Indies. In fact, only twenty-three warships, and all these of classes below that of destroyer, had been sunk."[99] One observer writes, "Encouraged by these results, the Japanese leaders decided to speed up their strategic advances, instead of consolidating their conquests as they might have been expected to do. This meant continued enlargement of their defense perimeter through new conquests."[100]

Japanese success resulted in "victory disease" that reinforced views of Japanese strength. As one Japanese historian writes, "By the spring of 1942 the Japanese people were intoxicated with the idea that their nation was invincible."[101] Paul Dull comments, "The Japanese victories had come so fast and with so few losses that they actually outpaced the planning of the Imperial General

---

[97] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 216.

[98] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 53.

[99] Ibid., 92.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 54.

Headquarters and the staffs of the Army and Navy."[102] Nomura noted, "Through the defeat in Hawaii the Americans have come to acknowledge their past mistake in underestimating Japan's real power."[103]

In January 1942, Admiral Matome Ugaki wrote, "the future is filled with brightness."[104] The Japanese planned to expand beyond their original plans.[105] Dull explains, "Victory fever made such steps seem not only possible, but inevitable. Japan's long-term weaknesses, however, were impossible to avoid. Japan estimated its oil consumption would be roughly 35 million barrels per year in 1941, with production rising from 5 million barrels at the beginning of the war to 23 million barrels over two years.[106] Yet, in their first year under Japanese control, the oil fields in Borneo, Java, and Sumatra produced just over half their pre-war levels.[107] Estimated reserves were therefore expected to collapse from 61 million barrels to 0 in just three years.[108] In the end, actual consumption was nearly 52 million barrels in the first year of the war, so the estimates had to be revised, resulting in Japan's reserves disappearing in just two years.[109]

Japan's need for a quick and decisive victory was clear. Yamamoto was "convinced that he must destroy the United States fleet in 1942."[110] Navy leaders suggested a plan to draw out the Pacific

---

[102] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 133.

[103] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 217.

[104] Evan Thomas, *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign, 1941-1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 84.

[105] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 116.

[106] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 71.

[107] Ibid., 68.

[108] Ibid., 69.

[109] Ibid., 71.

[110] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 114.

Fleet by attacking Midway. Yamamoto explained, "by launching the proposed operation against Midway, we can succeed in drawing out the enemy's carrier strength and destroying it in decisive battle. If, on the other hand, the enemy should avoid our challenge, we shall realize an important gain by advancing our defensive perimeter."[111] On May 5, 1942, the Combined Fleet was ordered to "Invade and occupy Midway Island and key points in the western Aleutians… in order to prevent enemy task forces from making attacks against the homeland."[112] The ensuing U.S. victory at Midway—made possible in part by the clandestine decoding of Japanese naval and diplomatic codes—represented a shocking loss for the navy and the beginning of Japan's military decline. After learning of the battle at Midway, a Japanese general remarked to Tojo, "the Navy has made a great mistake."[113] Evan Thomas writes that the Midway defeat, "spelled the end of Yamamoto's efforts to sink the U.S. Navy before America became too strong for Japan. From now on, Japan would be on the defensive, slowly retreating across the Pacific vastness…"[114] On the other hand, scholar James Wood argues, "The main question was the same after Midway as before: how was Japan going to consolidate its holdings, lay the groundwork for an extended war, and prepare the national defense zone for the inevitable return of the Allies?"[115]

At the beginning of the war, the Emperor had said to Army Chief of Staff General Hajime Sugiyama, "Last time you said it would only be three months."[116] Sugiyama responded, "China

---

[111] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 72.

[112] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 57.

[113] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 341.

[114] Thomas, *Sea of Thunder*, 66.

[115] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 17.

[116] Meirion Harries and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), 394–395.

is bigger than we thought," to which the Emperor noted, "The Pacific is also big."[117] As the war turned, Japanese leaders "withdrew to an inner defense line."[118] When this line came under pressure, Japan lost Guadalcanal. Dull notes, "The Japanese felt that Guadalcanal had to be reinforced and held, which meant that they had to control the seas around it."[119] By November 1942, both Japan and the United States had nearly 30,000 soldiers on Guadalcanal.[120] Although the Japanese fought desperately for Guadalcanal, only 20% of the supplies sent from the stronghold at Rabaul reached the troops on Guadalcanal.[121] Now, the distance between Japan and its southern holdings began to represent a real challenge, forcing Japan to withdraw and consolidate its position. Dull writes, "Just as Midway was the turning point in the war at sea, Guadalcanal would be the turning point in the war on land."[122] As a result, Willmott notes, "The months from April to June 1942 represent the period when the imbalance of power that had previously favored the Japanese shifted."[123]

Ways: Defensive Strategy

As Japan's relative position and national objectives changed, Tokyo was forced to alter its strategy. Japan's offensive approach at the outset of the war was the result of both its aims as a rising power and decades of planning. Scholar Jisaburo Ozawa writes that the basic Japanese strategic concept against the United States was, "To control the command of the sea in the Orient

---

[117] Ibid.
[118] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 93.
[119] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 194.
[120] Ibid., 238.
[121] "United States Strategic Bombing Survey - Summary Report (Pacific War)," 5.
[122] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 181.
[123] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 513.

in order to secure the traffic between the Asia continent and the southern district. To invade Guam… To invade the Philippines… expecting to have the decisive sea battle somewhere from the Nansei Islands down to [the] east of the Philippines."[124] To obtain command of the sea, one historian notes, "the Imperial Navy was committed to a doctrine of the offensive battle with the U.S. Pacific Fleet."[125] The strategy Japan pursued was "a form of naval warfare that showed the superiority of the tactical offensive over the strategic defensive."[126] Scholar Atsushi Oi suggests that this, "policy of surprise and offensive matched the Japanese national temperament very well… To sit in a defensive position without fighting is very detrimental to the maintenance of Japanese morale."[127]

Over time Japanese leaders hoped to "seize key objectives and then use the power of the defense to defeat American counterattacks, which in turn would lead to a negotiated peace."[128] Unfortunately, the attack on Pearl Harbor turned "what Japan had perceived to be a limited war into an unlimited war…"[129] Willmott comments, "Since Japan's enemies had already declared their intention not to negotiate with her, there was no alternative to persisting with offensive operations."[130] Admiral Nagano remained confident that Japan would be successful early in the

---

[124] Jisaburo Ozawa, "Development of the Japanese Navy's Operational Concept against America," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 71–72.

[125] He goes on to note, "This state of affairs had two consequences, first, in the type of ship built for the navy, and second, in the degree of emphasis placed on escorts for merchant shipping." Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 89.

[126] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 32.

[127] Atsushi Oi, "The Japanese Navy in 1941," 1951 in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 12.

[128] Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor the Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States.* (Annopolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013).

[129] Ibid.

[130] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 33.

war, but warned, "we must face the fact that it will probably be a long-drawn-out war," even if Japan could "establish a strategically impregnable position."[131] With this in mind, the Combined Fleet instructed in 1941, "Strategically important points shall be captured, expanded in area and strengthened in defensive forces in order to prepare for a prolonged war."[132]

The navy maintained grand plans but had limited resources. By early 1942, observers write that Japan had "gained control of the sea in the Southwest Pacific."[133] Yet, this control was incomplete. Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi Miwa wanted a more expansionist policy and was angry at the army's delay, noting, "We want to invade Ceylon; we are not allowed to! We want to invade Australia; we cannot! We want to attack Hawaii; we cannot do that either! All because the army will not agree to release the necessary forces."[134] On the other hand, army leaders desired "time to consolidate the advantages they had already obtained—to fortify the territory they had captured and build a political and military structure capable of withstanding a long war."[135] Wood writes that by March 1942, "Japanese forces had seized all the essential objectives needed to establish a new and expanded National Defense Zone. Losses had been minimal."[136] Tojo

[131] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 130.

[132] "Japanese Monograph No. 102: Submarine Operations December 1941-April 1942," Office of the Chief Military History Department of the Army, 1953 in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 233.

[133] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 51. On the other hand, Willmott writes, "Perhaps the most striking feature of Japanese doctrine was that it eschewed interest in the concept of command of the sea… the Japanese sought not command of the sea but 'sea control'…" Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 16.

[134] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 79.

[135] Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 394.

[136] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 13–14.

suggested, "measures shall be taken by seizing opportunities to expand our acquired war gains, and by building a political and military structure capable of withstanding a protracted war."[137]

Consolidating control and shifting to the defense had always been part of Japanese strategy, but as Japan won battle after battle in 1941 and early 1942, Tokyo's aims continued to expand and its strategy remained offensive. For example, the attack on the Aleutian Islands and the operation against Midway went beyond Japan's initial war plans. Following the defeat at Midway, however, Japanese leaders finally began to change their strategy from offense to defense. At the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, Japan lost many of its aircraft and its best pilots. The navy had opted to train only a small number of pilots, assuming that a war would be short. Peattie comments, "these dilemmas for the Japanese naval air arm can be traced back to the navy's assumption that it would fight a short, decisive war. In such a conflict, few of these problems would have been critical."[138] Ito writes that Japan's "increasingly 'deaf and blind' Navy was also losing its best offensive weapon—airplanes."[139] Worsening these trends, Japanese merchant shipping suffered a rapid decline in 1943, falling from 3,112,400 tons in April 1942 to 2,629,300 tons in February 1943.[140] Meanwhile, Japanese shipyards built no destroyer escorts in the first two years of the war, as compared to 331 by the United States.[141] Admiral Nobutake Kondō would therefore note that Japan, "had to aim at destroying the majority with the minority."[142]

---

[137] Ibid., 39.

[138] Mark R. Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of the Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 195.

[139] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 112.

[140] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 239.

[141] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 89.

[142] Nobutake Kondo, "Some Opinions Concerning the War," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 317.

In the first six months of the war, Japan gained nearly 1.5 million square miles in territory.[143] Yet, as Willmott writes, "Forward defense, along an extended front, is possible only with super-abundant strength because such a concept demands the dispersal of static forces rather than the concentration of mobile ones."[144] The army chief of staff warned, "the ratio of armament between Japan and the United States will become more and more unfavorable."[145] As scholars have noted, "to persist in the offensive could only aggravate Japan's already difficult logistics problems and her number-to-space troubles."[146] Therefore, facing a rapidly strengthening United States, Japan "was forced to take a defensive position geographically."[147] For this reason, Japanese leaders sought a major engagement "before their favorable balance of power was upset by the industrial capacity of the United States."[148]

Guadalcanal signified the end of Japan's expansion and demonstrated that even defensive control through garrison fortifications might also be impossible. U.S. General Alexander Vandegrift noted that the tide of the war was turning when he commented before the invasion of Guadalcanal, "we land in the first major offensive of this war."[149] On the other side, Colonel Sako Tanemura wrote in November 1942, "Today there is the impression that Japan is on the verge of rise or fall… the fake pride of Imperial Headquarters is forcing us to wage the Decisive

[143] Axell and Kase, *Kamikaze*, 30.
[144] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 452.
[145] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 161.
[146] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 453.
[147] Atsushi Oi, "The Japanese Navy in 1941," 1951 in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 11–12.
[148] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 71.
[149] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 352.

Battle on Guadalcanal."[150] The battle proved unwinnable for Japan, in large part due to the logistical requirements. Facing reality, Major General Kenryo Sato advised Tojo to withdraw from Guadalcanal, noting "We have no choice. Even now it may be too late. If we go on like this, we have no chance of winning the war… it will end up as a battle of attrition of our transports."[151] The Emperor's imperial rescript after Guadalcanal led him to thank the navy for its "brave fight" but to warn that the situation would "become more and more difficult."[152]

As Japan declined, the Empire was forced to adopt more defensively-minded strategies. The difficulty of defending even the Western Pacific had been made clear by the Doolittle raid on Tokyo in April 1942. Commenting on the attack, Admiral Ugaki said, "Our homeland has been air raided and we missed the enemy without firing a shot at him."[153] One scholar notes that Doolittle "forced the Japanese high command to face up to the reality that their conquests could not be secured, that the safety of the homeland could not be guaranteed, and that the peoples of Southeast Asia could not be reconciled to Japanese rule unless and until the Americans were defeated."[154] Later in 1942, Ugaki demonstrated the expansion of Japanese war objectives since the outset of the war when he wrote in his diary, "How splendid the first stage of our operations was! But how unsuccessfully we have fought since the defeat at Midway! Our strategy, aimed at invasion of Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, and New Caledonia as well as domination over India and the destruction of the British Eastern Squadron, has dissipated like a dream."[155]

---

[150] Ibid., 419.
[151] Ibid., 422.
[152] Ibid., 410.
[153] Thomas, *Sea of Thunder*, 63.
[154] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 460.
[155] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 427.

Means: Immobile Investments

Japan's changing security strategy fundamentally altered its military investments. For twenty years before World War II, the Japanese navy's primary objective in war games had been "the annihilation of the United States Fleet."[156] Yet, since the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty, Japan had been restricted to 60% of U.S. and British battleship and carrier construction. Moreover, the treaty had imposed a 10-year building moratorium on battleships, each of which was limited to 35,000 tons. Eight years later, the 1930 London Naval Treaty applied the 60% limit to Japanese heavy cruiser allocations, with a 70% ceiling for light cruisers and destroyers. In exchange for these restrictions, Japan won parity in submarines.

Due to peacetime estimates, many strategists believed that Japan would require 70% of the U.S. combat fleet to prevail in a war. During the London negotiations, respected statesman Kinmochi Saionji noted, "The reason that Japan maintains her world power status is that she holds that baton of command with England and America. If Japan loses her grip like France and Italy, how will she develop as a world power?"[157] Yet, the navy struggled under these treaties and by 1937 Japan had withdrawn from them and commenced unrestricted naval development.[158] The motivations for withdrawal were many, but one author suggests, "Japan's aim was to enhance her international standing by becoming a great peacetime naval power."[159]

---

[156] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 34.

[157] Wetzler, *Hirohito and War*, 175.

[158] Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*, 13.

[159] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 16. Also see Roger Dingman, *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Before World War II, the Japanese Navy General Staff "divided their strategy into two parts: the attrition stage and the decisive battle."[160] Attrition could help bring an opponent down to parity, but a decisive battle would eventually have to be fought to force a negotiated settlement. The requirements of such a decisive battle led to a focus on large surface ships over smaller vessels or submarines. With this in mind, plans for the 70,000-ton *Yamato* battleship were drafted while the Washington Naval Treaty was still in effect. Meanwhile, aircraft carrier development proceeded, with Japanese engineers skirting the naval treaties on their displacement as well. Due to displacement limits and the need for offensive action, "Japanese carriers were not built with defensive requirements as a prime consideration… Everything on Japanese carriers was geared to speed and ease of handling."[161] This focus on mobility permitted rapid power projection over great distances, but would come at a cost in protracted warfare.

Earlier in its naval development, Japan had invested heavily in smaller vessels, such as torpedo boats. During the late 1880s, Japan followed France's lead in adopting elements of the *Jeune Ecole*. The torpedo boat was seen as "an ideal weapon for Japan's defense: it was inexpensive and easy to deploy among the Japanese islands."[162] Submarines also attracted attention. Yet, future admiral Shinshi Akiyama noted, "because its development is still in its infancy it is a bit early to rank it as battle-worthy. Instead we may properly regard it now as a mobile subsurface mine."[163] Given this mindset, it is no surprise that submarines "were not one of the strong points

---

[160] Carl Boyd and Akihiko Yoshida, *The Japanese Submarine Force and World War II*, Bluejacket Books (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 4.

[161] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 415.

[162] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 15.

[163] Boyd and Yoshida, *The Japanese Submarine Force and World War II*, 3.

of the Imperial Navy."[164] Mark Stille comments, "Japanese submarine doctrine clearly focused on the enemy's battle fleet at the expense of developing the strategy and tactics required to attack the enemy's commerce and sea lines of communication."[165] This oversight was to prove critical when the Imperial navy attempted to switch its strategy from sea control to sea denial.

Through the 1930s Japanese leaders favored highly mobile and sustainable forces, resulting in a struggle between advocates of the battleship and the carrier.[166] In 1934, the navy instructed, "battleship divisions are the main weapon in a fleet battle and their task is to engage the main force of the enemy."[167] Such statements were driven by the idea that, "The war was about the projection of mobile fire power into waters that in orthodox terms would otherwise have been controlled by enemy surface forces."[168] Thus, defeating U.S. forces required an offensive surface warfare capability. One scholar explains, "The demands of offensive action were for high speed, good maneuverability, long range and heavy payload; the demands of defensive warfare were for ruggedness of construction, the ability to take punishment, armor and heavy fire power. Defensive needs had been sacrificed to secure optimum performance in the attack."[169] With this in mind, the navy attempted to modernize its battleships by "enlarging their radius of action" through oil-burning propulsion.[170]

---

[164] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 86.

[165] Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*, 21.

[166] Not all mobility was highly advanced; Japanese troops gained an advantage by riding bicycles in Malaya.

[167] Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*, 17.

[168] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 517.

[169] Ibid., 58.

[170] Masataka Chihaya, "Concerning the Construction of Japanese Warships," 1947 in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 87.

Advocates of the carrier did eventually gain traction. As early as the 1920s, "the need to control the air above the great gun duel… had given rise to the carrier fighter, which was seen as playing a defensive role."[171] The defensive role of carriers limited their value in the mind of many Japanese admirals.[172] Peattie comments, "despite the deeply rooted fixation of the Imperial Japanese Navy on warships as the decisive weapons of naval war, the navy's air war in China brought home to nearly all its leadership the tremendous offensive potential of aerial weapons."[173] Furthermore, "fleet maneuvers made obvious the offensive potential of carrier aviation… Thus, Japanese navy leaders became convinced of the needs for more carriers."[174] Therefore, in the early 1930s, "carrier aircraft had come to be viewed as instrumental in attacking capital ships themselves."[175]

The transition from battleships to carriers as the primary offensive arm of the Japanese fleet took years to implement. In 1935, Yamamoto advised, "the practical value of battleships has declined, but the world's navies still set great store upon them and they retain their symbolism as an indicator of naval power… think of it is as a decoration."[176] The vulnerability of battleships gave rise to advocates of airpower, both land- and sea-based. Captain Takijiro Onishi advised, "Because battleships are fragile under enemy attack, it is wrong to make them the navy's main force. For our naval armament we should shift from battleships to land-based air power."[177]

---

[171] Peattie, *Sunburst*, 40.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., 124.
[174] Ibid., 58.
[175] Ibid., 40.
[176] Ibid., 83.
[177] Ibid.

Nevertheless, the Japanese fleet was limited to 60% of the carrier force of the United States and Britain, forcing it to use fewer, smaller, and more lightly protected carriers. The result was that the Japanese carrier "was splendid in projecting power at great distance but significantly inferior to its American counterpart in warding off an enemy counterstrike… it could throw a punch but couldn't take one."[178] To make things worse, Admiral Nobumasa Suetsugu, Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet, noted, "The Japanese Navy at present lags manifestly behind the American Navy in aviation and communications."[179] Yet the Japanese navy rapidly improved its offensive power projection capabilities by focusing on "the offensive priorities of Japanese carrier doctrine."[180] For example, the *Kaga* went to sea with only 16 fighter aircraft for defense as opposed to 45 torpedo bombers and 30 dive bombers. As Japan constructed larger and faster carriers, it was able to increase the size and payload of its carrier-based aircraft.[181]

Thus, Japan entered World War II with a robust fleet of aircraft carriers and battleships. These capital ships were designed to be highly mobile and prepared for offensive action to bring about a decisive battle. Smaller platforms, such as escort vessels and submarines, were to play a lesser role and accomplish secondary objectives. Navalist Atsushi Oi writes that defensive missions such as anti-invasion and shipping protection were given "slight importance."[182] Instead, submarine development focused on long-range underwater boats. Willmott writes, "The Japanese envisaged fighting initially with forces they regarded as expendable; submarines and aircraft

---

[178] Ibid., 159.

[179] Atsushi Oi, "The Japanese Navy in 1941," 1951 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 20.

[180] Peattie, *Sunburst*, 76.

[181] Ibid., 60.

[182] Atsushi Oi, "The Japanese Navy in 1941," 1951 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 17.

were considered cheap craft, capable of relatively quick and easy replacement."[183] In the attrition phase, "the navy needed a submarine of greater speed and range than any in its possession at the end of World War I."[184] Therefore, Rear Admiral Nobumasa Suetsugu's first submarine division "was molded to support his vision of far-ranging offensive submarines."[185] The resulting doctrinal innovations "were directed toward fleet operations, not commerce raiding."[186]

Why did Japan focus on such highly-mobile forces before World War II? Stille explains that the Imperial Japanese Navy "had to have the weapons and tactics to inflict severe attrition" before a decisive battle by using "units with superior speed and capable of hitting at ranges beyond the reach" of the U.S. Navy.[187] As a result, Japan needed to strike first, "to 'outrange' the enemy in the air, just as Japanese surface forces were hoping to do by shell and torpedo on and below the ocean's surface… the Japanese navy came to emphasize range in its specifications when calling for bids for aircraft design."[188] In fact, Japanese carrier aircraft had much greater range than their American counterparts. U.S. aircraft searched up to 360 miles from their carrier, while Japanese aircraft ranged up to 560 miles away.[189] Similarly, U.S. aircraft attacked at ranges around 250 miles, but Japanese counterparts struck at distances up to 350 miles.[190] As this demonstrates, range and speed were the Japanese priorities before the war. The Japanese capability for rapid offensive action proved itself useful at Pearl Harbor and in the strikes that followed into 1942.

---

[183] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 29.
[184] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 215.
[185] Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*, 326.
[186] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 218.
[187] Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*, 12.
[188] Peattie, *Sunburst*, 74.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

Japan's success early in the war, however, rapidly evaporated as Midway and Guadalcanal sapped Japanese strength at sea and on land. Unable to compete symmetrically with the United States, Japan adopted a denial strategy using less mobile systems. Before the war, denial approaches had been viewed so unfavorably that submarines were not prepared for commerce raiding.[191] As a result, "the Japanese Navy placed little importance on commerce-destruction warfare."[192] Toward the end of the war, however, Japan began to emphasize submarine warfare. From 1942 to 1945, the United States produced roughly five times the tonnage of battleships, carriers, destroyers, and cruisers as Japan. In submarines, however, the U.S. lead was only two times that of Japan.[193] Submarines, long an afterthought in Japanese naval strategy, were coming to the forefront, but there were too few for them to make a decisive difference. This shift away from sea and air control would accelerate as Japan's position declined.

Japanese Defense Policy after 1944

> The Special Attack operations were truly impossible to bear in terms of our natural human feelings but Japan having been put in an impossible position, those unreasonable measures were all that was left to us.
>
> - Emperor Hirohito, after World War II[194]

In 1944, Japanese perceptions of relative power changed as Japan lost the bulk of its fleet and suffered defeat on all fronts. Moreover, Japan's allies were falling by the wayside, leaving Japan alone against the increasingly capable U.S. military. Unlike some other states that undergo

---

[191] Stille, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*, 326.

[192] Atsushi Oi, "The Japanese Navy in 1941," 1951 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 14.

[193] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 366.

[194] Axell and Kase, *Kamikaze*, 199.

decline, Japan's worsening position was impossible for its leaders to ignore. They rapidly scaled back Japan's objectives, strategy, and investments to accord with reality. In particular, leaders in Tokyo chose more limited objectives, selected denial-focused strategies, and invested in more expendable systems.

Ends: Adopting Limited Objectives

From 1942 onward, Japanese leaders perceived that their power was declining. The Japanese navy lost 38% of its aircraft in 1942, and 63% in 1943, amounting to a total of 7,820 aircraft.[195] These losses were more than three times the number of aircraft with which Japan had begun the war.[196] As a result, Dull notes, "The Japanese defense perimeter could not be maintained at the extent originally planned."[197] Although Japan had planned to defend a perimeter, this shift toward the defense had initially been delayed following the military's dramatic success in the early months of the war. Now, defense of Japanese-held islands in the Pacific seemed the Empire's best hope.

Japanese optimism was damaged further when the United States succeeded in killing Admiral Yamamoto in April 1943. A decade earlier Yamamoto had been seen as so important that he was sent to sea "purposefully because he would have been assassinated if he had stayed in Tokyo."[198] Now, Admiral Miniuki Koga took over as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet. Upon

[195] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 94.
[196] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 84.
[197] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 260.
[198] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 18.

assuming command, Koga noted, "There was only one Yamamoto and no one is able to replace him. His loss is an insupportable blow to us."[199]

As Japan declined, leaders in Tokyo attempted to consolidate their aims. After losses at Midway and Guadalcanal, Japanese leaders still believed they could defend conquered territory. Yet, even this proved to be increasingly difficult. Facing a strengthening United States, Japanese leaders were forced to alter the approach within just two years. By early 1944, defense of even strong points in the Pacific was impossible. General Tojo commanded, "Rabaul must be held without fail. It is the key to our barrier in this region," while he admitted, "Unfortunately, I cannot do much for you just now."[200] By 1944, it was clear that Japan was no longer just declining, but was now relatively weak compared to the United States. As a result, Japanese aims naturally became more limited. Japan sought not to uphold all of its holdings, but merely to slow the U.S. advance across the Pacific.

After the war, Tojo cited three reasons for Japan's defeat: the U.S. strategy of bypassing centers of Japanese power, the far-ranging activities of fast carrier forces, and the destruction of merchant shipping by U.S. submarines.[201] But the central reason that Japan lost the war, and indeed that it began the war in the first place, was better explained by General MacArthur: "There is practically nothing indigenous to Japan except the silkworm… They feared that if those supplies were cut off, there would be 10 to 12 million unoccupied people. Their purpose,

---

[199] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 255. Although a reporter who was on the *Enterprise* would publish a story noting that success at Midway was due to the breaking of Japanese naval codes, the Japanese proceeded unaware. Ibid., 152.

[200] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 267.

[201] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 38.

therefore, in going to war was largely dictated by security."[202] As Willmott writes, "With the imposition of the blockade in 1941, the Japanese faced the stark alternatives of conquering or starving."[203] Barnhart argues, "For Japan, there were, in essence, only two alternatives to war with the United States. On the one hand, Japan might have given up all attempts to achieve self-sufficiency… On the other hand, Japan might have actually achieved self-sufficiency with a great Asian empire and defied the West to overthrow it. How likely was this outcome?"[204]

Why were Japanese leaders so confident in the early phases of the war? Richard Overy argues that an outright Japanese victory or a favorable negotiated peace "were in fact strong possibilities. There was nothing preordained about Allied success."[205] Yet, when it became clear that a quick victory or negotiated peace were unlikely, Japan's odds of victory dropped dramatically. By April 1945, on the occasion of President Roosevelt's death, Japan's situation was so poor that Prime Minister Kantarō Suzuki openly noted America's "advantageous position."[206] This recognition of Japan's relative weakness and the reality that Tokyo would have to settle for more limited objectives led to adoption of a much more limited denial-focused strategy in the last years of the war.

Ways: Adopting a Denial Strategy

As Japan's power declined and its leaders' aims contracted, Tokyo settled first on a defensive-control strategy and then on a more denial-focused approach. Masanori Ito notes, "Wisely used,

---

[202] Axell and Kase, *Kamikaze*, 26.
[203] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 71.
[204] Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 267.
[205] Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 1.
[206] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 701.

or even unused, Japan's Navy could have remained an invincible defensive armada."[207] Yet, the much of the navy's strength had been spent by mid-1942. Other scholars observe, "With the end of the major Japanese offensives in the Pacific, however, the mission of the navy's land forces changed from mobile to positional warfare."[208] By early 1943, Dull comments that "Only in Burma were faltering offensive operations still under way… Victory fever had subsided, but the samurai spirit had not; now a determination to yield no more territory without making the enemy pay a tremendous price came to pervade Japanese strategic thinking."[209]

Late in 1943, at Cairo, the allies decided to capture advanced bases, blockade Japan, follow two routes to the Japanese home islands, and conduct strategic bombing from the second island chain. The momentum had unmistakably shifted. The stronghold of Rabaul, Japan's chief fortified location in the South Pacific, became the focus of much attention. Chihaya writes, "Japan, especially the Japanese Navy, did everything possible to reinforce Rabaul… to pour into Rabaul as many weapons, ammunitions, and planes as possible until in February 1944 Japan at last was forced to give up maintain the Rabaul area."[210]

Leaders in Tokyo recognized Japan's weakness but could do little to reverse it. The Emperor had approved war plans despite the fact that "no long-term, concrete plan for guiding the war through its protracted stage existed."[211] Tojo later recounted a conversation with the Emperor in June 1943 in which the Emperor castigated him by saying, "You keep repeating that the Imperial

---

[207] Itō and Pineau, *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 22.

[208] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 445.

[209] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 267.

[210] Masataka Chihaya, "Importance of the Japanese Naval Bases Overseas, 1947 in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 65.

[211] Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 422.

Army is invulnerable, yet whenever the enemy lands you lose the battle. You've never been able to repulse an enemy landing. Can't you do it somewhere?"[212]

In July 1943, Rear Admiral Kameto Kuroshima requested use of volunteer suicide attacks but "the navy and army high commands refused to consider such a drastic step. They were proud and spirited men who still believed that they could defeat the Allied forces in regular combat."[213] In early 1944, the Japanese set a new "absolute" defense line from the Ogasawara Islands through the Marianas to western New Guinea. This line "would be defended to the death."[214] Yet, with the fall of Saipan in summer 1944, the situation had changed. The Japanese commander directed, "positions are to be defended to the bitter end, and unless he has other orders, every soldier must stand his ground."[215] Nearly 30,000 Japanese would die on the island over just three weeks. The American figure was a little over 3,000 killed.

The fall of Saipan marked Japan's transition from strength to weakness. Saipan's loss prompted Tojo to remark, "Japan is threatened by a national crisis without precedent."[216] The Cabinet was replaced on July 18, 1944. When the Tojo cabinet fell, Kuniaki Koiso became both prime minister and army minister, while Mitsumasa Yonai became navy minister. Masanori Ito writes, "Japan advanced too far beyond her strength, or, to use a military term, had exceeded the offensive terminal point… the ideal point for the offensive force to hold, rest, and strengthen its lines of communication, supply, and reinforcements."[217] As a result, Samuel Tangredi comments,

---

[212] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 446–447.
[213] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 22.
[214] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 24.
[215] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 506.
[216] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 294.
[217] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 85.

"After having achieved conquests in China, Indochina, Indonesia, and outlying islands, Imperial Japanese forces shifted to an anti-access strategy in order to ensure that outside powers could not reverse the gains."[218] Despite similarities with the initial war plans, this shift happened long after initially intended. Japanese leaders only adopted a denial strategy when they perceived that their relative power had started to decline.

As Japan's territory contracted, its strategy became increasingly asymmetric. Ugaki commented that Japan had to be like a sumo wrestler and conserve its strength by "pushing out" or "outwitting" opponents rather than competing with them strength-on-strength.[219] Control of territory was no longer the strategy, denial would have to suffice. In August 1944, Ugaki asked, "I wonder why they don't give enough consideration to attacking enemy elements easy to destroy, instead of always seeking a decisive battle."[220] The answer was that by 1944, Japan was forced to adopt suicide tactics "in a desperate effort not to achieve victory but to ward off defeat."[221]

Denial-focused strategies encountered opposition within the army and navy. A veteran pilot wrote in 1945, "The right way is to attack the enemy with skill and return to the base with good results. A plane should be utilized over and over again. That's the way to fight a war. The current thinking is skewed."[222] Nevertheless, Japan's weakness made this impossible. The symmetric strategy that envisioned a battle for control between two great militaries had failed. The question now was how long Japan could deny U.S. forces control of various territories in East Asia.

---

[218] Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare*, 141.
[219] Thomas, *Sea of Thunder*, 149.
[220] Ibid., 130.
[221] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 454.
[222] Axell and Kase, *Kamikaze*, 42.

Means: Adopting Expendable Investments

As Japanese strength declined, leaders in Tokyo recognized their difficult position and authorized "special attacks." Andrew Adams notes, "Because of the growing inability of Japanese planes to penetrate the U.S. fleet's fighter-plane screen and drop their bombs and torpedoes, however, frustrated pilots began to urge the use of suicide tactics by early 1944."[223] Captain Eiichiro Jyo, commander of the *Chiyoda* light carrier, wrote, "No longer can we hope to sink the numerically superior enemy aircraft carriers through ordinary attack methods. I urge the immediate organization of special attack units to carry out crash dive tactics…"[224] Vice Admiral Kimpei Teraoka wrote in his diary, "Ordinary tactics are ineffective… We must be superhuman in order to win the war."[225]

Special attack units were highly controversial. Some worried that "A sure-death aerial weapon like this will have a grave impact on military discipline."[226] Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki, a retired admiral, insisted that "Using men in a situation where there is no chance of survival is not a proper military operation. The Japanese Navy has always opposed such undertakings."[227] Yet, Admiral Onishi noted, "there is only one way of assuring that our meager strength will be effective to a maximum degree. That is to organize suicide attack units…"[228] To encourage combat, "Japanese servicemen were taught to believe that if they died in battle, especially if they died heroically, they would instantly become 'gods', and join the guardian spirits of the nation at

---

[223] Andrew Adams, *Born To Die: The Cherry Blossom Squadrons* (Ohara Publications, 1973), 19.

[224] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 27.

[225] Ibid., 20.

[226] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 43.

[227] Ibid., 192.

[228] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 7.

Yasukuni Shrine…"[229] Notably, those killed in suicide operations would be given promotions of two ranks, while other personnel were given a single rank promotion on their death.[230]

Finally, in October 1944, pilots were instructed, "Japanese air strength in the Philippines is too hopelessly depleted to oppose the enemy effectively by orthodox methods of attack. The moment calls for the employment of crash-dive tactics."[231] Another wing commander announced the special attack units by reflecting, "Without taking extreme measures against the enemy, we will not be able to go on. We must do something that is unique in the annals of military history. Otherwise we will be ground down and destroyed as a nation."[232] One scholar reflects that these tactics were "futility itself, and it bespoke the desperation of Japan and her fighting forces."[233] From this point on, U.S. Admiral William Halsey noted, "the Americans fought to live; the Japanese fought to die."[234]

Suicide attacks had historical antecedents. Kamikaze ("divine wind") were named in reference to a typhoon that destroyed Kublai Khan's invasion fleet in 1281, an incident which had saved Japan and "prevented foreign barbarians from violating Japan's sacred soil."[235] In 1904, the Japanese navy consisted of only 10 capital ships, compared to 33 for Russia.[236] Success against Russia seemed impossible, so Japan utilized "special units" to attack enemy warships, with some success. Before Pearl Harbor, Admiral Yamamoto had been presented plans for attacks by

---

[229] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 21.
[230] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 107.
[231] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 39–40.
[232] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 29.
[233] Ibid., 109.
[234] Thomas, *Sea of Thunder*, 48.
[235] Adams, *Born to Die*, 16.
[236] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 90–91.

midget submarine, but worried that "If they enter the anchorage, it is certain that they cannot return."[237] Instead, he "gave permission for these midget submarine operations only on condition that the midgets could be recovered."[238] The midget submarines used at Pearl Harbor were unlikely to reach their pre-planned rendezvous points, but they differed from suicide boats. 'On the other hand, the new vessels were "especially designed for one-way trips."[239]

Although special attacks began in 1944, the Imperial Headquarters had previously assigned targets that were beyond the round-trip flying range of their pilots. The first officially planned suicide attack occurred near New Guinea on May 27, 1944. The next kamikaze aircraft attack took place on October 13, 1944 and continued almost daily for the next month. Kamikaze attacks from the air reportedly sunk 22 ships in the Philippines, double the number sunk by conventional air attacks.[240] Thousands of attacks were conducted using a variety of aircraft, some designed specifically for suicide attacks and others converted for that purpose.

At Leyte Gulf, Admiral Kurita urged his subordinates, "the war situation is far more critical than any of you can possibly know. Would it not be a shame to have the fleet remain intact while our nation perishes?"[241] With this in mind, the battleship *Yamato* received final orders instructing, "Fuel for only a one-way passage will be supplied. This is a special attack operation."[242] Japan lost 3 battleships, 4 aircraft carriers, 9 cruisers, 13 destroyers, and 5 submarines at Leyte Gulf.[243] Nearly 65,000 Japanese would die opposing the invasion that began there, compared to 3,500

---

[237] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 41.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Adams, *Born to Die*, 10.
[240] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 157.
[241] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 120.
[242] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 118.
[243] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 179.

Americans.[244] On Okinawa, nearly half of the 6,300 sorties flown against the invaders were suicide attacks.[245] These attacks damaged an estimated 217 American ships and sunk 20.[246]

In 1944, many forms of special attack craft would be prepared. For example, roughly 850 piloted bombs, or "Ohka", were constructed during the war, most with ranges of roughly 15 nautical miles.[247] Nine Ohka attacks occurred in November 1944, followed by 11 in December, and 12 in January 1945.[248] By March 1945, Japan had 2,100 aircraft remaining, but few pilots and crews. Of these aircraft, 300 were on Formosa, 400 on Honshu, 600 on Kyushu, and 800 in the Tokyo area.[249] To increase their effectiveness, over 400 special attack aircraft were constructed, with ranges as high as 1,000 miles.[250] In the end, two-thirds of the 3,913 kamikaze pilots who died were navy pilots, the other third being army pilots.[251] They incurred over 12,000 dead and 36,000 wounded American servicemembers.[252]

Although Kamikaze aircraft were the most well-known, many other special attack units were created in 1944. Japan attempted to build missiles similar to the German V-1, choosing to pilot these aircraft rather than leave them unguided. However, these designs never proceeded to the production stage. Special attacks with naval vessels were more effective. As O'Neill notes, "In March 1944, the Imperial Japanese Army's Warship Research Institute at Himeji, near Kobe,

---

[244] Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 607.
[245] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 169.
[246] Ibid., 170.
[247] Ibid., 177.
[248] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 24.
[249] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 138.
[250] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 268.
[251] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 25.
[252] Ibid.

was directed to devote considerable effort to the development of 'special (attack) boats'; in other words, suicide boats."[253] The boats had a warhead of roughly 600 pounds, typically rigged to explode upon impact or be detonated by a pilot. These vessels had short ranges, roughly 100 nautical miles when fully fueled. The need for these boats "was provoked by the inability of its aircraft, in the face of Allied superiority, to strike effectively at the most vulnerable element of the Allied amphibious landing forces—the landing ships."[254] Over 1,000 of these boats were deployed to the Philippines alone in 1944.[255]

The Japanese also constructed piloted torpedoes with warheads that detonated on impact. The ranges of some of these torpedoes could be as long as nearly 50 nautical miles. Roughly 400 were constructed, as well as a number of surface ships and submarines capable of carrying the torpedoes, known as *Kaiten*.[256] In a statement that demonstrates their perceived importance, one of the first questions asked by the U.S. commander in Manila at Japan's surrender negotiations was: "Are the *Kaiten* still at sea?"[257] In addition to these torpedoes, Japan also produced over 400 midget submarines. Some midgets had ranges of up to 1,000 nautical miles on the surface, and could be deployed from submarine tenders.[258] Japanese leaders also decided to lay minefields around the first island chain, but only four minelayers were available.[259] Thus, suicide boats proved more effective.

---

[253] O'Neill, *Suicide Squads, W.W. II*, 83.
[254] Ibid., 84.
[255] Ibid., 100.
[256] Ibid., 226–227.
[257] Ibid., 279.
[258] Ibid., 22–24.
[259] D'Albas, *Death of a Navy*, 268–269.

A U.S. operations booklet published in 1945 noted that the damage caused by suicide attacks far exceeded that caused by conventional attacks.[260] In the battle for Okinawa, the United States lost an estimated 11 destroyers and suffered damage to 10 battleships, 7 carriers, 5 cruisers, 61 destroyers, and over 100 other ships, the vast majority of which are attributable to kamikaze attacks.[261] By the end of the war, a quarter of all ground force deaths in the southern region were due to aerial bombardment.[262] The Strategic Bombing Survey following the war found that "The Japanese increased their ratio of results achieved to losses by adopting Kamikaze tactics. This was a measure of desperation, but the results obtained were considerable and, had they been much greater, might have caused us to withdraw or to modify our strategic plans."[263]

Why were special attacks used only from 1944 onward? Japanese leaders "increasingly saw the Thunder Gods Corps and the other special-attack forces as Japan's last hope."[264] Another typical response is that, "given our desperate situation near the end of the war, there was nothing else we Japanese could do."[265] The Japanese military was so weak that it could no longer contest control of the air, land, and sea. For example, army pilots at the beginning of the war had 500 hours training while navy pilots had 650 hours, but this fell to just 100 hours at the end of the war. As a result, "the pilots themselves began to feel that if they were going to die on carrier decks, it would be much better to die crashing the decks of enemy carriers."[266] With this in mind, a

[260] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 182.
[261] Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 160.
[262] "United States Strategic Bombing Survey - Summary Report (Pacific War)," 13.
[263] Ibid., 28.
[264] Naitō, *Thunder Gods*, 187.
[265] Ibid., 206.
[266] Ibid., 180–181.

kamikaze pilot noted, "To us at the time, a suicide air force was a very natural thing, nothing more than a means of self-defense toward the end of the war."[267]

Conclusion

> In the first six to twelve months of a war with the United States and Great Britain I will run wild and win victory upon victory. But then, if the war continues after that, I have no expectation of success.
>
> - Admiral Yamamoto (1941)[268]

Japan's collapse as a world power transpired over just three years. Japan's collapse occurred in two stages. From summer 1942 onward it was clear that Japan was in decline. From summer 1944 to the end of the war it was evident that Japan was not only declining but relatively weak as compared to the United States. Japan's national objectives, security strategies, and military investments changed as its leaders perceived these shifts in relative power.

Japanese leaders' perception of relative power changes appears to best explain Tokyo's defense policies. At the height of its power in early 1942, Japan had succeeded in pushing British and American forces out of the western Pacific. As a U.S. Navy memorandum had correctly predicted, however, Japan's capabilities would "gradually decline which must eventually result in her eviction from the Asiatic continent and her decline as a world power."[269] U.S. leaders went so far as to point out this likelihood to Japanese leaders before the war. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark noted to Ambassador Nomura, "you may have initial success… but there will be this great difference. You will not only be unable to make up your

[267] Adams, *Born to Die*, 52.
[268] Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare*, 144.
[269] Worth, *No Choice but War*, 183.

losses but will grow weaker as time goes on… we shall crush you."[270] When this decline came, Japanese leaders were forced to alter their policies, and to do so rapidly.

Alternative explanations struggle to explain Japan's 1944 change in defense policies. The distribution of capabilities changed rapidly during the war, but most other structural and cultural factors remained largely stable. Technology for suicide attacks existed long before these tactics were adopted. Geographic factors remained largely the same throughout the war. Moreover, suicide attacks might have proven highly effective had they been used at Pearl Harbor, from both an operational perspective and for demonstrating Japanese will to fight to the United States. Regarding domestic politics, a number of circumstances changed within the Japanese government from 1942 through 1945. Yet, available evidence does not suggest that domestic groups were particularly influential in encouraging the use of suicide attacks by Japanese forces.

Snyder argues that "Japan's bid for empire and autarky was not a rational strategic gamble… overexpansion and the strategic concepts that rationalized it are best explained as an outgrowth of Japan's domestic institutions and its route to modernity."[271] Yet, Wood counters, "As her overwhelming early victories should remind us, the decision to go to war was based on a correct calculation of the balance power in Asia and the military risks involved."[272] Overy notes, "no rational man in early 1942 would have guessed at the eventual outcome of the war… The situation for the Allies—and the coalition only emerged in December 1941, not sooner—was desperate, demoralizing…"[273]

---

[270] Willmott, *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 521–522.
[271] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 113.
[272] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 7.
[273] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 15.

Why were Japanese leaders so confident of success before the war? One reason is that U.S. production in 1939 was lower than it had been in 1929. As one expert noted, "Japanese leaders feared American power, but they had to make decisions against the background of fitful and sluggish American production in the thirties, a decade when Japanese output doubled."[274] While the United States struggled through the depression, Japan engaged in what has been called "Keynes in a uniform."[275] The navy swelled from just over 80,000 personnel in 1928 to 429,000 by 1942.[276] In 1938, Japan had 162 ships in the Far East compared to 141 for the United States and 34 for Britain. In addition, Ambassador Nomura wrote in June 1941 of "the underestimation of the strength of the Japanese air force."[277] Japan had an advantage of 1,102 aircraft to 973 for the United States and only 98 for Britain.[278] In the short term, Japan was in a position of strength.

Moreover, one should remember that the prospect of a Nazi victory over the Soviet Union, to say nothing of Great Britain, appeared to be a real possibility when Japan decided to go to war. Willmott explains, "the Japanese considered war in the Pacific in exactly the same light as the earlier wars against China and Russia around the turn of the century—a war that they could initiate and then limit in its conduct and aims. In global terms, the Japanese plans depended on the Anglo-Americans being engaged in two theaters, Europe and the Far East, and unable to mount effective responses in either area."[279] Although Kido told the Emperor in 1941 that "we

---

[274] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*, 452.

[275] Miles Kahler, "External Ambition and Economic Performance," *World Politics* 40, no. 04 (July 1988): 430.

[276] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 402.

[277] "Diary of Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, June-December 1941," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 146.

[278] Wetzler, *Hirohito and War*, 206.

[279] Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 74.

are not strong enough to fight the U.S.A. and the Soviet at the same time," this suggests that he thought Japan stood a chance against the United States alone.[280]

At the start of the war, there was a sense in Tokyo that Japan was ascending while the United States was stagnating. Wood argues, "It was only when a sound original strategic plan to secure the resources Japan needed and to establish a defensible perimeter for the empire and its new conquests was superseded by needless overexpansion that the enemy was able to regain the initiative…"[281] As Japan grew weaker, however, it shifted first to consolidation of its objectives and then to more limited aims. These objectives in turn favored defensive and denial strategies, respectively. One senior Japanese naval officer has noted, "the major battles in 1944 and 1945, when [the navy] lost its striking capability, were like a boxing match between a big, muscled boxer, full of energy, and a completely exhausted and emaciated players."[282]

By 1944, Japan had adopted the type of denial strategy and expendable systems predicted by perceived relative power theory. Evans and Peattie write, "the fortunes of the Japanese navy turned so disastrously by the end of 1943… few strategies, tactics, and technologies devised in the interwar years had any relevance in the last year and half of the war."[283] Admiral Chester commented, "nothing that happened during the war was a surprise — absolutely nothing except

---

[280] "Extracts from the Diary of Marquis Koichi Kido," in Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pacific War Papers*, 121. For more on this topic, see James William Morley and Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai, eds., *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941: Selected Translations from Taiheiyō Sensō E No Michi, Kaisen Gaikō Shi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

[281] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War*, 7.

[282] Jim Bresnahan, ed., *Refighting the Pacific War: An Alternative History of World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 14.

[283] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*. xxii.

the kamikaze tactics toward the end of the war; we had not visualized those."[284] Japanese records show that nearly 1,500 special air attacks were conducted by both the navy and army from April through June 1945, resulting in 11 U.S. ships being sunk and 102 damaged.[285] Yet, by the end of the war, the Japanese navy had lost 334 warships and 300,000 personnel.[286]

The eventual outcome of the war was unavoidable if the United States was able to fight a protracted conflict. In announcing the end of the war in 1945, Emperor Hirohito acknowledged, "We declared war on America and Britain out of Our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia… the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage…"[287] Indeed, the inevitable downturn of the relative power dynamics not only caused Japan to lose the war, but also to change its defense policies accordingly.

284

285 Inoguchi, Nakajima, and Pineau, *The Divine Wind*, 151.

286 Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, 492.

287 Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 838–839.

Soviet Collapse

> In the latter half of the seventies—something happened that was at first sight inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum… A country that was once quickly closing on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another.
>
> - Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (1987)[1]

The Soviet Union's collapse was one of the most surprising events of the 20th century. In each of the five-year periods from 1950 to 1980, Soviet growth exceeded that of the United States.[2] Yet, the booming Soviet economy eventually slowed, falling from 11.4% in 1951 to 1955 to 4.3% in 1976 to 1980.[3] Soviet production lagged due to deep structural problems in the Soviet system. Observers warned that without new energy the Soviet Union would "cease to be a great power" and become a "backward, stagnating state and an example to the rest of the world how not to conduct its economic life."[4] Indeed, despite several decades of rapid growth, estimates of Soviet gross national product suggested that it had peaked before 1980 at around 55% that of the United States.[5] Thus, as Mikhail Gorbachev admitted in the late 1980s, the signs of Soviet decline had been evident since at least the late 1970s.

---

[1] Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Perennial Library, 1988), 4–5.

[2] Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 137.

[3] Stephen White, *Gorbachev and after*, Cambridge Soviet Paperbacks 3 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 106.

[4] Leonid Abalkin and Nikolai Shmelev quoted in Ibid., 109.

[5] "A Comparison of Soviet and U.S. Gross National Products, 1960-1983," U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 1984, 3, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000498181.pdf.

Through the early 1980s, however, the Soviet military remained relatively strong. In 1981, U.S. estimates put Soviet defense spending 25% to 45% higher than that of the United States.[6] Soviet numerical advantages were substantial and caused U.S. President Ronald Reagan to highlight the danger of a "window of vulnerability" in which the Soviet Union could threaten Western interests. Nevertheless, the Soviet military remained far behind in many technological areas and its allies were much weaker than those of the United States. As a result, when Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985, he concluded that Soviet military power was clearly in decline.

The theory of perceived relative power presented here suggests that the Soviet Union should have undergone two perceptual shifts in the 1980s and 1990s. Before 1990, the realization that Soviet relative power was declining should have triggered a contraction of Soviet national objectives. Contracting objectives should have been most easily secured with a defensive security strategy. A defensive security strategy, in turn, should have shifted military investments toward less mobile systems. As the Soviet Union crumbled after 1990, Moscow should have recognized that it was no longer just declining, but was now weak compared to the United States. Russia should have endorsed more limited objectives, best accomplished by a denial-focused security strategy and investments in expendable military systems.

The first transition—the perceived shift from relative rise to relative decline—occurred largely as one might have expected. Soviet leaders radically altered their approach to defense policy in the 1980s, driven primarily by changing relative power trends. However, the second shift—from perceived relative strength to relative weakness—did not have the expected effects until the late

[6] We now know that these estimates overstated Soviet spending, but they still reflected the consensus opinion of the U.S. intelligence community at the time. Ibid, 21.

1990s. Although Russian leaders acknowledged the new power balance in the early 1990s, they did not face a serious external threat that would have forced adoption of politically-difficult military reforms. Thus, this case provides only partial confirmation of the theory of perceived relative power, and an important lesson for the conditions under which this theory applies.

Soviet Defense Policy before 1991

> We're at a turning point—and have based our strategy on this realization… we see more clearly than anyone that drastic change is necessary.
>
> - Mikhail Gorbachev (1986)[7]

In the mid-1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders recognized several indicators of declining Soviet power. First, and most importantly, was the consistent decline in Soviet economic growth rates, particularly compared to those in the United States. This trend was exacerbated by a number of unforeseen shocks. In 1985, the Communist Party experienced a crisis of leadership as its third General Secretary died in less than three years (the previous three leaders had held power for a total of over 60 years). Soon afterward, the 1986 Chernobyl disaster demonstrated Soviet technological limitations and the 1988 Armenian earthquake raised questions about Soviet government effectiveness. Moreover, the Soviet military was struggling in Afghanistan while Ronald Reagan was strengthening the U.S. military's relative position.

All these factors altered perceptions of Soviet power. The resulting support for political reform was embodied by the young and "new thinking" Mikhail Gorbachev. Over the course of just six years, Gorbachev attempted to open the Soviet economy, democratize its political structures, and

[7] A. S. Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, trans. Robert English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 50–51.

shift from a confrontational stance to a cooperative relationship with the West.[8] These changes had profound effects on the Soviet Union's defense policies. By 1990, Soviet ends, ways, and means were undergoing a fundamental transformation. The sections that follow trace the evolution in Soviet objectives, strategy, and investments through the late 1980s.

Ends: Contracting Objectives

As the 1970s opened, Leonid Brezhnev was firmly in command of the Soviet Union, having pushed aside Nikita Khrushchev to become First Secretary of the Communist Party (later renamed General Secretary) in 1964. Although Brezhnev was initially seen as a caretaker, he quickly consolidated power. Brezhnev trumpeted Soviet economic, technological, and military strength, particularly its parity in nuclear weapons with the United States.[9] The 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty signaled that the Soviet Union had finally reached strategic parity with the United States. Soviet writers claimed, "The change in the balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union and its further successes in developing nuclear missile weapons led to a serious crisis" within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[10] Edward Luttwak comments, "By the beginning of the 1970s, it seemed that the Soviet Union could indeed look forward to the day when it would become the world's greatest military power, and its only truly global power."[11] Luttwak notes "accumulating evidence that America was in retreat" and suggests that

---

[8] The most common motivations for Gorbachev's increasingly expansive reform agenda are often described as due to learning, increasing power, and external pressure. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13.

[9] Harriet Fast Scott and William Fontaine Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine: Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 69.

[10] N. A. Lomov, ed., *Scientific-Technical Progress and the Revolution in Military Affairs* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1973), 264, quoted in Ibid., 107.

[11] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 30.

this gave the Soviet Union "powerful encouragement to yet more activism overseas."[12] Demonstrating this type of thinking, a Soviet leader commented, "What should the Soviet Union fear? Only its own impotence, relaxation, laxity."[13]

Throughout this period, the primary Soviet objective remained "the retention of power by the Communist party."[14] Secondary objectives focused on the international arena, including pursuit of military superiority, worldwide support for socialism, and Eastern European influence. To implement these objectives, the "Brezhnev doctrine" directed that Western efforts to convert communist countries to capitalism be seen as "a common problem and concern of all socialist countries."[15] Doing so required an active foreign policy. Brezhnev commented, "socialism is sufficiently powerful to secure both reliable defense and the development of the economy, although, of course, without large defense expenditures we would be able to drive our economy forward even faster."[16]

By the late 1970s, the Soviet Union was struggling to keep pace with the United States. Rather than trumpeting parity and seeking supremacy, Brezhnev became increasingly focused on dampening the arms race. Despite this desire, Brezhnev noted, "I am against an arms race, but when the Americans declare they would build up, then the Ministry of Defense reports to me that

---

[12] Ibid., 29.

[13] Molotov quoted in V. M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 227.

[14] Michael MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1987), 37–38.

[15] Leonid Brezhnev, "Speech to the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party," November 13, 1968.

[16] Brezhnev speech in Moscow, June 11, 1971, referenced in Matthew Evangelista, "Soviet Policy Toward Strategic Arms Control," in Bruce Parrott, ed., *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy* (Washington, DC: Wilson Center Press, 1990), 311.

in this case they cannot guarantee security. And what should I, as chairman of the Defense Council, do?"[17] What Brezhnev did was increase military spending. By 1976, total defense-related expenses amounted to 40% of the Soviet budget.[18] Seeking a way out of the arms race, Brezhnev renounced nuclear superiority in 1977. Yet, Soviet insiders worried that this would not stop the arms race. Gorbachev's future foreign policy advisor Anatoly Chernyaev worried, "Periodic statements that we threaten nobody will not do the job. If we do not undertake a real change in our military policy, the arms race aimed at our economic exhaustion will continue."[19]

Despite growing economic concerns, the Soviet Union remained active abroad. In 1978, Soviet forces began fortification of the Northern Territory and the next year they invaded Afghanistan. Facing a worsening situation in Afghanistan and a slowing economy, Soviet leaders began to shift course. In 1980, head of the KGB and instigator of the Afghanistan invasion, Yury Andropov, commented, "The quota of interventions abroad has been exhausted."[20] At the time, the Warsaw Pact economies had a gross domestic product of $1.4 trillion, as compared to $2.9 trillion for the NATO economies.[21] The next year, Andropov convinced Brezhnev not to invade Poland to stem the Solidarity movement. This marked the beginning of the end of the Brezhnev doctrine of supporting socialist movements against democratic pressure. Andropov worried that

---

[17] Unofficial minutes of Brezhnev's remarks, December 16, 1975, quoted in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 246.

[18] Ibid., 277.

[19] Chernyaev diary, January 1977, referenced in Ibid., 255.

[20] Ibid., 267.

[21] Moreover, one estimate of the defense burden suggests that the Soviet defense sector required 6-9% of its rolled steel, 23-25% of its rolled aluminum, and employed over 8% of its total labor force. Steven E. Miller and Dmitriĭ Trenin, eds., *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*, American Academy Studies in Global Security (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences ; MIT Press, 2004), 159.Jacques Sapir, *The Soviet Military System* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 27.

"the Polish events are influencing the situation in the western provinces of our country," but he still sought to avoid direct military intervention.[22] By 1982, Brezhnev told military leaders that they must make better use of resources.

Brezhnev's health had long been declining and his death came at the same time that American pressure on the Soviet Union was increasing. Reagan claimed, "The truth of the matter is that on balance the Soviet Union does have a definite margin of superiority, enough so that there is risk and there is what I have called, as you all know, several times a window of vulnerability."[23] To undermine this perceived Soviet advantage, the 1982 U.S. Defense Guidance endorsed "a peacetime policy of applying the maximum economic pressure on the Soviet Union, directly through trade policies and the denial of advanced technology, and indirectly by developing new weapons that would make existing Soviet inventories obsolete."[24] In 1983, Reagan gave his famous "star wars" speech, challenging the Soviets to keep pace with U.S. defense spending.

Yury Andropov, Brezhnev's successor, felt that Reagan sought "to ensure a dominating position in the world…"[25] Longtime Soviet Foreign Minister and former Soviet Ambassador to the United States Andrei Gromyko agreed that "Reagan and his team have taken up as their aim to destroy the socialist camp."[26] According to many experts on Soviet decisionmaking, U.S. pressure during this period convinced "even some of the conservative members of the Soviet

---

[22] Politburo session, April 2, 1981, referenced in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 266.

[23] Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 146.

[24] Richard Halloran, "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy for Fighting a Long Nuclear War," The New York Times, May 30, 1982, quoted in MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy*, 290.

[25] Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), 540. Also see Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 274.

[26] Quoted in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 276.

leadership that major internal changes were needed in the USSR."[27] In term of external policy, Andropov noted that "the future belongs to détente."[28] However, increasing U.S. pressure caused him to release a statement the next year expressing resolve to resist détente. At the time, one Soviet insider wrote that the early 1980s were "a very dangerous period when the ruling circle cannot fully appreciate what it is doing and why."[29]

Although Andropov appeared open to limited internal reforms, by 1984 he too was dead. His replacement, Konstantin Chernenko, would last just over one year in office. The old age of Soviet leaders was evident in the Politburo as well, with the deaths of Premier Alexei Kosygin in 1980, Brezhnev and Chief Ideologue Mikhail Suslov in 1982, Andropov and Minister of Defense Dmitry Ustinov in 1984, and Chernenko in 1985. Thus, by 1985, many Soviet leaders believed it was time for someone younger and more energetic. Mikhail Gorbachev, the youngest Politburo member, was the enthusiastic pick. Gorbachev's energy was contrasted with that of his predecessors in a common joke: "What support does Gorbachev have in the Kremlin? None – he walks unaided."[30]

---

[27] Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 265–266. A similar argument is made in Jack F. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995). Also see Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 273. Additionally, in the summer of 1984, a CIA document reportedly concluded, "the Soviets have concluded that the danger of war is greater than it was before the INF decision, that Soviet vulnerability is great and will grow… These perceptions, perhaps driven by a building defense budget, new initiatives in continental defense, improvements in force readiness, and a potentially massive space program, may be propelling the U.S.S.R. to take national readiness measures at a deliberate pace." Jay Mallin, Sr., "Split Voiced by CIA, Pentagon on Buildup," *Washington Times,* July 27, 1984, referenced in MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy*, 303.

[28] MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy*, 293–295.

[29] Chernyaev diary, December 30, 1979, referenced in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 264.

[30] Quoted in White, *Gorbachev and after*, 8.

When Gorbachev took office, Soviet economic decline was unmistakable. Gorbachev recognized the severity of the decline in part because he had been appointed Central Committee Secretary for Agriculture in November 1978. Gorbachev's willingness to challenge the existing system drove his rise to candidate member of the Politburo in 1979 and to full Politburo member in 1980. As early as July 1985, Gorbachev warned military leaders in Minsk that they would face strict resource limits.[31] Gorbachev also expressed an early desire to withdraw from the costly misadventure in Afghanistan.[32] In September 1985, Soviet leaders proposed cutting half of all U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons. The next month Gorbachev argued for pulling forces out of Afghanistan, although he noted that "complete surrender of positions is unacceptable."[33] These were the sort of reform-minded policies that Margaret Thatcher had in mind in 1984 when she said, "One can do business with Mr. Gorbachev."[34]

Gorbachev's task became more difficult in April 1986 when the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown added to the Soviet leader's list of problems. Gorbachev reflected that Chernobyl "was graphic evidence, not only of how obsolete our technology was, but also of the failure of the old system."[35] Gorbachev later noted that Chernobyl "was perhaps the real cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union."[36] Within months Gorbachev won agreement to extricate Soviet forces from

---

[31] See Bruce Parrott, "Soviet National Security Under Gorbachev," *Problems of Communism,* 37, No. 6, (1988), 7.

[32] Afghanistan was costly to the Soviet Union despite the fact that in 1983, only 5% of Soviet divisional troops were in Afghanistan. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 83.

[33] Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 42. Also see Chernyaev diary, in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 284.

[34] Quoted in Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 260.

[35] Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 189.

[36] Mikhail Gorbachev, "Turning Point at Chernobyl," April 14, 2006, http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/turning-point-at-chernobyl#Mg5AuobjBGCGhFeb.99.

Afghanistan. Later that year he explained that success in foreign policy "lies in the healthy conditions of Soviet society and the economy."[37] With this in mind, Gorbachev urged the Politburo to support arms control arrangements, such as the Reykjavik summit that resulted in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Gorbachev argued, "we have secured military strategic parity and have thereby substantially restricted imperialism's aggressive plans and capabilities to start a nuclear war."[38] Without such agreements he noted, "We will be pulled into an arms race that is beyond our capabilities, and we will lose it, because we are at the limit of our capabilities… If the new round begins, the pressure on our economy will be unbelievable."[39]

The Soviet economy was under pressure, but the five-year plan for 1986 to 1990 set an optimistic goal of 4.1% growth.[40] In reality, growth from 1986 to 1989 averaged only 3.7% per year, and then crashed in 1990.[41] Despite Gorbachev's frustration with military spending, the 1986 to 1990 plan reportedly called for a 40% rise in military spending over five years, higher than the 22% increase in planned economic output.[42] Soviet economist Oleg Bogomolov noted, "Guns and rockets, unfortunately, are in abundance—instead of butter. But, having achieved strategic parity, and having allowed ourselves to be pushed into an arms race, we are under a

---

[37] *Izvestiia*, September 9, 1986, referenced in Malvin M. Helgesen, "Civil-Military Relations Under Gorbachev," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 53.

[38] M. S. Gorbachev, "Report of the Central Committee to the 27th Congress CPSU," *Pravda,* February 26, 1986, 6, referenced in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 101.

[39] Gorbachev, October 1986, quoted in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 292.

[40] Noted in *Pravda*, May 25, 1985, referenced in White, *Gorbachev and after*, 110.

[41] Ibid., 121.

[42] Noel E. Firth and James H. Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending: A History of CIA Estimates, 1950-1990*, Texas A & M University Military History Series 58 (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 125.

particularly heavy defense burden."[43] Despite its relative economic weakness, Warsaw Pact military spending was nearly even with that of NATO.[44] The Soviet Union alone contributed nearly 93% of this spending. Thus, Soviet estimates indicated that the Warsaw Pact was spending 2.5 times NATO's percentage of gross national product on defense, just to stay even in real spending.

One reason for high Soviet military spending was the need to match U.S. innovation. Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, Chief of the General Staff, argued that U.S. investments in conventional weapons—particularly stealth aircraft and precision munitions—marked the beginning of a military-technical revolution. Therefore, despite Gorbachev's arms control efforts, military leaders sought additional funding to counter the U.S. build-up. Gorbachev complained about this dynamic in a 1986 Politburo meeting, noting, "Ogarkov is very upset. He demands more and more. At a time when 25 million people here live below the officially proclaimed minimal living standard."[45] Although some scholars believe that Ogarkov was one of the first military leaders to fully appreciate the value of the arms control and détente processes, Gorbachev's anger demonstrates that even enlightened Soviet officers were unwilling to support defense cuts.[46]

---

[43] Ed A. Hewett, "The Soviet Economy and Soviet National Security," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 129.

[44] Warsaw Pact spending was 95% of NATO's, according to one figure. Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 26.

[45] Chernyaev's notes on the December 1, 1986 meeting are quoted in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 295.

[46] Dale R Herspring, *The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Personalities and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Gorbachev knew what few others did, that the notoriously secretive Soviet budget was in trouble. He later recollected this was "the greatest 'secret'… our budget was full of holes."[47] Gorbachev explained that "money was drawn from the savings of the citizens and by raising the internal debt. Meanwhile, it was officially proclaimed that the revenues always exceeded the expenditure and that all was very well balanced."[48] As a result, military expenditure were 40% of the budget and 20% of gross national product, rather than 16% and 6% respectively, which were the typically quoted figures.[49] It was at this point that Gorbachev began putting real pressure on the military to scale back its spending and alter its objectives. David Holloway notes, "Gorbachev treated the military carefully in the early years of *perestroika*. It was only after the January 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee that the armed forces came in for detailed criticism."[50] As Soviet observers wrote, "the West is striving in the foreseeable future to put the Soviet Union before a quite definite dilemma – either reconcile itself to military superiority of the USA and its allies… or face economic upheavals under the onus of increasingly costly military competition."[51]

In November 1987, Gorbachev published a book entitled *Perestroika* explaining his reforms. Gorbachev said, "*perestroika* has been largely stimulated by our dissatisfaction with the way things have been going in our country in recent years."[52] By this time, it was clear to Gorbachev

---

[47] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 147.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 215.

[50] David Holloway, "State, Society, and the Military under Gorbachev," *International Security* 14, no. 3 (1989): 6.

[51] Alexei Arbatov, "Parity and Reasonable Sufficiency," *International Affairs* (October 1988), 76. See Christoph Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power* (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1995), 84.

[52] Gorbachev, *Perestroika*. xiii.

that his reforms required acceleration, and that he would have to embrace some elements of the free market. Gorbachev later noted, "Historians will probably see 1986-7 as the first serious crisis of *perestroika*, and they will be right. We were feeling 'underground tremors', even though society was expecting happy and swift changes and did not yet sense what cataclysms lay in store…"[53] Gorbachev aimed to spur "real economic independence" without ending central planning, but he still needed to cut defense spending to do so.[54]

Unfortunately for Gorbachev, the economic situation worsened in 1988, along with social and political conditions. From 1987 to 1988, reported crime increased 17.8%, violent murders 14%, and robbery 43%. During the full period of *perestroika*, reported crime doubled in Russia.[55] By February 1988, Gorbachev proposed a full withdrawal from Afghanistan within a year. In June, a major party meeting was held. Gorbachev commented that the XIXth All-Union Party Conference was "the real turning-point" for *perestroika*, and that "this decisive step was prompted by the obvious failure of economic reform to get going and the radicalization of public opinion."[56] Changes were in store for national objectives too, with Defense Minister Dimitry Yazov endorsing a softer version of parity by noting, "the Soviet Union does not strive for superiority, does not claim more security, but it will not agree to less security and will not permit

[53] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 199.
[54] White, *Gorbachev and after*, 114.
[55] *Pravda,* August 12, 1989, referenced in Ibid., 87.
[56] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 237.

any other power to gain military superiority over it."[57] Political changes were also in store, with Gorbachev proposing a presidential system.

The international repercussions of the Soviet Union's economic struggles were substantial. In December 1988, Gorbachev made a major speech to the United Nations in which he announced a reduction of 500,000 troops, 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces, and 800 combat aircraft from the European theater. These cuts would save badly needed money, but just days later the Armenian earthquake killed 25,000 and again worsened the Soviet position. The next month, Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan, after experiencing roughly 13,000 killed and at least 35,000 wounded.[58] Accordingly, Gorbachev announced a 14.2% budget cut and 19% decrease in defense procurement.[59] Several months later, Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov stated that Soviet defense spending would be 9.3% of Soviet gross national product.[60] Meanwhile, U.S. estimates placed Soviet defense expenditures at 15% to 17% of Soviet gross national product (as compared to 7% for the United States).[61]

As Soviet troubles accumulated, Gorbachev remained active abroad. Seeking an era of cooperation rather than competition, Gorbachev held summits with Reagan in May 1988, with Reagan and President-elect George H. W. Bush in December 1988, and with Bush alone in December 1989. In May 1989, Gorbachev held the first Sino-Soviet summit in twenty years.

---

[57] D. T. Yazov, "On the military balance of forces and nuclear-missile parity," *Pravda*, February 8, 1988, translated in A. A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91*, CSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998), 133.

[58] Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 97.

[59] *Pravda,* January 9, 1989, referenced in Malvin M. Helgesen, "Civil-Military Relations Under Gorbachev," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 62.

[60] Nikolai Ryzhkov, June 1989, in Ed A. Hewett, "The Soviet Economy and Soviet National Security," in Ibid., 129.

[61] Ed A. Hewett, "The Soviet Economy and Soviet National Security," in Ibid.

Despite Gorbachev's external outreach, U.S. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft commented, "Soviet priorities seemed only to narrow."[62]

It was becoming apparent that the Soviet Union could not hold the Warsaw Pact together. Gorbachev's advisor Chernyaev wrote in his diary, "most likely what awaits us is the disintegration of the state and something resembling chaos."[63] Estonia and Lithuania soon declared sovereignty. In October 1989, Gorbachev agreed to "unconditional respect for the principle of freedom of socio-political choice, the de-ideologization and humanization of international relations, the subordination of all foreign policy activities to international law, and the supremacy of universal human interests and values."[64] The Brezhnev doctrine was officially dead, replaced by what Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov called the "Sinatra doctrine." Gerasimov explained of Sinatra, "He has a song, 'I Did It My Way.' So every country decides on its own which road to take."[65] The next month, the Berlin Wall was torn down. The next year, Germany was unified.

As the Soviet Union collapsed, its leaders focused increasingly on internal reforms, including an ambitious economic plan. Polling in Moscow found that 56% of residents supported an immediate transition to a market economy, but 69% expected that this would leave ordinary

---

[62] George H. W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 135.

[63] Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 225.

[64] "The Soviet-Finish Declaration: New Thinking in Action," *Izvestiya,* October 27, 1989, 1, referenced in Susan L. Clark, ed., *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 29.

[65] "The Sinatra Doctrine," *National Review Online*, accessed December 29, 2015, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/210798/sinatra-doctrine-william-f-buckley-jr.

workers worse off.[66] Reformer Pavel Bunich warned against "shock without therapy."[67] As predicted, the last years of the Soviet Union witnessed rapid inflation, a dramatic collapse in growth rates, and rising emigration. Inflation rose 7.3% in 1987, 8.4% in 1988, 10.5% in 1989, 53.6% in 1990, and at least 650% in 1991.[68] Simultaneously, growth rates plummeted, with official national income estimates falling from 2.4% in 1989 to -15% in 1991.[69] Meanwhile, emigration rose from 8,000 in 1986 to 235,000 in 1989, with polling showing that 12% of residents would leave the Soviet Union if they could.[70] Soviet identity quickly disintegrated as fault lines emerged among different nationalities, religions, and linguistic groups. Of the Soviet Republics, only Ukraine and Belorussia shared traditional religions and languages with Russia.[71] By September 1990, Chernyaev recorded, "The centrifugal tendencies set in motion by Gorbachev… are spinning out of control. We have only weeks, maybe just days left—it could all collapse at any moment. A wholesale transformation of the entire system appears imminent."[72]

The question by 1990 was not whether the Soviet Union would end but when and how. In May, Boris Yeltsin, a resurgent advocate of reform, was elected chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Yeltsin quickly weakened Gorbachev from the left. Meanwhile, hardliners blamed *perestroika* for the Soviet Union's problems, presenting a challenge from the right. By the end of 1990, Gorbachev told Yeltsin that "his attempts to weaken and undermine the Union"

---

[66] *Moscow News,* 1990, 10, referenced in White, *Gorbachev and after*, 137.
[67] Bunich quoted in Ibid., 134.
[68] Robert W. Strayer, *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?: Understanding Historical Change* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 135.
[69] White, *Gorbachev and after*, 123.
[70] See *Pravda,* May 22, 1991, referenced in Ibid., 139.
[71] Ibid., 147.
[72] Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 293.

had caused "a stage beyond which collapse of the country would begin."[73] In just one year, the Soviet Union disappeared.

Ways: Defensive Strategy

As the Soviet Union's objectives contracted, its security strategy shifted from an offensive orientation to a defensive one. This process accelerated as Soviet decline became more evident. During most of Brezhnev's tenure as General Secretary, the Soviet military focused on three operational themes: exploiting advantages early in a war, conducting rapid ground offensives, and utilizing mobile forces.[74] Each of these three aspects emphasized the importance of offensive capabilities.[75] By 1986, however, Gorbachev's objectives would lead to a more defensive approach and the eventual guidance in 1986 that the military seek only "reasonable sufficiency." Although Gorbachev's sufficiency initiative may have been driven in part by a desire to spread propaganda about benign Soviet intentions, it still demonstrates a significant change from the openly offensive strategies of his predecessors.

In the 1960s, the influential Soviet doctrine manual *Methodological Problems of Military Theory and Practice* stated, "Soviet military doctrine has always considered the offensive as the basic method of the full defeat of the enemy and the achieving of victory… defense was viewed as a

---

[73] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 388.

[74] Raymond L. Garthoff, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 154. Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads* (Harvard University, 1965), 7–8.

[75] Luttwak cautions that throughout Russian history, "there was an unusually great disparity between the very great defensive strength of the country and its far smaller capacity to wage war offensively against serious opposition. Two compelling reasons immediately present themselves to explain the contrast: the fragility of autocratic rule, and military backwardness…" Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 14.

forced form of struggle used when the offensive was impossible or inconvenient."[76] Colonel-General Shtemenko, Chief of Staff of Soviet ground forces, went even further. He argued, "The striking power and range of modern weapons puts the question of strategic defense in a different light… combat potential of modern armed forces manifests itself to the greatest degree in the offense, not in the defense. Therefore, Soviet military doctrine regards the strategic defense as an unacceptable form of strategic operations in a modern war."[77]

This focus on offensive power projection continued through the early 1970s. Yet, observers note that Soviet strategists began to specify "the importance of defense in war" around this time.[78] One reason for this strategic change was that Soviet political leaders desired a less aggressive and more affordable strategy to avoid an arms race.[79] In public, Brezhnev suggested, "There is not now, never was and never will be any strategic doctrine other than a defensive one… the Warsaw Pact nations had never and never would aim for military superiority."[80] This statement obscured past Soviet strategy, but demonstrated a new willingness to discuss defensive operations.

---

[76] S. A. Tyushkevish, N. Ya. Sushko, and Ya. S. Dzyuba, *Marxism-Leninism on War and Army* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1969), 284-290, referenced in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 51.

[77] Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads*, 194.

[78] Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 86. See also figures on defense spending in Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, 107.

[79] As V. M. Kulish wrote, "In conformity with its foreign-political goals, a state will give primary consideration to those forms and methods which, in its opinion, will be the most effective in a given situation." V. M. Kulish, "Conclusion," *Military Power and International Relations* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya, 1972), 217, translated in United States Air Force, trans., *Selected Soviet Military Writings 1970 - 1975: A Soviet View* (University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 26.

[80] "Declaration of Warsaw-Treaty Member Countries," *Pravda,* May 16, 1980, 2.

As Soviet political leaders sought a more defensive strategy, military leaders pushed back. Ogarkov argued in 1980 that the United States sought "overwhelming military superiority" in an effort to change "the correlation of forces."[81] Ogarkov specifically rejected the division between offense and defense, writing, "The Soviet Union does not need to expand its borders. But that which belongs to the Soviet people and has been created by their labor, it will defend with complete decisiveness, actively and without compromise. And therefore the peaceloving nature of the foreign policy of the Soviet state and its constant readiness to deal a crushing repulse to any aggressor are blended together in Soviet military doctrine."[82] Ogarkov argued that more mobile capabilities were needed and that purely defensive approaches would fail. Yet, Ogarkov's ventures into the political arena triggered a backlash. When Ogarkov opposed the invasion of Afghanistan at a Politburo meeting in December 1979, Andropov interrupted and instructed, "Focus on military affairs! Leave policy-making to us, the party, and Leonid Ilyich [Brezhnev]!"[83]

Soviet military leaders worried that the political desire for a defensive approach would undermine parity with the United States. In the 1970s, military leaders had argued, "the active, offensive character of strategic operations is a most important principle of waging war."[84] Now military leaders insisted that offensive and defensive capabilities were one in the same. In 1985, Soviet military strategist and Deputy Chief of the General Staff General Makhmut Gareyev

---

[81] MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy*, 299.

[82] N. V. Ogarkov, *Always in Readiness to Protect the Fatherland* (Moscow Voyenizdat, 1982), 58. See Harriet Fast Scott and William Fontaine Scott, *The Armed Forces of the USSR* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press ; Arms and Armour Press, 1984), 64.

[83] Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 264.

[84] V. Karpov quoted in October 1979, referenced in Raymond L. Garthoff, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 165.

noted the need to "carry out decisive actions for defeating any aggressor in any combination of circumstances."[85] With the United States pursuing deep strike capabilities, Minister of Defense Ustinov and Marshal Vasily Petrov emphasized the importance of sudden maneuvers.[86] Eventually, however, the political leadership won out. Scholar Michael MccGwire notes that Soviet policymakers accepted fundamental changes from 1983 onward, when Soviet leaders blamed tensions with NATO on the Warsaw Pact's "offensive posture facing NATO and responded by developing a defensive doctrine that was publicized in mid-1986."[87]

In 1986, Gorbachev moved to restrain defense spending in three ways. First, he actively sought arms control and disarmament agreements to limit spending on strategic forces. Second, Gorbachev pushed the military to pursue only "reasonable sufficiency" of forces, rather than parity. Third, Gorbachev insisted that the military adopt a defensive form of warfare, which would require fewer resources and present less of a threat to NATO. These changes intensified as the Soviet Union experienced economic stagnation, the Chernobyl disaster, and the Armenian earthquake. At the time, Gorbachev asked a Soviet expert on the United States, Georgy Arbatov, how he could break Soviet international isolation. Arbatov advised that he could immediately withdraw from Afghanistan, unilaterally reduce Soviet forces in Europe, and return the Kuril Islands to Japan.[88] These proposals amounted to a wholesale re-examination of Soviet priorities. As another Gorbachev advisor wrote, "Any major political power—in tandem with major social

---

[85] M. A. Gareyev, *M. V. Frunze—Military Theoretician* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1985), 242-243, referenced in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 115.

[86] Petrov comments made in December 1984, quoted in Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 91.

[87] Michael MccGwire, "A Soviet View of World War," in Ibid., 187.

[88] Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1993), 321–322. Also see Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 282.

transformations or with changes in the military or political situation—has to undertake military reform from time to time… And now a radical reform is imperative once again."[89]

Gorbachev's greatest push for strategic change began when he noted, "Our country is for withdrawing weapons of mass destruction from circulation and limiting military potential to the limits of reasonable sufficiency."[90] Recognizing that superiority or even parity were no longer realistic, many in the military supported Gorbachev's move.[91] New Minister of Defense Marshal Dimitry Yazov said, "The Warsaw Pact member states, proceeding on the principle of sufficiency, propose to reduce, on a mutual basis of course, military potential to such a level that neither side, while assuring its defense, has the forces or means enabling it to mount offensive operations."[92] Yazov defined sufficiency as "having precisely the magnitude of armed forces necessary to defend oneself against an attack from outside."[93] Gorbachev's arms control and disarmament efforts were intended to lower tensions, avoid an arms race the Soviet Union could not afford, and win a propaganda victory against the West. He was therefore even more explicit that he desired forces, "sufficient for repulsing any possible aggression but inadequate for conducting offensive action."[94]

---

[89] Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 118.

[90] *The Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow: Novosti, 1986), 544, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 102.

[91] Herspring, *The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989*.

[92] *Pravda,* July 27, 1987, referenced in Raymond L. Garthoff, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 174.

[93] *Pravda,* July 27, 1987, referenced in Edward Warner III and David Ochmanek, "Conventional Arms Control: Soviet Approaches and Objectives," in Ibid., 339.

[94] Mikhail Gorbachev, *Realities and Guarantees for a Secure World* (Moscow: Novosti Press, 1987), referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 85.

As these comments demonstrate, sufficiency and defense were inextricably linked. In the words of one observer, Gorbachev ordered the military to "abandon the offensive strategy of reaching the English Channel in several days and to work out a new military doctrine based on 'strategic sufficiency' and defensive posture."[95] This push met resistance. William Odom notes that Gorbachev's "defensive doctrine" clashed with the "subconscious hegemony" and "conscious articulation" of longstanding Soviet combat philosophy.[96] Gorbachev was steadfast, however, arguing in 1986, "If we don't back down on some specific, maybe even important issues, if we won't budge from the positions we've held for a long time, we will lose in the end. We will be drawn into an arms race that we cannot manage. We will lose, because right now we are already at the end of our tether."[97] In a clear shift, Soviet doctrine was restated in 1987 to make acknowledge that defense was "the main form of military operations."[98] For the first time since the 1950s, scholars found that Soviet forces for "strategic defense" (particularly surface-to-air missiles and fighter-interceptor aircraft) experienced rapid growth from 1985 to 1987, rising 8.2%.[99] Gorbachev trumpeted this change, saying, "Soviet military doctrine is… unequivocally defensive. In the military sphere we intend to act in such a way as to give nobody grounds for fears, even imagined ones, about their security."[100]

---

[95] Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 292.

[96] William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 15.

[97] Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 84.

[98] Raymond L. Garthoff, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 174.

[99] Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, 107.

[100] *Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress* (Moscow: Novosti, 1986), 85, referenced in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 101.

These shifts in Soviet arms control policy, force structure, and strategy exposed deep divides.[101] Yet, Gorbachev and his supporters were winning the battle. The 1987 Soviet low-level tactics manual contained twice the number of pages on defensive operations as it had in 1984, including new sections on "Preparation of Defense" and "Disengagement from Battle and Withdrawal."[102] The Warsaw Pact now called its military doctrine defensive and explained, "in today's circumstances the use of the military way of resolving any disputed question is inadmissible."[103] Deputy Chief of the General Staff Gareyev commented, "The Military Doctrine of the Warsaw Treaty Organization is aimed at achieving an ever lower level of military confrontation of the sides, as genuine equal security today is guaranteed not by a high but the lowest possible level of the strategic equilibrium."[104] Supporters of defensive strategies went so far as to publish a book suggesting Lenin had declared that socialist states "wage only defensive wars."[105]

Meanwhile, the Soviet position continued to deteriorate. In 1987, Minister of Defense Yazov noted, "The limits of reasonable sufficiency are set not by us, but by the actions of the United States and NATO."[106] Yazov lamented, "The member states of NATO had a higher gross domestic product than those of the Warsaw Pact and were increasing their military expenditure.

---

[101] Susan Clark describes three views on parity: "The first group links strategic parity with arms control, the second school identifies itself with the reasonable sufficiency concept, and the third group consists of those advocating a minimum deterrence posture." Clark, *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*, 68.

[102] R. Hall, *Soviet Military Art in a Time of Change* (London: Brassey's, 1991), 59-61, referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 79.

[103] Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 20.

[104] M. A. Gareyev, June 22, 1987, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 103.

[105] A. S. Milovidov, *Military-Theoretical Heritage of V. I. Lenin and Problems of Contemporary War* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1987), 251, quoted in Ibid.

[106] *Pravda,* July 27, 1987, referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 85.

Considerable advances in military technology had been made in the West."[107] In 1988, Gorbachev told the Politburo, "Yes, we've achieved strategic military parity with the United States. And no one counted how much it cost us. Although we should. It's clear now that without substantially cutting military expenditures we cannot solve the problems of *perestroika*. Parity is parity, and we have to sustain it. But we also have to disarm…"[108] Some Soviet leaders even went so far as to argue that "we do not possess the required means" to sustain parity.[109] Gorbachev was more nuanced, suggesting, "Let's make a thorough analysis of what a strong modern army is, what ensuring security means, what the quality of security consists of. And when we know how much all this costs, we can cut out the rest."[110]

Many experts remained unconvinced about the virtues of defense. When the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987 and the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty in 1990, neither "received the wholehearted support of the General Staff."[111] Gorbachev decided on a major public pronouncement at the United Nations in late 1988, in which he announced unilateral cuts to Soviet forces. He stated, "All remaining Soviet divisions on the territory of our allies will be reorganized. They will be given a different structure from today's which will become unambiguously defensive, after the removal of a large number of their tanks."[112] Consequently, the number of tanks per division was decreased from 328 to 260 and

---

[107] Summary of comments by Soviet Defense Minister General Iazov, November 26, 1987, quoted in Ibid., 76.

[108] Chern͡iaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 192.

[109] Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 76.

[110] Chern͡iaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 192.

[111] Carolina Vendil Pallin, *Russian Military Reform: A Failed Exercise in Defence Decision Making*, Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series 14 (London: Routledge, 2009), 65.

[112] Mikhail Gorbachev, "Speech to the United Nations General Assembly," December 7, 1988.

tank regiments were removed from motorized-rifle divisions.[113] The next December, Gorbachev noted, "we have adopted a defensive doctrine and our armed forces are undergoing profound changes: the structure of our forces in Central Europe is changing – we have reduced the number of tanks per division, we are withdrawing airborne and amphibious equipment, repositioning our strike aircraft to the second echelon and so on."[114] Gorbachev also suggested that he and Reagan "agree on how to eliminate imbalances and asymmetries and reduce armed forces and weapons…"[115] He proposed reduction of 500,000 troops and that "conventional forces on both sides would be restructured to become purely defensive and unsuited for offensive warfare… to reduce offensive weapons on both sides – tactical nuclear weapons, strike aircraft and tanks."[116]

Gorbachev's efforts to strengthen relations with the West met substantial opposition. Soviet military experts worried that the Soviet Union was now weaker than NATO in tanks (a 2-to-3 ratio), artillery (3-to-4), and helicopters (4-to-5).[117] Some experts argued that "conventional stability" was a better description of Soviet policy than the sometimes used term "defensive defense."[118] Alexei Arbatov wrote, "the same elements can perform either offensive or defensive operations depending on the combat mission," noting specifically that counteroffensive capabilities, "from an operational-tactical point of view, would carry out offensive tasks, and

---

[113] Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 98.

[114] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 514.

[115] Ibid., 455.

[116] Ibid., 456.

[117] F. Ladygin, "In the Condition of Partnership," *Pravda,* December 7, 1990, 5, referenced in Clark, *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*, 107.

[118] See Andrei Kokoshin, Alexander Konovalov, Valentin Larionov, and Valeri Mazing, *Problems of Ensuring Stability with Radical Cuts in Armed Forces and Conventional Armaments in Europe* (Moscow: Novosti, 1989), referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 98.

from the strategic-political view, defensive tasks."[119] Gorbachev later commented that he was "still convinced that various forces – mostly connected with the military-industrial complex – attempted then to undermine improvements in Soviet-American relations."[120] Yet, U.S. leaders were hesitant as well, so Gorbachev critiqued their "immoral intention to bleed the Soviet Union white economically, to prevent us from carrying out our plans of construction by dragging us ever deeper into the quagmire of the arms race."[121] Indeed, many American experts remained skeptical of Soviet intentions, with some writing, "NATO planners should not forget that the change from an 'offensive' to a 'defensive' doctrine was purely nominal, a change in words and nothing more… doctrine remains much the same as in earlier periods."[122]

Despite this opposition, Gorbachev continued his push for a defensive strategy. In November 1988, Gorbachev asked a small group of advisors, "Why do we need such a big army?"[123] He explained, "Our announced military doctrine contradicts our actual military programs… Our military expenses are 2.5 times larger than those of the United States… We won't solve the problems of *perestroika* if we leave the arms as it is… without reductions in the army and the military-industrial complex we won't be able to deal with *perestroika*'s tasks… we can't afford not to be militarily strong. But for purposes of security, not intimidation."[124] Another favorite argument was that military technology had "developed to such an extent that even a non-nuclear

---

[119] Alexei Arbatov, "Military Doctrines," 200 in Yevgeny Primakov (ed.), *Disarmament and Security 1987 Yearbook* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1988), referenced in Ibid., 94.

[120] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 439.

[121] Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 205.

[122] They did note, however, that "It is even possible that significant changes have already taken place, but have not yet been announced." Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 125.

[123] Chernia͡ev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 193.

[124] Ibid., 193–195.

war would now be comparable with a nuclear war in its destructive effect… Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of policy only by different means, which was classical in his time, has grown hopelessly out of date… Attempts to achieve military superiority are preposterous."[125] Along these lines, Gorbachev noted, "The weak side may simply explode all its nuclear charges, even on its own territory, and that would mean suicide for it and a slow death for the enemy. This is why any striving for military superiority means chasing one's own tail. It can't be used in real politics."[126]

As the Soviet Union's collapse drew closer, the shift from an offensive to a defensive approach was not popular, but Soviet doctrine had become largely defensive. Gorbachev's view of relative power dynamics required that he change Soviet military strategy. Although his efforts initially encountered resistance, he had largely won the day by 1990. But whether Soviet forces could effectively fight a defensive war was another question. To do so, they would require a new set of military investments focused less on mobility and maneuver.

Means: Immobile Investments

In the 1980s, Soviet leaders recognized their state's relative decline and sought to scale back national objectives and adopt a more defensive security strategy. These changes in ends and ways required, and were indeed inspired in part by, a desired change in defense spending. As a result, Soviet investments moved away from highly mobile systems—such as tanks, aircraft carriers, and aircraft—toward more static defenses.

[125] Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 127.
[126] Ibid., 205.

In the early Cold War, Soviet investments were driven by the need to penetrate deep through enemy lines and rapidly exploit any offensive advantage. In the early 1960s, the Soviet authors of *Military Strategy* concluded, "The center of gravity… will be transferred from the zone of combat contact of the sides, as in past wars, into the depth of the enemy's disposition, including the most remote regions."[127] This type of warfare required highly mobile forces. Soviet writers noted, "the enemy cannot be considered fully beaten until the time when his territory is occupied and he is deprived of the possibility of continuing the conflict."[128]

The American response to growing Soviet capabilities, however, was to emphasize high-technology solutions that proved difficult for the Soviets to match. Soviet experts argued that the Warsaw Pact's strength had "compelled the political leaders of the capitalist countries to take a new approach to present-day realities."[129] As early as 1971, Ogarkov noted that nuclear weapons and new conventional equipment would place "unusually high demands on Soviet military-scientific thinking and the ideological-theoretical and professional training of army and navy cadres."[130] By 1978, Ogarkov publicly suggested that Soviet forces adopt new strategies, tactics, and technology to deal with "revolutionary" U.S. capabilities.[131] These capabilities, most notably stealth aircraft and cruise missiles, provided the United States with the ability to strike deep and accurately into Soviet territory. Soviet doctrine sought to rapidly bring multiple units to the point of attack, with echelons of follow-on forces attacking consecutively. U.S. responses, such as Air-

---

[127] V. D. Sokilovskiy, *Military Strategy* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1962), 238-239, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 38.

[128] P. I. Trifonenkov quoted in Ibid., 147.

[129] Bruce Parrott, "The Soviet System, Military Power, and Diplomacy: From Brezhnev to Gorbachev," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 11.

[130] Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Ibid., 82.

[131] Ibid., 83.

Land Battle, held these forces at risk. Although Ogarkov pushed for adoption of a military-technical revolution, Dima Adamsky writes that sophisticated concepts of operations were "beyond the political, economic, and cultural capacity of the Soviet state."[132]

Many Soviet military leaders were unwilling to accept Ogarkov's premise that a new type of warfare was emerging. Marshal Hamazasp Babadzhanian wrote, "there are no objective reasons to speak of a demise of the tank troops, of how the tank has allegedly ceased to be viable on the battlefield."[133] Yet, it was clear to some that U.S. precision weapons would change warfare. Marshal Andrei Grechko wrote, "The battle between armor and antitank missiles has now shifted to the scientific research laboratories, the proving grounds, and industry…"[134] From 1977 to 1983, Soviet forces began to shift away from their offensive strategies and adopt more defensive approaches. During this six years, Soviet anti-tank missiles doubled while tanks, troop transports, and fighters decreased in number.[135] While tank divisions decreased through the 1970s, less mobile motorized rifle divisions increased by roughly 40%.[136] Many of these systems could be used for both offense and defense, but the clear trend was toward less mobile platforms.

Another response to Ogarkov was the insistence that nuclear weapons, both strategic and tactical, were more important than conventional capabilities. After all, in 1980, the Soviet Union had an edge in many categories of tactical nuclear weapons, with over 600 intermediate range ballistic

---

[132] Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, 57.

[133] Babadzhanian quoted in Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 89.

[134] A. A. Grechko, *The Armed Forces of the Soviet State* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1975), 197, referenced in Scott and Scott, *The Armed Forces of the USSR*, 155.

[135] Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 260.

[136] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 196.

missiles and 3,000 nuclear capable aircraft in Europe.[137] A Soviet spokesman stated, "Nuclear missile weapons have… become the main indicator and element in the military potential of the great powers."[138] Yet, Ogarkov wrote in 1979, "Soviet military strategy assumes that world war may begin and continue for a certain time with the use of only conventional weapons."[139] Moreover, in 1981, Brezhnev argued, "it is dangerous madness to try to defeat each other in an arms race, to count on victory in nuclear war… Whatever strength the attacker may have and whatever means of starting a nuclear war he may choose, he will not achieve his aims. Retaliation is unavoidable. That is our essential view."[140] Therefore, Soviet leaders agreed to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons and they issued a public pledge to that effect in 1982.[141] In a statement intended for both strategic and propaganda value, Foreign Minister Gromyko announced that the Soviet Union "unilaterally assumes the obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons."[142]

How could the Soviet Union respond to an American conventional attack without nuclear weapons? A battle erupted between advocates of traditional ground forces and those supporting Ogarkov's notion of reconnaissance strike complexes. Ogarkov wrote articles in 1983 suggesting, "Inertia of thought and stubborn, mechanical unthinking attachment to old ways are dangerous in present-day conditions… Bold experiments and solutions are necessary—even if it

---

[137] Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 19.

[138] V. V. Serebryannikov, *Basis of Marxist-Leninist Teachings on War and Army* (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1982), 173, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 149.

[139] Ogarkov quote referenced in Phillip A. Petersen and Notra Trulock III, "Soviet Views and Policies Toward Theater War in Europe," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 241–242.

[140] *Pravda*, October 21, 1981, referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 69.

[141] Ibid., 63.

[142] L. I. Brezhnev, *By Lenin's Course* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1982), 538, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 124.

means discarding obsolete traditions… New means of armed combat require improvement of existing forms of combat action."[143] In May 1984, Ogarkov warned that Soviet conventional capabilities were lagging, requiring a substantial modernization program.[144] In February 1985, Marshal Sergey Akhromeyev wrote that Soviet enemies were pursuing "conventional weapons with better destruction, range, and accuracy… controlled and automated modes of high-accuracy weapons."[145] Yet, ground force commander Marshal Vasily Petrov responded, "tanks are still the main strike force of the Ground Forces even today—a reliable shield in defense, a telling sword in attack."[146] Marshal O. A. Losik agreed, "massive employment of tanks… [increases] the mobility and strike power of the Ground Forces."[147]

While the Soviet army struggled to come to terms with the changing nature of ground warfare, the Soviet navy encountered a similar predicament.[148] For decades, the fleet had largely focused on defending the coasts. Yet, in 1970, the Soviet navy conducted an exercise named "Ocean" and the head of the navy's political department claimed, "Now we call our navy an ocean-going fleet, and this is correct. There are no areas on the map of the world's oceans where Soviet warships

---

[143] Nikolai Ogarkov, *Izvestiia,* May 9, 1983 and May 9, 1984, quoted in Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 88.

[144] Malvin M. Helgesen, "Civil-Military Relations Under Gorbachev," in Ibid., 49.

[145] Akhromeyev quoted in February 1985, referenced in Phillip A. Petersen and Notra Trulock III, "Soviet Views and Policies Toward Theater War in Europe," in Ibid., 243.

[146] *Pravda,* September 11, 1983, quoted in Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Ibid., 89.

[147] Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Ibid.

[148] Readers should remember that the Soviet army received just one-fifth of Soviet military spending. In 1979, the army and navy together accounted for only 40%. Of the six services, roughly 23% of funding was spent on the air force, 21% on the ground forces, and 19% on the navy, with another 15% on command support, 12% on air defense, and 10% on strategic missile forces. Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 240.

do not sail."[149] By 1976, Admiral Sergey Gorshkov sought to build a true blue-water naval capability, arguing that the navy should pursue a "balanced fleet" capable of contesting control of the sea.[150] Gorshkov sought aircraft carriers to counter to the new U.S. maritime strategy, which threatened targets deep in Soviet territory.[151] However, "Brezhnev went out of his way to announce that the construction of aircraft carriers was inconsistent with Moscow's 'exclusively defensive' military doctrine."[152] When Gorshkov's successor Admiral Vladimir Chernavin took office in 1985, he argued that the Soviet navy could not pursue the same strategy as the United States.[153] According to observer Jacques Sapir, Chernavin favored the traditional view that the Soviet navy "should restrict its role to defending the USSR's sea approaches and SLBM [Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile] bastions and should act in accordance with the logic of denial."[154] In this sense, Sapir writes, "Basically, the aim is to acquire the means to neutralize the American fleet at the lowest possible cost."[155]

---

[149] Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91*, 130.

[150] MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy*, 465. Also see Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 103.

[151] As Tangredi writes, "later in Admiral Gorshkov's tenure the Soviet navy began to construct ships more suitable to the sea-control role… But for much of its existence, the Soviet navy was focused on sea denial." Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare*, 36–37.

[152] Jeremy R. Azrael, The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command, 1976-1986 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1987), 9, referenced in Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 104.

[153] Chernavin noted that U.S. strategy, "considers its surface ships and naval aviation to be the most important component of its naval strike forces designed to ensure supremacy in regions of 'vital interest' to the United States." *Izvestiia,* July 26, 1987, 2, referenced in Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Ibid., 105.

[154] Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 40.

[155] Ibid., 41–42.

With army and navy leaders rebuffed in their desire for more mobile forces, the shift toward more defensive and less mobile systems was underway. To implement "non-offensive defense" some experts proposed "reduction of armaments with more clearly pronounced offensive functions: tanks, long-range artillery, tactical strike aircraft, tactical missiles, combat helicopters, and pontoon bridge facilities."[156] They also advised, "disbanding some major armored and mechanized forces together with their logistics support units, air armies and missiles groups, and redeploying others to areas farther removed from the forward edge so that they could perform the function of an operational reserve for the defense, and not that of an attack to mount a surprise offensive."[157] These initiatives would eventually gain political support, despite military opposition. By May 1987, when *Pravda* published a statement outlining the Warsaw Pact's military doctrine, it was clear that political restrictions were becoming increasingly important and military motivations less so. The statement noted that the Warsaw Pact would "never, under any circumstances, begin military actions against any state or alliance of states whatsoever unless they themselves become the target of an armed attack. They will never use nuclear weapons first. They have no territorial claims to any state either in Europe or outside of Europe."[158] Restrictions on the military were now more evident than ever.

As *perestroika* continued, Gorbachev became bolder. In March 1986, he briefed the Politburo on discussions with the Americans, saying, "We really want to achieve disarmament… They responded to our proposal for a nuclear-free world by bringing up conventional arms. We are

---

[156] See Yevgeny Primakov (ed.), *Disarmament and Security 1987 Yearbook* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1988), referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 93.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 285–286.

prepared for that as well. We're for a balance in all types of armaments, and that means conventional ones too."[159] Gorbachev soon went after not just military spending, but the entire defense industry. In April 1986, he complained to the Politburo, "We're in this fix thanks to the priority awarded the defense industry. But if we don't succeed, there won't even be sufficient funds for defense in the future."[160] The massive changes being forced on the Soviet military drew criticism from rightwing nationalists such as Alexander Prokhanov, who said, "Today, the Soviet Union is weaker than ever before… The Army today is being destroyed like so many columns in an Afghan ravine… turning the Army into a motionless, demoralized mass…"[161] Indeed, from July 1988 to September 1990, half of Soviet tanks were removed from Europe.[162]

Despite decrementing its mobile combat forces, the Warsaw Pact maintained substantial advantages in the European theater.[163] In 1988, notwithstanding rough parity in numbers of active ground forces (around 2.3 million each), reserve ground forces (4.3 million each), and attack aircraft (both around 2,400) in the European theater, the Warsaw Pact held at least a 3-to-1 advantages over NATO in artillery pieces (37,100 to 11,100), anti-aircraft missiles (12,859 to 2,250), and fighters/interceptors (4,942 to 1,079), as well as roughly 2-to-1 advantages in main battle tanks (52,200 to 22,200), armed helicopters (1,630 to 780), and bombers (700 to 323). The

[159] Cherni͡aev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 55.

[160] Ibid., 64.

[161] Alexander Prokhanov, January 5, 1990, translated in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, 42, no. 4 (1990), 1-2, referenced in Clark, *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*, 31–32.

[162] Ibid., 47.

[163] The Warsaw Pact noted four objectives: "increase strategic attack forces three-fold, increase ground forces two-fold, increase air forces two-fold, increase naval forces by a factor of three." Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 76.

margin in anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank guided weapons was closer to 3-to-2.[164] U.S. forces would have to be moved into the theater in a conflict, slowing the U.S. response. Thus, by decreasing its mobility, Soviet forces were giving up the opportunity to land a deadly blow before U.S. reinforcements arrived.

Despite a growing chorus of military leaders favoring reliance on nuclear weapons, they were marginalized in the late 1980s. In 1987, a military spokesperson stated, "nuclear weapons are increasingly becoming an instrument which it would be irrational to use."[165] Many in the military had embraced this view when Ogarkov endorsed the leaderships' insistence that "the principle that the Soviet Union will not be the first to use nuclear weapons is at the foundation of Soviet military doctrine."[166] Minister of Defense Sergey Sokolov wrote, "The Soviet Union formerly advocated and advocates now the decisive lowering of the level of military confrontation, the cutting of military potentials to the level necessary and sufficient for defense, and the complete elimination of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction from the strategic balance."[167] One of Sokolov's predecessors as Minister of Defense, Andre Grechko, said soldiers needed to be ready "in conditions with the use and without the use of nuclear weapons… to

---

[164] Figures compiled for "The Military Balance," International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1987, 231-232, referenced in Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 12. Conversely, in 1988, Chief of the General Staff Akhromeyev noted that NATO had superiority in aircraft, aviation, helicopters, and anti-tank complexes, while the Warsaw Pact held numerical superiority in tactical rocket launchers (a 7.6 fold advantage), tanks, rocket launchers, artillery, and ACVs. See Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 77.

[165] D. A. Volkogonov, "Imperatives of the Nuclear Age," *Krasnaya Zvezda,* May 22, 1987, 3, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 113.

[166] N. V. Ogarkov, *History Teaches Vigilance* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1985), 88, quoted in Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91*, 181.

[167] S. L. Sokolov, "On Guard Over the Peace and Security of the Motherland," *Pravda,* February 23, 1987, 2, quoted in Scott and Scott, *Soviet Military Doctrine*, 102.

operate successfully on the battlefield in circumstances that take shape in different ways."[168] However, Gorbachev's "new thinking" had won the day and nuclear weapons were cut, as were other weapons of mass destruction. This included chemical weapons, which were deemphasized in 1990 when the Soviets agreed to cut 80% of their stockpile and to eventually eliminate them.

The overall shift away from mobile forces was dramatic, particularly given that the United States was in many ways focusing on increasing its own mobility. By January 1990, Soviet forces had been reduced by 265,000 personnel, 9,320 tanks, over 50,000 artillery pieces, 835 combat aircraft, and 40 warships and submarines.[169] In November 1990, the Conventional Forces in Europe agreement was signed, which limited tanks and artillery to 20,000 each, armored combat vehicles to 30,000, helicopters to 2,000, and aircraft to 6,800.[170] These cuts focused first on the most mobile forces, effectively setting in stone Gorbachev's more defensive approach. By 1990, even if the Soviet Union had wanted to launch an offensive with mobile forces, it had forgone the strategy and systems that would have been required. Thus, as expected, declining Soviet power led to contracting objectives, a defensive strategy, and less mobile forces.

---

[168] *Pravda,* January 15, 1988, referenced in Ibid., 61.

[169] Numbers quoted in interview with Col. General Nikolai Chervov, *Moscow World Service,* January 11, 1990.

[170] Clark, *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*, 54.

Russian Defense Policy after 1991

> I am not presenting people with a global strategic goal. I am not setting my sights on some shining peak that must be scaled… No. The chief goal of this restless president is Russia's tranquility.
>
> - Boris Yeltsin (1994)[171]

As the decline of the Soviet Union accelerated in the late 1980s, it became clear that the Soviet Union's very existence might be called into question. Many Soviet leaders had long recognized the signs of relative economic decline, but the rapid political disintegration of the Soviet Union forced a total reassessment of the state's international position. The new Russian state controlled less territory, included fewer people, suffered from political instability, and had a far smaller military than the Soviet Union that preceded it. As a result, Russian leaders were forced to reassess whether their state still qualified as a strong power on par with the United States.

Russian leaders were forced to come to terms with their new position during a series of events in the early 1990s. First was the loss of elections in the former Soviet republics in 1990, accompanied by the republics' declarations of sovereignty and independence from Russia, stripping the Soviet Union of its constituent parts. Second was the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in March 1991, ridding Russia of its European allies. Third was the downfall of the Soviet state itself, which was hastened by the August 1991 coup attempt and formally came to an end in December 1991.[172] Fourth, the economy went into freefall, losing nearly one-third of per capita

---

[171] Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, *The Struggle for Russia*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: Belka Publications Corp., 1994), 293.

[172] On the coup's roots and implications for civil-military relations see Stephen M. Meyer, "How the Threat (and the Coup) Collapsed: The Politicization of the Soviet Military," *International Security* 16, no. 3 (1991): 5. See also John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

gross domestic product in just the first few years of the Yeltsin era. Finally, with Russia's allies gone, the military shrunk from 5 million to 1 million personnel in less than a decade, and conflicts broke out in several former Soviet republics. By the end of the 1990s, Russia's gross domestic product was only 11th in the world, less than one-tenth that of the United States.[173]

Changing perceptions of Russian power led Yeltsin to adopt more limited national objectives than those harbored by his Soviet predecessors. The theory of perceived relative power predicts that this new set of objectives should have been accompanied by a shift toward a denial-focused security strategy and investments in more expendable weapons systems. Through the early 1990s, however, no such change occurred. Instead, Russian military leaders were consumed by the challenge of managing the reorganization of the military. These leaders saw little need for reform of Russian military strategy or investments. After all, there was no acute threat to Russia, now that it was a partner of the West. By the late 1990s, however, Russian military strategists published strategy documents that ushered in a more denial-focused strategy and greater investment in expendable systems. The question of why Russian national objectives diverged from its security strategy and military investments in the early 1990s is therefore a central issue in the sections that follow, and a key puzzle for the theory of perceived relative power.

Ends: Adopting Limited Objectives

As the Soviet Union disintegrated, its leaders limited their objectives. Unlike the slow decline of the 1980s, the rapid collapse of the 1990s was unmistakable. In just one year, the Soviet Union crumbled, with Azerbaijan declaring sovereignty in September 1989; Estonia, Georgia, and Lithuania in March 1990; Latvia in May; Russia, Moldova, and Uzbekistan in June; Belorussia

[173] "GDP, PPP (current international $)," World Bank, 2015.

and Ukraine in July; Armenia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan in August; Kazakhstan in October; and Kyrgyzstan in December.[174] Others note that the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 was the first step in "the voluntary dismantlement of Soviet military power. Once the use of military force was no longer considered legitimate to hold the Soviet empire together, the Soviet empire had to fall apart…"[175] Yeltsin himself commented, "The Soviet Union could not exist without the image of the empire. The image of the empire could not exist without the image of force. The USSR ended the moment the first hammer pounded the Berlin Wall."[176]

The Soviet collapse was complete by 1992. On March 31, 1991, the Warsaw Pact's military components were formally disbanded. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the Russian Federation. From August 19 to 21, 1991, plotters attempted a coup against Gorbachev, which failed but hastened the dissolution of the regime. On December 8, 1991, Yeltsin signed the creation agreement for the Commonwealth of Independent States, effectively dissolving the Soviet Union. Several weeks later, on December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned and within days the Soviet Union ceased to exist. As he stepped down, Gorbachev announced, "when I became head of state, it was already obvious that there was something wrong in this country. We had plenty of everything: land, oil, gas and other natural resources… yet we lived much worse than people in other industrialized countries and the gap was constantly widening."[177] Yeltsin now took on the task of shifting the political and economic machinery in a new direction.

---

[174] Clark, *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*, 301–305.
[175] Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 261.
[176] Yeltsin, *The Struggle for Russia*, 35. See also Ibid.
[177] Gorbachev, *Memoirs*. xxvii.

In the next few years, Yeltsin reformulated Russian objectives. In early 1992, he stated, "Russia sees the U.S., the West, and the countries of the East not merely as partners but as allies."[178] Despite this spirit of cooperation, Yeltsin was not ready to pass on the mantle of a great power. In April, he commented, "Russia is rightfully a great power by virtue of its history, of its place in the world, and of its material and spiritual potential."[179] With this in mind, Yeltsin's government began playing an active role in the former Soviet republics. In July, Russia negotiated agreement with Georgia and South Ossetia, and Moldova and Transnistria, on cessation of violence. In early 1993, Yeltsin explained that Russia had a "vital interest in the cessation of all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR" and requested United Nations authority "to grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability in this region."[180]

In January 1993, Yeltsin announced, "the imperial period in Russia's history has ended," but other political leaders were slow to grasp this fact.[181] Vice President Alexander Rutskoy suggested that Russia should "retain a fitting position in world civilization and the status of a great power worthy of respect…"[182] Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev argued against "losing geopolitical positions that took centuries to conquer."[183] Nevertheless, one of the first Russian military documents, *Basic Provisions for Russian Military Doctrine*, demonstrated that Russian objectives had changed. The report indicated that the military should be capable of

---

[178] Yeltsin quoted in Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 219.

[179] John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 12, in Stephen J. Cimbala, ed., *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*, Cass Series on Soviet (Russian) Military Theory and Practice (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

[180] Suzanne Crow, "Russia Asserts Its Strategic Agenda," RFE/RL Research Report, vol. 2, no. 50, December 17, 1993, 1-8. See also Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 151.

[181] Ibid., 107.

[182] Pallin, *Russian Military Reform*, 10–11.

[183] Interview with *Izvestia*, October 8, 1993, referenced in Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 108.

protecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and other vitally important interests of the Russian Federation; conduct peace-keeping operations; and terminate armed conflicts and any unlawful armed violence on the state border or the border of another state in accordance with treaty commitments.[184] This was a fairly limited international role largely focused on dampening conflict with Russia's neighbors. In 1994, Yeltsin commented, "The era of enmity, distrust, and suspiciousness is ending in the history of Russia and Germany, and in the history of Europe."[185]

Over the next few years, Russian leaders maintained this focus on the former Soviet republics, and paid increased attention to NATO involvement in Eastern Europe. In December 1993, Yevgeny Primakov, director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, stated that "If the countries of Central and Eastern Europe join [NATO], the objective result will be the emergence of a barrier between Russia and the rest of the continent."[186] However, in June 1994, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev signed the Partnership for Peace framework and an associated protocol. These documents stated, "Russia and NATO have agreed to prepare a wide-ranging individual program of partnership, in keeping with Russia's size, importance, and potential."[187] This theme of Russia as a "great power" would recur frequently. Politician Grigory Yavlinsky stated that the Russian army would always be "the army of a great power."[188] Kozyrev also commented,

---

[184] "Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," Decree 1833, November 2, 1993.

[185] *Izvestia,* August 31, 1994, translated in Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 257.

[186] "Russia Issues a Warning on NATO Expansion," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, 45, no. 47 (1993), 11-13, referenced in Ibid., 240.

[187] See Michael Mihalka, "European-Russian Security and NATO's Partnership for Peace," RFE/RL Research Report 3, no. 33 (1994), 44. Also Ibid., 241.

[188] Grigorii Yavlinskii in "Comments on US National Strategy and Hearing in the Defense Committee of the Duma," *Moskovskii Komsomolets,* October 26, 1994, in John Erickson,

"Russia is doomed to be a Great Power."[189] By late 1995, Russian leaders were pushing back against Western encroachment. Yeltsin warned that expansion of NATO would trigger Russia to "immediately launch constructive relations with all former Soviet republics. There will be a bloc. There will be two blocs. Does that promote common European security?"[190]

As tensions with NATO grew, most Russian leaders acknowledged that they were now in a relatively weak position. Some, however, continued to insist that Russia's status was largely unchanged. In January 1996, Yevgeny Primakov stated, "Russia has been and remains a great power, and its policy toward the outside world should correspond to that status."[191] He also outlined four priorities: strengthening territorial integrity, strengthening the process of reintegration, settling regional and interethnic conflicts, and preventing "hotbeds" of tension or proliferation.[192] Going further, politician Gennady Zyuganov argued that "only the attainment of [control of the heartland] will guarantee the basic national security of our state."[193] Other

---

"'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 11, in Cimbala, *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*.

[189] Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 34.

[190] Yeltsin quoted in *ITAR-TASS*, September 8, 1995. Referenced in Stephen J. Blank, "The New Turn in Russian Defense Policy: Russia's Defense Doctrine and National Security Concept," 56, in Cimbala, *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*.

[191] John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 12, in Ibid. See also Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 116.

[192] Quoted in Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 116.

[193] Gennady Zyuganov, *The Geography of Victory: Foundation of Russian Politics* (Moscow: G. Zyuganov, 1997), referenced in John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 19, in Cimbala, *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*.

Russians denied this objective, commenting that Russia "knows better than anyone else the fearful price of superpower status and does not aspire to it."[194]

In 1997, the Russian government released several critical documents setting a course for the state.[195] The most important of these was the 1997 National Security Concept, which demonstrated Russia's acceptance of its new reality. The document described a Russia beset by internal problems and no longer qualified to be one of the world's strongest states.[196] The concept noted "the change in Russia's status within the world" and vowed not to "pursue hegemonistic or expansionist goals."[197] Despite this decrease in Russian power, the concept acknowledged "the threat of large-scale aggression against Russia is virtually absent for the foreseeable future… the main threats to Russia's national security come from internal political, economic, and social spheres and are predominantly non-military."[198] The document therefore focused primarily on non-military challenges, stating "economic, scientific, and demographic potential is declining" and expressed concern that Russia was "lagging increasingly far behind developed countries in terms of science and technology."[199] Perhaps most revealing was the

---

[194] M. A. Khaldin, "Geopoliticheskie gorizonty Rossii," 622, referenced in John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 12, in Ibid.

[195] For background, see Celeste A. Wallander, "Russian National Security Policy in 2000," PONARS Policy Memo 102, January 2000. See also Ivan Rybkin, *Rossiiskie Vesti,* May 13, 1997, referenced in John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 12, in Ibid.

[196] It stated, "Russia's national interests are long-term in nature… A necessary condition of the realization of Russia's national interests is the ability to resolve domestic political, economic, and social tasks independently, irrespective of the intentions and positions of foreign states and communities of states, and to maintain a standard of living for the population such as to ensure national accord and socio-political stability in the country." "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid.

statement that Russia was "an influential European-Asian power."[200] A presidential decree released in 1997 stated, "Traditionally, Russia is considered to be one of the great maritime powers… The crisis in the national economy has seriously deteriorated the opportunities for Russia."[201] This line was echoed by the National Security Concept, which said, "Russia is one of the biggest multinational states and has an age-old history and culture and its own national interests and traditions."[202] The presidential decree committed to "stop the uncontrolled decline, and stabilize main parameters characterizing activity of Russia in the World Ocean."[203]

Soon, tensions grew with the West over NATO enlargement, intervention in Kosovo, and Russian operations in Chechnya. Alexei Arbatov wrote, "The bombing of Yugoslavia revived the worst instincts of the Cold War."[204] In August 1999, Yeltsin selected Vladimir Putin to succeed him. Putin took office as acting President on December 31, 1999 and then released Presidential Decree 24, revised the 1997 National Security Concept, and issued a new military doctrine. The new concept criticized "the attempt to create a structure of international relations based on the domination of developed Western countries, led by the USA… providing for unilateral solution

---

[200] Furthermore, the concept stated, "At the same time Russia has all the preconditions for maintaining and consolidating its position as a power capable of ensuring its people's prosperity and playing an important role in world processes." "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

[201] "The World Ocean," Presidential Decree 11, Russian Federation, January 11, 1997.

[202] Furthermore, the concept stated, "At the same time Russia has all the preconditions for maintaining and consolidating its position as a power capable of ensuring its people's prosperity and playing an important role in world processes." "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

[203] "The World Ocean," Presidential Decree 11, Russian Federation, January 11, 1997.

[204] Alexei Arbatov, "The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya," in *The Marshall Center Papers*, No. 2 (Garmisch-Partenkirchen, GE: The George C. Marshall Center, 2000), 9, referenced in Jacob W. Kipp, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons," *Military Review*, June 2001, http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/russias_nukes/russias_nukes.htm.

of the key problems of global politics, above all with the use of military force, in violation of the fundamental norms of international law."[205] Rather than seeking "partnership" with the West, Putin sought only "cooperation" and committed to "firmly and resolutely" defend Russian interests.[206] The document went so far as to note that Russian interests "predetermine, in certain conditions, Russia's military presence in some strategically important regions of the world."[207]

As this discussion demonstrates, it is possible to identify at least three changes in the Russian mindset during the 1990s.[208] In the first period, during and shortly after the Soviet Union's collapse from 1990 to 1993, national leaders adopted limited objectives and sought partnership with Russia's former adversaries. To accomplish these aims, the 1993 military doctrine stressed cooperation with the West and a more limited role for the Russian armed forces. In the next stage, from roughly 1994 to 1997, leaders maintained their focus on objectives in the former Soviet republics, but became more outspoken about the need to regain Russia's former position. The 1997 National Security Concept reflected the prevailing consensus in Moscow, to the extent that one existed. Finally, from 1998 onward, tensions with the West led toward more adversarial relationships, particularly as NATO was perceived to encroach on Russian areas of influence. Thus, Russian national objectives changed rapidly after the Soviet Union's collapse, generally in line with predictions of the theory of perceived relative power.

---

[205] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, January 10, 2000.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] See, for example, the categories develop by Miller and Trenin, *The Russian Military*, 46.

Ways: Rejecting a Denial Strategy

Although Russian objectives changed rapidly in the early 1990s, Russian strategy remained static through at least the middle of the decade. The theory of perceived relative power suggests that leaders in Moscow should have shifted to a more denial-focused security strategy shortly after the Soviet Union's collapse. In fact, Russian military strategy was stagnant for at least five years. Although Russia did concentrate more on denial capabilities, particularly tactical nuclear weapons, this change did not take place until the late 1990s. Why did this delay occur?

For much of the 1990s, Russian military leaders were consumed with managing logistical challenges. They had to decide which Soviet forces would become Russian and which would become part of the newly independent republics. The status of nuclear weapons was also a central question, since Ukraine maintained 1,564 nuclear warheads, Kazakhstan 1,420, and Belarus 54 in 1991.[209] Another issue was the return to Russia of large numbers of forces that had been forward deployed, particularly in East Germany. When the Soviet Union fell, its armed forces numbered 2.7 million, of which only 2.1 million were resident within Russian borders.[210] Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl agreed that Soviet troops would leave Germany within four years, but housing and facilities were needed for them, and funding was in short supply. A further challenge was recruiting troops. Polls showed that only 12% of Soviets were interested in serving in the military in 1990, as compared to 78% in 1975.[211] The Soviet armed forces suffered 6,000 desertions in 1989 and 30,000 draft evasion cases in 1990. As the Soviet Union fell, young men sought to avoid mandatory service. In Armenia, for example, only 7.2% of those drafted

[209] Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 143.

[210] Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 72.

[211] S. Alexandrov, "To Serve the People and Not Parties," *Nedelya,* no. 22 (1990), translated and excerpted in Clark, *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*, 115.

showed up, with even lower numbers in other areas. The Soviet armed forces were therefore 400,000 personnel short by mid-1989, and this shortage carried over into the Russian military.[212]

A related challenge, and perhaps the most severe, was budgetary. During the Cold War, most U.S. estimates of Soviet military spending tended to place defense expenditures at 10% to 15% of Soviet gross national product.[213] This is one reason that Gorbachev called the Soviet Union the "most militarized" country in the world in February 1991.[214] The new government in Moscow was determined to reverse this phenomenon. Estimated military expenditures were therefore predicted to fall from $443 billion in 1988, to $324 billion in 1991, to just $87 billion in 1992, and $46 billion by 1995.[215] This amount was just one-tenth of previous Soviet spending, reflecting a massive decrease.[216] In reality, Russian declared defense spending declined by 98% in just seven years, from $142 billion in 1992 to $4 billion in 1999.[217]

Facing serious logistical difficulties and falling resources, the new Russian government set about to reorganize the military and shrink the defense enterprise. In September 1992, the Russian Parliament passed a Law on Defense requiring that no more than 1% of the population serve in the armed forces by 1995, which would have amounted to 1.5 million troops. Russian leaders made clear that the concept of parity, which had long been the Soviet aim, would not apply to the Russian Federation. Yeltsin noted, "We are departing from the ominous parity where each

---

[212] *Pravda,* July 4, 1990, referenced in Bluth, *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*, 42.

[213] Sapir, *The Soviet Military System*, 259.

[214] See *Pravda,* October 26, 1990 and February 28, 1991, referenced in White, *Gorbachev and after*, 135.

[215] Figures cited in Miller and Trenin, *The Russian Military*, 11.

[216] This reflected a decrease in defense spending from 21% of the budget in 1994 to under 15% in 2002. Ibid., 100.

[217] Ibid.

country was exerting every effort to stay in line, which has led to Russia having half of its population living below the poverty line."[218]

It was in this context that the *Basic Provisions for Military Doctrine* was released in 1993. The document stated that the "immediate threat of direct aggression… has considerably declined."[219] Yet, for several years no new military doctrine accompanied this new strategic situation. There was, however, an early sign that Russia might rely more on nuclear weapons to deter its competitors' conventional forces. Shifting away from its broad "No First Use" pledge, the basic provisions stated that Russia reserved the right to use nuclear weapons against an attack by any state connected by an alliance or joint action with a state that does possess nuclear weapons.[220] Nevertheless, the decree retained Yeltsin's pledge to seek "the reduction of nuclear forces to a minimal level which would guarantee the prevention of large-scale war and the maintenance of strategic stability and – in the future – the complete elimination of nuclear weapons."[221]

Having rewritten Russian doctrine, it was time to cut excess force structure. From 1991 to 1996, Russian forces declined rapidly, with the ground forces falling from 1.4 million to 460,000; air defense from 475,000 to 175,000; navy from 450,000 to 190,000; air force from 420,000 to 145,000; and the strategic rocket forces from 280,000 to 149,000. Meanwhile, paramilitary

---

[218] Thomas L. Friedman, "Reducing the Russian Arms Threat," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1992.

[219] On the other hand, John Erickson observes, "In the military doctrine itself there was little concession to the reality of Russia's shrinking geostrategic space." John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 10, in Cimbala, *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*. "Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," Decree 1833, November 2, 1993.

[220] "Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," Decree 1833, November 2, 1993.

[221] Ibid.

forces fell from 520,000 to 352,000.[222] Notably, the smallest cuts came to the forces responsible for nuclear weapons. Russian experts Alexei Arbatov and Gennady Batanov warned that the cuts would result in "a combat-unable, poorly equipped and poorly trained, impoverished and alienated Army which will not be able to defend the country from an external threat and will itself become an internal threat."[223] Indeed, in January 1992, 71% of Russian officers favored restoration of the Soviet state and roughly 65% preferred a military regime.[224] Despite military pressure, however, Yeltsin resisted calls from Colonel-General Viktor Barynkin and others who argued for military funding "that corresponds to the status of a great power."[225] In May 1997, Russian military spending was limited to 3.5% of gross national product, down from 7.2% in 1991.

By 1997, it was obvious that Russia needed to align its military strategy with new realities. Russia's more limited national objectives and resources made preventing an attack on the homeland the clear top priority. Two options were available: maintaining a large investment in conventional (especially ground) forces or shifting toward a greater reliance on nuclear deterrence. Yeltsin's aversion to parity and his cuts to the defense budget seemed to make a conventional deterrent impossible. With this in mind, the 1997 National Security Concept stated, "Russia does not seek to maintain parity in arms and armed forces with the leading states of the world, and is oriented toward the implementation of the principle of realistic deterrence."[226] "Realistic deterrence" could be accomplished with nuclear weapons. The concept made clear,

---

[222] See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (London: Brassey's, 1991-1997) and Pallin, *Russian Military Reform*, 81.

[223] Quoted in Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 174.

[224] Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 141.

[225] Pallin, *Russian Military Reform*, 11.

[226] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

"The most important task for the Russian Federation Armed Forces is to ensure nuclear deterrence in the interests of preventing both nuclear and conventional large-scale or regional wars… Russia reserves the right to use all the forces and systems at its disposal, including nuclear weapons…"[227] Yet, the nuclear enterprise was also suffering from the cuts. One expert wrote, "The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 affected the [nuclear forces] more profoundly than any other branch of the Soviet armed forces."[228] Seeking to address this, the government created a unified missile force and cut two of the six branches of the armed forces.

By the late 1990s, it was clear that tactical (or non-strategic) nuclear weapons were a central focus of the Russian military. Scholar Stephen Cimbala commented, "Russia's conventional military weakness makes it more reliant on nuclear weapons as weapons of first choice or first use, instead of last resort."[229] As Minister of Defense Marshal Igor Sergeyev commented, "In the coming years, Russia will not be able to support military-strategic and military-technical parity with the leading military powers of the West on a 'symmetrical' basis, especially in the area of non-nuclear armaments… it is necessary to search for a reasonable combination of evolutionary and 'revolutionary' paths and more effective asymmetric directions."[230] He also noted the need to avoid "direct military-technical competition with the most developed countries."[231] To this end, in April 1999, Putin apparently persuaded Yeltsin to sign a decree authorizing tactical

---

[227] Ibid.

[228] Steven J. Zaloga, "Soviet/Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces, 1945-2000," in Higham and Kagan, *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, 216.

[229] Stephen Cimbala, "Nuclear Crisis-Management and Information Warfare," *Parameters,* 29, 2 (1999), 118, in Peter Rainow, "If War Will Come Tomorrow," 33.

[230] "The Main Factors which Determine Russia's Military-Technical Policy on the Eve of the 21st Century," *Krasnaya zvezda,* December 9, 1999, referenced in Timothy L. Thomas, "Russia's Asymmetrical Approach to Information War," 104, in Cimbala, *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*.

[231] Ibid.

nuclear weapon development, which likely involved low-yield weapons designed to deter conventional attacks.[232] Colonel-General Vladimir Yakovlev explained, "The general purpose forces have been reduced, their global rearmament is impossible in the foreseeable future, and Russia is compelled to reduce the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons and extended nuclear deterrence to conflicts of lesser scales and to openly warn about that."[233]

The choice to rely more on nuclear weapons was evident in January 2000 when Russia endorsed a doctrine that "unequivocally resurrects the specter of the possible use of nuclear weapons and the resort to first strike."[234] The 2000 National Security Concept stated, "The main task of the Russian Federation is to deter aggressions of any scale against it and its allies, including with the use of nuclear weapons."[235] The concept blamed NATO for "the use of force beyond the zone of its responsibility and without the sanction of the UN Security Council."[236] The Russian strategy was summarized by experts as "curbing Western superiority in conventional arms by means of Russian tactical nuclear weapons."[237] As a Russian journalist wrote, "nuclear weapons are the basis for Russia to retain its influence in the world and they are the guarantee against pressure on

---

[232] "Yeltsin Signs Decree on Tactical Nuclear Weapons," *Arms Control Today* (April/May 1999), 18-19.

[233] "Yakovlev on 40th Anniversary of Rocket Forces," *Moscow Vek*, 1999, in Mark Schneider, "The Nuclear Forces and Doctrine of the Russian Federation" (Nationa Institute Press: United States Nuclear Strategy Forum, 2006).

[234] John Erickson, "'We Have Plenty To Defend Ourselves With…': Russian Rhetoric, Russian Realism," 23, in Cimbala, *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*.

[235] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, January 10, 2000.

[236] Ibid.

[237] "Lecture Background Notes Recommend Focus on Modernization of Russia's Armed Forces," *Samara Soldat Otechestva,* February 23, 2005, translation referenced in Schneider, "Nuclear Forces and Doctrine."

us from NATO."[238] Russian military officers argued that de-escalation might require "actually using nuclear weapons for showing resolve as well as for the immediate delivery of nuclear strikes against the enemy."[239] In many ways, these concepts were reminiscent of NATO's own "flexible response" doctrine in face of overwhelming Soviet conventional strength in the 1960s.[240] Raymond Garthoff explained, "the Soviet Union is moving to substitute an objective not of winning, but of preventing the other side from winning, not of defeating and destroying the enemy's forces, but only of defeating the accomplishment of the enemy's offensive aims."[241]

In summary, Russian leaders did adopt a denial-focused strategy in the late 1990s, but this shift took longer than expected by perceived relative power theory. The most likely explanation, addressed in greater detail at the conclusion of this chapter, is that Russian military reforms required substantial political support that was not forthcoming until there was a perceived threat to Russian interests. Edward Luttwak suggests that Russian leaders acted according to a "hierarchy of imperial needs" by seeking to "deny the use of their own territory to any power hostile to the empire/"[242] This coincides with William Wohlforth's argument that Russian

---

[238] Dmritriy Yevstafyev, "Putin's Position on Arms Control, Disarmament as Derived from Public Statements, Actions in Previous Posts," *Yadernyy Kontrol*, March-April 2000, translation referenced in Ibid.

[239] A. V. Nedelin, "Nuclear Weapon Use To De-escalate Mil Operations," *Moscow Voyennaya Mys,* May 1, 1999, translation referenced in Ibid.

[240] U.S. government assessed, "The overall reduction in Russian military capabilities, especially the conventional forces, has caused Russian military planners to emphasize Moscow's threat to use nuclear weapons to deter a large-scale conventional attack, a policy that Moscow stated in its military doctrine published in October 1999 and reiterated in January 2000 and again in April 2000." "Proliferation: Challenge and Response," U.S. Department of Defense, 2001, 53.

[241] Raymond L. Garthoff, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 178.

[242] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 77.

leaders' emphasis on Russia's geographic advantages "slowed their adaptation to decline in the 1990s and hindered their ability to face necessary trade-offs between cherished strategic goals.[243]

Means: Rejecting Expendable Investments

The theory of perceived relative power suggests that as Russian leaders came to terms with their decreased level of power, they should have sought more expendable weapons systems. However, the theory also expects Russian security strategy to have changed, which did not occur until the late 1990s. Actual Russian investment decisions mirrored the delay in strategic reassessment, but were also obscured by the fact that Russia spent much of the early 1990s eliminating excess force structure and equipment from its inventory. Thus, this section focuses primarily not on new investments, for which there was little funding, but more generally on resource allocations.

Russian investments in the early 1990s remained largely a byproduct of earlier Soviet decisions. With little funding for procurement, the focus was not on what would be purchased but what would be cut. In 1992, the Russian Ministry of Defense proposed reducing the army to 2.1 million by 1995.[244] The next year, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev suggested that a 1.5 million army "would be fine for a compact state without such vast borders."[245] Russian leaders concluded, "The existing military organization is burdensome to the state. It must be

---

[243] Wohlforth also suggests three assumptions underscoring Russian thinking, including the view that Russia is a "great Eurasian power" and a "temporarily wounded world power seeking to restore its rightful place, and that Russia's interests demand a sphere of influence in the former Soviet territory." William C. Wohlforth, "Heartland Dreams: Russian Geopolitics and Foreign Policy," in Wolfgang F Danspeckgruber, *Perspectives on the Russian State in Transition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2006), 268.

[244] Dale R. Herspring, ed., *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

[245] Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 73.

reformed…"[246] Yet, scholar Brian Taylor writes, "Military reform has been frequently discussed over the last decade in Russia, with decidedly mixed results. In practice, reform has primarily meant further cuts in the size of the armed forces, with some moderate organizational changes."[247]

In 1992, Russia maintained 10,604 tanks, 17,338 armored combat vehicles, 8,107 artillery pieces, 4,161 aircraft, and 1,035 helicopters. By 1995, however, each of these categories had been cut by roughly 15% to 40%, resulting in 6,696 tanks (63% of the 1992 total), 11,806 armored combat vehicles (68%), 6,240 artillery pieces (77%) , 3,283 aircraft (79%), and 872 helicopters (84%).[248] Meanwhile, decommissioning of naval vessels led to five aircraft carriers being sold between 1992 and 1994, leaving Russia with just a single operational carrier.[249] These cuts make clear that the most mobile power projection forces experienced the greatest decreases. Armored units and aircraft carriers represented highly mobile and sustainable forces, but these were no longer seen as necessary in the post-Cold War world. Nuclear weapons were scheduled to receive drastic cuts as well.

In 1991, the United States announced unilateral cuts to non-strategic nuclear systems and Gorbachev pledged to dismantle all nuclear land mines, all nuclear artillery shells, half of all surface-to-air missile warheads, half of tactical naval warheads, and half of non-strategic air

---

[246] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

[247] Brian Taylor, "The Duma and Military Reform," October 2000, 1, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pm_0154.pdf.

[248] Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, 82.

[249] Christopher C. Lovett, "The Soviet Cold War Navy," in Higham and Kagan, *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, 255.

force bombs over the next decade.[250] Yeltsin agreed to apply these constraints to Russia. However, when time came for actual reductions, Russian leaders agreed to cut strategic nuclear weapons (including via START I and START II), but consistently avoided cutting tactical nuclear weapons. Even the cuts to strategic weapons were controversial, with *Pravda* calling START II a "hasty, unwarranted concession to Washington and Russia's final loss of the status and importance of a superpower."[251]

According to most experts, the nuclear enterprise was saved from deeper cuts by the Russian desire to be seen as a great power. Alexander Golts writes, "supporters of cardinal reform could not risk directly stating that due to the complicated economic, political and demographic reasons there would never be a way in the future that Russia could be able to stand as a great power. They were forced to seek other ways on how to reconcile the military reform plans and aspiring to the role of a great power. The natural expansion of this 'opposition' gave the Stavka nuclear deterrence."[252] Facing a worsening military balance, Minister of Defense Igor Rodionov stated, "We might objectively face the task of increasing tactical nuclear weapons at our border," to respond to NATO activities."[253] The 1997 National Security Concept concurred, "The former

---

[250] Kipp, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons."

[251] Brian Taylor notes that although Duma opposition weakened arms control efforts, it was otherwise "not a serious player in military policy during the Yeltsin era." Brian Taylor, "The Duma and Military Reform," October 2000, 1, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pm_0154.pdf. *Pravda,* June 18, 1992, referenced in Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 221.

[252] Aleksander Golts, "The Army of Russia: 11 Lost Years," *Armiya Rossii: Ordinadtsat Poteryannykh*, December 31, 2004, translation referenced in Schneider, "Nuclear Forces and Doctrine."

[253] Igor Rodionov, "'Neobkhidimo reformirovat' ne chasti sistemy voyennoy bezopasnosti gosudarstva, a vsyu ee v tselom," *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye*, November 1996, quoted in Kipp, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons."

defense system has been disrupted, and the creation of a new one is proceeding slowly. Long unprotected sections of the Russian Federation state border have appeared…"[254]

Yet, the poor state of Russian forces and an unwillingness to reform the armed forces without additional funding led Yeltsin to fire Rodionov in 1997. Yeltsin explained, "I am not merely dissatisfied. I am outraged… over the condition of the armed forces."[255] New Defense Minister Sergeyev stated, "not a single unit was combat ready except for the nuclear forces and some paratroopers."[256] By 1998, the Defense Ministry warned, "53 percent of aircraft and 40 percent of the anti-aircraft systems, helicopters, armored equipment and artillery were in need of repair."[257] In addition, 70% of naval ships required major overhauls.[258] A government decree stated that the navy was "losing its ability to safeguard political and economic interests of the nation, and its ability to ensure full-scale security on the sea border. Currently the Navy is able to accomplish only limited tasks in the most important areas of the nearest sea zone."[259] Furthermore, no major increase in funding was on the horizon. Thus, in 1998, Russia did not acquire a single tank, artillery piece, combat aircraft, helicopter, or nuclear submarine.[260]

Minister of Defense Sergeyev and Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin disagreed over how to deal with this growing conventional weakness. Sergeyev, a former head of the Strategic Rocket Forces, argued in the words of one observer, "that given its limited resources, Moscow

---

[254] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

[255] *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, 49, no. 21 (1997), 1, referenced in Donaldson and Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, 8.

[256] Stephen J. Blank, "Valuing the Human Factor: The Reform of Russian Military Manpower," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1999): 83.

[257] "Defense chief Describes Army's Woes," *The Monitor,* April 9, 1999.

[258] "Russia Tries to Save Military," *Associated Press,* July 2, 1999.

[259] "The World Ocean," Presidential Decree 11, Russian Federation, January 11, 1997.

[260] "Russian Army Woes Outlined," *The Monitor*, December 14, 1998.

should pay primary attention (including the allocation of funds) to the [Rocket Forces]."[261] Kvashnin preferred investments in ground forces and was able to stall Sergeyev's push.[262] At the time, the lack of an immediate and severe threat to the Russian homeland left many political and military leaders unconvinced that additional cuts to the ground forces were necessary. In addition, with Russia engaged in low-intensity conflicts, most notably in Chechnya, such cuts seemed to go against near-term needs. Yet, cuts to force structure show that the missile forces eventually prevailed. Although strategic missile forces were cut from 376,000 to 149,000 between 1990 and 1995, they stayed at this level for the rest of the 1990s. Meanwhile, the ground forces experienced deeper cuts from 1,473,000 in 1990 to 670,000 in 1995, and then another 50% by 2000. Similarly, the air force and air defense forces were cut by roughly 60% each between 1990 and 1995, and then merged and cut by another 45% from 1995 to 2000.[263]

By 2000, Russian leaders were facing a sharp decrease in conventional capabilities and they decisively to tactical nuclear weapons. Jacob Kipp notes, "in 1999 military discussion of these weapons concerned their potential role in theater warfighting as a counterweight to Russia's declining conventional capabilities."[264] The 2000 National Security Concept found, "The growing technological surge of some leading powers and their growing possibilities to create new-generation weapons and military hardware are creating prerequisites for a qualitatively new

---

[261] Herspring, *Putin's Russia*.

[262] Partially as a result, the Ground Forces were reinstated from their downgrading in 1997 and the SRF was instead downgraded to a command. The SRF would eventually be split into the Strategic Missile Troops and the Space Troops. Sergeyev would eventually resign in March 2001.

[263] See figures in Marcel de Haas, "Russia's Military Reforms: Victory after Twenty Years of Failure?," Clingendael Paper, No. 5, 10, http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20111129_clingendaelpaper_mdehaas.pdf.

[264] Kipp, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons."

stage in the arms race and a dramatic change in the forms and methods of waging hostilities. "[265] The only proposed solution was, "the use of all available means and forces, including nuclear weapons, in case of the need to repel an armed aggression when all other means of settling the crisis situation have been exhausted or proved ineffective."[266] This decision did not come easily, but when Russian leaders perceived a serious threat, they responded by trying to develop capabilities to deny the West the ability to take and hold territory.

In summary, although many Russian leaders desired an alternative strategy in the early 1990s, the shift from sustainable to expendable systems came later than expected. Moscow only resorted to tactical nuclear weapons when its leaders perceived a direct threat to the state.

Conclusion

> Russia's influence on resolving cardinal questions of international life which affect our state's interests has decreased significantly.
>
> - Russian National Security Concept (1997)[267]

The actions of Soviet, and later Russian, leaders between 1980 and 2000 correspond in many ways to the predictions of perceived relative power theory. As Soviet power declined throughout the 1980s, leaders in Moscow endorsed contracting national objectives, adopted a more defensive security strategy, and invested in less mobile military systems. As one expert noted, "Ogarkov sought a lean, modern, high-technology force to permit a more rapid and effective combined-arms offense… Gorbachev, by contrast, seems bent on implementing a doctrine that

[265] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, January 10, 2000.
[266] Ibid.
[267] "National Security Concept," Russian Federation, December 26, 1997.

excludes rapid offensive onto enemy territory."[268] Scholars explain, "when confronted by a preponderance of power, Moscow found it expedient to minimize points of conflict with its adversaries and to pursue a policy of accommodation.

When operating from a position of strength the Kremlin could and often did pursue a more aggressive or risky policy."[269] These observers note, "there is little doubt that by the mid-1980s Moscow was operating from a position of relative weakness."[270] In the 1990s, however, the timing of the changes in Russian objectives, strategies, and investments was disconnected. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Russian leaders rapidly revised their views of Russia's relative position.[271] Yet, it was not until the late 1990s that Russian leaders changed their security strategy toward denial and their military investments in favor of more expendable systems. Why did it take so long?

Most alternative theories struggle to explain Russian decisions. By all accounts, Russian strategic culture was largely consistent from the Cold War through the fall of the Soviet Union, yet Soviet strategy changed dramatically during this period. Structural explanations also do not explain why Soviet leaders would have adopted a more defensive strategy in the late Cold War and then a more denial-focused strategy in the late 1990s. Although domestic explanations might stand a

---

[268] Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces," in Parrott, *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*, 110.

[269] Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1988), 307.

[270] Ibid., 308.

[271] The sheer changes in the size of the Russian military forced a rapid reassessment. In 1985, the Soviet armed forces included 5 million people, but Russia had only 2.5 million when the Soviet Union collapsed, falling to 1.5 million by 1995 and 1 million by 1999

better chance, the domestic support for ground forces was high in the late 1990s, but the ground forces still lost funding rapidly.

An amendment to perceived relative power theory suggests one possible explanation for Russian behavior: perceived relative power is most important when leaders also perceive an immediate and significant threat. In the early 1990s, Russia lacked such a threat.[272] Three of the four aspects of Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory were not satisfied. First, Russia was no longer geographically close to its former NATO adversaries, since its borders had shrunk and its troops had pulled back from the Warsaw Pact states. Second, the West was attempting to withdraw combat forces and nuclear weapons from Europe, decreasing its offensive capabilities in Russia's neighborhood. Third, NATO had declared that it was a partner of Russia's, foregoing what had previously been perceived as offensive intentions. As a result, in the early 1990s, Russia perceived no urgent state-based threats and reformers therefore had limited political support to transform Russia's security strategy and military investments.[273]

By the late 1990s, however, Russian attitudes and perceptions were changing. NATO had expanded and was moving closer to Russian borders, decreasing the geographic distance between Russia and NATO. Meanwhile, NATO gained new allies and demonstrated impressive offensive capabilities in Bosnia and Kosovo (in addition to the victory over Soviet-equipped Iraq

---

[272] Although Charles Dick notes that an early draft of the 1993 military doctrine "implied that the USA and NATO really were hostile" the final document stated that Russia, "Does not regard any state as its enemy." See Charles J. Dick, "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 1994): 495.

[273] This contrasts with Marshal Ogarkov's comment in the 1980s that "we are witnessing the creation of a military alliance between the U.S., China, and Japan that is similar to the infamous Rome-Berlin-Tokyo 'axis' of the 1930s." Ogarkov quoted in Jeremy R. Azrael, *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command, 1976-1986* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1987), 18.

during the Persian Gulf War). Finally, Russia viewed NATO as having increasingly offensive intentions vis-à-vis Russia. This combination of factors reshaped Russian strategy, resulting in the realpolitik-focused National Security Concepts of 1997 and 2000. By the late 1990s, military reform appeared urgent and necessary, resulting in a greater emphasis on relative power dynamics, which resulted in the adoption of a denial strategy and expendable systems, especially tactical nuclear weapons.[274]

In the end, Henry Kissinger accurately described the Soviet Union's path when he noted, "The paradox of Russian history lies in the continuing ambivalence between messianic drive and a pervasive sense of insecurity. In its ultimate aberration, this ambivalence generated a fear that, unless the empire expanded, it would implode."[275]

[274] These trends have continued and by 2005, the Russian Defense Ministry's official newspaper noted, "despite various assurances, Russia's traditional geopolitical rivals are continuing to take advantage of the historical moment—the temporary weakness of a great state. Stronger states are striving to reinforce their positions around the entire perimeter of Russian borders… Russia survived thanks largely to its military potential, above all nuclear." *Oleg Falichev, "Russia: Editorial Remarks for Reprinted Interview With RVSN Commander* Solovtsov," *Moscow Krasnaya Zvezda,* January 12, 2005, translation referenced in Schneider, "Nuclear Forces and Doctrine."

[275] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 143.

CONCLUSION

> American leaders seem to believe that America's preeminent position will last indefinitely... States are free to disregard the imperatives of power, but they must expect to pay a price for doing so.
>
> - Kenneth Waltz (2000)[1]

This dissertation has proposed a theory of perceived relative power and evaluated it against the behavior of six great powers. This chapter concludes by reviewing the findings and drawing lessons for scholars and policymakers. The first section describes the case study results and puts forward the conditions under which perceived relative power theory holds the greatest explanatory value. The second section reviews the policy implications for the United States and China. The final section describes areas for further study.

Case Study Findings

Each of the six cases evaluated three causal-process observations, resulting in eighteen separate observations. Although it is impossible to fully and accurately capture all eighteen observations in a single chart, the figure below provides an overview of the findings. Thirteen of the eighteen observations are largely consistent with the predictions of perceived relative power theory, while five observations are entirely or partially inconsistent. The American, German, French and Japanese cases align most closely with the theory, as compared to the British and Soviet cases.

[1] Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," 37.

Figure 13: Theoretical Predictions and Case Study Findings

	Change in Defense Policies			**Consistency with Theory**
	Ends: Objectives	**Ways: Strategy**	**Means: Investments**	
American Rise (1890-1910)	Limited → Extensive ✓	Denying → Controlling ✓	Expendable → Sustainable ✓	Consistent
German Rise (1890-1914)	Limited → Extensive ✓	Denying → Controlling ✓	Expendable → Sustainable ✓	Consistent
British Decline (1888-1914)	Expansive → *Expansive* ✗	Offensive → *Offensive* ✗	Mobile → *Mobile* ✗	*Inconsistent*
French Decline (1919-1939)	Expansive → Contractive ✓	Offensive → Defensive ✓	Mobile → Immobile ✓	Consistent
Japanese Collapse (1935-1945)	Extensive → Limited ✓	Controlling → Denying ✓	Sustainable → Expendable ✓	Consistent
Soviet Collapse (1980-2000)	Extensive → Limited ✓	Controlling → *Controlling* ✗	Sustainable → *Sustainable* ✗	*Inconsistent*

Why are the British and Soviet cases least consistent with the theoretical predictions? Domestic and cultural factors certainly played important roles, but one factor that both cases have in common is that national leaders did not recognize the existence of a serious external threat. Thus, threat perception plays a critical role in perceived relative power theory. As detailed below, other critical factors are the politicization of power, the time lag in adjustments to power changes, the importance of alliances, and the role of individual leadership.

Perception of Threat

Perhaps the most important lesson from the case studies is that the theory of perceived relative power typically requires a perceived threat. Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory suggests that states generally balance against the greatest threats to their security. States identify these threats by assessing opponents' aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and offensive intentions.[2] As Walt has noted, "Other things being equal, states that are close by are more dangerous than those that are far away. States with large offensive military capabilities are more dangerous than those whose armed forces are largely suitable for defending their own territory. Lastly, states with clearly aggressive intentions tend to provoke more opposition than those who seek primarily to uphold the status quo."[3] When leaders perceive a serious external threat, they are more likely to focus on relative power balances. When no serious threat exists, domestic political and cultural factors dominate structural incentives for defense policy reform. As a result, a perceived threat is a typically a prerequisite for perceived relative power theory.

The importance of a perceived threat is evident in several case studies. Leaders in three of the six great powers—Germany, France, and Japan—perceived a serious external threat throughout the period under study. These three cases align closely with the theoretical predictions. For example, most German leaders identified several possible threats and focused on the British from at least 1900 onward. After all, Britain was powerful, close to Germany, maintained robust offensive forces, and in William II's mind, had clear offensive intent. Similarly, most French leaders perceived Germany as a threat during the interwar period. During this time, Germany rapidly

[2] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

[3] "Balancing Threat: The United States and The Middle East - An Interview with Stephen M. Walt," *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, n.d., 10–16.

rebuilt its power, remilitarized areas on the France border, constructed offensive military forces in spite of legal restrictions, and demonstrated offensive intentions. Finally, most Japanese leaders viewed the United States as a severe threat from the 1930s onward. This is no surprise given America's size, its forces in the Philippines, the offensive nature of U.S. naval capabilities, and Tokyo's belief that Washington had offensive intentions. These three cases demonstrate that high threat environments most closely match the predictions of perceived relative power theory.

The other three cases exhibit varying levels of perceived threat. At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States faced no major external threat of the sort its European competitors had to confront. The other great powers were far away, and although the British were powerful and had offensive military forces, they tended to seek to cooperate with the United States. During the same time period, British leadership was divided on whether a serious external threat existed. Although the United States, Germany, France, and Russia were certainly important powers, each of them lacked one or more element of Walt's balance of threat theory. The United States was far away and appeared not to harbor offensive intentions against Britain. France and Russia had limited offensive naval capabilities, and from 1904 onward neither appeared to have serious offensive intentions. Finally, until a few years before World War I, Germany lacked the offensive naval capabilities required by balance of threat theory. Some British leaders—such as Jackie Fisher and Winston Churchill—viewed Germany as a clear threat, but many saw it as a secondary concern. As a result, political support for major defense policies changes was limited. Similarly, in the early 1990s, most Russian leaders believed that they faced no serious external threat. The United States and NATO were strong, but they were geographically distant and neither appeared to have offensive intentions, especially since NATO openly sought partnership with Russia.

The American, British, and Russian cases are particularly interesting because they vary in the degree to which national objectives, security strategies, and military investments changed. The United States, for example, adopted nearly the same policies as Germany during the same time period, even though it did not face a serious threat. On the other hand, when British and Russian leaders viewed external threats as low, they largely continued existing defense policies. Why did American leaders change unlike their British and Russian counterparts? The answer to this question is rooted in a second lesson from the case studies: power tends to be politicized and some defense policy transitions are therefore easier for political leaders to champion than others.

Politicization of Power

Perceptions of relative power are highly political. The case studies show that most national leaders tended to over-estimate their power, particularly when speaking in public. In the case of rising powers, such as the United States at the turn of the century, this tendency accentuated the degree to which American leaders and the public viewed the United States as a strong and rising power. Theodore Roosevelt won massive domestic support for championing U.S. strength. Luttwak writes, "As the relative power of a state increases in the perceptions of the world's political leaders and opinion-makers, its sphere of action that others deem proper and legitimate increases also."[4]

Given that power is often a source of national pride, rising powers are typically quick to acknowledge their rise and react to changes in relative power, even in the absence of a direct threat. On the other hand, leaders in declining or collapsing powers have little incentive to openly acknowledge changes in relative power without the existence of a serious external threat.

[4] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 53–54.

As a result, it is not surprising that British and Russian leaders were slow to admit their relative decline and embrace the associated defense policy reforms that might otherwise have been expected. Although some advocates pushed for defense reforms, they could not with the political support needed to change national objectives, security strategies, and military investments.

In most cases, public admission of changes in relative power was required for major defense policy reforms. New policies require substantial political support, which can only be manufactured if leaders explain why reform is needed. When leaders do not admit that relative power is changing, either because they do not perceive changes or are unwilling to highlight national weakness in public, then it becomes difficult to win support for major defense policy changes. Therefore, a perceived threat is vital in forcing the leaders of declining and collapsing states to accurately assess and openly acknowledge changes in relative power. This helps to explain why French leaders altered their defense policies as Germany rose in the interwar period, but British leaders were slow to respond several decades earlier. This also explains why Japan reacted so readily to changes in relative power during World War II, while Russian reactions were delayed at the end of the Cold War.

The politicization of power also accords with the literature on perception and misperception. As prospect theory suggests, individuals are strongly predisposed to avoid losses, even small losses.[5] This applies to relative power too. Even if signs of deteriorating relative power are evident, national leaders may believe or argue that relative power dynamics are largely unchanged. In the British case, political leaders often discounted economic and military trends and focused on the strength of British colonies and alliances. In the Russian case, its leaders framed Russia's

[5] See Kahneman and Tversky, "Prospect Theory."

geostrategic position astride Europe and Asia as an enduring strength. The French talked about the might of defensive warfare. The Japanese focused on national willpower and racial superiority. In short, leaders in all declining states made arguments about how their national strength was undiminished, despite clear signals to the contrary. As prospect theory suggests, leaders attempted to avoid or acknowledge even small negative changes in power unless a serious external threat made such assessments absolutely necessary.

Lag of Reform

A third lesson from the case studies is that defense policies tend to lag changes in relative power, often by decades. This delay demonstrates a critical weakness of structural conceptions that ignore perceptions. Since national leaders are slow to acknowledge change and even slower to adapt to it, defense policies often appear disconnected from abstract measures of relative power.

There are several reasons that defense policy reforms lag changes in perceived relative power. First, changes in relative power are often difficult to discern. Although economic conditions may change, these dynamics are not always visible to national leaders or to the public. This was particularly true in earlier periods when gross domestic product and trade estimates were not easily available. Second, even when relative power changes are recognized, Bayesian updating implies that perceptions change slowly since new data must be evaluated in light of previous information.[6] Third, leaders must build consensus in political, military, and industrial circles to pursue new policies. These initiatives take time, and efforts to change ends, ways, and means must often be pursued in sequence rather than in parallel, increasing defense reform delays.

[6] Philip E. Tetlock, "Theory-Driven Reasoning About Plausible Pasts and Probable Futures in World Politics: Are We Prisoners of Our Preconceptions?," American Journal of Political Science 43, no. 2 (1999): 335–66.

Fourth, many physical capabilities and doctrinal innovations require years if not decades to develop. For example, Germany's acquisition of battleships necessitated new ship designs, new construction facilities and equipment, and the widening of the Kiel Canal, just to field the first battleship. Constructing an entire fleet of battleships took even longer, and the maintenance of older vessels slowed the pace of even Germany's ambitious naval program.

As a result, changes in defense policies often appear disconnected from relative power, even when perceptions are taken into account. This is one challenge for realist scholars who reject incorporation of perceptions into their models. Although structural factors are central to the theory of perceived relative power, state behavior is rooted not in power itself but in perceptions of power. Therefore, incorporating perceptions is vital if scholars are to accurately assess changes in state behavior.

Importance of Alliances

A fourth lesson from the case studies is that national leaders tend to focus not only on their own national power, but also on that of their allies (and their competitor's allies). Estimation of allied strength tends to alter perceptions of a state's own relative power. This tendency is evident in both British and Japanese assessments, each of which overestimated the strength of their allies before the outbreak of World Wars I and II, respectively.

From 1902 onward, Britain entered into alliance relationships with Japan, France, and Russia. These three nations, along with the United States, represented some of the strongest powers of the time – leaving Germany saddled with the decaying Austrian, Italian, and Ottoman empires. British leaders were therefore confident that they could remain relatively strong, even as German power grew. This diminished the incentives for Britain to make drastic defense policy reforms.

Japan went through a similar experience before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although Japan was economically weaker than the United States, many Japanese leaders viewed Japan as strong because their Nazi allies had succeeded in gaining control over Western Europe and appeared likely to achieve victory over the Soviet Union as well. Many Japanese therefore believed that British power was waning, Soviet power was collapsing, and U.S. attention would have to be split between Europe and Asia. As a result, some leaders in Tokyo overestimated their power.

If leaders include allied strength in their assessments of national power, it follows that they should adjust their objectives, strategies, and investments accordingly. The case studies show that states did adjust their defense policies in response to assessments of allied relative power, but in periods of high threat they tended to ignore alliance requirements and focus on domestic defense needs. Interwar France illustrates the tendency to ignore allied military needs; although French leaders were committed to the defense of their Eastern European states, they did not acquire the capabilities needed to come to their aid, or even to launch an attack on Germany in response. Even if states calculate allied power, these case studies suggest that leaders tend to base defense policies more on parochial self-interest, especially in high threat environments.

Role of Leadership

A fifth and final lesson from the case studies is that individual leaders are critical to the timing of defense policy changes. Overcoming the bureaucratic inertia that favors status quo policies requires sustained effort and substantial domestic power and political savvy. Therefore, defense policy reforms often require that existing leaders embrace new ideas, or be replaced. Given leadership's importance, the beliefs, personalities, and perceptions of individual leaders are hugely important. As Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack argue, structural constraints may shape

a leader's policy options, but the choices that leaders make are often determined by personal experiences, prejudices, and biases.

Each of the six great powers examined here had at least one leader who pushed the state to adopt new objectives, strategies, or investments. In the United States, it was the combination of the Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan. In Germany, it was the notorious William II and Alfred von Tirpitz. In Britain, it was Jackie Fisher, along with a young Winston Churchill. In France, André Maginot personified the new policies. In Japan, it was Isoroku Yamamoto. In Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev drove reform. It is impossible to explain how great power defense policies changed in the 20th century without referencing these leaders.

Yet, these case studies suggest that individual leadership was strongly shaped by strategic circumstances. For example, Theodore Roosevelt's bravado was politically popular, but it is difficult to separate Roosevelt's election from the changing strategic circumstances of the United States. In fact, Roosevelt initially opposed many of the reforms that he would later embrace. The same is true of other leaders, from Tirpitz to Gorbachev. In most cases, the selection of leaders was not random, but was inherently connected to their views of state power. Thus, there is no doubt that individual leaders were important, but their causal role is indeterminate. Given that many of the cases align closely with the theoretical predictions, individual leadership may be shaped more by structural conditions in the international system than the other way around.

Implications for Policymakers

The theory of perceived relative power contains important implications for policymakers. Numerous states are experiencing shifts in relative power today, but perhaps the most important

are China and the United States.[7] China's rise is reshaping the security environment, not just in Asia but around the world. This section remains focused on the United States and China, given their unique importance to the international order. Gaining a better understanding of their likely future behavior is vital if policymakers are to accurately assess, predict, and respond to the evolving Sino-American military competition.

China's Rise and Defense Policies

The People's Republic of China is now the second largest economic and military power in the world. With three decades of double-digit yearly growth, it is no surprise that Beijing's military modernization has allowed it to challenge Washington's influence and military power in East Asia. Yet, major questions remain about China's military modernization. Most importantly, why is China shifting its military investments toward traditional means of power projection and away from the asymmetric capabilities that have called into question U.S. military dominance in Asia?

Over several decades, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has developed and fielded military systems intended to deny the United States the ability to project power in East Asia. These military systems are typically termed anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Relevant systems include conventionally-armed ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, and diesel submarines. Most military experts believe that these systems have evened the playing field between China and the United States, allowing Beijing to field comparatively cheap weapons

[7] The theory presented here also applies to a broader set of powers beyond China and the United States. For example, it could be applied to India (a weak but rising power) and Russia (a weak and declining power), helping to forecast their likely future defense policies. This theory might also be applied to smaller regional powers, helping to explain different military procurement patterns emerging across Asia and the Middle East. This theory therefore provides an opportunity for insight into a variety of military competitions.

that can neutralize Washington's more advanced and expensive platforms. In the last few years, however, the PLA has begun to invest in traditional means of power projection. Most notably, the PLA Navy is in the process of fielding multiple aircraft carriers. China's shift from an asymmetric anti-access approach to a more symmetric power projection strategy is surprising because the United States has a large lead in the military systems and operational expertise required to project and sustain military power at a distance. Why would China pursue military systems that closely resemble the very U.S. capabilities that China has successfully undermined?

Experts on Chinese behavior have put forward numerous explanations for China's turn toward power projection. Perhaps the PLA has evaluated its anti-access strategy and simply decided that the American power projection approach is superior, producing the "sameness" in military capabilities that Kenneth Waltz long predicted. Alternatively, Mark Cozad suggests that Chinese forces may "develop sustainable, broadly-scoped capabilities that will allow them to challenge the major regional powers…"[8] This theory attributes Chinese aims to the desire to dominate regional states such as Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, or Taiwan. Andrew Scobell and Andrew Nathan present another explanation, arguing that Chinese power projection is "largely symbolic."[9] In this sense, Chinese investments could be a form of mirror imaging, intended to demonstrate that China has the traditional trappings of power. Robert Ross outlines a related theory that he terms naval nationalism. Ross argues that Beijing's investment in power projection capabilities can be attributed to "The Chinese people's nationalist ambition for an aircraft carrier… Combined with the persistent PLA Navy's demands," and that this is "a reflection of

[8] Mark Cozad in "China's Regional Power Projection" Army War College (U.S.), National Bureau of Asian Research (U.S.), and Texas A & M University, *Beyond the Strait*, 291.

[9] Scobell and Nathan, "China's Overstretched Military," 142. Also see Adam P. Liff, forthcoming, "Shadowing the Hegemon."

the leadership's growing reliance on appeasing widespread nationalist sentiment."[10] All of the theories above provide potential explanations for China's recent behavior.[11]

Unfortunately, few of these theories explain the timing of China's turn toward power projection. It is logical for China to adopt successful U.S. approaches, challenge regional states, build symbolic forces, and satisfy nationalist demands, but why do so now? The theory of perceived relative power provides a convincing explanation for both China's type of defense reforms and its timing. Perceived relative power theory suggests that leaders in Beijing believe their level of relative power has increased and they have therefore adopted more extensive national objectives, pursued a more offensive security strategy, and invested in more sustainable military systems.

China has been rising for decades, but through most of its rise, China was relatively weak and focused primarily on deterring American military intervention in regional disputes. One observer has argued, "China only wants to keep America from dominating its neighborhood."[12] Today, however, leaders in Beijing may believe that they can use China's growing military power to challenge the United States directly, thereby altering the status quo in China's favor. Although evidence from internal Chinese discussions is notoriously difficult to attain, many scholars cite the 2008 financial crisis as having triggered a reassessment of national power by Chinese

---

[10] Robert Ross in Glosny, Saunders, and Ross, "Debating China's Naval Nationalism," 174–175. See also Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism."

[11] It is also possible that these theories combine to explain Chinese naval modernization. For example, Michael Glosny and Phillip Saunders write that the PLA is likely to "develop a limited power-projection capability that increases China's ability to defend regional interests in contingencies not involving the United States, to protect expanding overseas interests, to perform nontraditional missions, to conduct military diplomacy, to demonstrate international responsibility, and to increase China's prestige." Glosny, Saunders, and Ross, "Debating China's Naval Nationalism," 165.

[12] "Why Beijing Isn't Backing Down on South China Sea," *Newsweek*, accessed October 12, 2015, http://www.newsweek.com/why-beijing-not-backing-down-south-china-sea-381973.

leaders. As the United States floundered in the financial crisis, China looked comparably strong. Admiral Michael McDevitt writes, "China wants to become a maritime power mainly because its strategic circumstances have changed dramatically over the past 20 years."[13] In particular, he notes "the dramatic growth in China's economic and security interests abroad," and the importance of Chinese "notions of power and control" to its development of naval power projection capabilities.[14]

According to perceived relatively power theory, China is undergoing a shift from Phase 1 to Phase 2 that should result in a transition from anti-access to power projection defense policies.[15] Whereas Robert Ross argued in 1997 that "China is a revisionist power, but for the foreseeable future it will seek to maintain the status quo."[16] Today, Robert Kaplan has observed, "China's naval leaders are displaying the aggressive philosophy of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century U.S. naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who argued for sea control and the decisive battle."[17] The parallels with Wilhelmine Germany are also clear and concerning.

China's accumulation of power leads to an obvious question: should observers expect China to shift even more toward expansive objectives and power projection if its growth continues? As perceived relative power theory suggests, most observers expect this trend to accelerate. Denny

---

[13] McDevitt, "Becoming a Great 'Maritime Power': A Chinese Dream," 117–119.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Prior to the Persian Gulf War, Chinese leaders may have thought they could already compete symmetrically with the United States. However, Samuel Tangredi writes that the U.S. victory "justified the acquisition of sensors and weapons systems optimized for the denial of contested area rather than the control of it." After all, as as U.S. Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster notes, "There are only two ways to fight the US: stupidly or asymmetrically." Italics in original. Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare*, 23.

[16] Robert S. Ross, "Beijing as a Conservative Power," *Foreign Affairs*, 1997, 34.

[17] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Can Beijing Reach on Land and at Sea?," *Foreign Affairs*, 2010, 34.

Roy writes, "China's growth from a weak, developing state to a stronger, more prosperous state should result in a more assertive foreign policy."[18] Michael Green comments that China's recent actions are "part of a longer-term attempt by Beijing to chip away at the regional status quo and assert greater control over the East and South China Seas."[19] If these scholars are correct, Beijing's move toward conventional power projection is likely to continue. Recent evidence of this shift includes the announcement of reforms that will cut the least mobile Chinese forces in order to fund a more deployable military. Efforts to adopt more extensive objectives, offensive strategies, and sustainable investments should be expected to continue if Chinese power grows.

This assessment suggests that China's initial steps toward power projection are just the first signs of a move toward a truly global military. Deployments of Chinese ships, aircraft, and potentially even ground forces abroad are likely to increase if China's power grows. Beijing will likely seek to expand its reach—using new bases in the Indian and Pacific Oceans—just as the United States and Germany did during their development. Although China's anti-access systems have successfully called into question U.S. power projection capabilities, investments in these capabilities are likely to shrink as Beijing embraces more extensive national objectives. In short, it is no coincidence that China's rapid economic and military rise has coincided with major changes in its defense policies. Beijing's new focus on power projection is directly attributable to its leaders' changing perceptions of China's relative strength vis-à-vis the United States.

---

[18] Denny Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security," *International Security*, 1994, 159.

[19] Michael J. Green, "Safeguarding the Seas," *Foreign Affairs*, December 2, 2013, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140307/michael-j-green/safeguarding-the-seas.

America's Relative Decline and Defense Policies

Beijing's growing power has triggered a debate about whether the United States is in decline relative to China. The United States has numerous longstanding competitive advantages, including an international order it largely created, a strong alliance system, a stable domestic political system, and a global power projection capability. Yet, China's economic growth rate has surpassed that of the United States for decades, and China is now challenging the U.S. role as the top global economy. The U.S. National Intelligence Council has suggested that China, "will probably have the largest economy, surpassing that of the United States a few years before 2030."[20] Furthermore, it notes, "the United States' (and the West's) relative decline vis-à-vis the rising states is inevitable…"[21] Joseph Nye writes, "the American century is not over," but he does admit that while the United States is not in absolute decline, it may be declining relatively.[22]

The fact that the United States is in relative decline does not imply that China will necessarily surpass the United States, just that China's power is growing more quickly at the moment. Acknowledging China's economic strength, former commander of U.S. Pacific Command Samuel Locklear has noted, "if I were China, and I was in the economic position that China is in… I would consider building an aircraft carrier. And I might consider building several aircraft

[20] The National Intelligence Council also argues that five military competitions will define the character of the future security environment: "Access vs. Anti-Access. The US ability to project air and maritime forces is in competition with China's burgeoning capabilities to deter and deny such force projection. The outcome of this competition will impact the ability of either side to control the maritime and air approaches to East Asia and the US ability to assure allies in the region." National Intelligence Council (U.S.), *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Government Printing Office, 2013), 72.

[21] (U.S.), *Global Trends 2030*.

[22] Joseph S. Nye, *Is the American Century Over* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2015).

carriers."[23] This is a far cry from Roger Cliff's 2007 logic that, "If the U.S. military can arrive in force, it will almost undoubtedly win in a conventional military campaign. A rational opponent should thus seek to acquire the capabilities necessary to disrupt or delay U.S. deployment activities or to deny it the use of regional bases."[24] This shift in sentiment in under a decade suggests an implicit recognition that relative power dynamics are changing.

Yet, despite robust evidence that the United States is in relative decline, there is substantial debate in Washington about whether this is in fact the case. The U.S. debate is similar in many ways to that of Britain pre-World War I. British leaders largely continued their existing defense policies despite the changing balance of power. Britain maintained a "two power standard," similar in many ways to the U.S. "two war construct," that is until Germany's rapidly growing capabilities made the two power standard impossible. Eventually, British leaders began to change their policies, but it took decades for the recognition that Germany posed a severe threat to take hold. Gilpin notes that it was not until the eve of World War I that "British commitments had been retrenched to arrest further decline in the face of expanding German power."[25] Retrenchment did not occur willingly – British leaders avoided scaling-back their objectives until they could see no other alternative.

American leaders are just beginning to reexamine U.S. ends, ways, and means, with some scholars and political leaders calling for the United States to consolidate its position. The U.S. experience calls to mind the five lessons discussed earlier in this chapter. First, although relative

---

[23] Samuel J. Locklear III, "Defense Department News Briefing in the Pentagon Briefing Room," News Briefing, December 6, 2012, http://www.pacom.mil/Media/SpeechesTestimony/tabid/6706/Article/565147/defense-department-news-briefing-in-the-pentagon-briefing-room.aspx.

[24] Roger Cliff et al., *Entering the Dragon's Lair* (RAND Corporation, 2007), 2.

[25] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 196–197.

decline may be occurring, U.S. defense policy is unlikely to change course until a severe threat is perceived. China may represent that threat, but U.S. leaders have heretofore been preoccupied by challenges in the Middle East and Europe. As a result, China's military challenge has yet to attract the sustained senior leader focus required to fundamentally alter U.S. defense policies. Second, relative power perceptions have been shaped by the politicization of power. Most U.S. politicians reject the notion that the United States is undergoing relative decline, which in turn shapes public perceptions and limits government's ability to adopt defense reforms. Third, defense policy changes have lagged relative power changes. Even when leaders in Washington have acknowledged changing power dynamics, changes in defense policies have lagged. Fourth, U.S. leaders often include alliances in their calculations of power, comparing China's military not to that of the United States alone, but to the vast U.S. network of East Asian and NATO allies. This serves to inflate Washington's power, particularly since Chinese allies are few, weak, and unstable. Fifth, individual leadership is critical to altering defense policies. No U.S. president or senior defense leader has proposed a drastic reassessment of U.S. defense policy – instead they have tended to endorse their predecessors' approaches as sufficient for current challenges.

Perceived relative power theory suggests that U.S. leaders are unlikely to shift course until they acknowledge that relative power trends have changed. Today, U.S. leaders remain attached to projecting power worldwide, as they have done since the United States rose over a century ago. In 1997, the U.S. National Defense Panel suggested, "The cornerstone of America's continued military preeminence is our ability to project combat power rapidly and virtually unimpeded to widespread areas of the globe."[26] Fifteen years later, despite the worsening U.S. relative position, the 2012 U.S. Defense Strategy Guidance noted, "the United States must maintain its ability to

[26] "Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century," National Defense Panel, 1997.

project power in areas in which our access and freedom to operate are challenged."[27] Writing in the 1990s, Christopher Layne warned, "In terms of ambitions, interests, and alliance, the United States is following the same grand strategy it pursued from 1945 until 1991: that of preponderance. Whether this strategy will serve U.S. interests in the early twenty-first century is problematic… preponderance cannot be maintained… The changing distribution of power in the international system—specifically, the relative decline of U.S. power and the corresponding rise of new great powers—will render the strategy untenable."[28]

U.S. defense strategy has remained focused on projecting power despite the increasing costs of doing so. Andrew Krepinevich wrote in 2010, "U.S. military dominance is waning at an increasing and alarming rate. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the United States' ability to project power."[29] Krepinevich warns, "The price of projecting power is going up."[30] The U.S. Air-Sea Battle concept and its successor Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons represent an effort to "double down" on power projection by disrupting Chinese anti-access/area denial capabilities. These operational concepts are designed to strike the sensors and launchers for long-range weapons, such as cruise and ballistic missiles. Proponents of Air-Sea Battle argue that it is a "concept to ensure that U.S. forces remain able to project power on behalf of American interests worldwide."[31] Yet, given the cost-effectiveness of anti-access weapons

---

[27] "Defense Strategic Guidance," U.S. Department of Defense, 2012.

[28] Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing," 289 in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*.

[29] "Why Air Sea Battle," 7.

[30] Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "The Next War," Government Executive, August 15, 2012, chapter http://www.govexec.com/magazine/features/2012/08/next-war/57392/.

[31] Schwartz, Norton A., and Jonathan W. Greenert. "Air-Sea Battle: Promoting Stability in a Period of Uncertainty." *The American Interest* (2012).

against power projection systems, one might have expected that the United States would consider alternative approaches to maintaining the status quo in East Asia.

What new defense policies might the United States adopt if leaders in Washington acknowledge the reality of U.S. relative decline? There is a growing chorus of voices calling for more defensive approaches.[32] These advocates argue that the United States can secure the status quo by denying China the ability to project power – in short, "anti-access with American characteristics." After all, John Nagl writes: "the world's greatest Navy is at increasing risk of being checkmated by [China's] very precise and relatively cheap guided munitions."[33] U.S. forces in East Asia, particularly in Japan, South Korea, and Guam, might be cheaper and less vulnerable to missile strikes if they were less dependent on rapid mobility. This would amount to a shift from power projection toward more defensively-focused garrison fortification strategies.[34] Such approaches might include aspects of a "hedgehog defense" designed to build U.S., ally, and partner defensive capabilities to constrain Chinese power projection.

At the end of the day, the U.S. willingness to adopt major defense policy reforms focused will be dependent on perceptions of relative power dynamics and the severity of the threat from China.

---

[32] As Jennifer Lind and Daryl Press note, "it might make military sense to blind the adversary and disrupt its command and control – but are the strategic risks of this so high, that those strategic considerations should outweigh the military considerations?" Jennifer Lind and Daryl G. Press, "Geography, Technology, and Crisis Escalation in U.S.-China Relations," U.S.-China Working Group paper, April 7, 2014.

[33] John Nagl, "After Gates: Asymmetric Threats," *Defense News*, April 24, 2011, http://www.defensenews.com/article/20110424/DEFFEAT05/104240310/After-Gates-Asymmetric-Threats.

[34] Note that the connation of the term "garrison" is used quite differently here than in Aaron Friedberg's review of strategic formulation in the United States during the early Cold War. Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

If the perceived changes in power are substantial and the threat is seen as high, then Washington is likely to consider less expansive objectives, more defensive strategies, and less mobile forces. This would not be an easy choice, but perceived relative power theory makes clear that as unpalatable as this option may seem, it is likely to occur if Chinese power continues to grow.

Areas for Further Study

The theory of perceived relative power provides a broad characterization of state behavior. This study represents an initial effort to validate the theory, but much additional work is necessary to specify the conditions under which the theory holds. This section outlines five areas for future study: applicability beyond great powers, applicability to earlier time periods, the role of threat perception, the role of technological change, and the quantification of investment patterns.

Applicability Beyond Great Powers

Although the theory of perceived relative power has been applied here to great powers, the theory should apply to lesser powers as well. Leaders of lesser powers must also assess their relative power and determine defense policies in part based on these assessments. There are no inherent restrictions that would limit the scope conditions to great powers, but lesser powers do face a number of additional challenges in determining their defense policies.

The core question in applying this theory to lesser powers is how they perceive relative power. Do weaker states compare themselves to the world's greatest power, to the region's greatest power, or to the state they perceive as most threatening? For most great powers, the answer to this question is simple because they worry most about other great powers rather than lesser regional powers. For smaller states, on the other hand, even a relatively weak neighbor can pose

a serious challenge. Consider Iraq before the Persian Gulf War. Saddam Hussein could have determined his defense policies in reaction to the United States (the world's greatest power), Iran or Saudi Arabia (two of the region's greatest powers), or Israel (which had previously struck targets within Iraqi territory).

The states that lesser powers compare themselves against is likely to drive perceptions of relative power. If lesser powers compare themselves to great powers, they should never view themselves as relatively strong and therefore should forgo extensive national objectives, control-focused security strategies, and sustainable military investments. However, if lesser powers compare themselves to regional powers, they may still see themselves as relatively strong and therefore pursue more extensive policies. Expanding the scope conditions will require substantial additional research and a variety of new case studies, so applying perceived relative power theory to less powerful states is an important next step in this research agenda.

Applicability to Earlier Time Periods

This study has tested the theory of perceived relative power against defense policy decisions from the 1880s onward. The reason for doing so was that many denial capabilities came about only recently. Since denial is the act of imposing costs on an adversary without physical presence, the development of autonomous systems (such as mines) represents a major change. Nevertheless, this does not imply that denial was impossible in previous periods, only that it was likely more difficult. Thus, perceived relative power theory should be tested in earlier periods.

Two examples of great powers from earlier ages suggest that the theory may be historically applicable. Take the case of the Roman Empire. In his famous study of Roman grand strategy, Edward Luttwak suggests three "changing conceptions of empire: hegemonic expansionism…

territorial security… and finally, in diminished circumstances, sheer survival."[35] These correlate closely to the second, third, and fourth phases of perceived relative power. Luttwak notes that when the Roman republic was relatively strong and rising, "the Romans generally solved the security problems of their growing empire by furthering expansion…"[36] As Roman power began to decline, however, Luttwak describes how "the overall strategy of the empire was transformed from hegemonic expansionism to territorial defense… the army also needed a sustained defensive capability over the full length of a land perimeter that was 6,000 miles long."[37] Finally, in the final stage, Rome became relatively weak and adopted "defense-in-depth strategies" focused on rearward defense providing "interception only inside imperial territory" rather than forward defense "in advance of the frontier."[38] At first glance, these three periods correspond closely to the predictions of perceived relative power theory.

Another potential test case is the Ming dynasty. Iain Johnston explains how "differences in the strategies pursued across time in the Ming period were to a significant degree a function of the changing assessments of the Ming capacity to act offensively against the Mongols. The Ming

---

[35] Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 4.

[36] He notes, "at any one moment large troop concentrations could be assembled for wars of conquest…" Ibid., 49–50. Luttwak goes on to comment that in the late republic and early principate period, Rome remained strong and the marching camp was established, but "the strategic mobility of Roman forces was undoubtedly reduced by this tiring and time-consuming camp-building routine." Ibid., 55–56. He later describes how "perimeter defense inaugurated by the Flavians required an investment of colossal proportions… and the "defense against high intensity threats was mobile and offensive, not static: combat was to take place *beyond* the border than within it. In other words, the complex of fixed defenses built along the *limes* served only as a *supporting infrastructure* for offensive operations…" Italics in original. Ibid., 61-66.

[37] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, 117.

[38] Ibid., 136. Luttwak also notes that "decline did not occur suddenly during the late fourth century," but left "purely territorial forces incapable of mobile field operations." Ibid., 175.

tended to act most coercively in the ascending period of the dynastic cycle… As this relative capacity declined… Ming strategy shifted to an increasingly reactive static-defensive posture."[39] Johnston concludes, "in the Chinese case, at least, empires, especially at peak periods of power, often exhibited offensive, coercive behavior."[40] Johnston refers to the importance of a "realpolitik-dynastic cycle model" that assumes "states will expand as long as their resources allow, since greater relative capabilities increase the relative strength of the state, and increases in the relative strength of the state increase the probability of success."[41] He goes on, "The realpolitik-dynastic cycle model would therefore predict that as the empire consolidates and mobilizes resources in the earlier stages of the dynastic cycle, it will adopt increasingly expansionist, coercive strategies… As the dynastic cycle peaks, the empire is overextended financially and militarily… and the empire begins to collapse inwardly. As decline sets in, the state turns to less offensively coercive, more static defensive strategies, and from there to more accommodating strategies."[42] This description of the Ming period matches many of the predictions made by the theory of perceived relative power.

These Western and Eastern examples from millennia past suggest that perceived relative power theory may be broadly applicable across time, but additional research will be needed to confirm this initial finding. If correct, the scope conditions for this theory could be expanded and the theory could be used to explain defense policies decision in a larger number of historical cases.

---

[39] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 250.

[40] Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (April 1, 2013): 266.

[41] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 56–57.

[42] Ibid., 57.

Role of Threat Perception

In addition to expanding the scope conditions, it is necessary to specify the conditions under which the theory has the most causal significance. As already noted, threat perception played a critical role in several cases. The lack of a serious perceived threat may have slowed reform efforts in Britain at the beginning of the 20th century and Russia at the end of the 20th century. On the other hand, perception of a serious threat may have motivated rapid changes in defense policies in Germany before World War I, France during the interwar period, and Japan at the end of World War II. Thus, the role of threat perception merits further study.

Additional research should examine which elements of threat perception drive adherence to the theory of perceived relative power. One question is whether threat perception is critical at all stages of relative power. For example, the rising powers studied here pursued the expected policies regardless of the degree of perceived threat. Germany viewed Britain as a severe threat from at least 1900 onward, and it is therefore not surprising that leaders in Berlin closely watched and reacted to changes in perceived relative power. American leaders, however, perceived no similar threat but still pursued expansionary objectives and the power projection capabilities necessary to attain them. One potential explanation is that a variety of realist and domestic forces are aligned in rising powers, leading to more expansive national objectives regardless of the level of perceived threat. This is not the case in declining or collapsing powers, in which more domestic groups have incentive to hold firm to existing objectives, strategies, or investments. To better understand these dynamics and to specify the conditions under which the theory of perceived relative power holds, additional research is needed into the interaction between perception of threat and perception of relative power.

Role of Technological Change

Another important area for future research is the role of technological change in determining defense policies. Offense-defense balance theorists have long argued that technological changes inherently strengthen or weaken the cost-effectiveness of certain defense policies. International relations theorists have long focused on how technology alters the offense-defense balance, but this study suggests that scholars should examine the control-denial balance as well.

If the theory of perceived relative power holds, then the development of control-enhancing weapons—such as improved logistics capabilities, nuclear-powered warships, etc.—should increase spending on sustainable military systems and advantage stronger states. On the other hand, if denial-enhancing technologies proceed more quickly—ranging from improvised explosive devices to nuclear weapons—spending on expendable military systems should increase and help weaker actors. Scholars should be able to test this proposition in a variety of situations.[43]

This adjustment to traditional theories of technological change has important implications for both scholars and policymakers. For scholars, this modification may help to address some of the shortcomings of offense-defense theory, such as its difficulty categorizing missile technologies. For policymakers considering research and investment options, it may be advantageous to focus on those technologies that help states in a certain phase of relative power. In addition, when new technologies develop, this theory will help to explain how states will adjust their investments and

[43] If one accepts that status quo actors are typically defensive and revisionist actors are typically offensive, then this theory should also explain whether a military technological innovation would advantage not only strong or weak actors, but also status quo or revisionist actors. See Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* 50, no. 01 (October 1997): 171–201.

which states are likely to benefit the most. Therefore, continuing to study the important of technological change to defense policies holds great promise from both scholars and policymakers.

Quantification of Investment Patterns

A final area for future study is quantifying the independent variables discussed in this study. Although national objectives and security strategies are difficult to quantify, it is easier to measure military investments.[44] By identifying certain investments as mobile or immobile and sustainable or expendable, it may be possible to track how much funding is directed toward different types of systems. By analyzing changes over time and across cases, it could therefore be possible to evaluate whether military investments follow the expected pattern when changes in relative power occur. Doing so would help to identify the magnitude of change in investments that is due to changes in perceived relative power, which is one of the major outstanding questions raised by the case studies included here.

Summary

This dissertation argues that existing international relations theories are insufficient to explain why and how national defense policies change over time. The theory of perceived relative power suggests that leaders alter their national objectives, security strategies, and military investments in accordance with changes in perceptions of relative power. The case studies demonstrate that

[44] It may also be possible to use emerging research methods, such as computer-assisted content analysis, to assess the degree to which policymakers discuss certain types of defense policies and track changes over time. By doing so, it might be possible to correlate changes in defense policies to changes in perceptions of relative power.

this theory holds great potential for explaining an important set of state behaviors. As Paul Kennedy has noted, "There is a very clear connection in the long run between an individual Great Power's economic rise and fall and its growth and decline as an important military power."[45] This dissertation represents the first step toward a better understanding of the relationship between relative power perceptions and defense policy.

[45] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. xxii.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introduction, Literature Review, and Theory Chapters

Adams, Karen Ruth. "Attack and Conquer? International Anarchy and the Offense-Defense-Deterrence Balance." *International Security* 28, no. 3 (January 2004): 45–83.

Adamsky, Dima. *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Allison, Graham T. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *The American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (September 1969): 689–718.

———. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971.

Andreski, Stanislav. *Military Organization and Society*. University of California Press, 1968.

Arreguín-Toft, Ivan. "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict." *International Security* 26, no. 1 (July 2001): 93–128.

Arreguín-Toft, Ivan M. *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations 99. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Art, Robert J. "American Foreign Policy and the Fungibility of Force." *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (June 1, 1996): 7–42.

———. "To What Ends Military Power?" *International Security* 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980): 3–35.

Art, Robert J, and Kenneth N Waltz. *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Baldwin, David A. "Interdependence and Power: A Conceptual Analysis." *International Organization* 34, no. 04 (September 1980): 471.

———. "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies." *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1, 1979): 161–94.

Bell, Sam R., and Jesse C. Johnson. "Shifting Power, Commitment Problems, and Preventive War." *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 124–32.

Bennett, Andrew, and Colin Elman. "QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (June 2006): 455–76.

Berger, Thomas U. *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Betts, Richard K. "Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence." *World Politics* 37, no. 02 (January 1985): 153–79.

———. "Must War Find a Way?: A Review Essay." *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1999): 166–98.

Biddle, Stephen. "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-Defense Theory." *The Journal of Politics* 63, no. 03 (August 2001): 741–74.

———. "The Past as Prologue: Assessing Theories of Future Warfare." *Security Studies* 8, no. 1 (September 1998): 1–74.

Biddle, Stephen D. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Blainey, Geoffrey. *The Causes of War*. New York: Free Press, 1988.

Boulding, Kenneth Ewart. *Conflict and Defense; a General Theory*. New York: Harper, 1962. http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001109316.

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

Brodie, Bernard. *Sea Power in the Machine Age*. Princeton, London: Princeton University Press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1941.

Brodie, Bernard, and Fawn McKay Brodie. *From Crossbow to H-Bomb*. A Midland Book, MB 161. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.

Brooks, Risa, and Elizabeth A. Stanley, eds. *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Brooks, Stephen G. "Dueling Realisms." *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 445–77.

Brown, Michael E., Owen Coté, Lynn-Jones, Sean M., and Steven E. Miller, eds. *Offense, Defense, and War*. An International Security Reader. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. *The War Trap*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Buzan, Barry. "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School." *International Organization* 47, no. 03 (June 1993): 327.

———. *People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. Colchester: ECPR Press, 2007.

Buzan, Barry, Charles A. Jones, and Richard Little. *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*. New Directions in World Politics. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Byman, Daniel L., and Kenneth M. Pollack. "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In." *International Security* 25, no. 4 (April 2001): 107–46.

Carr, Edward Hallett. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939; an Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Christensen, Thomas J. *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Christensen, Thomas J., and Jack Snyder. "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity." *International Organization* 44, no. 02 (March 1990): 137.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Translated by Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret. First paperback printing. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Cohen, Eliot A., and John Gooch. *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*. New York: Free Press, 1990.

Collier, David, and James Mahoney. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 49, no. 01 (October 1996): 56–91.

Copeland, Dale C. *The Origins of Major War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Dahl, Robert A., and Bruce Stinebrickner. *Modern Political Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Davis, James W., Bernard I. Finel, Stacie E. Goddard, Stephen Van Evera, Charles L. Glaser, and Chaim Kaufmann. "Correspondence: Taking Offense at Offense-Defense Theory." *International Security* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 1999): 179–206.

Desch, Michael C. "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies." *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 141–70.

Doyle, Michael W. *Empires*. Cornell Studies in Comparative History. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1986.

———. "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs (Part 1)." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 205–35.

———. *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism*. New York: Norton, 1997.

Dueck, Colin. *Reluctant Crusaders Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=445472.

Duffield, John S. "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism." *International Organization* 53, no. 04 (September 1999): 765–803.

Dupuy, Trevor N. *The Evolution of Weapons and Warfare*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980.

Earle, Edward Mead, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Edelstein, David. "Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers." *Security Studies* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 2002): 1–40.

Elman, Colin. "Horses for Courses: Why No Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?" *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (September 1996): 7–53.

Epstein, Joshua M. *The Calculus of Conventional War: Dynamic Analysis without Lanchester Theory*. Studies in Defense Policy. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1985.

Evangelista, Matthew. *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Evera, Stephen Van. "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War." *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58.

Farnham, Barbara, ed. *Avoiding Losses/taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Farrell, Theo, and Terry Terriff, eds. *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology*. Making Sense of Global Security. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.

Fazal, Tanisha M. *State Death the Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Fearon, James D. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49, no. 03 (June 1995): 379.

———. "The Offense-Defense Balance and War Since 1648." unpublished, April 8, 1997.

Feaver, Peter D., Gunther Hellmann, Randall L. Schweller, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, William C. Wohlforth, Jeffrey W. Legro, and Andrew Moravcsik. "Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? (Or Was Anybody Ever a Realist?)." *International Security* 25, no. 1 (July 2000): 165–93.

Fischerkeller, Michael P. "David versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars." *Security Studies* 7, no. 4 (June 1998): 1–43.

Gaddis, John Lewis. "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System." *International Security* 10, no. 4 (1986): 99.

Gartzke, Erik. "War Is in the Error Term." *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): 567–87.

Gartzke, Erik, and Dominic Rohner. "The Political Economy of Imperialism, Decolonization and Development." *British Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 03 (July 2011): 525–56.

Geller, Daniel S. "Power Differentials and War in Rival Dyads." *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (June 1993): 173.

Geller, D. S. "Power Transition and Conflict Initiation." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 1–16.

Gellner, Ernest, and John Breuilly. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Gentry, John A. *How Wars Are Won and Lost: Vulnerability and Military Power*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2012.

Gilpin, Robert. *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Foreign Direct Investment*. The Political Economy of International Relations Series. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

———. *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Glaser, Charles L. "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models." *World Politics* 44, no. 04 (July 1992): 497–538.

———. "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help." *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 50.

———. "The Security Dilemma Revisited." *World Politics* 50, no. 01 (October 1997): 171–201.

Glaser, Charles L., and Chaim Kaufmann. "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?" *International Security* 22, no. 4 (April 1, 1998): 44–82.

Goldman, Emily O. *Power in Uncertain Times: Strategy in the Fog of Peace*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Gourevitch, Peter. "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics." *International Organization* 32, no. 04 (September 1978): 881.

Gray, Colin S. *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Grieco, Joseph M. "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism." *International Organization* 42, no. 03 (June 1988): 485.

Hassner, Ron E., and Jason Wittenberg. "Barriers to Entry: Who Builds Fortified Boundaries and Why?" *International Security* 40, no. 1 (2015): 157–90.

Hintze, Otto. *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Hopf, Ted. "Polarity, The Offense Defense Balance, and War." *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 2 (June 1991): 475.

Horowitz, Michael. *The Diffusion of Military Power : Causes and Consequences for International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Hughes, Wayne P. *Fleet Tactics and Coastal Combat*. Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 2000.

———. , ed. *The U.S. Naval Institute on Naval Tactics*. U.S. Naval Institute Wheel Books. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2015.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.

———. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. 19. print. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2002.

———. "US Defense Strategy: The Strategic Innovations of the Reagan Years." In *American Defence Annual 1988*, by Joseph Kruzel. Lexington: Prentice Hall & IBD, 1988.

Ikenberry, G. John. *After Victory Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10491748.

Ikenberry, G. John, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth. "Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences." *World Politics* 61, no. 01 (January 2009): 1.

Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 30, no. 02 (January 1978): 167–214.

———. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976.

———. "The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past." *International Security* 16, no. 3 (1991).

Johnston, Alastair Iain. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Third print. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

———. "Thinking about Strategic Culture." *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 32–64.

Jones, Archer. *The Art of War in the Western World*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Kahneman, Daniel, and Amos Tversky. "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk." *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (March 1979): 263.

Katzenstein, Peter J., ed. *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

———. , ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New Directions in World Politics. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Kennedy, Paul M. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. London ;Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Ashfield Press, 1986.

Keohane, Robert O. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

———. "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond." In *Neorealism and Its Critics*, edited by Robert O. Keohane. The Political Economy of International Change. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton Paperbacks. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Kier, Elizabeth. *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Kim, Woosang. "Power Transitions and Great Power War from Westphalia to Waterloo." *World Politics* 45, no. 01 (October 1992): 153–72.

Kissinger, Henry A. "The Viet Nam Negotiations." *Foreign Affairs*, January 1969. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1969-01-01/viet-nam-negotiations.

Klein, Bradley S. "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics." *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 02 (April 1988): 133.

Kliman, Daniel M. *Fateful Transitions: How Democracies Manage Rising Powers, from the Eve of World War I to China's Ascendance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Krasner, Stephen D. *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Kristof, Ladis K. D. "The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 49, no. 3 (September 1, 1959): 269–82.

Kupchan, Charles. *The Vulnerability of Empire*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Kupchan, Charles A. "Setting Conventional Force Requirements: Roughly Right or Precisely Wrong?" *World Politics* 41, no. 04 (July 1989): 536–78.

Kydd, Andrew. "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do Not Fight Each Other." *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (September 1997): 114–55.

Larson, Deborah Welch. *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Lebow, Richard Ned. *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis*. 4. [print]. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Lebow, R. N., and B. Valentino. "Lost in Transition: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory." *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 389–410.

Legro, Jeffrey. *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint during World War II*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Legro, Jeffrey W. "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II." *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 108.

Legro, Jeffrey W., and Andrew Moravcsik. "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1999): 5–55.

Lemke, Douglas. "Investigating the Preventive Motive for War." *International Interactions* 29, no. 4 (October 2003): 273–92.

Lemke, D., and W. Reed. "Power Is Not Satisfaction: A Comment on de Soysa, Oneal, and Park." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August 1, 1998): 511–16.

Levy, Jack. "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (March 2008): 1–18.

Levy, Jack S. "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War." *World Politics* 40, no. 01 (October 1987): 82–107.

———. "Domestic Politics and War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 653.

———. "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War." *International Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 1986): 193.

———. "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis." *International Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (June 1984).

Levy, Jack S., and William R. Thompson. "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?" *International Security* 35, no. 1 (July 2010): 7–43.

Liberman, Peter. "The Spoils of Conquest." *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 125.

Liddell Hart, Basil Henry. *Strategy*. New York, NY: Meridian, 1991.

Lieber, Keir A. "Grasping the Technological Peace: The Offense-Defense Balance and International Security." *International Security* 25, no. 1 (July 1, 2000): 71–104.

———. *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics over Technology*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Liff, Adam P. "Shadowing the Hegemon? Great Power Norms, Socialization, and the Military Trajectories of Rising Powers." Ph.D., Princeton University, 2014. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1558898357.

Liou, Yu-Ming, Paul Musgrave, and J. Furman Daniel. "The Imitation Game: Why Don't Rising Powers Innovate Their Militaries More?" *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 157–74.

Luttwak, Edward N. *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

Lykke, Jr., Arthur F. "Toward An Understanding of Military Strategy." In *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, by Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., n.d.

Lynn-Jones, Sean M. "Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics." *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (June 1, 1995): 660–91.

MacDonald, Paul K., and Joseph M. Parent. "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment." *International Security* 35, no. 4 (April 2011): 7–44.

Mack, Andrew. "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict." *World Politics* 27, no. 02 (January 1975): 175–200.

Mackinder, H J. "The Geographical Pivot of History (1904)." *The Geographical Journal* 170, no. 4 (n.d.): 298–321.

Mackinder, Sir Halford John. *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. H. Holt, 1919.

Mahnken, Thomas G. *Technology and the American Way of War since 1945*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Mahoney, James. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 62, no. 01 (January 2010): 120–47.

Maoz, Zeev. "Power, Capabilities, and Paradoxical Conflict Outcomes." *World Politics* 41, no. 02 (January 1989): 239–66.

Markey, Daniel. "Prestige and the Origins of War: Returning to Realism's Roots." *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (June 1999): 126–72.

Mastanduno, Michael, David A. Lake, and G. John. Ikenberry. "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action." *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (December 1989): 457–74.

May, Ernest R. *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*. London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

McDevitt, Michael. "Becoming a Great 'Maritime Power': A Chinese Dream." CNA, June 2016.

Mearsheimer, John J. "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War." *International Security* 15, no. 1 (1990): 5.

———. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 5.

———. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001.

Merom, Gil. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Modelski, George. "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 02 (April 1978): 214.

Monteiro, Nuno P. *Theory of Unipolar Politics*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations 132. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

———. "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful." *International Security* 36, no. 3 (January 2012): 9–40.

Moravcsik, Andrew. "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics." *International Organization* 51, no. 04 (September 1997): 513–53.

Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 6. ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985.

Morrow, James D. "Arms versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security." *International Organization* 47, no. 02 (March 1993): 207.

Neustadt, Richard E., and Ernest R. May. *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers*. New York: Free Press, 1988.

Nye, Jr., Joseph S. "The Changing Nature of World Power." *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 177–92.

Olson, Mancur Lloyd. *The Rise and Decline of Nations*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Organski, A. F. K. *World Politics*. Knopf, 1958.

Organski, A. F. K., and Jacek Kugler. *The War Ledger*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1981.

Pape, Robert Anthony. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Paul, T. V. *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations 33. Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Posen, Barry R. "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power." *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 80.

———. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Powell, Robert. "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory." *The American Political Science Review*, 1991, 1303–20.

———. "Guns, Butter, and Anarchy." *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 1 (March 1993): 115.

———. "Stability and the Distribution of Power." *World Politics* 48, no. 02 (January 1996): 239–67.

Putnam, Robert D. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization* 42, no. 03 (June 1988): 427.

Quester, George H. *Offense and Defense in the International System*. International Relations Series. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1988.

———. *Offense and Defense in the International System*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003.

Reiter, Dan. *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliances, and World Wars*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996.

———. "Exploding the Powder Keg Myth: Preemptive Wars Almost Never Happen." *International Security* 20, no. 2 (1995): 5.

Reiter, Dan, and Curtis Meek. "Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903–1994: A Quantitative Empirical Test." *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1999): 363–87.

Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. *Democracies at War*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Resende-Santos, Joâo. "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems: Military Organization and Technology in South America, 1870–1930." *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (March 1, 1996): 193–260.

Rogowski, Ronald. "Structure, Growth, and Power: Three Rationalist Accounts." *International Organization* 37, no. 04 (September 1983): 713.

Rosecrance, Richard N., and Arthur A. Stein, eds. *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Rosen, Stephen Peter. "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters." *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 5.

———. *Winning the next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Rostow, Walt W. *Politics and the Stages of Growth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Rostow, W. W. "The Stages of Economic Growth." *The Economic History Review* 12, no. 1 (1959): 1–16.

Ruggie, John Gerard. "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order." *International Organization* 36, no. 02 (March 1982): 379.

———. "International Responses to Technology: Concepts and Trends." *International Organization* 29, no. 03 (June 1975): 557.

Sagan, Scott D. "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability." *International Security* 11, no. 2 (1986): 151.

Sapolsky, Harvey M., Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge. *US Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014.

Sasaki, K., T. Naito, T. Satomi, and Y. Momoki. "Chemical Modification of Streptovaricin C. II The Intramolecular Aldol Condensation of 19-O-Acetonyl-Damavaricin C and Its Analogs." *The Journal of Antibiotics* 29, no. 2 (February 1976): 199–200.

Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1976.

Schweller, Randall L. "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In." *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 72.

———. *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

———. "Neorealism's Status-quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (March 1996): 90–121.

Seawright, J., and J. Gerring. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (February 9, 2008): 294–308.

Sechser, Todd S. "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power." *International Organization* 64, no. 04 (October 2010): 627–60.

Shimshoni, Jonathan. "Technology, Military Advantage, and World War I: A Case for Military Entrepreneurship." *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990): 187.

Snidal, Duncan. "International Cooperation among Relative Gains Maximizers." *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (December 1991): 387.

Snyder, Glenn Herald. *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Snyder, Glenn Herald, and Paul Diesing. *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977.

Snyder, Jack. "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984." *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108.

———. *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. 2. print. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Snyder, Jack L. *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1997. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2005/R2154.pdf.

Soysa, Indra de, John R. Oneal, and Yong-Hee Park. "Testing Power-Transition Theory Using Alternative Measures of National Capabilities." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 4 (August 1, 1997): 509–28.

Spruyt, Hendrik. *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Spykman, Nicholas John. "Frontiers, Security, and International Organization." *Geographical Review* 32, no. 3 (July 1942): 436.

———. *The Geography of the Peace*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944.

Stam III, Allan C. *Win, Lose, or Draw: Domestic Politics and the Crucible of War*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Sullivan, P. L. "War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 3 (June 1, 2007): 496–524.

Tangredi, Sam J. *Anti-Access Warfare: Countering A2/AD Strategies*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013.

Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*. Studies in Social Discontinuity. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992.

Trachtenberg, Marc. "The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914." *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990): 120.

(U.S.), National Intelligence Council. *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*. Government Printing Office, 2013.

van Creveld, Martin. *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present*. New York : Toronto : New York: Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1991.

Van Evera, Stephen. *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

———. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

———. "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War." *International Security* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1994): 5–39.

———. "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War." *International Security* 22, no. 4 (April 1998): 5–43.

———. "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War." *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990): 7.

Vasquez, J. A. "Capability, Types of War, Peace." *Political Research Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 1986): 313–27.

Vasquez, John A. *The War Puzzle*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations 27. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Vickers, Michael G. "The Structure of Military Revolutions." Johns Hopkins University, 2011.

Walt, Stephen M. *The Origins of Alliances*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

———. "The Search for a Science of Strategy: A Review Essay." *International Security* 12, no. 1 (1987): 140.

Waltz, Kenneth N. "International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy." *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (September 1996): 54–57.

———. "Structural Realism after the Cold War." *International Security* 25, no. 1 (July 2000): 5–41.

———. "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 615.

———. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979.

Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

Weigley, Russell F. *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 02 (March 1992): 391.

———. "Constructing International Politics." *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 71.

Wilson, James Q. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000.

Wohlforth, William Curti. *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Wolfers, Arnold. *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Yarhi-Milo, Keren. "In the Eye of the Beholder: How Leaders and Intelligence Communities Assess the Intentions of Adversaries." *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 2013): 7–51.

———. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*, 2014.

Zakaria, Fareed. "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay." *International Security* 17, no. 1 (1992): 177.

Zisk, Kimberly Marten. *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955-1991*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993.

American Case

Bauer, K. Jack, ed. *The New American State Papers, Naval Affairs. Vol. 10*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1981.

Beale, Howard K. *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*. The Albert Shaw Lectures on Diplomatic History 1953. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956.

Coletta, Paolo Enrico. *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987.

Cooling, Benjamin Franklin. *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy: The Formative Years of America's Military-Industrial Complex, 1881-1917*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979.

Epstein, Katherine C. *Torpedo: Inventing the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Friedman, Norman. *The US Maritime Strategy*. London: Jane's, 1988.

Hendrix, Henry J. *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009.

Kennedy, Paul M. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

———. , ed. *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1979.

King, Randolph W., ed. *Naval Engineering and American Seapower*. Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1989.

Love, Robert William. *History of the U.S. Navy*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992.

Mahan, A. T. *From Sail to Steam: Recollections of Naval Life*. New York: Harper, 1907.

———. *Mahan on Naval Warfare: Selections from the Writing of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*. Edited by Allan F. Westcott. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1941.

———. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*. American Century Series S-10. New York: Sagamore Press, 1957.

McBride, William M. *Technological Change and the United States Navy, 1865-1945*. Johns Hopkins Studies in the History of Technology. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Reckner, James R. *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988.

Schroeder, John H. *Shaping a Maritime Empire: The Commercial and Diplomatic Role of the American Navy, 1829-1861*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Shulman, Mark R. *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995.

"Special - 'The Dawn of a New Naval Century' | U.S. Naval Institute." Accessed December 31, 2014. http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2014-08/special-dawn-new-naval-century.

Sprout, Harold. *Toward a New Order of Sea Power; American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940.

Sprout, Harold, and Margaret Tuttle Sprout. *The Rise of American Naval Power: 1776-1918*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946.

Symonds, Craig L. *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1980.

Weinberg, Albert Katz. *Manifest Destiny; a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935.

Wimmel, Kenneth. *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet: American Seapower Comes of Age*. Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998.

German Case

Berghahn, Volker R. *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1973.

Bönker, Dirk. *Militarism in a Global Age Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*. The United States in the World. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012.

Bülow, Bernhard. *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*. Translated by Fritz August Voigt. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931.

Epkenhans, Michael. *Tirpitz: Architect of the German High Seas Fleet*. Military Profiles. Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2008.

Gauss, Christian. *The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances*. New York: Scribner's, 1915.

Henderson, W. O. *The Rise of German Industrial Power, 1834-1914*. London: Temple Smith, 1975.

Herwig, Holger H. *"Luxury Fleet": The Imperial German Navy, 1888-1918*. London ; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980.

Hobson, Rolf. *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914*. Studies in Central European Histories. Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2002.

Hurd, Sir Archibald, and Henry Anson Castle. *German Sea-Power: Its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis*. Murray, 1913.

Kehr, Eckart. *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Kelly, Patrick J. *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011.

Kennedy, Paul M., ed. *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1979.

Kennedy, Paul Michael. *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism: 1860-1914*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1982.

Kerr, Mark Edward Frederic. *Land, Sea, and Air;: Reminiscences of Mark Kerr*. Longmans, Green and Co, 1927.

Lambi, Ivo Nikolai. *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862 - 1914*. Boston, Mass. [u.a.]: Allen & Unwin, 1984.

League of Nations. *Industrialization and Foreign Trade*. League of Nations. Series of Publications. II. Economic and Financial. United States: League of Nations, 1945.

Ludwig, Emil. *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. London: G. P. Putnam's sons, ltd., 1926.

MacDonogh, Giles. *The Last Kaiser William the Impetuous*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000.

Mombauer, Annika, and Wilhelm Deist, eds. *The Kaiser New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Padfield, Peter. *The Great Naval Race: The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry, 1900-1914*. New York: D. McKay Company, 1974.

Ritter, Gerhard. *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press Reprint, 1979.

Röhl, J. C. G. *Germany without Bismarck*. London: London Batsford, 1967.

Röhl, John C. G. *Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1859-1941: A Concise Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Rüger, Jan. *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Seligmann, Matthew S., ed. *The Naval Route to the Abyss the Anglo-German Naval Race 1895 - 1914*. Publications of the Navy Records Society 161. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015.

———. *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901-1914: Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War against Germany*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Snyder, Jack L. *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Steinberg, Jonathan. *Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and the Birth of the German Battle*. Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1993.

Tirpitz, Alfred von. *My Memoirs, by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1919.

VanDerKiste, John. *Kaiser Wilhelm II Germany's Last Emperor*. Stroud [u.a.]: Sutton, 1999.

Wegener, Vice Admiral Wolfgang. *The Naval Strategy of the World War*. Translated by Holger H. Herwig. Annapolis, Md: US Naval Institute Press, 1989.

Weir, Gary E. *Building the Kaiser's Navy the Imperial Navy Office and German Industry in the von Tirpitz Era, 1890 - 1919*. 1. print. Annapolis, Md: Naval Inst. Press, 1992.

William II. *The Kaiser's Memoirs, 1888-1918*. New York: Narper & Brothers, 1922.

Woodward, E. L. *Great Britain and the German Navy*. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1935.

Yabarra, Thomas Russell, trans. *The Kaiser's Memoirs, Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888-1918; English Translation by Thomas R. Ybarra*. New York; London: Harper, 1922.

Zuber, Terence. *German War Planning, 1891-1914: Sources and Interpretations*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K. ; Rochester, N.Y: Boydell Press, 2004.

British Case

Bacon, Reginald. *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Admiral of the Fleet*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929.

Bell, Christopher M. *The Royal Navy, Seapower and Strategy between the Wars*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Company, 2000.

Brassey, Thomas Allnutt. *The Naval Annual, 1896*. Adamant Media Corporation, 2000.

Churchill, Winston S., and Martin Gilbert. *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*. New York: Free Press, 2005.

Clarke, George Sydenham Clarke, and James R. Thursfield. *The Navy and the Nation; Or, Naval Warfare and Imperial Defence*. London: J. Murray, 1897.

Cobb, Stephen. *Preparing for Blockade, 1885-1914: Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare*. Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

Corbett, Sir Julian Stafford. *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy: By Julian S. Corbett*. Longmans, Green and Company, 1918.

Dunlop, J. K. *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914, from the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force*. London: Methuen, 1938.

Friedberg, Aaron L. *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline,*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Gooch, G. P., and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, eds. *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*. London: H.M.S.O, 1926.

Great Britain. Admiralty. *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher (v2)*. Edited by Peter Kemp. Vol. 2. London: Navy Records Society, 1964.

Horowitz, Michael. *The Diffusion of Military Power : Causes and Consequences for International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Jones, Spencer. *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012.

Kelly, Patrick J. *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011.

Kemp, Peter, ed. *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*. 2 vols. London: Navy Records Society, 1960.

Kennedy, Greg. *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856-1956*. Cass Military Studies. London: Routledge, 2008.

Kennedy, Paul M. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. London: A. Lane, 1976.

———. , ed. *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1979.

Lambert, Nicholas A. *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*. Studies in Maritime History. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

Langer, William L. *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*. New York: Knopf, 1951.

League of Nations. *Industrialization and Foreign Trade*. League of Nations. Series of Publications. II. Economic and Financial. United States: League of Nations, 1945.

Liddell Hart, Basil Henry. *The Defence of Britain*. London: Faber and Faber limited, 1939.

Lowe. *Reluctant Imperialists Pt1*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Mackintosh, Alexander. *Joseph Chamberlain: An Honest Biography*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914.

Mallet, Bernard. *British Budgets 1887-88 to 1912-13*. London: Macmillan and Company, 1913.

Marder, Arthur Jacob. *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905 : The Anatomy of British Sea Power*. London: Putnam, 1940.

———. , ed. *Fear God and Dread Nought; the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952.

———. *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; the Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Massie, Robert K. *Dreadnought*. New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2012.

Monger, George W. *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976.

O'Brien, Phillips Payson. "The Titan Refreshed: Imperial Overstretch and the British Navy before the First World War." *Past & Present*, no. 172 (August 2001): 146–69.

Padfield, Peter. *The Great Naval Race: The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry, 1900-1914*. New York: D. McKay Company, 1974.

Pirenne, Jacques. *Tides of History*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Rüger, Jan. *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Seligmann, Matthew S. *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901-1914: Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War against Germany*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Silburn, Percy Arthur Baxter. *The Colonies and Imperial Defence*. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1909.

Smith, Humphrey Hugh. *A Yellow Admiral Remembers*. Edward Arnold, 1932.

"Special - 'The Dawn of a New Naval Century' | U.S. Naval Institute." Accessed December 31, 2014. http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2014-08/special-dawn-new-naval-century.

Stokesbury, James L. *Navy and Empire*. New York: Morrow, 1983.

Sumida, Jon Tetsuro. *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Wernham, R. B. *Before the Armada: The Emergence of the English Nation,*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.

Wettern, Desmond. *The Decline of British Seapower*. London: Jane's, 1982.

Woodward, E. L. *Great Britain and the German Navy*. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1935.

French Case

Adamthwaite, Anthony P. *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936-1939*. London: Cass, 1977.

———. *Grandeur and Misery: France's Bid for Power in Europe, 1914-1940*. London: Arnold, 1995.

Alexander, Martin S. *The Republic in Danger: General Maurice Gamelin and the Politics of French Defence, 1933-1940*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Atkin, Nicholas. *The French at War, 1934-1944*. Harlow: Longman, 2001.

Bankwitz, Philip Charles Farwell. *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Bell, P. M. H. *France and Britain, 1900-1940: Entente and Estrangement*. London: Longman, 1996.

Blatt, Joel, ed. *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1998.

Bloch, Marc. *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*. New York: Norton, 1999.

Boyce, Robert W. D., ed. *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918 - 1940: The Decline and Fall of a Great Power*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Churchill, Winston. *The Gathering Storm*. The Second World War. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

Churchill, Winston, and Winston Churchill. *Their Finest Hour*. The Second World War, v. 2. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

Cohen, Eliot A., and John Gooch. *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*. New York: Free Press, 1990.

Desch, Michael C. "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies." *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 141–70.

Girault, René, and Robert Frank. *Turbulente Europe et nouveaux mondes (1914-1941) : Histoire des relations internationales contemporaines, Tome 2*. Paris: Payot, 2004.

Horne, Alistair. *To Lose a Battle: France 1940*. London: Penguin, 2007.

Hughes, Judith M. *To the Maginot Line: The Politics of French Military Preparation in the 1920's*. Harvard Historical Monographs 64. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Kaufmann, J. E, and H. W Kaufmann. *Fortress France: The Maginot Line and French Defenses in World War II*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2007.

Kaufmann, J. E., and H. W. Kaufmann. *The Maginot Line: None Shall Pass*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.

Kemp, Anthony. *The Maginot Line: Myth and Reality*. New York: Stein and Day, 1982.

Kiesling, Eugenia C. *Arming against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996.

Kiesling, Eugenia C. "Resting Uncomfortably on Its Laurels." In *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918 - 1941*, by Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets. Studies in War, Society, and the Military. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.

Luttichau, Martin Blumenson, Robert W. Coakley, Stetson Conn, Byron Fairchild, Richard M. Leighton, Charles V. P. von. *Command Decisions*. Government Printing Office, n.d.

Maiolo, Joseph A. *Cry Havoc: How the Arms Race Drove the World to War, 1931 - 1941*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

May, Ernest R. *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001.

Murray, Williamson, and Allan R. Millett, eds. *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Porch, Douglas. "Review: Military 'Culture' and the Fall of France in 1940: A Review Essay." *International Security* 24, no. 4 (Spring 2000): 157–80.

Ropp, Theodore. *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy, 1871-1904*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987.

Rowe, Vivian. *The Great Wall of France: The Triumph of the Maginot Line*. New York: Putnam, 1961.

The Maginot Line - the Facts Revealed (by a French Officer). London: Duckworth, 1939.

Weber, Eugen. *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s*. New York: Norton, 1994.

Young, Robert J. *In Command of France: French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933-1940*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Japanese Case

Adams, Andrew. *Born To Die: The Cherry Blossom Squadrons*. Ohara Publications, 1973.

Asada, Sadao. *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor the Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States.* Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013.

Axell, Albert, and Hideaki Kase. *Kamikaze: Japan's Suicide Gods*. London: Longman, 2002.

Barnhart, Michael A. *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919 - 1941*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Bix, Herbert P. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: Perennial, 2002.

Boyd, Carl, and Akihiko Yoshida. *The Japanese Submarine Force and World War II*. Bluejacket Books. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002.

Bresnahan, Jim, ed. *Refighting the Pacific War: An Alternative History of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011.

Butow, Robert J. C. *Tojo and the Coming of the War*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969.

Crowley, James Buckley. *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938.*, 2015.

D'Albas, Andrieu. *Death of a Navy: Japanese Naval Action in World War II*. Devin-Adair Co., 1957.

Dingman, Roger. *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-1922*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

Dower, John W. *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

Dull, Paul S. *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941 - 1945)*. Cambridge, MA: Stephens, 1978.

Ellis, John. *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War*. New York: Viking, 1990.

Evans, David C., ed. *The Japanese Navy in World War II: In the Words of Former Japanese Naval Officers*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986.

Evans, David C., and Mark R. Peattie. *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997.

Feis, Herbert. *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War between the United States and Japan*, 1950.

Goldstein, Donald M., and Katherine V. Dillon, eds. *The Pacific War Papers: Japanese Documents of World War II*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2004.

Green, Michael J. *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Harries, Meirion, and Susie Harries. *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army*. New York: Random House, 1991.

Hull, Cordell, and Andrew Henry Thomas Berding. *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*. Macmillan Company, 1948.

Inoguchi, Rikihei, Tadashi Nakajima, and Roger Pineau. *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978.

Iriye, Akira. *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*. New York: Routledge, 1987.

Itō, Masanori, and Roger Pineau. *The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984.

Kahler, Miles. "External Ambition and Economic Performance." *World Politics* 40, no. 04 (July 1988): 419–51.

Lu, David J. *From the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor a Study of Japan's Entry Into World War II*. Public Affairs Press, 1961.

Miller, Edward S. *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan,*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007.

Morley, James William, and Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai, eds. *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941: Selected Translations from Taiheiyō Sensō E No Michi, Kaisen Gaikō Shi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Naitō, Hatsuho. *Thunder Gods: The Kamikaze Pilots Tell Their Story*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989.

O'Neill, Richard. *Suicide Squads, W.W. II: Axis and Allied Special Attack Weapons of World War II, Their Development and Their Missions*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

Overy, Richard. *Why the Allies Won*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Peattie, Mark R. *Sunburst: The Rise of the Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001.

Pelz, Stephen E. *Race to Pearl Harbor; the Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II*. Harvard Studies in American-East Asian Relations 5. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Stille, Mark. *The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War*. New York, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2014.

Tanin, O., and E. Yohan. *When Japan Goes to War*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1936.

Thomas, Evan. *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign, 1941-1945*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

Toland, John. *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945*. New York: Random House, 1970.

"United States Strategic Bombing Survey - Summary Report (Pacific War)." Government Printing Office, 1946.

Wetzler, Peter Michael. *Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

Willmott, H. P. *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

———. *The Barrier and the Javelin: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies, February to June 1942*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1983.

Wood, James B. *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Worth, Roland H. *No Choice but War: The United States Embargo against Japan and the Eruption of War in the Pacific*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 1995.

Young, Louise. *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

Russian Case

Adamsky, Dima. *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Andropov, I͡U V. *Speeches and Writings*. Leaders of the World. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1983.

Arbatov, Georgi. *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1993.

Azrael, Jeremy R. *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command, 1976-1986*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1987.

Baev, Pavel. *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

Barany, Zoltan. *Democratic Breakdown and the Decline of the Russian Military*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

Blanchard, Olivier, Kenneth Froot, and Jeffrey Sachs, eds. *The Transition in Eastern Europe*. A National Bureau of Economic Research Project Report. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Blank, Stephen. "The Great Exception: Russian Civil-Military Relations." *World Affairs* 165, no. 2 (2002): 91–105.

Blank, Stephen J. "Valuing the Human Factor: The Reform of Russian Military Manpower." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1999): 64–93.

Bluth, Christoph. *The Collapse of Soviet Military Power*. Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1995.

Brown, Archie. *The Gorbachev Factor*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Bush, George H. W., and Brent Scowcroft. *A World Transformed*. New York: Vintage, 1999.

Cherni͡aev, A. S. *My Six Years with Gorbachev*. Translated by Robert English and Elizabeth Tucker. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Cimbala, Stephen J., ed. *The Russian Military into the Twenty-First Century*. Cass Series on Soviet (Russian) Military Theory and Practice. London: Frank Cass, 2001.

Clark, Susan L., ed. *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.

Danspeckgruber, Wolfgang F. *Perspectives on the Russian State in Transition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2006.

Desch, Michael C. "Why the Soviet Military Supported Gorbachev but Why the Russian Military Might Only Support Yeltsin for a Price." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 1993): 455–89.

Dick, Charles J. "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 1994): 481–506.

Dobrynin, Anatoly. *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001.

Donaldson, Robert H., and Joseph L. Nogee. *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009.

Dunlop, John B. *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*. Princeton Paperbacks. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Firth, Noel E., and James H. Noren. *Soviet Defense Spending: A History of CIA Estimates, 1950-1990*. Texas A & M University Military History Series 58. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998.

FitzGerald, Mary C., Stephen Blank, Richard Weitz, and Army War College (U.S.), eds. *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Mary Fitzgerald*. Carlisle, PA: Stategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010.

Force, United States Air, trans. *Selected Soviet Military Writings 1970 - 1975: A Soviet View*. University Press of the Pacific, 2002.

Gates, Robert M. *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007.

Glantz, David M. *The Military Strategy of the Soviet Union: A History*. Cass Series on Soviet Military Theory and Practice 5. London, England ; Portland, Or: F. Cass, 1992.

Goldstein, Lyle J. "Russian Civil-military Relations in the Chechen War, December 1994–February 1995." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 1997): 109–27.

Gorbachev, Mikhail Sergeevich. *Memoirs*. New York: Doubleday, 1996.

———. *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*. New York: Perennial Library, 1988.

Gromyko, Andrei. *Memoirs*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Herspring, Dale R., ed. *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Herspring, Dale R. *The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Personalities and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Higham, Robin D. S., and Frederick W. Kagan, eds. *The Military History of the Soviet Union*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Holloway, David. "State, Society, and the Military under Gorbachev." *International Security* 14, no. 3 (1989): 5.

Kipp, Jacob W. "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons." *Military Review*, June 2001. http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/russias_nukes/russias_nukes.htm.

Kissinger, Henry. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Kokoshin, A. A. *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91*. CSIA Studies in International Security. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998.

Laird, Robbin F., and Erik P. Hoffmann, eds. *Soviet Foreign Policy in a Changing World*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986.

Luttwak, Edward. *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.

Matlock, Jack F. *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. New York: Random House, 1995.

MccGwire, Michael. *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1987.

Meyer, Stephen M. "How the Threat (and the Coup) Collapsed: The Politicization of the Soviet Military." *International Security* 16, no. 3 (1991): 5.

Miller, Steven E., and Dmitriĭ Trenin, eds. *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*. American Academy Studies in Global Security. Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences ; MIT Press, 2004.

Nogee, Joseph L., and Robert H. Donaldson. *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1988.

Odom, William E. *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Pallin, Carolina Vendil. *Russian Military Reform: A Failed Exercise in Defence Decision Making*. Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series 14. London: Routledge, 2009.

Parrott, Bruce, ed. *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy*. Washington, DC: Wilson Center Press, 1990.

Sapir, Jacques. *The Soviet Military System*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991.

Schneider, Mark. "The Nuclear Forces and Doctrine of the Russian Federation." Nationa Institute Press: United States Nuclear Strategy Forum, 2006.

Scott, Harriet Fast, and William Fontaine Scott. *Soviet Military Doctrine: Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

———. *The Armed Forces of the USSR*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press ; Arms and Armour Press, 1984.

Strayer, Robert W. *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?: Understanding Historical Change*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.

"The Sinatra Doctrine." *National Review Online*. Accessed December 29, 2015. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/210798/sinatra-doctrine-william-f-buckley-jr.

White, Stephen. *Gorbachev and after*. Cambridge Soviet Paperbacks 3. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Wolfe, Thomas W. *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads*. Harvard University, 1965.

Yeltsin, Boris Nikolayevich. *The Struggle for Russia*. Translated by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick. New York: Belka Publications Corp., 1994.

Zubok, V. M. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Conclusion

Andrew S. Erickson, Ja Ian Chong. "The Challenge of Maintaining American Security Ties in Post-Authoritarian East Asia." Text. *The National Interest*. Accessed January 29, 2015. http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-challenge-maintaining-american-security-ties-post-12145.

Army War College (U.S.), National Bureau of Asian Research (U.S.), and Texas A & M University. *Beyond the Strait: PLA Missions Other than Taiwan*. Edited by Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008.

Art, Robert J. "Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement." *International Security* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 1999): 79–113.

Beckley, Michael. "China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure." *International Security* 36, no. 3 (December 28, 2011): 41–78.

Blackwill, Robert D., and Ashley J. Tellis. *Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China*. Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2015.

Bracken, Paul. "Americ's Maginot Line." *The Atlantic*, December 1998. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1998/12/americas-maginot-line/377340/.

Brooks, Stephen G., G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth. "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment." *International Security* 37, no. 3 (December 13, 2012): 7–51.

———. "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement." *Foreign Affairs* 92 (2013): 130.

Chong, Ja Ian, and Todd H. Hall. "The Lessons of 1914 for East Asia Today: Missing the Trees for the Forest." *International Security* 39, no. 1 (July 1, 2014): 7–43.

Christensen, Thomas J. "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia." *International Security* 23, no. 4 (April 1, 1999): 49–80.

———. "Posing Problems Without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy." *International Security* 25, no. 4 (April 1, 2001): 5–40.

———. *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.

———. *Worse Than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Cliff, Roger, Mark Burles, Michael S. Chase, Derek Eaton, and Kevin L. Pollpeter. *Entering the Dragon's Lair*. RAND Corporation, 2007.

Dempsey, Martin E. "Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)." Department of Defense, 2012.

Drezner, Daniel W. "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think)." *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 1, 2013): 52–79.

Fravel, M. Taylor. "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes." *International Security* 30, no. 2 (October 1, 2005): 46–83.

Freedberg Jr., Sydney J. "The Next War." *Government Executive*, August 15, 2012. http://www.govexec.com/magazine/features/2012/08/next-war/57392/.

Friedberg, Aaron L. *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012.

———. *Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate Over US Military Strategy in Asia*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014.

———. *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Glaser, Charles L. "A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation." *International Security* 39, no. 4 (April 1, 2015): 49–90.

Glosny, Michael A., Phillip C. Saunders, and Robert S. Ross. "Debating China's Naval Nationalism." *International Security* 35, no. 2 (October 1, 2010): 161–75.

Goldstein, Lyle J. "China's Strange Fascination with the Soviet Navy." Text. *The National Interest*. Accessed December 28, 2014. http://nationalinterest.org/feature/china%E2%80%99s-strange-fascination-the-soviet-navy-11913.

Green, Michael J. "Safeguarding the Seas." *Foreign Affairs*, December 2, 2013. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140307/michael-j-green/safeguarding-the-seas.

Haddick, Robert. *Fire on the Water: China, America, and the Future of the Pacific*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014.

Hayton, Bill. *The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

———. "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security* 37, no. 4 (April 1, 2013): 7–48.

———. "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security* 27, no. 4 (April 1, 2003): 5–56.

Kaplan, Robert D. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2015.

———. “The Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Can Beijing Reach on Land and at Sea?” *Foreign Affairs*, 2010, 22–41.

Kissinger, Henry. *World Order*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014.

Krepinevich, Andrew F. “How to Deter China.” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (April 2015). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-02-16/how-deter-china.

Krepinevich, Andrew F., Barry D. Watts, and Robert O. Work. *Meeting the Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenge*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2003. http://www.csbaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2003.05.20-Anti-Access-Area-Denial-A2-AD.pdf.

Legro, Jeffrey W. “What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power.” *Perspectives on Politics* null, no. 03 (September 2007): 515–34.

Liff, Adam P., and G. John Ikenberry. “Racing toward Tragedy?: China’s Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma.” *International Security* 39, no. 2 (October 1, 2014): 52–91.

Medeiros, Evan S., and M. Taylor Fravel. “China’s New Diplomacy.” *Foreign Affairs* 82 (2003): 22.

Montgomery, Evan Braden. “Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific.” *International Security* 38, no. 4 (April 1, 2014): 115–49.

Nye, Joseph S. *Is the American Century Over*. Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2015.

Ochmanek, David. “Sustaining U.S. Leadership in the Asia-Pacific Region.” Product Page, 2015. http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE142.html.

Overholt, William H. “China in the Global Financial Crisis: Rising Influence, Rising Challenges.” *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 21–34.

Paulson, Henry M. *Dealing with China: An Insider Unmasks the New Economic Superpower*. New York: Twelve, 2015.

Pillsbury, Michael. *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. Henry Holt and Company, 2015.

Posen, Barry R. “Pull Back: The Case of a Less Activist Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Affairs* 92 (2013): 116.

———. *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Posen, Barry R., and Andrew L. Ross. “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy.” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (January 1, 1997): 5–53.

Ratner, Ely. “Rebalancing to Asia with an Insecure China.” *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 21–38.

Ross, Robert S. “Beijing as a Conservative Power.” *Foreign Affairs*, 1997, 33–44.

———. “China’s Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response.” *International Security* 34, no. 2 (September 30, 2009): 46–81.

Roy, Denny. “Hegemon on the Horizon? China’s Threat to East Asian Security.” *International Security*, 1994, 149–68.

Scobell, Andrew, and Andrew J. Nathan. "China's Overstretched Military." *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 135–48.

Steinberg, James, and Michael E. O`Hanlon. *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: U.S.-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Swaine, Michael D. *America's Challenge: Engaging a Rising China in the Twenty-First Century*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2011.

Tangredi, Sam J. *Anti-Access Warfare: Countering A2/AD Strategies*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013.

Tetlock, Philip E. "Theory-Driven Reasoning About Plausible Pasts and Probable Futures in World Politics: Are We Prisoners of Our Preconceptions?" *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 2 (1999): 335–66.

T. X. Hammes, R. D. Hooker Jr. "America's Ultimate Strategy in a Clash with China." Text. *The National Interest*. Accessed May 29, 2015. http://nationalinterest.org/feature/americas-ultimate-strategy-clash-china-10633.

U.S. Department of Defense. "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015," 2015. http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2015_China_Military_Power_Report.pdf.

Wright, Thomas. "The Rise and Fall of the Unipolar Concert." *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 7–24.