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Perception and Misperception
in International Politics

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Deterrence, the Spiral Model, and Intentions of the Adversary

Two Views of International Relations and the Cold War

Differing perceptions of the other state's intentions often underlie policy debates. In the frequent cases when the participants do not realize that they differ on this crucial point, the dispute is apt to be both vituperative and unproductive. This has been the case with much of the debate in the United States over deterrence theories and policies. Although the arguments have been couched in terms of clashing general theories of international relations, most of the dispute can be accounted for in terms of disagreements about Soviet intentions. An examination of this debate will reveal the central significance of perceptions of intentions for most decision-making and will shed light on the causes and consequences of several common misperceptions.[1]

Deterrence

For our purposes we need not be concerned with the many subtleties and complexities of deterrence theory, but only with the central argument that great dangers arise if an aggressor believes that the status quo powers are weak in capability or resolve. This belief will lead the former to test its opponents, usually starting with a small and apparently unimportant issue. If the status quo powers retreat, they will not only lose the specific value at stake but, more important in the long run, will encourage the aggressor to press harder. Even if the defenders later recognize their plight and are willing to pay a higher price to prevent further retreats, they will find it increasingly difficult to convince the aggressor of their new-found resolve. The choice will then be between continuing to retreat and thereby sacrificing basic values or fighting.

To avoid this disastrous situation, the state must display the ability and willingness to wage war. It may not be able to ignore minor conflicts or to judge disputes on their merits. Issues of little intrinsic value become highly significant as indices of resolve. Thus even though President Ken-

nedy had ordered American missiles out of Turkey before the Cuban missile crisis, he would not agree to remove them as the price for obtaining Soviet cooperation. Many conflicts resemble the game of "Chicken," and, in such a game, Thomas Schelling argues, "It may be safer in the long run to hew to the center of the road than to yield six inches on successive nights, if one is really going to stop yielding before being pushed onto the shoulder. It may save both parties a collision." To take Kenneth Boulding's suggestion that we go "off on a side road" and "refuse to play the game" is to invite costly depredations.[2]

The state must often go to extremes because moderation and conciliation are apt to be taken for weakness. Although the state may be willing to agree to a settlement that involves some concessions, it may fear that, if it admits this, the other side will respond, not by matching concessions, but by redoubled efforts to extract a further retreat. (As long as the other believes that the state will retreat still further, it will refuse to accept the state's offer even if it prefers that offer to a breakdown of negotiations.) For example, shortly before ordering an attack on the French fleet in the harbor at Oran in July 1940, the British cabinet decided not to make a proposal to the French which, if accepted, would have provided a better outcome for the British than opening fire. It reasoned that this proposal "not having been included in the alternatives first offered, we should not offer it now, as this would look like weakening."[3]

The fear that concessions may be taken by the other as indicating that the state can be beaten at the game of Chicken also inhibits the state from making overtures that might end a conflict. Thus, toward the end of the Russo-Japanese War, a Japanese statesman replied to the British suggestion that his country take the diplomatic initiative of calling for mediation: "that would be little short of madness, for the War Party in Russia would at once look upon it as a sign of weakness, and be strengthened in their resolve to continue the war." More recently, President Johnson believed that the most telling argument against halting the bombing of North Vietnam was that this action might lead the North to conclude that American resolve was weakening. Even civility is dangerous because it is often misinterpreted by aggressors. Thus two days before Germany attacked Poland, Chamberlain sent her a note that he thought made clear his country's determination to fight. But the German impression, as recorded in General Halder's notes, was very different: Chamberlain's "letter conciliatory. Endeavour to find a *modus vivendi*.

[1] For an excellent treatment of the contrasting beliefs of "hard" and "soft" liners that in several respects parallels the discussion here without, and however, stressing the importance of differing perceptions of the adversary, see Paul Diesing and Glenn Snyder, *Systems, Bargains, Decisions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming), chapter 4.

[2] "Uncertainty, Brinkmanship, and the Game of 'Chicken,'" in Kathleen Archibald, ed., *Strategic Interaction and Conflict* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1966), p. 87; Anthony de Reuck and Julie Knight, eds., *Conflict in Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), p. 298.

[3] Quoted in Arthur Marder, *From the Dardanelles to Oran* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 253.

. . . Dignified tone. . . . Face must be saved. England gives assurance that Poland will come to conference. . . . General impression, England 'soft' on the issue of a major war."[4]

This does not mean that the state should never change its position. At times superior power must be recognized. Legitimate grievances can be identified and rectified, although care must be taken to ensure that the other side understands the basis on which the state is acting. In other cases, fair trades can be arranged. And at times concessions will have to be made to entice the other to agree. But while carrots as well as sticks are to be employed, the other's friendship cannot be won by gratuitous concessions. As Eyre Crowe put it in his famous memorandum: "there is one road which . . . will most certainly not lead to any permanent improvement of relations with any Power, least of all Germany, and which must therefore be abandoned: that is the road paved with grateful British concessions—concessions made without any conviction either of their justice or of their being set off by equivalent counter-services."[5]

The other side of this coin is that, if the distribution of power is favorable, firmness can check aggression. The combination of the high cost of a war, the low probability that the aggressor can win it, and the value the aggressor places on retaining what he has already won will lead even a minimally rational state to refrain from an expansionist attack. And it will not strike in the mistaken belief that the first side is planning aggression because it knows that the latter is defensive. Thus once it realizes that the defender cannot be bullied, the other side will try to increase its values by peaceful and cooperative means. Complementing his argument quoted above, Crowe claimed that, in the period following the successful Anglo-French display of firmness in the first Moroccan crisis, "our relations with Germany, if not exactly cordial, have at least been practically free from all symptoms of direct friction, and there is an impression that Germany will think twice before she now gives rise to any fresh disagreement. In this attitude she will be encouraged if she meets on England's part with unvarying courtesy and consideration in all matters of common concern, but also with a prompt and firm refusal to enter into any one-sided bargains or arrangements, and the most unbending determination to uphold British rights and interests in every part of the globe."[6] With

[4] Quoted by the British ambassador to Russia in his dispatch printed in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914,* vol. 4 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), pp. 72-73; Lyndon Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 136, 234, 237, 250, 368, 377, 408, 413; quoted in Ian Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet* (New York: Taplinger, 1971), p. 253.

[5] Eyre Crowe, "Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany," January 1, 1907, printed in Gooch and Temperley, eds., *British Documents,* vol. 3, p. 419; also see p. 428.

[6] *Ibid.,* pp. 419-20.

only slight changes in wording, this analysis could be applied to the changes in Soviet behavior that followed America's firm stance in the Cuban missile crisis.

In this view, the world is tightly interconnected. What happens in one interaction influences other outcomes as each state scrutinizes the others' behavior for indications of interests, strengths, and weaknesses. As the German foreign minister said during the Moroccan crisis of 1905, "If we let others trample on our feet in Morocco without a protest, we are encouraging a repetition of the act elsewhere."[7] As we will discuss below, this view often rests on the belief that the other side's aims are unlimited. Thus Robert Butow paraphrases Tojo's argument in September 1941: "The real purpose of the United States [is] the domination of the Far East. Consequently, to yield on one matter would be to encourage other demands, until there would be no end to the concessions required of Japan." The Japanese foreign minister agreed: "Relations between Japan and the United States leave no room for improvement through comity and good will. Rather, . . . such conciliatory attitudes would aggravate the situation." This position was later colorfully put by Khrushchev: "It is quite well known that if one tries to appease a bandit by first giving him one's purse, then one's coat, and so forth, he is not going to be more charitable because of this, he is not going to stop exercising his banditry. On the contrary, he will become ever more insolent."[8]

In a less extreme version, the other side is seen as without a plan but opportunistically hoping to move where there is least resistance. Lord Palmerston urged firmness in dealing with the United States over a minor dispute: "A quarrel with the United States is . . . undesirable . . . [but] in dealing with Vulgar minded Bullies, and such unfortunately the people of the United States are, nothing is gained by submission to Insult & wrong; on the contrary the submission to an Outrage only encourages the commission of another and a greater one—such People are always trying how far they can venture to go; and they generally pull up when they

[7] Quoted in E. L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 84. During the Seven Years' War the French foreign minister had a similar perception of Russia although the two countries were allied. See L. Jay Oliva, *Misalliance* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 98. For the argument that most deterrence theorists have overestimated the degree of interdependence among conflicts because they have overstressed the importance of resolve and paid insufficient attention to each side's interest in the issue at stake, see Robert Jervis, "Bargaining and Bargaining Tactics," in J. Roland Pennock and John Chapman, eds., *Nomos,* vol. 14: *Coercion* (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1972), pp. 281-83.

[8] Robert Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 280; quoted in Ryuzo Sejima, *Reminiscences* (privately printed, 1972), p. 70; quoted in Nathan Leites, *Kremlin Thoughts: Yielding, Rebuffing, Provoking, Retreating,* Rand RM-3618-ISA (May 1963), pp. 12-13.

find they can go no further without encountering resistance of a formidable Character."[9]

The Spiral Model

The critics of deterrence theory provide what seems at first to be a contrasting general theory of international influence. The roots of what can be called the spiral model reach to the anarchic setting of international relations. The underlying problem lies neither in limitations on rationality imposed by human psychology nor in a flaw in human nature, but in a correct appreciation of the consequences of living in a Hobbesian state of nature. In such a world without a sovereign, each state is protected only by its own strength. Furthermore, statesmen realize that, even if others currently harbor no aggressive designs, there is nothing to guarantee that they will not later develop them.[10]

So we find that decision-makers, and especially military leaders, worry about the most implausible threats. In 1933, although the British army was willing to assume that war with France was out of the question, the air force and navy were not. Maurice Hankey, the influential secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, agreed with them: his subordinate noted that "Hankey's opinion is that we cannot neglect France completely—times change and policies with them; there are plenty of examples of that in the past, and the changes can be rapid." The year before, the United States staged a war game in the Pacific Ocean in which the envisaged enemy was an Anglo-Japanese coalition. In the 1920s Canada's only war plan "held that the principal external threat to the security of Canada lay in the possibility of armed invasion by the forces of the United States," and the director of military operations and intelligence conducted reconnaissance missions around Portland and Seattle. In 1929 the United States developed "Basic War Plan Red" that envisaged war with Great Britain growing out of Anglo-American commercial rivalry. And lest we are too quick to laugh, it should be noted that for years historians confidently concluded that Frederick the Great of Prussia was paranoiac to have believed that the Seven Years' War was preceded by a foreign conspiracy aimed at his state. But the opening of the most secret archives revealed that Frederick's fears were actually justified.[11]

[9] Quoted in Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 182.

[10] This point is missed by Butterfield in his argument quoted on page 69 below that it is the inability of each side to "see the inside of [the other's] mind" that drives the Hobbesian spiral.

[11] Brian Bond, ed., *Chief of Staff: the Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall*, vol. 1: *1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), p. 21; Christopher

The lack of a sovereign in international politics permits wars to occur and makes security expensive. More far-reaching complications are created by the fact that most means of self-protection simultaneously menace others.[12] Rousseau made the basic point well:

It is quite true that it would be much better for all men to remain always at peace. But so long as there is no security for this, everyone, having no guarantee that he can avoid war, is anxious to begin it at the moment which suits his own interest and so forestall a neighbour, who would not fail to forestall the attack in his turn at any moment favourable to himself, so that many wars, even offensive wars, are rather in the nature of unjust precautions for the protection of the assailant's own possessions than a device for seizing those of others. However salutary it may be in theory to obey the dictates of public spirit, it is certain that, politically and even morally, those dictates are liable to prove fatal to the man who persists in observing them with all the world when no one thinks of observing them towards him.[13]

In extreme cases, states that seek security may believe that the best, if not the only, route to that goal is to attack and expand. Thus the tsars believed that "that which stops growing begins to rot," the Japanese decision-makers before World War II concluded that the alternative to increasing their dominance in Asia was to sacrifice their "very existence," and some scholars have argued that German expansionism before World War I was rooted in a desire to cope with the insecurity produced by being surrounded by powerful neighbors.[14] After World War I France held a somewhat milder version of this belief. Although she knew that the war had left her the strongest state on the Continent, she felt that she had to increase her power still further to provide protection against Germany,

Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy* (New York: Putnam, 1973), p. 75 (also see p. 73); James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, vol. 1: *From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 70-78 (the civilians had no knowledge of these plans and activities); "1929 File Reveals War Plan on Britain," *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1975; Herbert Butterfield, *George III and the Historians* (revised ed., New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), pp. 27-28.

[12] For this reason, whether anarchy produces the unfortunate effects we are discussing is strongly influenced by two variables: the extent to which the weapons and strategies that are useful for defending oneself are also useful for threatening and attacking others, and the relative advantage of the offense over the defense. The effects of these variables will be explored in a later paper.

[13] *A Lasting Peace through the Federation of Europe*, translated by C. E. Vaughan (London: Constable, 1917), pp. 78-79.

[14] Quoted in Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 5; quoted in Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War*, p. 203; Klaus Epstein, "Gerhard Ritter and the First World War," in H. W. Koch, ed., *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1972), p. 290.

whose recovery from wartime destruction might some day lead her to try to reverse the verdict of 1918. This view is especially likely to develop if the state believes that others have also concluded that both the desire for protection and the desire for increased values point to the same policy of expansionism.

The drive for security will also produce aggressive actions if the state either requires a very high sense of security or feels menaced by the very presence of other strong states. Thus Leites argues that "the Politburo . . . believes that its very life . . . remains acutely threatened as long as major enemies exist. Their utter defeat is a sheer necessity of survival." This view can be rooted in experience as well as ideology. In May 1944 Kennan wrote: "Behind Russia's stubborn expansion lies only the age-old sense of insecurity of a sedentary people reared on an exposed plain in the neighborhood of fierce nomadic peoples."[15]

Even in less extreme situations, arms procured to defend can usually be used to attack. Economic and political preparedness designed to hold what one has is apt to create the potential for taking territory from others. What one state regards as insurance, the adversary will see as encirclement. This is especially true of the great powers. Any state that has interests throughout the world cannot avoid possessing the power to menace others. For example, as Admiral Mahan noted before World War I, if Britain was to have a navy sufficient to safeguard her trading routes, she inevitably would also have the ability to cut Germany off from the sea.[16] Thus even in the absence of any specific conflicts of interest between Britain and Germany, the former's security required that the latter be denied a significant aspect of great power status.

When states seek the ability to defend themselves, they get too much and too little—too much because they gain the ability to carry out aggression; too little because others, being menaced, will increase their own arms and so reduce the first state's security. Unless the requirements for offense and defense differ in kind or amount, a status quo power will desire a military posture that resembles that of an aggressor. For this reason others cannot infer from its military forces and preparations whether the state is aggressive. States therefore tend to assume the worst. The

[15] Nathan Leites, *A Study of Bolshevism* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953), p. 31; quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Origins of the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs* 46 (October 1967), 30. As Kennan later put it: "Many people in the Western governments came to hate the Soviet leaders for what they *did*. The Communists on the other hand, hated the Western governments for what they *were*, regardless of what they did." *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Mentor, 1962), p. 181. For a general discussion of the impact of the demand for high security, see Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), pp. 92, 150-51.
[16] Cited in Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1973), p. 345.

other's intentions must be considered to be co-extensive with his capabilities. What he can do to harm the state, he will do (or will do if he gets the chance). So to be safe, the state should buy as many weapons as it can afford.[17]

But since both sides obey the same imperatives, attempts to increase one's security by standing firm and accumulating more arms will be self-defeating. Earlier we quoted Palmerston's belief that, when dealing with "Vulgar minded Bullies" like the Americans, "the submission to an Outrage only encourages the commission of another and a greater one." In a dispute a few years earlier, James Polk expressed the same sentiment, arguing that "if Congress faultered [sic] or hesitated in their course, John Bull would immediately become arrogant and more grasping in his demands; & that such had been the history of the Brittish [sic] Nation in all their contests with other Powers for the last two hundred years."[18] These symmetrical beliefs produce incompatible policies with results that are in neither side's interest.

With hindsight, decision-makers may recognize the undesired effects of their actions. Lord Grey, the British foreign secretary before World War I, saw this as he looked back over the diplomacy of this period:

> The increase of armaments, that is intended in each nation to produce consciousness of strength, and a sense of security, does not produce these effects. On the contrary, it produces a consciousness of the strength of other nations and a sense of fear. Fear begets suspicion and distrust and evil imaginings of all sorts, till each Government feels it would be criminal and a betrayal of its own country not to take every precaution, while every Government regards every precaution of every other Government as evidence of hostile intent.[19]

[17] It is reported that the dispute between First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill and Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George over the 1914 naval budget was resolved when the latter told the former: "Oddly enough, my wife spoke to me last night about this Dreadnought business. She said, 'You know, my dear, I never interfere in politics; but they say you are having an argument with that nice Mr. Churchill about building Dreadnoughts. Of course I don't understand these things, but I should have thought it would be better to have too many rather than too few.' So I have decided to let you build them." Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 2, *The Young Statesman, 1901-1914* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 681.
Of course weapons and security are not free goods and nations have to balance them against other values. See Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, pp. 147-66. This is also recognized by theorists who have developed mathematical models of arms races.
[18] Quoted in Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, p. 182; quoted in Charles McCoy, *Polk and the Presidency* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960), p. 91.
[19] Edward Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1925), p. 92. This was not Grey's position at the time. He did not believe "that one nation can put a stop to the rivalry by dropping out of the race. . . . On the

The German chancellor's retrospective view was similar: "Ignoring the fact that in the existing power constellation any major shift among the Great Powers of Europe was bound to involve the whole world, those Powers had their eyes fixed only on the growth of their own power." At the time, states may warn others about the dangerous implications of their security policies. Thus Ramsay MacDonald told the Japanese ambassador that "Japan would have to be very careful that in seeking her own security she did not upset the sense of security of other nations." But this perspective rarely enlightens the state's own posture.[20]

These unintended and undesired consequences of actions meant to be defensive constitute the "security dilemma" that Herbert Butterfield sees as that "absolute predicament" that "lies in the very geometry of human conflict. . . . [H]ere is the basic pattern for all narratives of human conflict, whatever other patterns may be superimposed upon it later." From this perspective, the central theme of international relations is not evil but tragedy. States often share a common interest, but the structure of the situation prevents them from bringing about the mutually desired situation. This view contrasts with the school of realism represented by Hans Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr, which sees the drive for power as a product of man's instinctive will to dominate others. As John Herz puts it, "It is a mistake to draw from the universal phenomenon of competition for power the conclusion that there is actually such a thing as an innate 'power instinct.' Basically it is the mere instinct of self-preservation which, in the vicious circle [of the security dilemma], leads to competition for ever more power."[21]

Arms races are only the most obvious manifestation of this spiral. The competition for colonies at the end of the nineteenth century was fueled by the security dilemma. Even if all states preferred the status quo to a division of the unclaimed areas, each also preferred expansion to running the risk of being excluded. The desire for security may also lead states to weaken potential rivals, a move that can create the menace it was designed to ward off. For example, because French statesmen feared what they thought to be the inevitable German attempt to regain the position she lost in World War I, they concluded that Germany had to be

kept weak. The effect of such an unyielding policy, however, was to make the Germans less willing to accept their new position and therefore to decrease France's long-run security.[22] Finally, the security dilemma can not only create conflicts and tensions but also provide the dynamics triggering war. If technology and strategy are such that each side believes that the state that strikes first will have a decisive advantage, even a state that is fully satisfied with the status quo may start a war out of fear that the alternative to doing so is not peace, but an attack by its adversary. And, of course, if each side knows that the other side is aware of the advantages of striking first, even mild crises are likely to end in war. This was one of the immediate causes of World War I, and contemporary military experts have devoted much thought and money to avoiding the recurrence of such destabilizing incentives.

If much of deterrence theory can be seen in terms of the game of Chicken, the spiral theorists are more impressed with the relevance of the Prisoner's Dilemma. Although they realize that the current situation is not exactly like the Prisoner's Dilemma because of the unacceptable costs of war, they believe that the central characteristic of current world politics is that, if each state pursues its narrow self-interest with a narrow conception of rationality, all states will be worse off than they would be if they cooperated. Not only would cooperation lead to a higher level of total benefits—and this is of no concern to a self-interested actor—but it would lead to each individual actor's being better off than he would be if the relations were more conflictful. States are then seen as interdependent in a different way than is stressed by the theorists of deterrence; either they cooperate with each other, in which case they all make significant gains, or they enter into a conflict and all suffer losses. A second point highlighted by the Prisoner's Dilemma is that cooperative arrangements are not likely to be reached through coercion. Threats and an adversary posture are likely to lead to counteractions with the ultimate result that both sides will be worse off than they were before. As we will discuss below, states must employ and develop ingenuity, trust, and institutions if they are to develop their common interests without undue risks to their security.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS

The argument sketched so far rests on the implications of anarchy, not on the limitations on rationality imposed by the way people reach decisions in a complex world. Lewis Richardson's path-breaking treatment of arms races describes "what people would do if they did not stop to

contrary, it might very well be that if one nation dropped out of the competition it might momentarily give a spurt in expenditure in some other." Quoted in A. J. Anthony Morris, *Radicalism Against War, 1906-1914* (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 228.

[20] Quoted in Egmont Zechlin, "Cabinet versus Economic Warfare in Germany," in Koch, ed., *The Origins of the First World War*, p. 167; quoted in Gerald Wheeler, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1963), p. 167. For examples of self-restraint, see below, pp. 88-89.

[21] Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951), pp. 19-20; Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, p. 84; John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 4.

[22] Similar dynamics fueled the war between France and the Second Coalition before Napoleon's seizure of power. See Steven Ross, *European Diplomatic History, 1789-1815* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 194.

think." Richardson argues that this is not an unrealistic perspective. The common analogy between international politics and chess is misleading because "the acts of a leader are in part controlled by the great instinctive and traditional tendencies which are formulated in my description. It is somewhat as if the chessmen were connected by horizontal springs to heavy weights beyond the chessboard."[23]

Contemporary spiral theorists argue that psychological pressures explain why arms and tensions cycles proceed as if people were not thinking. Once a person develops an image of the other—especially a hostile image of the other[24]—ambiguous and even discrepant information will be assimilated to that image. As we will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, people perceive what they expect to be present. If they think that a state is hostile, behavior that others might see as neutral or friendly will be ignored, distorted, or seen as attempted duplicity. This cognitive rigidity reinforces the consequences of international anarchy.

Although we noted earlier that it is usually hard to draw inferences about a state's intentions from its military posture, decision-makers in fact often draw such inferences when they are unwarranted. They frequently assume, partly for reasons to be discussed shortly, that the arms of others indicate aggressive intentions. So an increase in the other's military forces makes the state doubly insecure—first, because the other has an increased capability to do harm, and, second, because this behavior is taken to show that the other is not only a potential threat but is actively contemplating hostile actions.

But the state does not apply this reasoning to its own behavior. A peaceful state knows that it will use its arms only to protect itself, not to harm others. It further assumes that others are fully aware of this. As John Foster Dulles put it: "Khrushchev does not need to be convinced of our good intentions. He knows we are not aggressors and do not threaten the security of the Soviet Union." Similarly, in arguing that "England seeks no quarrels, and will never give Germany cause for legitimate offence," Crowe assumed not only that Britain was benevolent but that this was readily apparent to others. To take an earlier case, skirmishing between France and England in North America developed into the Seven Years' War partly because each side incorrectly thought the other knew

[23] Lewis Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Pittsburgh: Boxwood Press, Chicago: Quadrangle, 1960), p. xxiv; Lewis Richardson, *Arms and Insecurity* (Pittsburgh: Boxwood Press, Chicago: Quadrangle, 1960), p. 227.

[24] Any number of incidents and conflicts can establish such an image of the other as hostile. The theory does not discuss what initially sets the spiral in motion. Thus Kenneth Terhune and Joseph Firestone hypothesize that "hostility and mistrust . . . are important not as initial causes of conflict, but as contributing factors in the feedback cycle by which conflict escalates." "Global War, Limited War, and Peace: Hypotheses From Three Experimental Worlds," *International Studies Quarterly* 4 (June 1970), 218.

that its aims were sharply limited.[25] Because the state believes that its adversary understands that the state is arming because it sees the adversary as aggressive, the states does not think that strengthening its arms can be harmful. If the other is aggressive, it will be disappointed because the state's strengthened position means that it is less vulnerable. Provided that the state is already fairly strong, however, there is no danger that the other will be provoked into attacking. If the other is not aggressive, it will not react to the state's effort to protect itself. This means that the state need not exercise restraint in policies designed to increase its security. To procure weapons in excess of the minimum required for defense may be wasteful, but will not cause unwarranted alarm by convincing the other that the state is planning aggression.

In fact, others are not so easily reassured. As Lord Grey realized—after he was out of power:

> The distinction between preparations made with the intention of going to war and precautions against attack is a true distinction, clear and definite in the minds of those who build up armaments. But it is a distinction that is not obvious or certain to others. . . . Each Government, therefore, while resenting any suggestion that its own measures are anything more than for defense, regards similar measures of another Government as preparation to attack.

Herbert Butterfield catches the way these beliefs drive the spiral of arms and hostility:

> It is the peculiar characteristic of the . . . Hobbesian fear . . . that you yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear that you have of the other party, but you cannot enter into the other man's counter-fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous. For you know that you yourself mean him no harm, and that you want nothing from him save guarantees for your own safety; and it is never possible for you to realize or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have. As this operates on both sides the Chinese puzzle is complete in all its interlockings and neither party can see the nature of the predicament he is in, for each only imagines that the other party is being hostile and unreasonable.[26]

Because statesmen believe that others will interpret their behavior as they intend it and will share their view of their own state's policy, they

[25] Quoted in Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), p. 62; Crowe, "Memorandum," p. 407; Patrice Higonnet, "The Origins of the Seven Years' War," *Journal of Modern History* 40 (March 1968), 57-90.

[26] Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, p. 91; Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, pp. 19-20.

are led astray in two reinforcing ways. First, their understanding of the impact of their own state's policy is often inadequate—i.e. differs from the views of disinterested observers—and, second, they fail to realize that other states' perceptions are also skewed. Although actors are aware of the difficulty of making their threats and warnings credible, they rarely believe that others will misinterpret behavior that is meant to be more compatible with the other's interests. Because we cannot easily establish an objective analysis of the state's policy, these two effects are difficult to disentangle. But for many purposes this does not matter because both pressures push in the same direction and increase the differences between the way the state views its behavior and the perceptions of others.

The degree to which a state can fail to see that its own policy is harming others is illustrated by the note that the British foreign secretary sent to the Soviet government in March 1918 trying to persuade it to welcome a Japanese army that would fight the Germans: "The British Government have clearly and constantly repeated that they have no wish to take any part in Russia's domestic affairs, but that the prosecution of the war is the only point with which they are concerned." When reading Bruce Lockhart's reply that the Bolsheviks did not accept this view, Balfour noted in the margin of the dispatch: "I have constantly impressed on Mr. Lockhart that it is *not* our desire to interfere in Russian affairs. He appears to be very unsuccessful in conveying this view to the Bolshevik Government." The start of World War I witnessed a manifestation of the same phenomenon when the tsar ordered mobilization of the Baltic fleet without any consideration of the threat this would pose even to a Germany that wanted to remain at peace.[27]

Similarly, when at the start of the Korean War Truman and his advisers decided to "neutralize" Formosa, they had little idea that by doing so they were depriving Communist China of a central national value. And later in the war the United States failed to realize the degree to which its advance to the Yalu objectively menaced Chinese security. Looking back on this incident, Dean Acheson argued that "no possible shred of evidence could have existed in the minds of the Chinese Communist authorities about the [peaceful] intentions of the forces of the United Nations." That China probably overestimated the danger should not obscure the American failure to realize that conquering North Korea would have given it a greater ability to threaten China. Because Ameri-

[27] Quoted in John Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk* (New York: Norton, 1971), pp. 295-96; Ole Holsti, *Crisis Escalation War* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 132. During the Vietnam war, Walt Rostow tried to stop the State Department from circulating memoranda that attempted to show that North Vietnam probably saw the United States as more aggressive than the United States thought it was. (David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* [Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1973], p. 775.)

can leaders thought they would never utilize this resource, they failed to understand that their actions in fact decreased China's ability to protect herself. Four years later, President Eisenhower similarly failed to see the extent to which American signals of readiness to "unleash" Chiang Kai-shek were arousing Communist Chinese insecurity.[28]

The same inability to see the implications of its specific actions limits the state's appreciation of the degree to which its position and general power make it a potential menace. As Klaus Epstein points out in describing the background to World War I, "Wilhelmine Germany—because of its size, population, geographical location, economic dynamism, cocky militarism, and autocracy under a neurotic Kaiser—was feared by all other Powers as a threat to the European equilibrium; this was an objective fact which Germans should have recognized."[29] Indeed even had Germany changed her behavior, she still would have been the object of constant suspicion and apprehension by virtue of being the strongest power in Europe. And before we attribute this insensitivity to the German national character, we should note that United States statesmen in the postwar era have displayed a similar inability to see that their country's huge power, even if used for others' good, represents a standing threat to much of the rest of the world. Instead the United States, like most other nations, has believed that others will see that the desire for security underlies its actions.

The psychological dynamics do not, however, stop here. If the state believes that others know that it is not a threat, it will conclude that they will arm or pursue hostile policies only if they are aggressive. For if they sought only security they would welcome, or at least not object to, the state's policy. Thus an American senator who advocated intervening in Russia in the summer of 1918 declared that if the Russians resisted this move it would prove that "Russia is already Germanized." This inference structure is revealed in an exchange about NATO between Tom Connally, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Secretary of State Acheson:

> Now, Mr. Secretary, you brought out rather clearly . . . that this treaty is not aimed at any nation particularly. It is aimed only at any nation or any country that contemplates or undertakes armed aggression against the members of the signatory powers. Is that true?

[28] John Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 97; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 279. Similarly, it is often argued that the American protests against the Soviet takeover of East Europe threatened the Russians more than the United States thought or intended. But for a contrary view, see Raymond Aron, *The Imperial Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1974), pp. 20, 25-35.

[29] "Gerhard Ritter and the First World War," p. 293.

Secretary Acheson. That is correct, Senator Connally. It is not aimed at any country; it is aimed solely at armed aggression.

The Chairman. In other words, unless a nation other than the signatories contemplates, meditates or makes plans looking toward, aggression or armed attack on another nation, it has no cause to fear this treaty.

Secretary Acheson. That is correct, Senator Connally, and it seems to me that any nation which claims that this treaty is directed against it should be reminded of the Biblical admonition that "The guilty flee when no man pursueth."

The Chairman. That is a very apt illustration.

What I had in mind was, when a State or Nation passes a criminal act, for instance, against burglary, nobody but those who are burglars or getting ready to be burglars need have any fear of the Burglary Act. Is that not true?

Secretary Acheson. Very true.

The Chairman. And so it is with one who might meditate and get ready and arm himself to commit a murder. If he is not going to indulge in that kind of enterprise, the law on murder would not have any effect on him, would it?

Secretary Acheson. The only effect it would have would be for his protection, perhaps, by deterring someone else. He wouldn't worry about the imposition of the penalties on himself, but he might feel that the statute added to his protection.[30]

To return to a case discussed earlier, the United States thought that China's intervention in Korea showed that she was aggressive, not that she had legitimate concerns about her security.

When the state believes that the other knows that it is not threatening the other's legitimate interests, disputes are likely to produce antagonism out of all proportion to the intrinsic importance of the issue at stake. Because the state does not think that there is any obvious reason why the other should oppose it, it will draw inferences of unprovoked hostility from even minor conflicts. Thus the belief that the Open Door policy was in China's interest as well as in America's made the United States react strongly to a Chinese regime that disagreed. If, on the other hand, each side recognizes that its policies threaten some of the other's values, it will not interpret the other's reaction as indicating aggressive intent or total hostility and so will be better able to keep their conflict limited.

[30] Quoted in Peter Filene, *Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917-1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 43; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings, North Atlantic Treaty*, 81st Congress, 1st Session, p. 17. Inexperienced policemen patrolling the streets similarly fail to understand how innocent people react with alarm when they are stopped. See Jonathan Rubinstein, *City Police* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 233.

The perceptions and reactions of the other side are apt to deepen the misunderstanding and the conflict. For the other, like the state, will assume that its adversary knows that it is not a threat. So, like the state, it will do more than increase its arms—it will regard the state's explanation of its behavior as making no sense and will see the state as dangerous and hostile. When the Soviets consolidated their hold over Czechoslovakia in 1948, they knew this harmed Western values and expected some reaction. But the formation of NATO and the explanation given for this move were very alarming. Since the Russians assumed that the United States saw the situation the same way they did, the only conclusion they could draw was that the United States was even more dangerous than they had thought. As George Kennan put the Soviet analysis in a cable to Washington:

It seemed implausible to the Soviet leaders, knowing as they did the nature of their own approach to the military problem, and assuming that the Western powers must have known it too, that defensive considerations alone could have impelled the Western governments to give the relative emphasis they actually gave to a program irrelevant in many respects to the outcome of the political struggle in Western Europe (on which Moscow was staking everything) and only partially justified, as Moscow saw it, as a response to actual Soviet intentions. . . . The Kremlin leaders were attempting in every possible way to weaken and destroy the structure of the non-Communist world. In the course of this endeavor they were up to many things which gave plenty of cause for complaint on the part of Western statesmen. They would not have been surprised if these things had been made the touchstone of Western reaction. But why, they might ask, were they being accused precisely of the one thing they had *not* done, which was to plan, as yet, to conduct an overt and unprovoked invasion of Western Europe? Why was the imputation to them of this intention being put forward as the rationale for Western rearmament? Did this not imply some ulterior purpose . . . ?[31]

The Russians may have been even more alarmed if, as Nathan Leites has argued, they thought that we behaved according to the sensible proverb of "whoever says A, says Z" and had knowingly assigned Czechoslovakia to the Russian sphere of influence during the wartime negotiations. "How could, they must ask themselves, the elevation of an already dominant Czechoslovak Communist Party to full power in 1948 change the policies of Washington which had agreed to the presence of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia in 1945? Washington, after all, could

[31] *Memoirs*, vol. 2: *1950-1963* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), pp. 335-36. Kennan also stresses the ideologically rooted Soviet predispositions to see Western aggressiveness.

hardly imagine that Moscow would indefinitely tolerate the presence of enemies . . . within its domain!" The American protests over the take-over must then be hypocrisy, and the claim that this event was alarming and called for Western rearmament could only be a cover for plans of aggression.[32]

This perspective leads to speculation about possible Soviet perceptions of the American alert at the end of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The alert was justified by the claim that the Russians were threatening to send troops to Egypt. If this was a real danger, the American response may have been appropriate. But if Russia was not seriously contemplating this measure, an unfortunate misunderstanding would have been produced.[33] For in this case Russia probably would have assumed that the United States knew that there was no danger. Why, then, she would ask herself, did the United States mobilize? Either because she had militant plans of her own or because she wanted to humiliate Russia by later claiming that her vigorous actions had made Russia retreat. This inference could be avoided only if Russia realized that the United States had overestimated the challenge she was posing.

With a disinterested perspective and access to documents from both sides, historians have seen a number of cases that fit the spiral model. Sometimes contemporary third parties also detect them. In 1904 President Roosevelt noted that the kaiser "sincerely believes that the English are planning to attack him and smash his fleet, and perhaps join with France in a war to the death against him. As a matter of fact, the English harbour no such intentions, but are themselves in a condition of panic terror lest the Kaiser secretly intend to form an alliance against them with France or Russia, or both, to destroy their fleet and blot out the British Empire from the map! It is as funny a case as I have ever seen of mutual distrust and fear bringing two peoples to the verge of war." The humor was lost on the powers concerned. Each side's claim that it was peaceful and afraid of the other only deepened the dilemma. Since each knew that there were no grounds for the other's supposed anxiety and believed that the other had enough of a grasp on reality to see this, each sought a darker meaning for the assertion. Thus the British foreign secretary wrote to his ambassador in Berlin: "They cannot seriously believe that we are meditating a coup against them. Are they perchance meditating one against us and are they seeking to justify it in advance?" Similarly, a few years earlier when Salisbury heard that the kaiser

[32] Leites, A Study of Bolshevism, pp. 42, 34.
[33] Ray Cline, who was Director of Intelligence and Research in the State Department when these events occurred, argues that the evidence available to him did not indicate that the Soviets were going to intervene. "Policy Without Intelligence," Foreign Policy 17 (Winter 1974-75), 132-33.

thought that he was the kaiser's enemy, he wrote: "So groundless is the charge that I cannot help fearing that it indicates a consciousness on the part of His Majesty that he cherishes some design which is bound to make me his enemy—and that he looks forward to the satisfaction of saying . . . 'I told you so.' "[34]

The explication of these psychological dynamics adds to our understanding of international conflict, but incurs a cost. The benefit is in seeing how the basic security dilemma becomes overlaid by reinforcing misunderstandings as each side comes to believe that not only is the other a potential menace, as it must be in a setting of anarchy, but that the other's behavior has shown that it is an active enemy. The inability to recognize that one's own actions could be seen as menacing and the concomitant belief that the other's hostility can only be explained by its aggressiveness help explain how conflicts can easily expand beyond that which an analysis of the objective situation would indicate is necessary. But the cost of these insights is the slighting of the role of the system in inducing conflict and a tendency to assume that the desire for security, rather than expansion, is the prime goal of most states. As we will discuss at greater length below, spiral theorists, like earlier students of prejudice, stereotypes, and intergoup relations, have given a psychological explanation for perceptions of threat without adequate discussion of whether these perceptions are warranted.[35]

Both the advantages and pitfalls of this elaboration of the security dilemma are revealed in Kenneth Boulding's distinction between

> two very different kinds of incompatibility. . . . The first might be called "real" incompatibility, where we have two images of the future in which realization of one would prevent the realization of the other. . . . The other form of incompatibility might be called "illusory" incompatibility, in which there exists a condition of compatibility which

[34] Quoted in R. B. Mowat, The Diplomatic Relations of Great Britain and the United States (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1925), p. 296; quoted in Eugene Anderson, The First Moroccan Crisis, 1904-1906 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), p. 115; quoted in J.A.S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy (London: Athlone, 1964), p. 277 (another example is p. 260).
[35] See, for example, John Burton, Controlled Communication (New York: Free Press, 1970) and Leonard Doob, ed., Resolving Conflict in Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970). A parallel criticism of many theories of race relations is made in Jessie Bernard, "The Conceptualization of Inter-Group Relations," Social Forces 29 (March 1951), p. 244.
Scholars sometimes talk of "paranoia" or "misunderstandings" without adequately exploring the vital question of whether the actors' perceptions are accurate. For a discussion of this question in the context of the origins of World War I, see Robert Jervis, "Reply to Professor North," International Studies Quarterly 12 (June 1968), 225-27. For a similar argument about the origins of the American Civil War see the letters by David Brion Davis and William Freehling, New York Review of Books 17 (December 2, 1971).

would satisfy the "real" interests of the two parties but in which the dynamics of the situation or illusions of the parties create a situation of perverse dynamics and misunderstandings, with increasing hostility simply as a result of the reactions of the parties to each other, not as a result of any basic differences of interest.[36]

This distinction can be very useful, and we shall employ it in much of this chapter. But it takes attention away from the vital kind of system-induced incompatibility that cannot be easily classified as either real or illusory. If both sides primarily desire security, then the two images of the future do not clash, and any incompatibility must, according to one reading of the definition, be illusory. But the heart of the security dilemma argument is that an increase in one state's security can make others less secure not because of misperception or imagined hostility, but because of the anarchic context of international relations.

Under some circumstances, several states can simultaneously increase their security. But often this is not the case. For a variety of reasons, many of which have been discussed earlier, nations' security requirements can clash. While an understanding of the security dilemma and psychological dynamics will dampen some arms-hostility spirals, it will not change the fact that some policies aimed at security will threaten others. To call the incompatibility that results from such policies "illusory" is to misunderstand the nature of the problem and to encourage the illusion that if the states only saw themselves and others more objectively they could attain their common interest.[37]

SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES AND PROBLEMS WITH INCREMENTALISM

As this analysis suggests, the spiral model stresses the prevalence of self-fulfilling prophecies, defined by Merton as "a *false* definition of the situa-

[36] Kenneth Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3 (June 1959), 130. But how do we determine the "real" interests of the parties? A more detailed treatment of the concept of illusory incompatibility would draw distinctions on the basis of what beliefs and values would have to change to bring about agreement. The more that the necessary changes are in the lower parts of the actors' means-ends chains, the more we can consider the incompatibility to be illusory.

[37] Another problem with Boulding's distinction arises in those cases in which actors' "bargaining ranges" overlap—i.e. there are solutions that both sides prefer to a breakdown of negotiations—and yet they fail to reach agreement because each is trying to exact as many concessions as possible. Potential settlements exist that are minimally satisfactory to both parties, but the incompatibility is still real since within the bargaining range one side's gains are the other's losses. To say that the failure to reach agreement shows the existence of illusory incompatibility is misleading because the threat of not agreeing is one of each side's most powerful bargaining weapons. The breakdown of negotiations may neither produce nor be the product of a spiral of hostility.

tion which makes the originally false conception come true." As examples, he cites bank runs and racial prejudice. But there are differences between these situations that have implications for the strategies one could use to cope with them. While the bank would become solvent if the people believed it was and therefore stopped making panic withdrawals, the mere belief that all men are equal would not erase the characteristics of the minority group that are both caused by, and used to justify, discrimination.[38]

This distinction reminds us that for our purposes the crucial question is the degree to which a state's actions that are based on an initially false image have transformed the other state's intentions. If the prophecy of hostility is thoroughly self-fulfilling, the belief that there is a high degree of real conflict will create a conflict that is no longer illusory. Overtures that earlier would have decreased tensions and cleared up misunderstandings will now be taken as signs of weakness. If the prophecy that Russia is like Nazi Germany has been truly self-fulfilling, a policy appropriate for dealing with an aggressor would be called for.

Even if a prophecy can be so self-fulfilling that the origins of the conflict are irrelevant to its treatment, the spiral perspective is valuable for revealing a major drawback with policy-making by incrementalism. Charles Lindblom and James March and Herbert Simon have shown that, because most problems are too complex to be amenable to total or synoptic rationality, decision-makers must start from the existing policy and take small, remedial steps to cope with problems as they arise. These alterations may not only cure specific ills but also provide valuable information about the environment.[39]

The spiral model reveals two difficulties with this approach. First, as we have seen, the state's policy not only probes the environment but can alter it. Second, as long as the basic beliefs about the other side's intentions are wrong, policy will lead down a blind alley. Not only are minor changes insufficient but the information produced by them will be of slight value and will exact a high price.[40] Marginal adjustments in a con-

[38] Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (revised ed., Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), p. 423.

[39] Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administrative Review* 19 (Spring 1959), 74-88; David Braybrooke and Charles Lindblom, *A Strategy of Decision* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Charles Lindblom, *The Intelligence of Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1965); Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (2nd ed., New York: Free Press, 1965); James March and Herbert Simon, *Organizations* (New York: Wiley, 1958).

[40] This case presents even more of a problem than do those noted by Hirschman and Lindblom in which "we cannot afford to do our learning about the imperfections and imbalances of a system through the failures, irritations, and discomforts that are the natural concomitants and signals of the imbalance. Such situations present us with a well-nigh insoluble task, similar to the one which would face a child who had to learn to walk without being permitted to fall."

ciliatory policy toward a state that is incorrectly believed to support the status quo will eventually provide self-correcting information, but only after a number of values have been sacrificed. When the error is in treating a status quo power as though it were aggressive, the necessary information may never appear even if the prophecy is not completely self-fulfilling. Unless the other side goes to unusual lengths to demonstrate its peacefulness, the state, in good incrementalist fashion, is apt to tinker with its policy only within the accepted assumptions. For the decision-maker to use the information derived from the effects of his behavior in order to determine what alterations are called for, he will have to discern exactly what the other country is doing, estimate whether and how it is responding to him rather than following internal imperatives, and use the immediate impact of his policy to estimate its long-term effects. Under these conditions, the feedback will be highly ambiguous and, for reasons given in Chapters 4 and 7, will be seen as calling for only minimum changes in the current policy.

Self-Defeating Power

When we compare deterrence and spiral theories, what is most striking is that they give opposite answers to the central question of the effect of negative sanctions. Deterrence theory, while elaborating a sophisticated logic of bargaining that often runs counter to common sense, generally endorses the conventional view that power must be met by power. The only way to contain aggression and cope with hostility is to build up and intelligently manipulate sanctions, threats, and force. The greater the aggressor's relative strength, the more valuable the concessions that will have to be made to him. Even Neville Chamberlain recognized this. In defending the Munich agreement, he told the cabinet: "I hope . . . that my colleagues will not think that I am making any attempts to disguise the fact that, if we now possessed a superior force to Germany, we should probably be considering these proposals in a very different spirit. But we must look facts in the face." In the current context this sentiment was expressed by Senator Henry Jackson when he argued that the increases in Soviet nuclear force would lead to political outcomes unfavorable to the United States:

> You see, this is what really disturbs me. The Russians have taken enormous risks when they have been in a totally inferior position; they took Czechoslovakia when they didn't even have a nuclear bomb; they tried to move into Cuba with missiles when they were at a 7 to 1 stra-

Albert Hirschman and Charles Lindblom, "Economic Development, Research and Development, Policy Making: Some Converging Views," in Bruce Russett, ed., *Economic Theories of International Politics* (Chicago: Markham, 1968), p. 482.

tegic disadvantage, I think it was, 5 or 7 to 1, but it is way up there, was it not, in October of 1962? Look at the risks they took. I wonder what kind of risk they are going to take in the mid-1970's and late 1970's and the 1980's when they have a situation that is totally reversed with this enormous power and a more confident Soviet Union, in my judgment, that will be a more dangerous Soviet Union?[41]

Since, for a variety of reasons, it is easier to defend than to alter the status quo,[42] as long as the aggressor does not possess a preponderance of power even hasty and biased calculations should convince him not to press his challenges to the point of war. Of course, as we mentioned above, deterrence does not prevent all changes. Because the other's legitimate interests should be respected and reasonable compromises made, an expansionist's skill, resources, and interest will allow him to prevail in some conflicts. But careful diplomacy will see to it that these incidents occur without leading dissatisfied states to expect more general concessions. Furthermore, the long-run effects of the successful application of power to halt disruptions are often beneficial. Once it learns that the defender is strong, the aggressor may become reconciled to the status quo.

Although deterrence theory denies that threats set off self-fulfilling spirals of fear and hostility, it does not claim that threats always work. First, deterrence may fail because the threat is not believed. Deterrence theory stresses both the importance and the difficulty of establishing credibility and acknowledges that, for reasons that are often beyond the scope of the theory, these attempts may fail. Thus after years of appeasement, Britain and France were unable to make clear to Hitler that they would not only go to war over Poland but also fight to the end. Second, the theory does not hold that even credible threats will always be successful. No issue could be worth an all-out nuclear war, and a state that convinces the other that it will fight such a war rather than retreat will prevail in a confrontation. In cases where the costs of war are less, however, the adversary may prefer war to retreat. Thus the problem with the United States' strategy of putting pressure on North Vietnam was not that the threats were not believed, but rather that the North preferred to take the punishment rather than stop supporting the war in the South. Third, threats can fail if they are applied in a case where the other side has situational advantages and can "design around" them to reach its

[41] Roger Parkinson, *Peace for Our Time* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971), p. 41; Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on the Military Implications of the Treaty on the Limitations of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and the Interim Agreement on Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 273.

[42] Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 69-91.

goal without having to resort to any of the proscribed actions.[43] To take a recent example, Israeli threats were probably sufficient to deter Syria from sending her army to the aid of the Lebanese Moslems in the 1975-1976 civil strife, but they did not inhibit her from allowing the Palestine Liberation Army, based in Syria, to intervene.

Fourth, threats can not only fail but also increase the other side's hostility by revealing the existence of great conflicts of interest. But when this spiral proceeds through the intervening variable of increasing the accuracy of each side's perception of the other, the deterrence model is not damaged (although it says little about the process), and the spiral model is not confirmed. The aggressor, of course, is hostile because its expansion is blocked, but it does not develop the unfounded fear that the status quo power is menacing its existence. It may increase its arms because it sees that its foreign policy aims have outrun its military strength, and the increases of arms and tensions can continue for several cycles as each side matches the other's belligerence. But this process resembles that explained by the spiral model only superficially. It is completely rational. Each side is willing to pay a high price to gain its objectives and, having failed in its initial attempt to win a cheap victory, is merely acting on its unchanged beliefs about the value of the issues at stake. The heightening of the conflict does not represent, as it does in the spiral theory, the creation of illusory incompatibility, but only the real incompatibility that was there from the beginning. Thus the spiral explanation of the process is not correct, and an attempt to apply the spiral prescriptions (see below) would not have the intended effects.

The spiral model, in contrast to deterrence, argues that it is often not to the state's advantage to seek a wide margin of superiority over its adversary. In situations that resemble the Prisoner's Dilemma rather than Chicken, coercion is not likely to produce the desired results. There are two general reasons for this. First, an increase in the adversary's military strength may lead, not to greater assertiveness, but to a more conciliatory stance. The explanation for this is the other side of the dynamics that drive the security dilemma. If the adversary is mainly seeking security, increased arms may give it the confidence to be reasonable. Thus some students of Soviet behavior take the opposite position to the one of Senator Jackson quoted earlier in this section: they argue that the U.S.S.R. is more tractable when it has enough strength to feel secure. A similar argument was made in 1894 when the German ambassador to France told the French minister of war that the Franco-Russian alliance will make it "very difficult for you to remain quiet." The French leader replied that the Germans did not understand the roots of French policy:

[43] George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, pp. 561-65.

What makes us sensitive and touchy as you say, is mainly the idea that we are thought to be weak and that insufficient account is taken of us. The stronger we shall be the less distrustful we shall be. Rest assured that our relations with you will become easier when we shall feel on a footing of equality. So long as we were facing the Triple Alliance our pride was constantly on the alert. We shall now be much less easily impressed. As you can see, our understanding with Russia is a token of peace.[44]

The second branch of this position is the argument that threats and negative sanctions, far from leading to the beneficial results predicted by deterrence theory, are often self-defeating as a costly and unstable cycle is set in motion. Short-run victories are possible, but will prove Pyrrhic if they convince the other that the victorious state is a threat that must be met by force.

Thus, if the spiral theory is correct, it is so partly because the actors do not understand it or follow its prescriptions. By acting according to a crude version of deterrence theory, states bring about results predicted and explained by the spiral theory. The former then provides an understanding of the world as seen by decision-makers and thus an explanation for their specific actions, but the latter provides an explanation for the dynamics of the interaction.[45] Acting on the premises of deterrence theory creates a self-denying prophecy, and if statesmen understood the validity of the spiral theory they could behave in ways that would similarly undermine its validity.[46] Thus it is interesting to note that people

[44] Lincoln Bloomfield, Walter Clemens, Jr., and Franklyn Griffiths, *Khrushchev and the Arms Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966); quoted in René Albrecht-Carrié, *Britain and France* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 254-55. Even though an official in the British Foreign Office believed there was a high degree to real incompatibility between his country and Japan, he argued that a hard line policy was not wise because Japan's "recklessness is apt to grow the more when she is threatened." Quoted in Wm. Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 243. Also see below, pp. 88-89.

[45] Although Rapoport is correct to call the spiral model a systemic perspective, his claim that deterrence theory, as a subset of "strategic" theories, deals only with the calculations of individual actors is misleading. ("Systemic and Strategic Conflict," in Richard Falk and Saul Mendlovitz, *The Strategy of World Order*, vol. 1: *Toward a Theory of War Prevention* [New York: World Law Fund, 1966], pp. 251-82.) Deterrence theory also attempts to explain and predict the complex interactions of national decision-making, for example the way unnecessary wars can result from appeasement. Rapoport has recently recognized this in *Conflict in Man-Made Environment* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), pp. 161-65.

[46] This type of paradox is not limited to international relations. Arend Lijphart argues that the commonly held theory that overlapping social cleavages produce strong and often violent political tensions does not apply to Austria and the Netherlands because the political elites in these countries understand the dangers of the situation and consciously moderate their policies to counteract the forces

who understand the nature of the Prisoner's Dilemma play the game more cooperatively than do those who do not.[47]

Prescriptions

The ideal solution for a status quo power would be to escape from the state of nature. But escape is impossible. The security dilemma cannot be abolished, it can only be ameliorated. Bonds of shared values and interests can be developed. If actors care about what happens to others and believe that others care about them, they will develop trust and can cooperate for mutual benefit. When two countries are locked in a spiral of arms and hostility, such bonds obviously are hard to establish. The first step must be the realization, by at least one side but preferably by both, that they are, or at least may be, caught in a dilemma that neither desires.

On the basis of this understanding, one side must take an initiative that increases the other side's security. Reciprocation is invited and is likely to be forthcoming because the initiative not only reduces the state's capability to harm the other but also provides evidence of its friendly intentions.[48] For these measures to be most effective, the state should place them in the proper setting; i.e. they should not be isolated gestures but must be part of a general strategy to convince the other side that the first state respects the legitimate interests of the other. Indeed the initiatives may not be effective unless the state first clearly explains that it feels that much of the incompatibility is illusory and thus provides the other with an alternative to the conflict framework in which specific moves can be seen.[49]

The central argument is that properly executed concessions lead the other side to reciprocate rather than, as in the deterrence model, leading it to expect further retreats from the first state. The first state does not, and does not appear to, retreat under pressure. Indeed "concedes" is not the best term for what the first state does. It makes a move to break the arms-hostility cycle. The end result is not that the state has given something up, or even that it has proposed a trade, but that a step is taken toward a mutually beneficial relationship. The states must learn to approach issues from a problem-solving perspective rather than from a competitive one. Instead of seeking to gain an advantage over each other, both sides should work together to further and develop their common

that, if allowed to take their natural course, would shatter their fragile systems. ("Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21 [January 1969], 207-25.)

[47] David Kanouse and William Wiest, "Some Factors Affecting Choice in the Prisoner's Dilemma," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 11 (June 1967), 206-13.

[48] For a detailed discussion of this strategy see Charles Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), pp. 85-134, and Amitai Etzioni, *The Hard Way to Peace* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 83-110, 141-72.

[49] Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender*, pp. 6-9.

interests.[50] Such a new and better relationship can be created, Boulding argues, because perceptions of friendships can be made into self-fulfilling prophecies:

> George F. Kennan once said: "It is an undeniable privilege of every man to prove himself in the right in the thesis that the world is his enemy; for if he reiterates it frequently enough and makes it the background of his conduct, he is bound eventually to be right." ("The Roots of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947.) If for "enemy" we read "friend" in this statement, the proposition seems to be equally true but much less believed.

The British ambassador to Germany, Nevile Henderson, expressed the same sentiment in February 1939, when he cabled London: "My instinctive feeling is that this year will be the decisive one, as to whether Hitler comes down on the side of peaceful development and closer cooperation with the West or decides in favour of further adventures eastward. . . . If we handle him right, my belief is that he will become gradually more pacific. But if we treat him as a pariah or mad dog we shall turn him finally and irrevocably into one."[51]

Implicit in these prescriptions is the belief that, once each side loses its unwarranted fear of the other, some level of arms can be maintained that provides both sides with a reasonable measure of security. Here the spiral theorists' stress on understanding the position of the other side makes them more optimistic than the earlier proponents of the security dilemma. First, the latter's concentration on the degree to which the dilemma is inherent in the anarchic nature of the international system leads them to doubt that an understanding of the situation is sufficient for a solution. Even if the state does not fear immediate attack, it will still have to design policies that will provide safety if this trust is misplaced or if peaceful rivals later develop aggressive intentions. So even if both sides believe that the other desires only protection, they may find that there is no policy and level of arms that is mutually satisfactory. Second, those who stress the impact of the security dilemma usually are keenly aware that states often seek expansion as well as security and that conciliation, no matter how skillfully undertaken, will sometimes lead to greater demands.

[50] For discussion of the problem-solving approach, see Richard Walton and Robert McKersie, *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), pp. 126-83, and Dean Pruitt and Steven Lewis, "Development of Integrative Solutions in Bilateral Negotiations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 31 (1975), 621-33.

[51] Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," p. 127; quoted in Parkinson, *Peace for Our Time*, p. 103. Osgood argues similarly when he states that GRIT "is a learning process" and if applied "we might expect [an aggressive state] to be modified in course." (*An Alternative to War or Surrender*, p. 147.)

UNIVERSAL GENERALIZATIONS?

In summary, both the spiral and the deterrence theorists are deeply concerned with the danger of misunderstandings and the consequent importance of states' making their intentions clear. But the deterrers worry that aggressors will underestimate the resolve of the defenders, while the spiral theorists believe that each side will overestimate the hostility of the other. Policies that flow from deterrence theory (e.g. development of potent and flexible armed forces; a willingness to fight for issues of low intrinsic value; avoidance of any appearances of weakness) are just those that, according to the spiral model, are most apt to heighten tensions and create illusory incompatibility. And the behavior advocated by the spiral theorists (attempts to reassure the other side of one's nonaggressiveness, the avoidance of provocations, the undertaking of unilateral initiatives) would, according to deterrence theory, be likely to lead an aggressor to doubt the state's willingness to resist.[52]

Spiral and deterrence theories thus contradict each other at every point. They seem to be totally different conceptions of international relations claiming to be unconditionally applicable. If this were true, it would be important to gather evidence that would disconfirm at least one of them.[53] A look at the basic question of the effects of the application of negative sanctions makes it clear that neither theory is confirmed all the time. There are lots of cases in which arms have been increased, aggressors deterred, significant gains made, without setting off spirals. And there are also many instances in which the use of power and force has not only failed or even left the state worse off than it was originally (both of these outcomes can be explained by deterrence theory), but has led to mutual insecurity and misunderstandings that harmed both sides.

Evidence against the Spiral Model

The most obvious embarrassment to the spiral model is posed when an aggressive power will not respond in kind to conciliation. Minor conces-

[52] It is possible for a state to combine the undesired images stressed by both theories. Bradford Perkins points out that the American embargo on trade with Britain in the early nineteenth century "was worse than useless." The British did not think it could possibly achieve the declared objectives. "This posture of feeble defiance strengthened the hands of those in Great Britain who insisted that America was malignantly but ineffectively anti-British." *Prologue to War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), p. 113.

[53] First, of course, the theories would have to be made more specific and operational than they are now. There is, however, the danger of making theories easily testable at the price of rendering them so crude as to be caricatures. This is the problem with William Gamson and André Modigliani, *Untangling the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). For a critique of this book see Stanley Michalak, "Will the Methodology of Science Resolve the Continuing Debate Over Soviet External Conduct?" paper presented to the 1972 meeting of the American Political Science Association.

sions, the willingness to treat individual issues as separate from the basic conflict, and even an offer to negotiate can convince an aggressor that the status quo power is weak. Thus in 1903 Russia responded to British expressions of interest in negotiating the range of issues that divided them by stiffening her position in the Far East, thus increasing the friction that soon led to the Russo-Japanese War.[54] Whatever the underlying causes of Anglo-German differences before World War I, once the naval race was under way the kaiser interpreted any hesitancy in the British building as indicating that, as he had predicted, the British economy could not stand the strain. As he read a dispatch describing a debate on naval estimates in Parliament in which more attention was paid to the costs of the program than to the two-power standard, the kaiser scribbled in the margin: "They respect our firm will, and must bow before the accomplished fact [of the German naval program]! Now further quiet building."[55] And, as events of the 1930s show, once an aggressor thinks the defenders are weak, it may be impossible to change this image short of war. Unambiguous indicators of resolve are infrequent, and the aggressor is apt to think that the defender will back down at the last minute.

Concessions made in the incorrect belief that the other is a status quo power are especially apt to be misinterpreted if the other does not understand that the state's policy is based on a false image. The spiral theorists have made an important contribution by stressing the serious consequences that flow from the common situation when a status quo power does not realize that others see it as aggressive, but they have ignored the other side of this coin. Aggressors often think that their intentions are obvious to others and therefore conclude that any concessions made to them must be the result of fear and weakness. Thus, by the time of Munich, Hitler seems to have believed that the British realized his ambitions were not limited to areas inhabited by Germans and concluded that Chamberlain was conciliatory not because he felt Germany would be sated but because he lacked the resolve to wage a war to oppose German domination of the Continent. Since Hitler did not see that British policy rested on an analysis of German intentions that was altered by the seizure of the non-German parts of Czechoslovakia, he could not under-

[54] George Monger, *The End of Isolation* (London: Nelson, 1963), pp. 50-56. Similarly, the stiffening of the French position in negotiations with Italy over a variety of colonial issues in 1925 is partially explained by the fact that the Italian foreign minister "in a grandiose attempt to heal the rift between Italy and France, had proposed a broad colonial entente covering a variety of issues and places. . . . Paris may well have perceived an opportunity to win from Italy desiderata in Tunisia in return for spectacular but general promises which probably could never be realized, in which case there was no need to make immediate and precise payment to Italy in Tangier." Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 358.

[55] Quoted in Raymond Sontag, *European Diplomatic History, 1871-1932* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1933), p. 143.

stand why British policy would be different in September 1939 than it had been a year earlier.[56]

Even when the adversary aims for less than domination, concessions granted in the context of high conflict will lead to new demands if the adversary concludes that the state's desire for better relations can be exploited. Thus Germany increased her pressure on France in the first Moroccan crisis after the latter assumed a more conciliatory posture and fired the strongly anti-German foreign minister. Similar dynamics preceded the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. More recently, the United States responded to Japanese concessions in the fall of 1941 not by making counter-concessions, but by issuing more extreme demands.

Less frequently, even a status quo power may interpret conciliation as indicating that the other side is so weak that expansion is possible at little risk. As Herman Kahn notes, prophecies can be self-denying. To trust a person and place him in a position where he can make gains at your expense can awaken his acquisitiveness and lead him to behave in an untrustworthy manner.[57] Similarly, a state's lowered level of arms can tempt the other to raise, rather than lower, its forces. For example, the United States probably would not have tried to increase NATO's conventional forces in the 1960s were it not for the discovery that the Soviet Union had fewer troops than had been previously believed, thereby bringing within grasp the possibility of defending West Europe without a resort to nuclear weapons. It is also possible that the Soviets drastically increased their missile forces in the late 1960s and early 1970s not only because of the costs of remaining in an inferior position but also because they thought the United States would allow them to attain parity.

Hostile moves can also produce effects different from those predicted by the spiral model. If statesmen possess even a modicum of rationality, returning conciliation for hostility may seem the best policy under some circumstances. The state may be in no position to pay the price of high arms and hostility. As long as its central values are not directly threatened, a small state is apt to retreat in the face of hostility from a great

[56] When an aggressor does not see that others think he is a status quo power he will not only misinterpret their concessions but also will not realize that his hostility can increase their opposition to him. Thus Leites argues the Soviets did not foresee the Western reaction to their policy in the postwar years because of their confidence that their adversaries "know for certain that the Politburo strives to annihilate them (as they strive to annihilate [capitalism]). Their estimates of basic Politburo intentions will not be changed whether it simulates friendliness or hostility." (A Study of Bolshevism, p. 40.) One wonders what Stalin thought when in 1946 the American ambassador told him the U.S. policy "will depend to a large extent on what our people believe to be the policies of the Soviet Union." (Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 6 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969], p. 733.)

[57] Herman Kahn, Thinking About the Unthinkable (New York: Horizon Press, 1962), p. 29.

power. Larger states also often find this policy wise. States cannot afford to make too many enemies. Confronted by American resistance in 1897, Japan altered her opposition to the American annexation of Hawaii. She needed her military and diplomatic strength "to deal with a gathering crisis in her own home waters as the fleets of Europe maneuvered for a possible showdown over China." Emotional reactions often give way to calculation. For example, when the British refused to help France stop the Russo-Japanese War, the French foreign minister was "incensed" because he saw his whole policy crumbling. "His better judgment soon calmed him, however, for with France's ally eliminated from European affairs, he needed British cooperation more than ever."[58]

Without arguing that the deterrence model is always appropriate, there are many cases in which hostility checks an aggressor without producing unintended and undesired consequences. For example, two aspects of Bismarck's diplomacy in the Balkan crisis of 1885-1887 show the effectiveness of hostility. First, under German guidance the British-Austrian-Italian coalition succeeded in deterring Russian moves against Bulgaria. A year later, the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy, supplemented by ties to Britain, dampened French belligerence.[59]

Policies consistent with deterrence theory were followed by Britain in the Fashoda crisis with France and had the desired effect. Indeed, in this case, British hostility not only met the French threat but paved the way for a reconciliation between the two countries by showing France that she could not afford to be enemies of both Britain and Germany. The resulting willingness to make concessions to the former was a necessary condition for reaching an entente in 1904. In this case the British had not contemplated such long-run consequences in 1898; in another important case a state increased the level of hostility with the conscious aim of convincing the other not only to retreat but to be more friendly. After Germany's support for Austria in the Balkan crisis of 1877 had alienated Russia, Bismarck sought to bring her back into the alliance. To do this, he did not make overtures to the tsar, but instead made a pact with Austria to show Russia that the path of hostility toward Germany was not

[58] William Braisted, The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1907 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), pp. 13-14 (similarly, Secretary of State Hay met Russian charges of lack of neutrality during the Russo-Japanese War by replying that Russia was "not so rich in friends" that she could afford reckless accusations [ibid., p. 158]); Anderson, The First Moroccan Crisis, p. 101.

[59] William Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890 (2nd ed., New York: Vintage, 1964), pp. 464-68. The coalition that blocked Russia was created by Bismarck when he successfully threatened the British that if they did not cooperate, he would turn the contending states against them. In a similar case of skillful coalition management, Castlereagh isolated Tsar Alexander in 1821-1822 and discouraged him from meddling in the Greek rebellion without alienating him. See Christopher J. Bartlett, Castlereagh (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1966), pp. 225-29.

an easy one. Bismarck made Russia choose between friendship on German terms and a high level of hostility by foreclosing the course that Russia preferred. This policy was successful (i.e. Russia returned friendship for German hostility) because Russia saw how much harm would come to her if Bismarck turned sharply against her. Similarly, when King Louis XI of France learned that King Edward IV of England was aiding his enemies, Louis replied with hostility, halting the payments he had been-making to Edward and aiding the Scots in their attacks along the border. Louis' "hard line" succeeded as Edward decided that the costs of French enmity were too high.[60] In all of these cases, threats not only accomplished the desired immediate result but also did not produce an unintended worsening of each side's image of the other.[61] There was a high level of real incompatibility to begin with, and the exercise of power, far from creating additional illusory incompatibility, either left the underlying conflict untouched or lowered the incompatibility by showing one side that its interests would be better served by abandoning its hostility.

Hostility may also succeed if the other believes that the state can be satisfied with small concessions. This is part of the reason why Britain and France gave in to Hitler. Similarly, a decision-maker will not feel that he needs to match the other's arms and hostility if he believes that the other's behavior is caused by insecurity. As we noted earlier, if a state believes that it and its adversary are in a security dilemma, the adversary's use of threats and power will not be self-defeating. It is significant that there are not many cases where statesmen, correctly or not, perceive that others are unduly afraid of them, but we should not ignore those instances that have occurred. British policies in the 1930s again come to mind. And when in 1907 the British military attaché in St. Petersburg reported that, although Russia had a "magnificent [military] position" in Central Asia, she still seemed to fear British moves in this area, the foreign secretary noted: "I am convinced that the apprehension of the Russians that we might adopt an aggressive policy against them in Central Asia is a real one on their part."[62]

Some American perceptions of the Soviet Union in the Cold War years showed similar insight. One of the reasons why Secretary of State Mar-

shall opposed Secretary of Defense Forrestal's appeals for an increased military budget was his worry "that American rearmament might exercise an adverse effect on Russian intentions." Similarly, when Secretary of Defense Wilson was asked to explain the Russian bomber build-up in 1954 he said: "My analysis would indicate that the Russians have been much more afraid of us than we are of them, and their build-up has been a defensive buildup." The Russians "were afraid of our monopoly [of atomic weapons]; they were afraid we would use it on them, I suppose. They shouldn't have been, but I think they probably were." These sentiments were echoed almost twenty years later by Gerald Smith, the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, when he testified that "I think sometimes we tend to minimize the . . . potential threat that our accurate ICBMs offer to the Soviets." But the spiral model is supported by the fact that these perceptions rarely dominate policy. More often they represent a minority position (see, for example, Henry Wallace's testimony on the ratification of the proposed NATO treaty) that is not taken seriously by most decision-makers. So although Kennan's brilliant presentation of the way in which the Russians may have been puzzled and frightened by the moves by which the United States sought to ensure its security through the establishment of NATO reminds us that statesmen can recommend policies based on an understanding of the security dilemma, the fact that his cable was ignored shows us how hard it is to convince most people that they may be inadvertently threatening others.[63]

In summary, the spiral model holds that statesmen see hostility as indicating that the other is out to get them and believe that the best, if not the only way to cope with this threat is with negative sanctions. But the examples cited here show that neither link is universal. Decision-makers sometimes believe that the other is acting out of insecurity or that real incompatibility, although significant, is limited. Even if they see the other as extremely hostile, decision-makers usually weigh, however roughly and inadequately, the costs of responding with hostility, the gains of conciliation, and the possibility of compromise. The spiral theorists are right to argue that the level of tensions and arms is not under the complete control of any one country. Unintended and undesired consequences fre-

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[60] Paul Murray Kendal, *Louis XI* (New York: Norton, 1971), pp. 324-30. A similar case in domestic politics occurred in England in 1915 when the Conservatives threatened to increase their hostility toward the Liberal government. In response, the prime minister quickly invited them to join in a coalition government.

[61] To use Morton Deutsch's terms, one side's prevailing in the "manifest" conflict did not increase the "underlying" conflict. ("Conflict: Productive and Destructive," *Journal of Social Issues* 25 [January 1969], 7-42.)

[62] Edward Grey in Gooch and Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol. 4, p. 532.

[63] Warner Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense: Fiscal 1950," in Schilling, Paul Hammond, and Glenn Snyder, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 147; quoted in *Study of Air Power*, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on the Air Force of the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, 1956, pp. 1757-60 (I wish to thank George Quester for calling these fascinating statements to my attention); Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on the Military Implications of the Treaty on the Limitations of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and the Interim Agreement and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*, p. 416, Kennan, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 137-39, 143-44, 327-51. Also see above, pp. 80-81.

quently follow from a state's actions. But this is not always the case. We should not overlook the extent to which statesmen look to the future, seek to manipulate the levels of tension and hostility in order to reach their goals, and frequently succeed.

Evidence against Deterrence

It is thus easy to find many cases that do not fit the spiral model and in which not only the outcomes but also the actors' perceptions and calcula- tions are consistent with deterrence theory. Unfortunately from the standpoint of theory building, it is equally easy to find cases of the re- verse. Hostility can be self-defeating, and conciliation does not always lead to further demands. Appeasement often works, even when there are major conflicts between the countries. By making many concessions to the United States around the turn of the century Britain succeeded in cementing American friendship. The number of conflicts settled by one side's retreating is unknown because these cases have little drama and often pass unnoticed. And it is at least plausible that many major dis- putes could have been avoided by small concessions that were withheld not because the state valued what was asked for but because it feared that conciliation would be mistaken for weakness. For example, had France followed a more flexible policy toward Germany before 1933, she might have drained much of the discontent that produced Hitler.

Our memories of Hitler have tended to obscure the fact that most statesmen are unwilling to pay an exorbitant price for a chance at expan- sion. More moderate leaders are apt to become defenders of the status quo when they receive significant concessions. Of course the value of these concessions to the status quo power may be high enough to justify resistance and even war, but the demands are not always the tip of an iceberg. To use the more common metaphor, the appetite does not al- ways grow with the eating. It partly depends on how one gains the meal and what suits one's taste. Concessions that are wrenched from the state by dire threats are more apt to lead to an image of it as weak than are concessions that appear to be freely given. And concessions on issues that are understood to be important to the side receiving them but not to the side making them are especially likely to be self-limiting.[64]

Threats, which have been more closely studied than concessions, often do not have the effect predicted by deterrence theory. Before discussing examples, we should remember that this theory is not embarrassed by threats that fail because they are not believed or can be "designed around," because the punishment is insufficient to outweigh the aggres-

[64] For a further discussion of how to minimize the costs of making concessions, see Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 139-224.

sor's expected gains, or because they set off responses based on accurate assessment of the real incompatibility. What does count against the theory are cases where threats not only fail and hostility not only in- creases, but where conflict develops in a way and to a degree that cannot be explained by the original conflict of interest. Here hostility, far from containing the enemy, creates him. Thus judgments as to whether the spiral theory explains a case often involve difficult analysis about the degree of real incompatibility present at the start. For example, the rele- vance of the theory to Japanese-American relations before World War II largely turns on whether Japan preferred war to foregoing domination of Asia and gaining proper, if not cordial, relations with the United States and whether the United States preferred war to permitting such Japanese expansion. It is true that American economic pressures accelerated rather than restrained Japanese expansion, and the Japanese alliance with Ger- many, rather than having the intended deterring effect, led America to see that a firm stand was even more important since Japan was now closely linked to America's primary enemy. But a necessary condition for the possible success of a conciliatory policy was the existence of solu- tions that both sides preferred to war.[65]

Limited spiral effects can occur that, while not completely fitting the spiral model, are not easily reconciled with deterrence. In 1887, Bis- marck tried to show Russia that she needed German friendship by cut- ting off the sale of Russian bonds on the Berlin money market. But Rus- sia was able to sell the bonds in France, thereby not only gaining the desired funds but creating a link to France that reduced Russian depen- dence on Germany. The next year Germany tried to push Britain into a closer association with the Triple Alliance by playing on British fears of an invasion by France. The rumors were convincing enough to be taken seriously; the problem was that Britain reacted differently from Ger- many's prediction. The cabinet resolved to be especially careful to avoid war in the immediate future and embarked upon a program of naval expansion. Thus Britain not only refused to draw closer to Germany but equipped herself with the means of later establishing even greater inde- pendence. Similarly, in an effort to draw the United States into a Far Eastern entente in 1907, Germany spread rumors that a Japanese-Amer- ican war was likely and that, if it occurred, Japan would probably win. But like England in the 1880s, the United States responded not by in-

[65] For balanced treatments of this vital question, see Chihiro Hosoya, "Mis- calculations in Deterrence Policy: Japanese–U.S. Relations, 1938-41," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 2 (1968), pp. 97-115; Akira Iriye, "Japanese Imperialism and Aggression," in Esmonde M. Robertson, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1971), pp. 257-59, and Iriye, "Japan's Foreign Policy Between the Wars," in *ibid.*, pp. 268-71.

creasing foreign ties, but by strengthening its navy.[66] In none of these cases was either side's image of the other significantly changed, and the effects were not as far-reaching as they are in pure spiral cases. But there were undesired consequences that outran the initial interaction. In the first case, a bridge, weak as it was, was thrown between France and Russia. Each now had a larger stake in the other's well-being. In the other two cases, the target state decreased its vulnerability and thus became better able to resist German threats and blandishments. In all three cases, German hostility had backfired.

When threats lead the recipient to believe that the sender is highly aggressive, the classic spiral of arms and hostility is apt to be set in motion. The best-known examples are provided by Anglo-German relations in the pre-World War I era. Around the turn of the century the Germans tried to improve relations with England by using the tactic that Bismarck had successfully employed against Russia in the late 1870s. Believing that England was isolated from France and Russia and that she therefore had no choice but to turn to Germany, the German leaders refused British offers of informal cooperation. They wanted a closer and more binding arrangement and, seeing Britain as vulnerable, believed that increasing German hostility would force Britain to agree. But Germany overestimated the gaps that separated England from France and Russia and failed to realize that German behavior might convince England that Germany was an irresponsible and dangerous power. Thus the kaiser vigorously opposed British policy in South Africa before the Boer War, most notably with the famous Kruger Telegram. But this attempt "to frighten England into joining the Triple Alliance" produced the opposite effect as both elite and public opinion concluded that a state that would gratuitously interfere with another's vital interest was unprincipled, reckless, or unreasonably hostile. Germany tried a similar policy in 1905 when she continued the first Moroccan crisis in order to break the newly formed Anglo-French entente by showing France that Britain was an unreliable partner. But the foreign secretary and one of his key subordinates regarded the German demands "a great piece of effrontery," the king believed that the Germans were "politically blackmailing," and the entente not only held, but was solidified.[67]

Interestingly enough, Germany had tried a similar policy toward the United States in 1898. It produced the same unintended results. During the Spanish-American War, Germany sent a fleet to Manila to impress

[66] Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 491-92; C. J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), pp. 151-52; Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific*, p. 209.
[67] Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, p. 205 (also see p. 216); quoted in Monger, *The End of Isolation*, p. 161.

the Americans with Germany's interests and power in the area. But what the Americans perceived was Germany's "evident hostility," and, by contrast, they appreciated Britain's friendship to a greater extent than before. At the same time Germany demanded the Samoan and Caroline islands in return for the gains the United States was making at the expense of Spain. The American decision-makers reacted just as the British were to do several years later. The Germans were considered to be unusually greedy and presumptuous in demanding payment for refraining from meddling in an area where the United States had won the right to do as it pleased. Their behavior seemed to go beyond the accepted pattern of advancing one's self-interest and to show a willingness to interfere at any point on the globe at the slightest excuse.[68]

The German attempt to separate England from France was not completely unwise since the entente was far from firm and the consequences of hostility could not be foreseen. Indeed had the initial effort been conducted with more skill and moderation, it probably would have succeeded. But later German policy was equally counterproductive and is more difficult to understand. In the absence of intrinsic issues dividing Germany from England and in the face of increasing evidence of the incorrectness of the German assumption that England could never find alternative allies, Germany persisted in believing that hostility would bring Britain around. Under this pressure, British policy did indeed alter—but not in the desired direction. Initially Britain wanted only to curb German excesses. Then German behavior convinced her that Germany was a menace to France. Finally as German hostility—and her navy—increased, Britain came to see Germany as a direct threat to her own security. Germany, the British believed, had chosen to make an enemy of England. Why else should Germany develop a navy that rivaled England's? Germany had no long sea-lanes to protect. The British navy was no danger to Germany, because Britain had no army with which to invade. A German naval victory, on the other hand, would leave the island defenseless against a German attack.

From the German perspective, the relationship looked entirely different. Britain had aligned herself with Germany's avowed enemy. Protestations that Britain was not pursuing an anti-German policy were beside the point if not hypocritical. England's stance in fact harmed Germany since it buttressed France. Therefore German hostility was morally and pragmatically justified. At best, firmness would convince Britain that she could not afford to menace Germany. Even if increasing arms did not make Britain more conciliatory, at least it would prepare Germany for the coming war. The British claims that German naval construction was

[68] Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific*, pp. 36, 39-40.

unnecessary and menacing could hardly be taken seriously. Germany was a world power, and as such needed a large navy. The fleet would be used against Britain only if the latter joined an anti-German war. Indeed Germany had promised to halt the naval race if Britain would agree to remain neutral in the event of a war between France and Germany. Britain's refusal of this bargain revealed the anti-German nature of her policy.

A version of spiral dynamics was also an immediate cause of the outbreak of war in 1914. Each of the continental powers believed that the side that struck first would gain a major military advantage. Since to wait for the other side to clarify its intentions could mean defeat, even a country that preferred the status quo to a war would feel great pressures to attack.[69] There was no way for a country to increase its ability to defend itself without simultaneously increasing its ability to destroy others. Under these conditions it would have required unusual empathy and statesmanship—and unusual willingness to risk receiving the first blow—to halt the final rush toward war.

DETERRENCE AND WORLD WAR II; SPIRAL MODEL AND WORLD WAR I

These examples are sufficient to show that neither the deterrence nor the spiral theories can account for all the evidence. Indeed, the previous discussion indicates that each theory has roots deep in an individual case. The sketch of one of the main versions of the origins of World War I that we have just given not only fits the spiral model very well, it is this case that has provided much of the inspiration for the model.[70] Lewis Richardson applied his equations to this era, and later scholars have used

[69] If the conflict is structured as a Prisoner's Dilemma (i.e. if each side is better off attacking than waiting no matter whether the other side is about to launch a strike or not), neither side has to make predictions about the other's short-run behavior in order to decide immediately to go to war. For a re-examination of the conventional wisdom about the 1914 mobilizations, see L.C.F. Turner, *Origins of the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 60-115.

[70] Historians differ on the degree of real incompatibility dividing the alliances, and especially that dividing Britain and Germany. British statesmen believed that Germany sought to dominate the Continent, and it is not clear that they were wrong. The immediate causes of the war have also been re-analyzed, and scholars have argued that Germany was not dragged into the war by giving a "blank check" to Austria—she played a far more active role. Indeed Germany may have seen the crisis as an opportunity to launch a preventive war in the belief that the military balance would shortly turn against her. The book that re-opened these debates is Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1967). He replies to his critics in *World Power or Decline* (New York: Norton, 1974). For excellent reviews, see Koch, ed., *The Origins of the First World War*, Turner, *Origins of the First World War*, and V. R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (New York: St. Martin's, 1973). It should also be noted that, even if the conflict between Germany and Britain was largely illusory, the war might have been prevented had Britain made clear her commitment to fight.

both the Anglo-German interaction and the frantic maneuvering of the last weeks of peace to drive home their arguments. The deterrence theorists, on the other hand, often hark back to, and derive much of their analysis from, the failure of appeasement in the 1930s. Given the histories of these two conflicts, it is not surprising that deterrence theories have little to say about World War I and that the spiral theorists rarely discuss the 1930s.[71]

Although both sets of theorists fail to discuss the conditions under which their theories will not apply, and so imply that they are universal, what they say on the infrequent occasions when they discuss the war that does not fit their model shows that they actually do not apply their model to all cases. When the deterrence theorists discuss World War I, they do not concentrate on how either side could have made their threats more credible. Instead they talk about the mobilization races in terms that are consistent with the spiral theory.[72] Indeed one of the major policy contributions of the deterrence theorists was to stress that mutual first strike capability, by creating a "reciprocal fear of surprise attack," is highly destabilizing.[73]

Deterrence theorists thus understand the workings of spiral dynamics and see them operating in some conflicts; they merely deny that the Cold War fits this model. Two possible exceptions: Dean Acheson appears not merely to deny that the exercise of American power has led to Soviet hostility, he seems not to understand how such a reaction could be possible. David McLellan argues that "Acheson discounts the counterproductive effects of situations of strength . . . by contending that weakness is a cardinal sin. . . . This insufficient sensitivity to the interactive quality of international relations may have been the Achilles' heel of Acheson's diplomacy. It dulled him to the likelihood that a Japanese Peace Treaty would have repercussions in Peking and in Moscow, in the same way it dulled him to the implications for China of MacArthur's advance to the Yalu." More recently, Senator Henry Jackson has denied the possibility of spirals. In describing how the senator reaches decisions, his assistant for national security policy said he "goes back to that formula: if we go ahead with a system, and it's not needed, then we've just wasted some money. But if we don't go ahead, and it turns out that we were wrong, then we're running extreme risks, like losing our independence."[74]

[71] See Aaron Wildavsky, "Practical Consequences of the Theoretical Study of Defense Policy," *Public Administration Review* 25 (March 1965), 90-103.

[72] Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (2nd ed., New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 357-72.

[73] Thomas Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 207-29.

[74] David McLellan, "Comparative 'Operational Codes' of Recent U.S. Secretaries of State: Dean Acheson," paper presented to 1969 meeting of the American Political Science Association, p. 34 (also see Acheson's reply to Gaddis Smith's questions ["Mr. Acheson Answers Some Questions," *New York Times Book*

Similarly, spiral theorists do not claim that deterrence is never possible or necessary. Even Neville Chamberlain argued that "we must not by showing weakness encourage Mussolini to be more intransigent," and noted that "it would be a tragic blunder to mistake our love of peace, and our faculty for compromise, for weakness." He finally realized that "it is perfectly evident . . . that force is the only argument Germany understands." Were the spiral theorists to argue that their model always applies; they would have to claim that events of the 1930s fit their analysis of the Cold War—"the arms race is a tension-inducing system," "both sides are caught in the same blind alley of trying to achieve 'peace through military strength,' " and "mutual insecurity rather than the struggle for power has become the major source of international tensions." Churchill would have to be, to use the term Osgood applies to those who seek security through arms, a "Neanderthal," and Chamberlain, in Fromm's words, a "sane" thinker. In fact, there are only occasional hints of this universalistic position, as when Singer argues that the Anglo-German negotiations for arms limitations in the mid-1930s "to some extent . . . resulted in a temporary reduction of mutually perceived threat and consequently of international tensions." More frequently the spiral theorists, like the deterrers, see Hitler as someone who could not have been conciliated. Thus when Albert Wohlstetter asked Anatol Rapoport whether he considered the spiral prescriptions to be "a sort of general rule" that could be applied to all cases including Hitler, Rapoport said that, while it could be applied to the Russians because they were "reasonable," it would not have worked with the Nazis.[75]

When Will Force and Threats Work? The Decision-Maker's Choice

If neither theory covers all cases, if force is sometimes effective and sometimes self-defeating, we are faced with two questions. First, what explains the differences between the spiral and deterrence theorists? What are they arguing about? Second, more important but much harder to answer, what are the conditions under which one model rather than the other is appropriate? When will force work and when will it create

Review, October 12, 1969, p. 31] following the publication of his memoirs); quoted in Daniel Yergin, " 'Scoop' Jackson Goes for Broke," *Atlantic Monthly* (June 1974), 81.

[75] Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1970), pp. 272, 392, 341 (also see pp. 265, 268, and 300); Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender*, pp. 8, 49, 142; Erich Fromm, *May Man Prevail?* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961); "Threat-Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2 (March 1958), 101; Archibald, ed., *Strategic Interaction and Conflict*, p. 224.

a spiral of hostility? When will concessions lead to reciprocations, and when will they lead the other side to expect further retreats?[76]

Decision-makers face these vital questions all the time. Israel has had to grapple with them from the beginning. Could the Arabs be conciliated? Would reprisals and punishments stop guerrilla raids? Similarly, one common facet of the Berlin conflict from 1958 to 1962 was the need for Western decision-makers to predict whether the Russians believed that "if the Western powers could accept the free city proposal as a model of change they would be psychologically prepared to accept the other 'realities,' as Moscow called them, of two Germanys and . . . a nuclear-free zone,"[77] or whether, by contrast, Western concessions over Berlin would call forth Soviet concessions on German security. In disputes between a large and a small power the former must calculate the reaction not only of the latter but of third parties. Thus to make concessions to Panama in the conflict over the canal President Johnson had to believe that not only that country but others as well would not infer that pressure and riots were a generally effective tool. Even if he thought that he could convince Panama that flexibility was not produced by weakness and that after our initial retreats our resistance would grow, not diminish, he would have to satisfy himself that others would not take our willingness to concede to a small state on a question previously considered vital as showing that we would give up much more to stronger states on other issues.

To return to the cases of World Wars I and II, the British had to predict the effects of firmness and conciliation. Would a commitment to outdo the Germans in the building of Dreadnoughts curb the naval race? Could the conflict be ameliorated by meeting German grievances? Similar questions arose in the last days of peace. Asquith, the prime minister, and Grey, the foreign secretary, considered sending an ultimatum but decided that to do so would only antagonize Germany and destroy the possibility of a peaceful settlement. Similarly, in March 1938 Foreign Minister Halifax told the cabinet that moves to protect Czechoslovakia would lead to unintended consequences: "The more closely we associate ourselves with France and Russia, the more we produce on German minds the impression that we are plotting to encircle Germany." At the time of the Nuremberg rally six months later, two leading foreign office officials wanted to send Germany a stiff warning "to prevent Hitler com-

[76] For a similar attempt to answer the last question, see S. S. Komorita and Marc Barnes, "Effects of Pressures to Reach Agreement in Bargaining," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 13 (1969), 245-52.

[77] Jack Schick, *The Berlin Crisis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 19.

mitting himself irretrievably." But the view prevailed that such a measure would infuriate, not deter, Hitler and reduce the chances of British mediation in the conflict. In March 1939 the permament undersecretary of the foreign office, Alexander Cadogan, summed up his disagreement with the ambassador in Berlin, Nevile Henderson, when he wrote the latter: "you express the wish that we could rearm a little more quietly, as you say that the noise we make about it leads Germans to believe that we want after all to attack them. . . . What seems to me to be a far greater danger is that they might believe they could attack and smash us. . . . For that reason, I had always hoped that, when the time came . . . we should advertise our strength as much as possible."[78]

Similar questions were central to the formation of British policy in the Far East. One reason why Ramsay MacDonald halted the building of a naval base at Singapore in 1924 was that he believed, contrary to the views of his military advisers, that the show of force was more likely to increase than to decrease Japanese pressure on China. More than ten years later, the British and American ambassadors to Japan disagreed about the advisability of a program of strong warnings and sanctions. To the former, "a private threat of this sort would encourage the civil government to extend its control over the actions of the military; to [the latter], on the other hand, such a step would only encourage the military to increase their independence."[79]

Even before the German demands were strongly raised, Britain and France had to decide the relative merits of firmness and conciliation. At Versailles they debated how punitive the peace settlement should be, and over the next two decades they quarreled over whether they should relax their harsh verdict or forceably resist German attempts to re-establish her position. The British, partly because they accepted the spiral explanation of the origins of war, favored making concessions in the expectation that Germany would become a defender of the new status quo. France opposed leniency on the grounds that German hostility was implacable. Concessions, she argued, would increase Germany's strength and lead her to doubt her adversaries' resolve. Prussia made the same choice in 1871. French bellicosity was ineradicable: hundreds of years of history had shown that she would never be peaceful or trustworthy. So she must be kept weak. As the minister of war put it: "We can, for the sake of our people and our security, conclude no peace that does not dismember France." Another decision-maker argued that Prussia

[78] Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London: Collins, 1964), p. 326; Cameron Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 84; quoted in Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, pp. 109, 148; David Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (New York: Putnam, 1972), pp. 155-56.

[79] B. B. Schofield, *British Sea Power* (London: Batsford, 1967), p. 111; Nicholas Clifford, *Retreat From China* (London: Longmans, 1967), p. 51.

"should treat the French as a conquered army and demoralize them to the utmost of our ability. We ought to crush them so that they will not be able to breathe for a hundred years." Bismarck agreed: France was "irritable, envious, jealous and proud to excess." Because she could never be trusted not to try to avenge the defeat, "We must have land, fortresses and frontiers which will shelter us for good from the enemy attack."[80]

The French position after World War I posed a second choice for Britain. Would conciliation or firmness be more likely to lead France to adopt a more reasonable view? Would security guarantees assuage France's fears, or would the resulting lack of restraint only embolden her to pursue an even more anti-German policy? Would threats make France abandon her harsh policy rather than risk losing British support? Or would they, by increasing French insecurity, lead her to hold even more strongly to her plan of keeping Germany down? When the tsar criticized Britain for having violated her proclaimed neutrality during the Russo-Japanese War by signing a new treaty with Japan that gave "encouragement and moral support to the Japanese," the British ambassador replied that in fact the treaty worked to the benefit of the Russians because it "enabled the Japanese to make peace on terms that were acceptable to Russia while without the safety assured to them by the Agreement they would probably have preferred to continue the war."[81]

Similar questions had to be answered by the United States government in 1971–1972 in deciding whether sending jet planes to Israel would make that country more or less flexible in negotiations with the Arabs. Some American officials "said that to the extent that Tel Aviv became independent of American supplies, Washington's diplomatic leverage would be reduced. Others argued . . . that a friendlier atmosphere between the two countries might increase American influence." After the United States decided to sell the planes, an American official said that

[80] Quoted in Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (New York: Collier, 1969), pp. 228, 221. Napoleon made a similar choice after defeating Austria in 1805. "Napoleon then had to choose between imposing mild or harsh terms on Vienna. Talleyrand favored a 'soft' peace in order to influence Austria to turn her attentions toward the Balkans, which would bring on a clash between the Hapsburgs and the Romanovs and leave the French a free hand in Germany. The Emperor, however, believed that the Hapsburgs would never give up the desire to regain their influence in Italy and Germany and decided to rob them of the means of resuming hostilities in the near future. . . . The Continent lay at [Napoleon's] feet. No power east of the Channel dared openly defy him. Despite these triumphs, however, Napoleon had failed to establish the basis for a lasting peace. He forced his victims into submission by the imposition of peace terms so rigorous that the treaties invariably were little more than truces under which the defeated powers thirsted for revenge and constantly sought a favorable opportunity to resume their contest of arms." (Ross, *European Diplomatic History, 1789-1815*, pp. 253, 381.)

[81] Gooch and Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol. 4, p. 216.

withholding them "never proved very effective anyway. Perhaps we can influence them more if there is a feeling of mutual respect and confidence." In early 1973, when the United States decided to sell more airplanes, it was explained that "As the Israelis become increasingly confident that their relative military strength will be preserved, they should be willing to take a few more risks in negotiating a peace settlement."[82] Russia also has had to decide whether aid and commitments are more likely to restrain or to encourage allies. By signing an agreement with India in 1971, for example, did Russia increase the chances that India would attack Pakistan because India would expect Russian support to deter other great powers from interfering? Or did the pact increase the chances of peace by reassuring India that she was not isolated and did not have to act rashly? These calculations are difficult to make and therefore often yield bad policies. When Britain signed a defensive alliance with Japan in 1902, she thought that the increased security would make Japan less likely to go to war with Russia. In fact, the agreement removed the remaining Japanese doubts about the safety of fighting.[83] (Ironically, the outcome of the war ended the Russian threat to India, a problem that had preoccupied British diplomacy for decades.)

When Will Force and Threats Work? Hypotheses

Unfortunately no well-structured or verified theory exists that tells us when force and threats work. Several fairly obvious propositions can be advanced, however, and one simple but important conclusion drawn. Threats are more apt to work and the deterrence model is more apt to apply when: 1) The other side sees the costs of standing firm as very high. More specifically, this will be the case when: 1a) The other side is relatively weak or vulnerable; 1b) the other places an especially high subjective value on preserving the lives and property of its citizens;

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[82] Articles in the *New York Times* by William Beecher, "U.S. Said to Plan to Help Israelites Make Own Arms," January 14, 1972; "U.S. Said to Agree to Supply Israel with 42 Phantoms," February 6, 1972; "Israelis Will Buy More Jets in U.S.: Total Is Put at 48," March 14, 1973.

The discussion here deals with concessions rather than rewards—i.e. side-payments for "good behavior." It is often argued that rewards are more likely to be effective than are punishments, especially in changing attitudes and images as well as behavior, and that rewards produce fewer unintended and undesired consequences. (See John Raser, "Learning and Affect in International Politics," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 3 [1965], 216-26, James Tedeschi, "Threats and Promises," in Paul Swingle, ed., *The Structure of Conflict* [New York: Academic Press, 1970], pp. 155-91, and David Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," *World Politics* 24 [October 1971], pp. 19-38.) But many questions need to be explored: are there many possible rewards that do not involve prohibitive costs to the state giving them? Are rewards only useful when the incompatibility is largely illusory? When will rewards be seen as bribes, encouraging the recipient to repeatedly show that he will make mischief unless he is continually paid? Should one reward the other for altering undesired behavior but not for continuing a friendly policy?

[83] Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp. 419-20.

1c) the other is highly risk-averse; and 1d) the other has a short-run perspective.[84] 2) The other side believes that the state making the threats sees its costs of standing firm as low. The specifics of this proposition are the reverse of those we have just given. 3) The other side sees the costs of retreating as relatively low. More specifically, this will be the case when: 3a) the other's central values are not involved in the issue at stake; 3b) the issue does not involve principles that apply to other important cases; 3c) the other can retreat without breaking important commitments; 3d) the goals of the side making the threat are seen as limited; 3e) the other believes that the demands derive from the state's desire for security and thinks that the state may see the other as a menace; 3f) neither the goals sought nor the means employed violate common standards of proper relations between juridically equal actors; and, related to the last proposition, 3g) the actor making the threat refrains from humiliating the other, inflicting gratuitous punishment, raising demands that lack any legitimacy, or asking for something that is of significantly greater value to the other than it is to him. All these kinds of behavior limit the costs of retreating to the other side by decreasing the other's fear that a retreat will be followed by further demands. They involve avoiding those traits that observers associate with extreme ambitions and taking care to observe lines of salience that differentiate present demands from many others that could be raised in the future.

To turn from the question of whether an actor will back down in the face of a threat to the question of the effects of retreats, concessions are more apt to encourage new demands, as the deterrence theory holds, when: 4) a retreat takes the state past a salient point; 5) the adversaries do not have a common conception of fair play and reciprocation; 6) the concession is made in a way that indicates that the state would sacrifice a great deal in order to avoid a war; and 7) the state retreats even though the costs of doing so are very high (i.e. the conditions specified in proposition 3 are not met).

To discuss these hypotheses in detail would take us away from the theme of this book. We should, however, note one thread that runs through them. A major determinant of the effect of threats is the intention of the other side. When faced with an aggressor, threats and force are necessary. Concessions may serve important tactical needs,[85] but they will not meet the underlying sources of dissatisfaction. When con-

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[84] For empirical support for these propositions, see Komorita and Barnes, "Effects of Pressures to Reach Agreement in Bargaining," and James Tedeschi et al., "Social Power and the Credibility of Promises," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 13 (1969), 253-61.

[85] Alexander George, David Hall, and William Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) have found that concessions are important even in those cases, like the Cuban missile crisis, that are usually thought of as being settled by a complete retreat by one side.

cessions are made under pressure or when the aggressor thinks that the status quo power is under no illusions about the nature of the conflict between them, the concessions are likely to quicken the pace of future demands. (We should briefly note the other side of this coin, which is important for other parts of this book: when a state believes that the other has responded to conciliation by claiming that the state retreated only because of the other's superior force and by raising new demands, it will be likely to infer that the other is an aggressor who must be dealt with firmly.) And when the status quo state stands firm and the aggressor responds in kind, the spiral model will not apply because the parties are correctly perceiving real incompatibility. On the other hand, when conflict erupts between two status quo powers, the spiral model will probably provide the correct explanation and policy prescription. Threats will tend to be self-defeating because neither side realizes that the other is afraid of it. Initiatives and concessions, carefully undertaken, can help the states out of the dilemma.

This does not mean, of course, that the states' basic intentions are the only variables that determine how they will react to threats and concessions. The details and context of the moves, each side's operational code, and the specific goals held and attributed to others need to be examined. Not all status quo or aggressive powers behave alike or interpret others' actions in the same way. Thus we are not claiming that conciliatory moves will be seen as an indication of weakness only by a state that seeks to overthrow the status quo. This interpretation can spring from a much more contingent analysis of alternatives available to the other state. Similarly, the attempt to increase power can increase illusory incompatibility even if there is a high degree of real incompatibility between the parties. But these qualifications should not obscure the importance of each side's intentions in determining which model is likely to provide the best fit.

If this conclusion is correct, then the argument between the spiral and deterrence theorists is not over a general model of international relations, but over which model applies to the Cold War and, as a main determinant of the answer to this question, what Soviet intentions are. This is why Rapoport asks: "Why is the power game being played at all? Is the game worth the candle?"[86]

PERCEPTIONS OF INTENTION AND ANALYSES OF WHAT IS AT STAKE

Differences in perceptions of Soviet intentions also explain why spiral and deterrence theorists have such different attitudes toward the handling of minor issues. The former see them as opportunities for reducing ten-

[86] In de Reuck and Knight, eds., *Conflict in Society*, p. 293.

sions. The outcomes are less important than the learning that can take place. Each side can show that it is no menace and respects the other's legitimate interests. This view was presented by Neville Chamberlain when he briefed his advisers after returning from Godesberg: "Herr Hitler had said that if we got this question [of the Sudetenland] out of the way without conflict, it would be a turning point in Anglo-German relations. That, to the Prime Minister, was the big thing of the present issue."[87]

Deterrence theorists agree that the way the conflict is handled is usually more important than the intrinsic value of what is at stake. But they fear positive feedback of a different kind. As Schelling has explained, "what is in dispute [in the game of Chicken] is usually not the issue of the moment, but everyone's expectations about how a participant will behave in the future." Khrushchev agrees: "Think what would have happened if we had sat down to negotiate [in the Paris Summit Conference of 1960] without having received an apology from the United States. . . . The aggressors would have wanted to bend us. But if we had bent our back, they would immediately have thrown a saddle on us, and then they would have sat themselves on top of us and begun to drive on us."[88]

For the same reasons, both sides in a labor-management conflict may expend resources on an issue out of all proportion to the money immediately at stake. In one plant the union fiercely opposed the effort of the new manager to deny a small group of workers overtime pay. Even though only a few people and small sums were involved, "the union officers . . . felt that this was a crucial issue; if [the new manager] got away with this particular move, there was no telling how far he would go." In another case the union strenuously fought a management effort to change the piecework rates on a relatively insignificant machine because "it seemed possible that management might take an inch here and an inch there until the whole rate structure was in jeopardy."[89]

[87] Quoted in Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, p. 162.

[88] *Arms and Influence*, p. 118; quoted in Leites, *Kremlin Thoughts*, pp. 11-12. At another point, Khrushchev said, "It is clear to everybody that this is only the beginning. Those who entered upon the path . . . are not going to stop at the half-way mark." (*Ibid.*, p. 11.) As these quotations indicate, several aspects of what Leites sees as the Soviet operational code—e.g. the requirements to "push to the limit" and "resist from the start" (*A Study of Bolshevism*, pp. 30-34, 50-57)—can be seen not as a uniquely Bolshevik outlook, but rather as the common view of a state that believes that it is confronted by an implacably hostile adversary. The frequently noted Russian refusal to reciprocate minor concessions and adjustments (Raymond Dennett and Joseph Johnson, eds., *Negotiating with the Russians* [Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1951], pp. 295-96; Fred Iklé, *How Nations Negotiate* [New York: Harper and Row, 1964], pp. 105-106; John Deane, *The Strange Alliance* [New York: Viking, 1947]) can also be partly explained by this image.

[89] William F. Whyte, *Pattern for Industrial Peace* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), pp. 42, 68.

When one state sees another as extremely hostile, it is apt to find most compromises on specific issues unattractive. Since the other's demands are considered illegitimate, having to give in even slightly will be seen as unreasonable. And since the other will be expected to accept the compromise only as a temporary solution, at best a little breathing space will have been gained. At worst, the state will have lost a clear and tenable position by sacrificing a defensible principle and placing itself in an unstable middle ground from which it can be more easily forced back. If the other is aggressive, what is at stake is not an issue of little intrinsic importance, but each side's image of the other's values, strength, and resolve. Firmness can help set relations right; retreats incur a high, long-run cost because they lead the adversary to expect further retreats. Thus in 1885 a British cabinet minister argued for a strong response to Russian expansion in Afghanistan: "It is now not a mere question about a few miles more or less of Afghan territory but of our whole relations with Russia in Asia." In the Agadir crisis the anti-German faction in Britain argued "the point that it is not merely Morocco which is at stake. Germany is playing for the highest stakes. If her demands are acceded to . . . , it will mean definitely the subjection of France. . . . The details of the terms are not so very important now. . . . Concession means not loss of interest or loss of prestige. It means defeat with all its inevitable consequences." In July 1914 Eyre Crowe made the same kind of argument: "France and Russia consider that these charges are the pretext and the bigger cause of the Triple Alliance versus the Triple Entente is definitely engaged. . . . [T]his struggle . . . is not for the possession of Serbia, but . . . [is] between Germany aiming at political dictatorship in Europe and the Powers who desire to retain individual freedom."[90]

The belief that the other side is highly aggressive and the resulting analysis of the issues at stake will also lead the state to refrain from reciprocating if the other modifies its demands. Thus, those Finns who favored standing firm in the negotiations with Russia in 1939 were not swayed when the Soviets eased their position. If Russia were out to dominate Finland, true compromise was impossible.[91]

Debates over policies often center on whether what is at stake is a specific matter or the wider question of security. This was true, for example, of the arguments over the Munich settlement. Chamberlain's opponents argued, in the words of Duff Cooper, that "It was not for Serbia that we

[90] Quoted in Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, p. 88; quoted in Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War*, p. 62; quoted in Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, pp. 95-96; quoted in Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 156.

[91] Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 133-39.

fought in 1914. It was not even for Belgium. . . . We were fighting then, as we should have been fighting last week, in order that one Great Power should not be allowed . . . to dominate by brutal force the continent of Europe." Chamberlain did not disagree with this principle—he only argued that it did not apply to the case at hand. Calling the dispute "a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing," he said:

> However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in a war simply on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that. I am myself a man of peace to the very depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me; but, if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of force, I should feel that it must be resisted. Under such a domination life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living; but war is a fearful thing, and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really the great issues that are at stake.[92]

The anti-appeasers did not disagree with this position; they advocated a different policy because they were sure that "the great issues" were at stake.

Major difficulties will arise if one side thinks that an issue can be treated in isolation when its adversary believes that all matters are closely interrelated. Attempts to treat individual issues on their merits may appear to the latter as indications of general weakness. In the midst of Franco-British conflict over the Near East in 1840, Palmerston accepted French mediation of a dispute involving Britain and Sicily. "Moreover, Palmerston showed admirable feeling in facilitating the transfer of Napoleon's remains from St. Helena to France. . . . But Thiers was quite wrong in thinking that this meant any relaxation of Palmerston's standpoint in the Eastern Question." When one side regards an agreement as

[92] Quoted in John Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich* (New York: Viking, 1964), pp. 186, 158. Also see the minutes of the cabinet meetings during the crisis in Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, pp. 156-59. One bit of evidence counts against this view, however. When Chamberlain went to Godesberg to tell Hitler that the Czechs had agreed to the original German ultimatum, Hitler added new demands. Chamberlain insisted on certain minor modifications, and when Hitler stood firm, declared that Britain was ready to go to war. The fact that the British were willing to fight over an issue much smaller than the future of the whole Sudetenland even though they did not believe German aims were unlimited seems to undermine the argument that the image of the adversary largely determines the view of what issues are at stake. But the appeasers took this stand only with great reluctance. Furthermore, between the time the declaration was issued and the crisis resolved Chamberlain, rather than displaying firmness, took even the slightest retractions by Hitler as an excuse to revert to appeasement.

limited to the specific issue at hand and the other side views it as indicating that a general settlement will be forthcoming, charges of deception and bad faith will be raised as soon as either side acts on its beliefs. The conflict over the basic issues will not only have been postponed but exacerbated. This is illustrated by the consequences of the resolution of the Stamp Act dispute between England and the American colonies. In developing a compromise, the British prime minister

> had been able to hide from Parliament the full extent of the Americans' objections to its authority and from the Americans the full extent of Parliament's assertion of it, [but] he had actually heightened the incompatibility of the two positions. When this incompatibility became evident, as it soon did, the happy misunderstanding he had fostered served only to exaggerate the difference. The English were encouraged to believe that the Americans were seeking independence in easy stages and the Americans to think that the English were trying to enslave them by slow and insensible degrees.[93]

Before closing this section we should acknowledge that one's image of the adversary and the resulting beliefs about what is at stake do not totally determine the way in which one handles small issues. First, even if the other is seen as aggressive, tactical considerations—e.g. the need to buy time, the belief that your side will be more united if you retreat and make the other show his aggressiveness clearly—may dictate treating small issues as though they were isolated. Second, there are other reasons why small issues develop into large conflicts. If the issue involves moral values, retreat or compromise may be prohibitively costly. Or if the two sides are coalitions and the issue is important to one member of the coalition, the others may feel obliged to lend support lest the alliance break up. This was part of the explanation for the outbreak of World War I. Small issues can also lead to large conflicts if both sides believe that only a little more effort is required to achieve victory. The model for this is an auction in which each bidder must pay his highest bid whether he wins the object or not. The bidding can easily go much higher than the value of the object at stake because previous bids are sunk costs that are not relevant to the question of whether to bid higher. The "quagmire" explanation of American policy in Vietnam is of this type. But the Pentagon Papers and the articles based on them show that the decision-makers actually were pessimistic about the chances that each step would bring

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[93] Robert William Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe, 1789-1914* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 204; Edmund and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis* (New York: Collier, 1963), p. 365. These difficulties are not considered in Roger Fisher's "Fractionating Conflict," in Fisher, ed., *International Conflict and Behavioral Science* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 91-109.

the conflict to a successful conclusion. And when cases do fit this model, one of the intervening variables is likely to be the development of an image of the other as hostile and the accompanying belief that what is at stake is the state's ability to contain its adversary.

Finally, astute strategy and tactics can permit an actor to treat one issue as separate from others, refuse to take up challenges, and limit the damage to his image when he has to back down after he has been engaged. Positions can be re-interpreted, definitions of the situation defined and re-defined, retreats justified by the special circumstances of the case, and the failure to contest an issue explained by temporary disabilities. In these ways the actor can increase the chance that his behavior on one issue will be seen as highly context-bound rather than as reflecting traits that will influence what he does in later cases. Retreats will then cast less of a shadow on the actor's ability to preserve other values, and concessions will be less likely to call up future demands.[94]

Other Explanations for the Differences between the Spiral and Deterrence Theories

The differences in images of the Russians are sufficient to account for the dispute between the deterrence and spiral theorists. There may be, however, other sources of disagreement. First, people differ in their propensity to perceive aggressiveness. Second, there may be residual differences in general views on the effect of threats. Even if the theorists agree on how to cope with the extreme cases, they could disagree on those toward the middle of the continuum. These two sources of disagreement often spring from differences in people's predispositions to see politics in general and international politics in particular as characterized by conflict or cooperation. Whether because of differences in personality, previous experiences, or ideology, people differ in their beliefs about the degree to which cooperation among nations is possible and in their readiness to perceive relations as conflictful. The result is that given the same situation some observers will see high threats and conflict of interest which they believe can only be coped with by firmness and strength, while others will see less threat and believe that conciliation can lead to a mutually beneficial solution.

A third argument, put most strongly by Anatol Rapoport, is that because deterrence theory concentrates on conflict it leads those who use it to become preoccupied with discordant as opposed to common interests. Deterrence theorists may have misperceived Russia and the Cold War, but it is more convincing to reverse the causation in Rapoport's argument. The theorists have applied their model to the Cold War be-

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[94] For a further discussion of this topic, see Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, pp. 174-224.

cause they believe the Soviets are aggressive. The approach was selected because its assumptions were believed to fit the problem to which it was being applied. Deterrers do not see a predominance of conflicting interests in other contexts, for example among allies. The famous Law of the Instrument (give a man a hammer and he will find that everything needs pounding) cannot be ignored, but to concentrate on it is to obscure the more important differences of opinion about Soviet behavior.[95]

DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

A final claim is that spiral and deterrence theorists arrive at their differing positions because they have different values and codes of morality. But because their empirical analyses differ so much, it is hard to tell whether there are any significant differences on these dimensions. Philip Green is certainly correct to say that deterrence theorists "are not 'anti-war' in the ethical sense of being themselves committed to some kind of non-warlike stance."[96] But this can also be said of the spiral theorists. They are not pacifists or nuclear pacifists. As we have shown, they do not deny that force is appropriate when confronted with an aggressor. Rather they claim that, faced with the Soviet Union, our threats have created a dangerous situation. We can afford to adopt a "non-warlike stance" because the Soviets are not a menace.

Because defenders and critics of deterrence policies disagree about the probable outcomes if deterrence is continued or dropped (e.g. war, communist expansion), disagreement about policies is not evidence of differences in the values accorded these outcomes. Such inferences could be drawn only by obtaining their answers to questions about what policy they would favor with a large number of empirical factors assumed as givens. In the absence of such information there is no reason to accept Robert Levine's claim that the key difference between the two groups of theorists lies in their different relative fears of war and of communism, leading them to give different answers to questions such as: "How much risk of war are you willing to take in order to increase your chances for freedom?" Similarly, J. David Singer's claim that "Apparently Mr. Kahn dislikes the possibility of an occasional Soviet diplomatic victory more

[95] Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964), pp. 28-29. For Rapoport's arguments see his *Strategy and Conscience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), "The Sources of Anguish," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 21 (December 1965), 34, and "Strategic and Nonstrategic Approaches to the Problems of Security and Peace," in Archibald, ed., *Strategic Interactions and Conflict*. For arguments similar to those expressed here, see Donald Brennan, "Strategy and Conscience," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 21 (December 1965), 30, and Schelling's review of Rapoport's book in the *American Economic Review* 54 (December 1964).

[96] Green, *Deadly Logic* (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 250, italics omitted.

than he dislikes the possibility of nuclear war while I would—given these two alternatives—opt for the other," is misleading because Singer and Kahn differ in their estimates of the probability that various policies will in fact lead to war.[97]

It may well be true that security policies actually involve trade-offs of this kind. We may be able to gain a larger chance of physical survival only by decreasing the probability that we, and our NATO allies, can have the government we desire. But the theorists have not argued in this way. Both sides justify their recommendations on the grounds that their policies will increase the chances for both peace *and* freedom. Not only Amitai Etzioni and Charles Osgood but their opponents, too, claim to be offering "the hard way to peace" and "an alternative to war or surrender." The spiral theorists do not admit that their policy would involve any significant risk to American national security. And the proponents of deterrence argue that their policies are more likely to prevent war than are unilateral initiatives.

Claims for a Dominant Strategy

Because they do not recognize the trade-offs implicit in their analyses, both sets of theorists imply that the strategy they advocate is, to borrow a term from game theory, a dominant one—i.e. one that is better than the alternative no matter what the Soviets are like.[98] Deterrence theorists assume that, in the unlikely event that the United States has been wrong to see Russia as a threat, its policy would cost little except money because the Russians would understand that American arms would never be used for aggression. Our discussion of arms-hostility spirals is sufficient to indicate that this confidence is misplaced.

Lacking political power, the spiral theorists have had to provide a fuller defense of their views. But their treatments of the dangers of applying their prescriptions to an aggressive U.S.S.R. are both brief and inadequate. The worst outcome they envisage is that Russia would not cooperate and tensions would not be lowered. If this happens, gradualism can be considered to have been a test that has indicated, at low cost, that the U.S.S.R. is aggressive or that the screen of misunderstanding is too great to be penetrated by this strategy. No dangers are foreseen. As Osgood puts it: "Even if [the Russians] proved to be inherently and unalterably evil, the very gradualness of [the program] and the fact that we retain our ultimate capacity to retaliate means that we could make sure

[97] "Facts and Morals in the Arms Debate," *World Politics* 14 (January 1962), 257-58 (Levine places more stress on differences in theorists' analysis in *The Arms Debate* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963]); "The Strategic Dilemma," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 5 (June 1961), 203.

[98] The tendency to avoid value trade-offs appears in many other contexts, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

that this was their nature without shifting the present balance of power to any significant degree." Similarly, Etzioni claims that "since the initial concessions are only symbolic or limited, such generosity [which gradualism calls for] would not imperil national security. . . . Should [gradualism] fail, the more hazardous extreme strategies [of deterrence or unilateral disarmament] are still available. It is a 'maximum gain,' 'minimum regret' strategy."[99]

DANGERS OF APPLYING GRADUALISM TO AN AGGRESSIVE ADVERSARY

If the arguments summarized above were true, it would be hard to see why anyone would oppose the policy. This fact should be enough to make us suspicious of these claims, and indeed this position ignores three dangers in gradualism. Initiatives might be understood by the state's allies as evidence that it was willing to settle problems with the adversary regardless of the interests of others. This might be fine so long as such agreements were possible. But if the spiral assumptions were wrong, the state would have to face a hostile opponent with a weakened alliance system. A second, and related, danger is that the two major powers would be able to cooperate once or twice at the expense of their allies but would feel they must support them strongly in the next crisis lest the allies permanently defect. In 1912–1913 Germany and Britain worked together to dampen one of the perennial Balkan crises, but further cooperation did not follow; the reaction of their allies led them to refuse to play similar roles the next year. The danger is compounded if one or both of the major powers expects the other to continue its cooperative behavior. Thus it has been argued that the 1913 Anglo-German attempt "to lessen antagonism [by opening] negotiations . . . on specific colonial questions. . . . [may have done] more harm than good by encouraging each government to hope that the other might desert its allies in a crisis."[100]

The third and most important problem should have been obvious to those concerned with psychological variables. The adversary could develop an image of the state that would lead the adversary to take more

[99] Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender*, p. 147; Etzioni, *The Hard Way to Peace*, pp. 105, 110.
[100] C. J. Lowe and M. L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, vol. 1: *British Foreign Policy, 1902-1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 107-18; Sontag, *European Diplomatic History*, p. 171. This also indicates that the common claim that the rigidity of the alliances was an important cause of World War I is only a half-truth and that the claim that 1914 shows that bipolar systems are unstable cannot be sustained. Cohesive intrablock relations might have led to flexible interblock relations. See Kenneth Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964), 900-902. (This is not to deny that a total absence of stable coalitions could also have contributed to system stability.)

aggressive actions. The very separability between military capability and psychological gestures that the spiral theorists see as permitting a state to "design initiatives that will reduce tensions significantly without also endangering [its] vital interests"[101] means that a state can decrease its security without changing the military balance. In a situation in which outcomes are heavily influenced by interests and resolve, perceptions of others' interests and resolve, and perceptions of others' perceptions of one's interest and resolve,[102] policies designed to show that the state is not a menace can lead others to think that the state can be bullied. A statement that no issues worthy of a war divide the two blocs may imply to a country that wishes to exploit this belief that the state will back down rather than risk a war. Gestures designed to reduce the adversary's presumed sense of insecurity may make it believe that the state has given up all pretense of being able to protect others against attacks. Concessions in small matters could lead the adversary to believe that it had overestimated the value the state placed on a wide range of goals and that it therefore could prevail in disputes it had previously shunned.

Ironically, the spiral theorists commit the same errors that they attribute to deterrence theorists. They underestimate the difficulty of projecting a desired (and accurate) image and forget that the adversary draws inferences from the state's behavior in light of what it thinks the state knows of its intentions. If the deterrers' beliefs about the adversary are correct, initiatives are especially likely to be misperceived because the adversary not only does not fear the state's aggressiveness but also believes that the state knows this. The adversary would then see only one possible explanation for the state's behavior—the state is indicating in a face-saving way that the adversary is free to expand. The history of the 1930s again comes to mind.

SUGGESTIONS

Instead of incorrectly believing that he is calling for a dominant strategy, the policy advocate should try to reach the more modest goal of developing policies that have high payoffs if the assumptions about the adversary that underlie them are correct, yet have tolerable costs if these premises are wrong. One way to do this would be to procure the kinds and numbers of weapons that are useful for deterrence without simultaneously being as effective for aggression. Such a posture would break out of the security dilemma. Given the logic of nuclear weapons, this would mean avoiding systems that are useful only for a counterforce first strike (e.g. large, soft missiles) and paying extra for weapons that are especially

[101] Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender*, p. 158.
[102] Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, pp. 225-53.

effective for retaliation (e.g. relatively invulnerable Polaris-type sub-marines). There are three major problems, however. First, it is hard to tell what inferences the adversary would draw from various military postures. What would appear threatening to one state's decision-makers may not be so to another's. Second, a state that is pledged to protect a third area that it cannot defend with conventional forces will need to rely for deterrence on the threat to launch a nuclear strike in response to a conventional attack. To the extent that the state cannot convince the adversary that it values the third area as much as it values its own home-land, it will need something more than a second strike capability. Third, and most important, nuclear weapons do not have to be used all at once. One side could threaten to destroy one or more of the other's cities if the other did not do as it demanded. While there are reasons why, if both sides are close to equal in general resolve, threats of this kind are more apt to be credible if they are deterrent (demanding that the other not do something) rather than compellent (demanding that it take positive action),[103] the military hardware required cannot be classified as either defensive or threatening.

A second suggestion brings us closer to the concerns of this book. Because the effect of initiatives and threats depends to a large extent on the other's intentions and its perceptions of the first state, people who are debating policy should not only realize what they are arguing about but should also ask themselves what possible behavior on the part of the adversary would they take as evidence against the interpretation that they hold. This is especially true of those who see the other as aggressive because, as we will discuss in a later chapter, it is easy to see almost any evidence as consistent with this image. This means that it is often very hard for the other to show that it has only limited ambitions, especially if it fears that the first side is aggressive. The more such an adversary adheres to the familiar view that the state is apt to interpret friendly overtures as weakness, the more hesitant it will be to take unambiguous actions and the more sensitive the state should be to evidence of the adversary's willingness to support the status quo. Decision-makers would certainly have cause to worry if the only actions that would convince them that the adversary is not aggressive are measures they believe to be too risky for their own state to undertake (e.g. drastic arms cut, abolition of spheres of influence, or even unilateral initiatives). Similarly, those who feel that the adversary is not aggressive should consider what behavior would distinguish an aggressive, but cagey, state from a peaceful one caught in the security dilemma.

These suggestions show that the well-known arguments for the importance of empathizing with one's adversary in order to predict how he will

[103] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 69-91.

react are insufficient. One must try to empathize with a variety of possible outlooks, any one of which could be a true representation of the adversary. It is not enough to calculate how the other will respond to your action if your image of him is correct. You must also try to estimate how the other will respond if he has intentions and perceptions that are different from those that you think he probably has. (In doing so you must also keep in mind that he is likely to think that you do understand him and so will view your policy as though it were designed to deal with his own policy as he, rather than you, sees it.)

If it is true that perceptions of the other's intentions are a crucial element of policy-making and that such perceptions are often incorrect, we need to explore how states perceive others and why and where they often go wrong. This is the subject of the rest of this book. Military analysts talk of the "fog of battle"—the severe limits on the ability of each side to tell what the other's army (and often what its own army) is doing. But more important is the "fog of foreign policy-making." It is terribly hard to tell what others are up to, to infer their predispositions, and to predict how they will behave. Because of the importance and difficulty of these tasks, decision-makers do and must employ short-cuts to rationality, often without being aware of the way they are doing so. But these short-cuts often produce important kinds of systematic errors, many of which increase conflict.

Perceptions of Centralization

UNITY AND PLANNING

A common misperception is to see the behavior of others as more centralized, planned, and coordinated than it is. This is a manifestation of the drive to squeeze complex and unrelated events into a coherent pattern. As Francis Bacon put it: "the human understanding, from its peculiar nature, easily supposes a greater degree of order and equality in things than it really finds." And a recent study found that "People seem to be unable to accept the idea of a random situation. Instead, they try to read order into random data."[1] People want to be able to explain as much as possible of what goes on around them. To admit that a phenomenon cannot be explained, or at least cannot be explained without adding numerous and complex exceptions to our beliefs, is both psychologically uncomfortable and intellectually unsatisfying.

We even resist explanations that involve several independent elements. This can be shown in three different areas. First, disjunctive concepts (i.e. those whose members exhibit one of several possible defining characteristics) are hard to learn. Second, in explaining others' behavior we minimize the number of causes that are operating by, for example, overestimating the degree to which this behavior can be explained by consistent and powerful personality factors. Third, as Abelson has noted in his summary of an ingenious set of experiments, "individuals seeking an account of their own behavior seem to prefer unitary explanations to conjunctive explanations." Thus if a man is told—wrongly—that his heart-beat rate increased when he saw a picture of a particular woman, he will rate her as more attractive than will someone who did not have this information. "The photograph viewers do not act as though they believe, 'This girl is really ordinary looking and my heart rate increase is due to something else.' It is mentally much more economical to suppose

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[1] Quoted in Donald Campbell, "Systematic Error on the Part of Human Links in Communication Systems," *Information and Control* 1 (1958), 363; Earl Hunt, Janet Marin, Philip Stone, *Experiments in Induction* (New York: Academic Press, 1966), p. 140 (similarly, Raymond Bauer notes that "the notion of 'accident' is alien to the enterprise of understanding. We feel impelled to give cognitive structure to all the data available to us." "Problems of Perception and the Relations Between the United States and the Soviet Union," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 5 [September 1961], 225).

that physiological and affective reactions are covariant."[2] In these diverse contexts, as many events as possible are seen as linked to a minimum number of causes. As a result, most people are slow to perceive accidents, unintended consequences, coincidences, and small causes leading to large effects. Instead coordinated actions, plans, and conspiracies are seen.

This is a product not only of a psychological need but also of the law of Occam's Razor—the preference for the most parsimonious explanation of the data at hand. But while it is not naive or unreasonable to try to encompass most of another's behavior under a very few rules, the more complete information available later usually shows that the behavior was the product of more numerous and complex forces than contemporary observers believed. And, more important from our standpoint, the predictions that the highly oversimplified model yields are often misleading.

The context of international politics shapes the content of the perceptions of unity and planning. An awareness of the implications of anarchy leads decision-makers to be alert for dangerous plots. If another's behavior seems innocuous, they will look for a hidden and menacing significance. They see not only plans, but sinister ones. Within society this perspective characterizes the paranoid. But since threats and plots are common in international relations, the perception that others are Machiavellian cannot be easily labeled pathological. It may have been extreme of Metternich, when he heard that the Russian ambassador had died, to ask "I wonder why he did that," but the search for the devious plan believed to lurk behind even the most seemingly spontaneous behavior is neither uncommon nor totally unwarranted.

I am not arguing that actors never carefully and skillfully orchestrate moves over a long period of time and a wide geographical area or claiming that there is a simple way for a contemporary observer to determine whether a given case fits this model. Secretary of State Dulles believed that "The Russians are great chess players and their moves in the world situation are . . . attempted to be calculated as closely and carefully as though they were making moves in a chess game."[3] Dulles may have been right; similar claims are correct in other cases. But these beliefs are

[2] Jerome Bruner, Jacqueline Goodnow, George Austin, *A Study of Thinking* (New York: Wiley, 1962), pp. 156-81; see footnote 9 below for several findings of the overestimation of the importance of personality; Robert Abelson, "Social Psychology's Rational Man," in G. W. Mortimore and S. I. Benn, eds., *The Concept of Rationality in the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, forthcoming).

[3] Ole Holsti, "Perceptions of Time, Perceptions of Alternatives, and Patterns of Communication as Factors in Crisis Diplomacy" (Stanford: Stanford Studies in Conflict and Integration, October 1964), p. 74.

much more common than the reality they seek to describe. Nor can they be entirely explained by a conscious desire to "play it safe." Decision-makers often spontaneously perceive an evil plan rather than make a calculated decision to act on the assumption that it lies behind the disparate events. Furthermore, they tend to be uncomfortable with explanations that point to the importance of chance or blunders.

Plans, Not Accidents and Confusion

Accidents, chance, and lack of coordination are rarely given their due by contemporary observers. Instead, they suspect that well-laid plans give events a coherence they would otherwise lack. Many would echo Einstein's refusal to accept the uncertainty principle: "God is subtle, but He is not malicious." Political examples are countless, but one example will remind us of many more. In the spring of 1918 England witnessed a bitter debate when General Maurice accused Lloyd George of providing Parliament with false information about British troop strength. The prime minister responded by claiming that, if the figures were misleading, the blame lay with his accuser, who had given them to him in the first place. Neither thought of the possibility, later shown to be the case, that the prime minister might have been sent the most recent correct figures but had never opened and read them.[4]

Men are also hesitant to believe that actions affecting them and occurring in rapid sequence could have occurred by coincidence. For primitive peoples, the idea that important outcomes can "come about through the accidental convergence of two independent chains of events is inconceivable because it is psychologically intolerable." Although modern men know of coincidences, psychologists have noted that it is nevertheless true that "when two events are appropriately coincidental in time, space, and sequence, an unavoidable and indivisible experience of causality occurs." Most of us have probably had the experience of, say, slamming a door just as a light in the room burns out. It is hard to avoid the immediate perception that the former caused the latter even though we know this is nonsense.[5]

It should not be surprising, therefore, that it is much less common for a decision-maker to see as coincidental a set of events that are planned than for him to see as part of a plan actions that are in fact coincidental. If two actors simultaneously increase their hostility toward a third, the

[4] Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London: Collins, 1964), pp. 467-74.

[5] Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," Part 2, *Africa* 37 (April 1967), 174; Donald Campbell, "Social Attitudes and Other Acquired Behavioral Dispositions," in Sigmund Koch, ed., *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, Vol. 6 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 122. For a political example, see John Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 305.

latter will believe they are acting in concert even if there is evidence that such cooperation is unlikely. If important events coincide with the arrival or departure of a powerful individual, observers will almost always believe he played a major role in them. Of special interest is that the movements of military forces are almost always seen as supporting foreign policies. Thus the Russians and Germans attributed particular significance to the fact that soon after the meeting between the tsar and the kaiser at Bjorko the British staged naval maneuvers in the Baltic without giving advance notice to other powers. They did not believe the British explanation, which was true, that the maneuvers had been long planned and the lack of notification was a mere oversight. Thirty years later when, shortly before the Italian attack on Ethiopia, the British foreign secretary's affirmation of Britain's commitment to her League obligations was immediately followed by fleet maneuvers in the Mediterranean, other states assumed the action was designed to give weight to the verbal message. In fact "The two acts were not . . . part of a single or coordinated policy and were causally unrelated." A more recent, and more dangerous, example of the tendency for a coincidence to be perceived as part of a plan was the difficulty Kennedy had in persuading Khrushchev that the U-2 reconnaissance plane that flew over Russia during the Cuban missile crisis was not conveying a threat, but really was lost. And so it is not surprising that when the American bombing raids on Hanoi and Haiphong practically ceased in late 1966 because of inclement weather, some North Vietnamese leaders thought that the United States was signaling its support for the "Marigold" peace initiative.[6] The other side of this coin is that, because decision-makers know that others are not apt to believe in coincidences, they may delay or change their behavior in order to avoid the appearance of being influenced by other events that are happening at the time.

Because chaos and confusion are not intellectually and psychologically satisfying explanations, actors must often seek hidden manipulations. For example, many observers believed the German fifth column was largely responsible for the Allies' mobilization difficulties and the swift German victories in World War II. Even those who were puzzled by the lack of direct proof of espionage and traitors could not rid themselves of this perception. Thus the British general in charge of home defense noted in his diary in July 1940: "It is extraordinary how we get circumstantial reports of 5th Column and yet we have never been able to get anything worth having. One is persuaded that it hardly exists. And yet

[6] Eugene Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis, 1904-1906* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), pp. 292-93; George Baer, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 351; Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), p. 338.

there is signalling going on all over the place and we cannot get any evidence." Later investigation showed that fifth columnists had done very little and that the incidents attributed to them were caused by Allied disorganization and natural disorder.[7]

Like confusion, stupidity is rarely given its due. Instead, otherwise inexplicable behavior is seen as part of a devious plan, usually a hostile one. For example, in the late nineteenth century the American military attaché in France bought the plans of French fortifications. There was no reason for him to do this; as the American ambassador noted, it was "perfectly useless for us to possess plans of seaboard fortresses in France." As a consequence, however, French decision-makers concluded that the American must have been in league with the Germans or Italians. At the start of World War I the German chancellor was reinforced in his belief that England would look for a political end to the conflict by the escape of the *Goeben* from a superior British force. "To attribute this *coup* to a blunder on the part of the British admiral in command seemed so unlikely that Bethmann-Hollweg and the German Chief of the Admiralty were inclined to conclude that Britain was unwilling to strike any 'heavy blows' against Germany."[8]

One Actor, Not Several

Coherence and consistency are further imposed on the world by the propensity of actors to see others as trying to maximize the same set of values in different situations and in different periods of time. As we will discuss at the end of this chapter, this parsimonious assumption often leads to powerful explanations, but it can be misleading when the other's decisions are the outcome of shifting interactions among conflicting forces and interests. Although the bulk of this section will discuss the underestimation of the degree to which the other's behavior is produced by independent actions of separate parts of the other's government, we should also note that the behavior of individuals is often similarly mis-

[7] Louis De Jong, *The German Fifth Column in the Second World War*, translated by C. M. Geyle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), passim; Roderick Macleod and Denis Kelly, eds., *Time Unguarded: The Ironside Diaries, 1937-1940* (New York: McKay, 1962), p. 377, also pp. 341, 347, and 360.

[8] Alfred Vagts, *The Military Attaché* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 222-23; Egmont Zechlin, "Cabinet versus Economic Warfare in Germany: Policy and Strategy during the Early Months of the First World War," in H. W. Koch, ed., *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1972), p. 187. A variant of this is the propensity to see sophisticated bargaining tactics in behavior that is actually the result of the other's inexperience. Edward Peters, a professional labor conciliator, has observed many cases in which one side is not experienced in bargaining and the other side, not realizing this, makes over-sophisticated interpretations of the first side's behavior. *Strategy and Tactics in Labor Negotiations* (New London, Conn.: National Foremen's Institute, 1955), p. 137.

perceived. Because each person seeks a variety of goals in a complex environment, his behavior may be self-contradictory. As we showed in Chapter 4, people pursue multiple goals without recognizing the trade-offs among them and act to further one value in one context and another value in a different situation. In other words, the view of the individual as a billiard ball is often as invalid as the analogous view of the state. We can see the person, just as we see the state, as governed by differing and often-incompatible values that sometimes produce strange compromises and sometimes act independently in their own spheres. But because of the drive "to complete the incomplete, to unify, to achieve closure," people tend to "overestimate the unity of personality." Furthermore, observers usually overestimate the influence of the other's internal characteristics and underestimate the influence of the situation the other is in. As a result, greater constancy is expected, and observers are surprised when the person behaves differently under changed circumstances. As Heider puts it:

> Often the momentary situation which, at least in part, determines the behavior of a person is disregarded and the behavior is taken as a manifestation of personal characteristics. . . . In *She Stoops to Conquer* Goldsmith presents a young man whose behavior varies extremely with the momentary situation. The other characters attribute the temporary behavior to the permanent personality and this error produces many of the comic situations in this play.[9]

But what is of most importance for international relations is that decision-makers generally overestimate the degree to which their opposite numbers have the information and power to impose their desires on all parts of their own governments. The state's behavior is usually seen as centrally controlled rather than as the independent actions of actors trying to further their own interests and their partial and biased conceptions of the national interest. For example, because most U.S. decision-makers analyze Soviet defense policy as though it were the embodiment of a coherent plan, they use weapons procurement as an index of Soviet

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[9] H. C. Smith, "Sensitivity to People," in Hans Toch and Henry Smith, eds., *Social Perception* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1968), pp. 15-17; Gustav Ichheiser, *Appearances and Realities* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970), pp. 49-59; Fritz Heider, "Social Perception and Phenomenal Causality," *Psychological Review* 51 (1944), 361-62. Also see Edward Jones and Victor Harris, "The Attribution of Attitudes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 3 (1967), 1-24. As has been widely noted, this tendency has strong moral implications when it leads people "to see the cause of [individuals'] successes and failures in their personal characteristics and not in other conditions." (Heider, "Social Perception and Phenomenal Causality," p. 361.) This is also consistent with the experimental findings discussed in Harold Kelley, *Attribution in Social Interaction* (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1971), p. 19.

strategy. The development of an inefficient system useful only in a first strike and the deployment of very large missiles thus were taken as showing that the Soviets must be contemplating aggression. Senator Ervin did not think much of the claim that it was difficult to draw inferences from the Russian build-up:

> I don't see anything wrong with a man using a bit of commonsense. If I saw a man going to the woodpile with an axe, I would think he was going to cut some wood, and if he was going to work on a still, I would figure he was going to make a little liquor.
> You tell me you don't infer that when the Russians build SS-9's with a 25-megaton yield, that they had the idea of knocking out our missiles, our Minuteman?[10]

But if the Russian military budget reflects the outcome of parochial inter-service conflicts, then procurement tells us little about Soviet foreign policy intentions. The latter will be determined under a different power distribution, or by different people, or by the same people acting on different values.

A misperception of this kind was partly responsible for the Chinese decision to enter the war in Korea. "Peking ignored the pluralistic political process in the West and failed to differentiate between the true locus of power in Washington and the confusion of voices on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Utterances by 'authoritative spokesmen' in Tokyo were given equal weight (if not greater) with statements from Secretary Acheson and President Truman." The Chinese found it hard to believe that officials of the United States' government could be advocating a policy which did not represent the views of the highest circles. Similarly, in 1913 when California prohibited Japanese from owning or leasing land in that state, the Japanese government was "unable to believe that the federal government was powerless to abrogate a state law, and [was] convinced that the action was a deliberate insult."[11]

Decision-makers tend to overestimate the centralization of the other's policies even if they are familiar with the other's domestic politics and elite divisions. Richard Neustadt has demonstrated that the dispute between the United States and Britain about the cancellation of Skybolt was exacerbated because each side failed to understand the other's internal bargaining processes even though the two countries had experi-

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[10] *Military Implications of the Treaty on the Limitations of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and the Interim Agreement on Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms,* Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 387.

[11] Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 169; Barbara Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram* (New York: Viking, 1958), pp. 40-41.

enced years of intimate and complex cooperation, knowledge about how the other's government worked was widely diffused throughout both countries, and personal contacts between the governments were extensive. These distortions can only be more pronounced between states that are less familiar with each other.[12]

Two important cases do not fit our generalization. Before World War II many people, while underestimating the confusion and bargaining on small disputes within the Reich, overestimated the pluralism on the vital foreign policy issues that concerned Hitler most. Similarly, during the war many Allied statesmen were puzzled by rapid alterations of Soviet attitude, and "the most usual explanation . . . was that when Stalin got really tough he was expressing the attitude of the mysterious Politburo rather than his own personal appraisal of the main issue."[13] Even in these cases, however, what was perceived involved a minimum of confusion—two factions vying for control of a centralized policy.

SPECIAL CASES

The tendency for an actor to believe that others are highly unified can be observed in two other contexts. First, alliances usually appear more durable and binding from the outside than from the inside. For example, "During the tense years preceding the outbreak of the Second World War, many people believed that an alliance had existed between Germany and Italy ever since 1936 and that they had conducted a concerted policy in which every move was carefully planned and agreed upon." The fact that coordination was hard to discern and its existence denied by these countries led to the conclusion that they "pretended to act independently . . . in order to obtain greater concessions from the Western Powers."[14] In fact, Germany and Italy not only failed to develop joint plans, but each was often unsure of the other's intentions and took important actions without informing the other.

More important consequences followed from the fact that the Axis powers also overestimated the degree to which their opponents were united. Even though the Japanese ambassador to the United States correctly told his government that American leaders thought that the Axis alliance was tighter than it was, he overestimated the extent of Anglo-

American cooperation.[15] This view led Japan to believe that America, even if not directly attacked, would enter the war if Japan moved against the British and Dutch resource-rich Asian territories. This meant that Japan had either to forego access to these resources, thus giving up her aim of dominating China, or else attack the United States. In fact, if Japan had moved south without such an attack, Roosevelt would have been placed in a terrible dilemma, as he well realized. Similarly, in the postwar world the United States overestimated the Russian control over Tito and was slow to recognize the Sino-Soviet split.

Second, domestic groups in conflict see the other side as more unified than it is. In local labor-management disputes each side is apt to believe incorrectly that the other is controlled from above (i.e. from the international union office or from the company's central headquarters). Pressure groups believe that the opposition is better organized than it is. Both Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives see the other party as the one that is the more organized and disciplined. Similarly, Lewis Anthony Dexter reports that "in shifting from Democratic campaigning to Republican campaigning [one finds that] each side has a picture of the other as well organized, purposive, intense, which is quite incompatible with what one sees and feels when one is actually over there."[16]

Variables Encouraging the Perception of Unity and Planning

While the tendency to see the other side as centralized and Machiavellian is widespread, it is especially strong in some actors. The Soviets, whose operational code indicates "nothing is accidental," believe all the moves of their bourgeois enemies to be carefully planned.[17] Many com-

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[12] *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970). That Neustadt underestimates the degree of real incompatibility between the United States and Britain in these cases should not obscure his well-documented argument that neither side adequately understood the ways in which the other's internal conflicts affected its policies.

[13] Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 621. For another exception, see Raymond Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 66.

[14] Felix Gilbert, "Ciano and His Ambassadors," in Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 529.

[15] T. B. Kittredge, "United States Defense Policy and Strategy; 1941," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 3, 1954, pp. 123-24. For other examples see David Walder, *The Chanak Affair* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 123, Saul Friedlander, *Prelude to Downfall* (New York: Knopf, 1967), p. 192 (for an exception, see p. 224), and Allen Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), pp. 62-72.

[16] Robert Blake, Herbert Shepard, and Jane Mouton, *Managing Intergroup Conflict in Industry* (Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Co., 1964), p. 182; Raymond Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Lewis Anthony Dexter, *American Business and Public Policy* (New York: Atherton, 1963), p. 399; Charles Clapp, *The Congressman* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1963), pp. 17-19; Dexter, *The Sociology and Politics of Congress* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), pp. 132-33. Similar perceptions of the other side's unity have been found in the conflict between two groups favoring different kinds of treatment for the mentally ill. See Anselm Strauss et al., *Psychiatric Ideologies and Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 130-31.

[17] Early in the life of the U.S.S.R. Louis Fischer noted that the "Bolsheviks often thought too primitively." (*The Soviets in World Affairs* [New York: Vintage, 1960], p. 544.) It was observed of Molotov twenty years later: "He is innately suspicious. He seeks for hidden meanings and tricks where there are none. He

mentators argue that French leaders make decisions with the aid of long-range plans and orderly calculations and so often see others as operating in this way. Stanley Hoffmann notes that France sees "American moves . . . not as improvisations but as the unfolding of a design," and Dorothy Pickles argues that

> one of the most important factors in Franco-British misunderstanding is the British preference for cautious empiricism, and dislike of specific commitments in fields of general principles . . . . [as compared to the French] Cartesian preferences for precision, and for progression from the general to the particular, and for commitments and guarantees. . . . Unfortunately [this] tends to make the French suspect the British more often of duplicity than of simplicity. . . . [O]ne British aircraft executive involved [in conversations with the French over the Concorde] was reported as having complained that: "The French always think we're being Machiavellian, when in fact we're just muddling through."[18]

Some individuals are prone to see others as centralized and Machiavellian. This was true of Friedrich von Holstein, who played a large part in the formation of German foreign policy after Bismarck's retirement. Without fail, he saw ambiguous events as evidence that England was engaging in elaborate plots to harm Germany. The fear "that Germany might be made a cat's-paw 'to pull English chestnuts out of the fire' became an obsession with him." While others in Germany shared some of these beliefs[19] (and some people in England had similar views about Germany), the consistency with which Holstein perceived that British

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takes it for granted that his opponents are trying to trick him and put over something nefarious." (In Gordon Craig, "Totalitarian Approaches to Diplomatic Negotiations," in A. O. Sarkissian, ed., *Studies in Diplomatic History in Honor of G.P. Gooch* [London: Longmans, 1961], p. 120.) Also see Nathan Leites, *A Study of Bolshevism* (Glencoe: Ill.: Free Press, 1953), pp. 67-73. Although this position is generally accepted, it should be noted that a content analysis of Soviet elite publications found that the Russians tend to think that U.S. foreign policy is formed haphazardly, "merely responding to events" rather than following a carefully developed plan. (J. David Singer, "Soviet and American Foreign Policy Attitudes: Content Analysis of Elite Articulations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 8 [December 1964], 442.) But it is difficult to be sure that these publications accurately mirror the views of the Soviet elite.

[18] "Perceptions, Reality, and the Franco-American Conflict," *Journal of International Affairs* 21, No. 1 (1967), 67; *The Uneasy Entente* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 5-7. The cause of these misperceptions is not ideology, as in the case of the Soviets, but national style.

[19] Raymond Sontag, *European Diplomatic History, 1871-1932* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1933), p. 71. One scholar notes that "over-profundity [was] characteristic of official German reasoning" on foreign policy around the turn of the century. (J.A.S. Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy* [London: Athlone Press, 1964], p. 39.)

behavior was not only hostile but involved a careful plan to trap Germany, is unusual and seems at least partially related to his own propensity to engage in plots. Similarly, it has been noted that Lloyd George, "himself a master of the art of political intrigue, attributed to [Generals] Haig and Robertson a similar subtlety, and assumed that they based their calculations on the same kind of considerations that actuated him."[20] For different reasons, it is probable that people with low tolerance for ambiguity and low cognitive complexity are also especially likely to perceive more centralization than is present. People with these psychological characteristics find it difficult and disturbing to cope with confusion.

Finally, perceptions of overcentralization and over-Machiavellianism are more apt to occur if the two sides are in conflict. Part of the explanation is that actors who are cooperating usually have detailed information about each other, and the greater the information, the greater the differentiation and diversity that will be perceived. Thus before the Opium War the Chinese emperor and his agents in Canton were equally hostile to the British. But the latter had more information about the British and realized that the emperor was incorrect in considering the British traders and government officials to be united.[21] Furthermore, there are usually more numerous and complex lines of communication between allies than between enemies. Decision-makers receive information from several parts of an ally's government, units of the two bureaucracies communicate directly with each other, and each side learns about the other's internal conflicts. Adversaries not only lack such diverse information but are also especially apt to see each other as highly centralized because behavior that might seem incompatible with a careful plan can be explained as attempted deception.[22] This perception is often supported by the desire to act on the conservative assumption that the other's hostility will be implemented with great skill and efficiency.

BEING MISINFORMED ABOUT ONE'S OWN BEHAVIOR

The previous discussion leads to the proposition that actors will tend to perceive the behavior of subordinates and agents of the other side (e.g. ambassadors, low-level officials) as carrying out the other's official policy. Actors underestimate the degree and frequency of violations of the spirit and letter of instructions. They are slow to see that the agents

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[20] Robert Blake, "Great Britain," in Michael Howard, ed., *Soldiers and Governments* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957), p. 47.

[21] Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 99-108.

[22] See, for example, Elting Morison, *Turmoil and Tradition: The Life and Times of Henry L. Stimson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 431.

may not be truly representing their masters. Thus after the liberation of France in 1944 "General Gerow, the highest-ranking American in [Paris] conducted his French relations with remarkable insensitivity. . . . De Gaulle, hypersensitive about American motivations, was persuaded that Gerow could not have been so consistently insulting without orders from a higher authority." Similarly, in 1918 the initial landings of a small number of British soldiers in Murmansk and Vladivostok were ordered by the local military authorities on their own for reasons unconnected with general Anglo-Russian relations. But the Soviets assumed they indicated that London had decided on large-scale intervention.[23]

These misperceptions resemble those discussed earlier. But further complexity, and often illusory incompatibility, is created when the agent's home government, as well as the government he is dealing with, does not realize that he failed to convey the desired impressions. Although decision-makers know that their own state is not monolithic, that policy is often the result of bargaining, and that different parts of the government often follow different policies, they overestimate the degree of centralization in their own state's implementation of policy. Unless they have evidence to the contrary, decision-makers assume that their agents act as instructed. When this belief is incorrect, leaders will be misled about the actions taken in the name of their state.[24]

We are dealing not with the familiar limits on the decision-maker's ability to enforce his will on his government, but with the defects in his

[23] Milton Viorst, *Hostile Allies* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 216; Richard Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, vol. 1: *Intervention and the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 109-19, 146-50; James Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 166. A few exceptions can be found. The Germans incorrectly blamed the breaking off of colonial negotiations with England in 1890 on the English agent involved; C. J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 144. In 1926 Mussolini "attributed Anglo-Italian difficulties to the 'excessive zeal of local British agents'"; Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 304. In 1932 Secretary of State Stimson exaggerated the degree to which the British foreign secretary could act on his own without cabinet approval; Robert Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression* (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 182.

[24] This is not to deny that even if the actor delivers the message himself he may not understand its impact and may thus misunderstand the other's later behavior. For example, in 1939 the Finnish foreign minister went to Moscow to try to ease tensions and protect Finnish independence by balancing his country's ties to Germany with links to Russia. He thought his mission had failed to convince Russia that Finland wanted better relations. In fact, he had "succeeded far too well. He had created in Moscow the impression that Finland was prepared to entrust her security to the Soviet Union"; Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 28. Had the foreign minister known of the impression he had made, he might have been able to design his later behavior in a way to reduce the unnecessary aspects of the conflict.

knowledge of what his government is doing. This is important here because the other state's behavior is partly a function of what the decision-maker's state does. So if the decision-maker is misinformed about the actions taken in the name of his state, he will believe that the other is responding to a different set of events than that which the other has seen, and so he will not be able to understand why the other is acting as it is. To explore this topic we must consider the reasons why decision-makers are incorrectly informed about their own state's behavior and, more specifically, the ways in which behavior can diverge from the decision-maker's instructions without his awareness.

Misinformation about Physical Effects

Even if subordinates faithfully implement their instructions, the decision-maker's beliefs about what has been done may be inaccurate because the actions were based on false premises or did not produce the reported effects. For example, in late July 1965 the United States attacked some anti-aircraft sites in North Vietnam. Washington believed that by doing this and killing Russian technicians the United States had demonstrated its determination and need not take other actions that were being considered (e.g. declaring a national emergency and calling up the National Guard). It was later discovered, however, that the missile sites were dummies and the attack had killed no one.[25] Similarly, had the Israelis sought to demonstrate their resolve by destroying anti-aircraft missile sites that they thought were deployed in violations of the 1970 cease fire, the impression conveyed would not be the desired one if the missiles had been installed legally or if the Egyptian decision-makers thought this was the case.

Second, even if his information about the physical environment is correct, the actor's behavior will not yield the expected or reported results if his instruments and techniques are less precise than he believes. For example, George Quester shows that one reason why the restraints on bombing civilians in World War II broke down was that neither side realized that it was not able to bomb accurately enough to hit military targets without doing collateral damage. Each side believed that it and the other were bombing accurately. Each therefore thought it was not killing the other's civilians and that the bombs that fell on its civilians reflected the other's policy. Inevitably, then, restraints could not be maintained.[26]

[25] Peter Lisagor, "Missile Site Raid Called a Failure," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 7, 1965. A related problem is reported in James Feron, "Israelis Report Seven MIG's Downed in Syrian Clash," *New York Times*, July 9, 1969.

[26] George Quester, *Deterrence Before Hiroshima* (New York: Wiley, 1966), pp. 105-22. Similarly, in World War I the British attributed the accidental bombing of a royal palace to official German policy. See Douglas Robinson, *The Zeppelin in Combat* (London: G. T. Foulis, 1962), p. 174.

Disobedience by Agents

Failures of tools are a less important cause of a decision-maker's incorrect view of what his state has done than is the human element. In the previous discussion we assumed that the decision-maker's subordinates faithfully carried out their instructions. When this is not true, two problems are created. First, and most obviously, the decision-maker does not fully control foreign policy. Undesired impressions and commitments will be given. For example, unauthorized actions by agents on the spot contributed to colonial expansion in the nineteenth century.[27] A second and less well-known set of problems arises when the agent does not report his actions accurately. The decision-maker will then be misinformed about what information the other side has about his state and so will not be able to understand the image the other holds or the policy that it follows.

CAUSES OF DISOBEDIENCE

Agents may disobey instructions when their values, payoffs, and tactical judgments differ from those of the decision-makers at home. Their selection and self-selection are important here. The kind of person who had the skills, knowledge, and desire to serve in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century usually wanted to see his country expand its control. In addition, serving as an agent can alter the person's values and create divergences where there were none initially. Ambassadors are often "captured" by the state they deal with. And an agent engaged in negotiations will often develop political and psychological incentives to reach an agreement that are not shared by the decision-makers at home.[28] The agent may then not only try to convince his government to accept a settlement it finds unacceptable, but may also break his instructions, for example by withholding some demands or by indicating to the other side that if it stands firm the agent's side will retreat.

The agent's beliefs about what tactics are appropriate may also differ from the views of those at home. The man on the spot almost always feels he knows more about the local situation than his superior and believes many of his instructions to be hopelessly out of touch with the reality he sees. His superiors, he is apt to conclude, do not understand what is happening or what can be achieved. In labor-management nego-

[27] W. David McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865-75* (London: Macmillan and Co., and New York: St. Martin's, 1967) (also see John Galbraith, "The Turbulent Frontier," in Robert Art and Robert Jervis, eds., *International Politics* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1973]); Richard W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965), pp. 158-59.

[28] Fred Iklé, *How Nations Negotiate* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 143-50.

tiations, as Walton and McKersie have shown, agents of both sides often form an alliance to convince their "home governments" to scale down their expectations. In these cases the agent has to convince his own side that he is following his instructions to stand firm and yet indicate to the agent from the other side that he will make concessions if need be.[29]

TYPES OF DISOBEDIENCE

An agent's disobedience can take various forms. In some cases an agent may refuse to deliver a message or may substitute one of his own for that of his government. In negotiations with Portugal in 1943 George Kennan gave the Portuguese government an assurance that was "in direct violation of the written orders I had in my safe." Before Pearl Harbor, Japan's ambassador to the United States sometimes withheld his government's proposals and on other occasions altered them. In 1809 the British minister to the United States broke his instructions and signed a treaty with America that did not meet major British demands. More often than breaking his instructions an agent will twist them by transmitting his message in a manner that alters its impact, most commonly by expressing a "private opinion" that contradicts the official message. Thus when the English ambassador to Germany, Nevile Henderson, was instructed to protest the take-over of Austria he did so but added that he thought that the Austrians "had acted with precipitate folly." He expressed similar opinions during the negotiations over Czechoslovakia when

> he went very far in accepting the German point of view on Central European questions. . . . [and] was wholly uninhibited in expressing views which could only encourage the Nazi leaders in their plans. . . . [W]hen he was arguing in his reports to London that a special warning to Hitler was unnecessary since the German government must be fully aware of Britain's determination to stand with France and Czechoslovakia, he told a German S.S. leader that "he personally had no sympathy at all with the Czechs and moreover considered the placing of the Sudeten Germans under Czech domination to be a grave mistake."[30]

Similarly, Joseph Kennedy, the American ambassador to Britain, told

[29] Richard Walton and Robert McKersie, *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), pp. 316-47.

[30] George Kennan, *Memoirs*, vol. 1: *1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 155; Robert Butow, *The John Doe Associates* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 236, 255; Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), pp. 211-19; Felix Gilbert, "Two British Ambassadors: Perth and Henderson," in Craig and Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats*, pp. 538, 540-41.

"the counselor of the German embassy in London that he intended to use all his influence to keep the U.S. out of war."[31]

Such unofficial remarks can affect the perceiving state's image in three ways. First, the comments may be seen as signals. That is, the perceiver may believe that the state told its representative to make the "private" statements. Because such statements can be disavowed if necessary, they are often used for probes and feelers.[32] Second, the perceiving state may take the agent's views as representing strong trends within the other state which, while not yet official policy, will become so. For example, in 1939 German and Italians were warranted in paying more attention to the unofficial comments of Japanese ambassadors than to the messages these agents were instructed to deliver. The ambassadors' private statements reflected the views of the army, and the army strongly influenced the most important foreign policy decisions. Third, and least likely, the perceiver may believe that the agent's private views are likely to influence his government's policy either because of their persuasiveness or because the agent has an independent political base at home.

CONSEQUENCES OF LACK OF AWARENESS OF AGENTS' BEHAVIOR

To focus not on the simple effects that follow from agents' independent actions but on the more complex consequences of a decision-maker's being misinformed about his agents' behavior and thus holding incorrect views about the evidence confronting the other side, we should re-examine two of the examples cited above. Immediately after George Kennan gave the Portuguese government a forbidden assurance, he explained his actions to Washington.[33] As a result, the U.S. government knew what the Portuguese believed the U.S. position to be and adjusted its policy accordingly. On the other hand, Nevile Henderson did not report home many of the "private opinions" he expressed to the Germans. Although the British decision-makers realized that Henderson made comments that were more pro-appeasement than the official position, they did not know the extent or vehemence of his remarks. They were

[31] William Kaufmann, "Two American Ambassadors: Bullitt and Kennedy," in *ibid.*, p. 663. This is not to imply that if the agent follows his instructions the desired message will always be conveyed throughout the other state's hierarchy. Lewis Namier notes the tendency of each participant in a discussion to file reports that sharpen his own remarks and weaken those of his opposite number; *Diplomatic Prelude* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1948), p. 240. This conclusion has been confirmed by Glen Stassen's research on the differences between the reports written by Henderson and the German officials.

[32] For an unusual example of an agent's being instructed to "express a personal opinion" and the perceiver taking the message only at face value, see Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis*, pp. 241-44.

[33] Kennan, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 155.

thus denied access to an important input into the German image of Britain, were handicapped in their efforts to determine German perceptions, and therefore found it more difficult to design a policy that would convince Germany that Britain would resist further demands. They thought their resolve was clear. Had they known what Henderson was saying, they might have sent additional, stronger messages.

Being misinformed about the activities of one's agent will often increase conflict since it will increase the chances that the state will behave in ways that appear erratic and deceptive. Because each side is proceeding on different beliefs about what has been done in the name of the state, the potential for misunderstanding is enormous. Thus when in the spring of 1941 the Japanese ambassador to the United States failed to report that Secretary of State Hull had said only that a draft proposal merited further discussion, and instead reported that Hull had sponsored it, he inflated his government's expectations and thereby diminished the chances that the negotiations could succeed. When the less conciliatory official note arrived two months later, the Japanese believed

> that the American mood was stiffening. . . . The initial Japanese hope of being able to retain the essence by compromising on the form . . . gradually waned and, as it did so, Japan's own bearing in the negotiations stiffened. Those who had been suspicious of Washington's motives from the outset, or who were opposed to even the slightest diplomatic concession, began finding it easier to interfere. A typical method was to attack the sincerity of the United States by pointing to the marked differences between the "American" offer of mid-April . . . and [the] "second" proposal.[34]

The American reaction was similar, if less extreme. Hull was deeply disappointed by an authentic Japanese message of September 1941 because he "had been 'conditioned' by the earlier statements [that misrepresented the official position] . . . to expect much more than Japan was currently offering. He now felt that the Japanese were presenting a far narrower program of settlement than before."[35]

A classic example of this effect is supplied by the activities of Paul von Hatzfeldt and Hermann von Eckardstein, respectively the German ambassador to England and the first secretary of the embassy around the turn of the twentieth century. These agents believed that the interests of both Germany and England would be served by an alliance but that "the technicalities of diplomatic procedure" prevented either side from taking

[34] Robert Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 241. The draft understanding presented by the priests was actually written by a Japanese colonel.

[35] Butow, *The John Doe Associates*, p. 270.

the initiative.[36] Over a period of years each of them attempted to bring the two states together by developing a tentative offer of his own design, telling the British that this was a German feeler, and reporting to Berlin that the British had authored the proposal. The difficulty with this procedure became apparent when the two states entered into direct talks. Because each side had been given different information, divergent expectations had developed. Each thought that the other had shown itself to be very interested in an agreement, and each therefore expected the other to take the initiative and make further concessions. Even if the initial proposal had been acceptable to both sides, the negotiations might have broken down because each side could have thought it a wise strategy to hold out for an even more favorable settlement.[37] But the agents had underestimated the magnitude of the obstacles to an alliance, and the consequences were even worse. Thus in 1895 Hatzfeldt told his government that Lord Salisbury had proposed that the great powers divide the Ottoman Empire. Expecting to find a cooperative partner, the kaiser raised this subject when he visited England. But Hatzfeldt's fictional report backfired when Salisbury would not consider such a plan and replied in a manner quite out of keeping with his supposed initiative. As a result, the kaiser grew angry and felt that "The British policy of trying to reach agreement with all the Powers . . . was just another attempt to sow distrust among the continental countries."[38]

Several years later the British and Germans again considered an agreement, and the agents repeated their distortions. When the negotiations broke down, the British were "not sure what to think," and the Germans less charitably felt that the "British" action of first originating a proposal and then displaying no interest in it constituted "a gratuitous insult." A minor incident reinforced this impression. Germany sent an agent, Stuebel, to England to settle a dispute with England over Chinese customs rates. The British were told by Eckardstein that

> Stuebel did not represent the Kaiser's views and so refused to yield an inch. In fact, . . . the opposite was true. It was Stuebel, and not Eckardstein, who represented the views of Berlin, and he returned to Germany full of complaint at the brusque treatment he had suffered. It was this episode which led the Kaiser into his famous denunciation of the British government as "unmitigated noodles" and into angry complaints that they were not treating him with confidence.[39]

[36] Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, p. 64.
[37] For an example of such a German perception, see *ibid.*, p. 355.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 355, 363; George Monger, *The End of Isolation* (London: Nelson and Sons, 1963), p. 32. The British ambassador to Germany similarly once made

Another German agent failed to report an unauthorized promise, with a different but equally striking result. At the start of the 1905 Moroccan crisis the German chancellor instructed his ambassador to the United States, Sternburg, to try to win President Roosevelt's support by telling him that if the negotiations with France ran into difficulties Sternburg would be willing to urge on the kaiser any practical and fair solution that the president might suggest. But by accident or design the ambassador told the president that the kaiser had promised to *adopt* any such proposal that the president would make. When the conference at Algeciras deadlocked, the president decided to invoke the "promise."

> Roosevelt's message caused consternation in Berlin. [The chancellor] realized for the first time the sweeping nature of Sternburg's letter to Roosevelt. . . . [and] knew that Sternburg's inexplicable blunder had placed Germany in an almost hopeless position. If it were impossible to disavow the letter, [the chancellor] telegraphed Sternburg, "his Majesty will probably hardly be able to avoid accepting the present proposal."[40]

When a nation has interests throughout the world, other states will draw important inferences from the behavior of its agents in a third area. If both sides' agents break their instructions and deceive their home governments, misunderstandings will be compounded because each state will overestimate the degree to which both sides are centralized. This partially explains the hostility between France and Britain preceding the Seven Years' War, between France and Britain over Greece and Tahiti in the early 1840s, and between the United States and Germany over Samoa in the late 1880s.[41] In these situations the home governments adopted a policy of cooperation, but the agents on the spot sought to expand their nation's influence. This not only increased the local conflict but led to increased suspicion and tension between the home governments. Each assumed that both sides' agents were obeying instructions. Thus both thought that their agents were trying to cooperate, as they had been told to do, and that the antagonistic behavior of the other state's agents represented official policy. As a result, the other state was seen as

a proposal to the kaiser and in his report home implied that it had originated with the Germans. (Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, p. 175.)
[40] Raymond Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and the International Rivalries* (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn-Blaisdell, 1970), pp. 81-82, 99. In fact, the situation was even worse than the Germans knew. Roosevelt had communicated to the French ambassador both the German "promise" and his own decision to invoke it.
[41] Patrice Higonnet, "The Origins of the Seven Years' War," *Journal of Modern History* 40 (March 1968), 57-90; Robert William Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe, 1789-1914* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 233.

responding with hostility to a policy of friendship. The other's protestations that it was the aggrieved party, that it was willing to settle the local conflict but was being taken advantage of, were rejected as deceitful hypocrisy.

Finally, it is not always the agent who deserves the blame if the home government does not know what he has done. Those at home sometimes fail to give clear instructions or to pay careful attention to the agents' reports. Knowing what messages he wants to convey, even the most experienced statesman may assume too quickly that both his agent and the other state understand his position. For example, in 1884–1885 Bismarck reversed his earlier policy and sought African colonies. Believing that this new stance had been adequately communicated to the British, he interpreted their intransigence as hostility and decided that only a more anti-British policy could coerce England into cooperating. In fact, Britain—and the German ambassador as well—had not understood what Bismarck wanted. While this may be partly traceable to British "slow-wittedness," Bismarck himself never carefully considered the information he was transmitting to England. He forgot how strongly his earlier notes had disclaimed any interest in the area he now wanted and "was obviously taken aback when [the German ambassador] later quoted to him the relevant passages of [a] dispatch by way of explaining his own failure to detect the change in German policy." Furthermore, Bismarck neglected to dispatch a message he had drafted that clearly explained his new policy. And, what is more important here than the source of the misunderstanding between the chancellor and his ambassador, even though an analysis of England's interests would have indicated that Britain was unlikely to defy Germany on a marginal issue, Bismarck never seriously considered the possibility that his agent might not have acted as he thought he had told him to.[42]

CONSEQUENCES OF PERCEPTIONS OF UNITY AND PLANNING

The perception of greater coherence than is present leads the actor astray in three ways. First, taking the other side's behavior as the product of a centralized actor with integrated values, inferring the plan that generated this behavior, and projecting this pattern into the future will be misleading if the behavior was the result of shifting internal bargaining, ad hoc decisions, and uncoordinated actions. A momentary or transient phenomenon will be endowed with enduring qualities that are expected to determine policy at later times and on other issues. Thus states make

[42] Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Bismarck's Imperialist Venture: Anti-British in Origin?" in Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds., Britain and Germany in Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 63-64.

sophisticated, and often alarming, inferences from the policy that the other pursues in one issue-area without giving sufficient consideration to the possibility that the coalition that decides the policy in that area may not be the one that establishes other policies, or that, even if the same people have power in both arenas, the values served in one are different from those that will be given priority in the other. Similarly, when the behavior of scattered agents is seen as part of a centrally directed plan, observers will draw far-reaching inferences from isolated actions. For example, when at the turn of the nineteenth century negotiations between the United States and Britain over the disposition of pre-Revolution debts broke down just as the Americans were dispatching a mission to France to try to improve relations, the British saw the two events as linked to a coherent anti-British position that would continue for several years. A decade later when there was trouble with the Indians on the western frontier, most Americans assumed this was connected with British efforts to put pressure on the United States. More recently, China's entry into the Korean War was caused in part by her interpretation of "ad hoc American decisions on Korea and Taiwan . . . as the outcome of carefully designed schemes for 'aggression' in Asia."[43] There is no doubt that the American policy was against the interests of China, but to China it appeared even more hostile and dangerous because it was seen as the initial stages of a plan whose later phases would strike directly at her homeland.

An even more extreme case occurred when the British severed relations with Russia in 1927. The Bolsheviks did not think that Britain had acted "merely as a demonstration or to rid London of a Soviet Embassy." While they did not expect a direct military attack (Stalin noted that "England always has preferred wars fought with the hands of others"), they did think that "the Baldwin Cabinet would avail itself of the services of Marshal Pilsudski and Marshal Chang So-lin." More recently, when a U-2 was shot down over Cuba during the missile crisis, American leaders quickly concluded that the "Soviet action . . . seemed to mean that they had decided on a showdown." This alarming inference assumed a higher degree of centralization, planning, and foresight than was probably present.[44]

Second, the effectiveness of attempts to influence the other's policy will be reduced because the importance of internal conflict will be under-

[43] Perkins, The First Rapprochement, p. 221; Perkins, Prologue to War (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 282-85 (for another example from this period see Samuel Bemis, Jay's Treaty [2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962], p. 239); Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, p. 169.

[44] Fischer, The Soviets in World Affairs, pp. 544-45; Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 220, also see p. 222.

estimated. The state will therefore devote insufficient resources to trying to learn about the factions, bureaucratic structures, and domestic preoccupations in the other side. As we discussed in a previous chapter, when these variables are noticed at all, the actor will rely heavily on his knowledge of his own domestic system for their interpretation. Even when the two systems have a great deal in common, this method will lead the actor astray on vital details.[45]

Third, illusory incompatibility is created because duplicity rather than confusion is perceived when the other's policy is inconsistent. Since no simple, straightforward design can explain the other's diverse actions if they are believed to be coherently serving a set of integrated values, it is inevitable that the perceiver will "look for intricate, machiavellian explanations."[46] It is possible that such explanations would not imply that the other is hostile, but this is unlikely, especially in an environment of anarchy. The more friendly segments of a policy that is erratic or vacillating will be seen as deceptive, and the entire policy will be judged, as the United States judged the uncoordinated Russian policy in the Far East in the early twentieth century, to be "two-faced and treacherous."[47] When the other's agent is more hostile than the direct voice or final position of the other's government, the perceiver is apt to believe that the agent represents the other's hostile intentions, which have been only temporarily thwarted. When the agent takes a more conciliatory position and is overruled, the perceiver will think that the other side was never serious about trying to settle the dispute. Thus in 1810 when the British government rejected the agreement that its agent had signed in violation of his instructions, many Americans believed that the whole episode "had probably been a trick." Similarly, before the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian War the British ambassador told the Italians that "the British were taking a new approach to the problem and what Britain had to offer would satisfy, in his opinion, half of the Italian demands and create conditions which could be developed further in Italy's favor." On this basis the Italians welcomed a visit by the British foreign secretary. But when his proposal did not meet their expectations, the Italians concluded, in the words of one of their diplomats, that the offer was a "trap" and the visit a "most maladroit gesture."[48]

[45] For several examples, see Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*.

[46] This was the common inference that observers drew from German behavior in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 56. For further discussion, see Steinberg, "Germany and the Russo-Japanese War," *American Historical Review* 75 (December 1970), 1965-86.

[47] William Braisted, *The United States in the Pacific, 1897-1909* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), p. 145.

[48] Baer, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War*, pp. 193, 197. For another example, see John Wills, Jr., "Ch'ing Relations With the Dutch, 1662-1690," in

The impact of these incidents can go a step further. When state A reacts with anger and suspicion to what it incorrectly believes to have been a double cross by state B, state B will not be able to understand A's reaction. B knows that its own behavior was unexceptionable. So A's outburst must be an unpleasant bargaining tactic, a smokescreen for its own devious plans, or a refusal to observe the standard rules of diplomacy. These were among the British interpretations of the seemingly inexplicable German displays of temper that followed the breakdown of negotiations discussed above.[49] Such inferences contributed to the developing British image of Germany as not only hostile but also unreasonable.

Three considerations prevent us from flatly concluding that decision-makers should avoid explanations based on images of unity and planning. First, this belief, although inaccurate, may be a useful assumption that leads to relatively accurate predictions. If the interests and power of the contending elements in the other's government are fairly stable, the belief that the other acts as though it were centralized may be fruitful, just as the assumptions of "economic man" have been invaluable in economics. Second, even if predictions based on this assumption are not very accurate, they still may be the best that can be made under most circumstances. It is one thing to know that the other's policy is a product of conflicts and bargains; it is quite another to have detailed information about the values, beliefs, and power positions of the other's factions. Even if predictions made with the benefit of complete knowledge of these variables would be more accurate than those possible with the assumption of centralization, it does not follow that those based on only incomplete and unreliable information will be more accurate than the alternative. Third, if in, say, one-third of the cases predictions based on the available evidence about the other's internal divisions are better than those following from the assumption of unity, and if decision-makers are not able to determine which method is best applied to each individual case, then they may always act as though the other is centralized since they will be better off two-thirds of the time. The strategy of probability matching (distributing one's guesses or bets in proportion to the distribution of outcomes in the sample), although common, is not rational. In the absence of additional information, it is best always to utilize the method of prediction that works in the largest number of cases.

So only weaker advice can be given. Decision-makers should not jump to the conclusion that the other is a centralized actor implementing a well-developed plan. When Eyre Crowe examined England's interna-

John Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 248-50.

[49] Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, p. 360.

tional position before World War I he admitted that the consistent hostility he attributed to Wilhelmine Germany might be "no more than the expression of a vague, confused, and unpractical statesmanship, not fully realizing its own drift." But, he went on, "It is, of course, necessary to except the period of Bismarck's Chancellorship. To assume that so great a statesman was not quite sure as to the objects of his policy would be the *reductio ad absurdum* of any hypothesis."[50] Perhaps, but it is important for decision-makers to be sensitive to alternative explanations involving internal conflict and lack of coordination. When it seems that only hostility and duplicity could account for the other's behavior, observers should not immediately assume that *any* coherent policy lies behind the activities.

[50] "Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany," January 1, 1907, in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, vol. 3 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 415.

Overestimating One's Importance as Influence or Target

INTRODUCTION

ACTORS exaggerate the degree to which they play a central role in others' policies. Content of the resulting perception, however, varies with the effect of the other's behavior on the actor. When the other behaves in accord with the actor's desires, he will overestimate the degree to which his policies are responsible for the outcome. When the situation is fluid, there is a less pronounced tendency for the actor to overestimate his potential influence. When the other's behavior is undesired, the actor is likely to see it as derived from internal sources rather than as being a response to his own actions. In this case the actor believes that the other is trying to harm him rather than that the effect was an unintended consequence or a side-effect.

The first and third propositions are often conjoined. For example, the replacement of the Liberal government by a coalition in England in 1915 was preceded by two events, the resignation of the First Sea Lord in protest against the government's conduct of the Dardanelles operation and the revelation of a shortage of artillery shells. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill had been the chief advocate of the attempt to force the Straits and a strong supporter of the government. General John French, the British commander on the Western Front, tried to undermine the government because he held it responsible for the lack of ammunition. Both men incorrectly attributed the government's fall to the shell shortage. French exaggerated his role in bringing about an outcome he desired; Churchill underestimated his responsibility for an outcome he had not sought. Similarly, most successful candidates for Congress believe their own behavior strongly contributed to their victory; most of those who lose blame their defeat on factors beyond their control.[1]

In many cases the same individual will display both parts of this effect. "We are prone to alter our perception of causality so as to protect or

[1] Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London: Collins, 1964), pp. 355-58; John Kingdon, *Candidates for Office: Beliefs and Strategies* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 22-34. Also see Chong Lim Kim and Donald Racheter, "Candidates' Perceptions of Voter Competence: A Comparison of Winning and Losing Candidates," *American Political Science Review* 67 (September 1973), 906-13.

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enhance our self-esteem." If a prisoner responds favorably to trust and leniency, the authorities are apt to credit their policy; if he does not they are apt to conclude that he was incorrigible. And while parents often trace any good traits their children display to the way they raised them, they usually do not give a similar explanation for undesired behavior. What one scholar said of Charles of Burgundy could be said of many people: "Whatever he accomplished, in council or on the field, he attributed to his own genius. Such failures as had to be recognized he laid to the ineptitude or cowardice of his subordinates and the machination of his enemies." Experiments have borne this out. Subjects are more apt to see their own actions as an important cause of their successes than of their failures. When workers or students do badly, the supervisors or teachers perceive the former as responsible. But when they do well, the latter claim the credit.[2] In international politics, while American officials did not believe that United States policy inadvertently encouraged Russia to put up the Berlin Wall, they did see the United States stand as largely responsible for the subsequent Soviet relaxation of pressure on Berlin.

Overestimating One's Effectiveness

Examples of the propensity to overestimate one's effectiveness abound. In the Opium War, China interpreted every favorable British move as a response to Chinese policy when in fact the British acted as they did for other reasons. The United States overestimated the degree to which the French withdrawal from Mexico in the 1860s was caused by American pressure. The British Conservatives believed that their letter of August 2, 1914, promising support for entry into the war tipped the balance in the cabinet. The United States and Britain each claimed that its pressure caused the Japanese to end hostilities in Shanghai in 1932. American interventionists believed that their opposition to Ambassador

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[2] Albert Hastorf, David Schneider, and Judith Polefka, *Person Perception* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1970), p. 73 (also see Fritz Heider, "Social Perception and Phenomenal Causality," *Psychological Review* 51 [1944], 368, and Harold Kelley, *Attribution in Social Interaction* [Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Corporation, 1971], pp. 19-21); Paul Murray Kendal, *Louis XI* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 265. In addition to the experiments summarized in Hastorf et al., *Person Perception*, p. 73, and Kelley, *Attribution in Social Interaction*, pp. 19-20, see William Davis and D. Elaine Davis, "Internal-External Control and Attribution of Responsibility for Success and Failure," *Journal of Personality* 40 (1972), 123-35; Thomas Ruble, "Effects of Actor and Observer Roles on Attributions of Causality in Situations of Success and Failure," *Journal of Social Psychology* 90 (1973), 41-44. For a conflicting finding see Lee Ross, Günter Bierbrauer, and Susan Polly, "Attribution of Educational Outcomes by Professional and Nonprofessional Instructors," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 29 (1974), 609-18.

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Kennedy was instrumental in securing his resignation. The Germans attributed the fact that the British were not bombing German cities early in World War II to their desire to reciprocate the German restraint rather than to a shortage of planes.[3] (The last example is striking because one expects wartime opponents to attribute the least charitable motives to each other and not to believe that the other will observe limits.) In contemporary cases we cannot be sure that perceptions of effectiveness are incorrect. But the generalization is clear—actors almost always feel responsible for exerting influence when the other acts as they wish. This belief is often incorrect. We have found almost no cases in which an actor underestimated his influence in producing a desired outcome.[4]

In some cases the person will perceive that the other is responding not only to the state he serves, but to himself personally. Experiments and several international incidents support this conclusion. In a whole series of events, Allied agents in post-revolutionary Russia greatly overestimated their influence. Raymond Robins protested the actions of an official; the official was removed, and Robins incorrectly believed this was cause and effect. Similarly, Robins told the Russian leaders that he would regard their response to the anarchist challenge as a test of their ability to rule; the Soviets moved against the anarchists, and Robins "was elated at what he took to be a new demonstration of his own influence with the Soviet leaders." Later research indicates that Robins's urgings had little to do with the Soviet actions. When John Reed was appointed Soviet consul to the United States, three of the American agents made independent efforts to have the appointment revoked. When it was revoked, "All three Americans were . . . convinced that it was the result of their own individual representations." To take a less impressionable person, Secretary of State Stimson believed he was largely responsible for preventing a Russo-Japanese war over Manchuria in 1929, and in 1931 he attributed Japanese concessions to "the stiff tone which I have taken." Although these examples show that it is often difficult to separate perceptions of personal efficacy from perceptions of national efficacy, the presence of the former is indicated by the fact that in the 1929 crisis the

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[3] Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1958), pp. 22, 186; Richard Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965), p. 161; Cameron Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 41; James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), p. 191; Mark Chadwin, *The Warhawks* (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 127; George Quester, *Deterrence before Hiroshima* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 120.

[4] For an exception to this generalization see Douglas Robinson, *The Zeppelin in Combat* (London: G. T. Foulis, 1962), p. 192.

undersecretary, who was not deeply involved in the crisis, did not believe that Stimson's actions mattered.[5]

A common type of exaggeration of one's influence is the belief that one has thwarted the adversary's evil intentions when in fact the latter was not actually planning any action. When generals take vigorous actions and the enemy does not attack, they are quick to perceive that they succeeded in disrupting an offensive. For example, "American and South Vietnamese officials who predicted a major Communist offensive . . . during President Nixon's visit to Peking are now saying that it was prevented by timely allied bombing."[6] More important in their political implications are the frequent cases in which an actor believes that his threats have affected the other's intentions rather than capabilities. For example, the United States claimed that by moving ships into the Bay of Bengal during the India-Pakistan War of 1971 it made the Indians reverse their plan to smash West Pakistan. Although for reasons of bargaining American decision-makers could want others to think they believed this even if they did not,[7] it seems probable that the claim represented actual beliefs. While we cannot be certain that this belief was incorrect, it is significant that it was not shared by those not responsible for the action.

This kind of perception of course enhances faith in deterrence. Not having the historian's knowledge of the other side's intentions, the decision-maker is relatively free to select a pleasing interpretation of why the adversary has not harmed him. He is more apt to believe that deterrence worked than that it was not necessary. And if, in spite of the actor's threats, the other does take hostile action, the actor can believe that the other would have taken even more damaging steps had it not been for his stance.

Of course an actor will try to deter the other only if he believes there is a significant chance that, if he does not, the other will take undesired

[5] For the Russian examples see George Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 404, also see p. 500; Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 178, also see pp. 108-109; *Russia Leaves the War*, p. 408. For the 1929 Manchurian incident see Robert Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression* (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 61-62. For the 1931 incident see James Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 143.

[6] Craig Whitney, "U.S. Bombing Raids Said to Bar Drive Timed to Nixon's Journey," *New York Times*, February 22, 1972. For other examples, see Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (New York: Morrow, 1962), p. 83; Robert Frank Futrell, with the assistance of Lawson Moseley and Albert Simpson, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1961), p. 381. For another example, see Allen Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), p. 70.

[7] Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 201-204.

actions. Third parties who believe that the other was not contemplating a move will feel that the actor's policy did little good. But the correlation between acting and perceiving credit for success will be spurious since both variables are explained by the original perceptions of the other's intentions. To surmount this problem, we would like to compare beliefs about the causes of restraint, holding perceptions of the adversary constant. Our hypothesis predicts that those responsible for the deterrence policy would see it as more efficacious than would observers, but we do not have many matched cases.

The tendency for actors to attribute valued outcomes to their own efforts provides an exception to the generalization that observers see others as autonomous causes of their own behavior. Fritz Heider notes the "tendency to perceive persons as origins" and "to ascribe . . . changes [in behavior] entirely to persons," ignoring external influences. But if A has tried to influence B and B has acted as A desired, A will not see B as an origin of behavior, but rather as reacting to him. This sheds a different light on William Gamson's argument that when A distrusts B, he will attribute friendly actions of B not to B's autonomous good will —which could later be withdrawn—but to A's power. Although a high level of distrust would reinforce this phenomenon, it is not necessary.[8]

One result is that tension-reducing initiatives will be less effective since the perceiver is likely to believe that they show, not that the other actor is friendly, but that the perceiver's policy of firmness is working. Thus the kaiser interpreted any sign that Britain was slackening in the naval race as proof that Germany's pressure was effective and should be increased. Indeed whether the actor has used rewards or threats, the tendency to attribute a desired outcome to his own efforts will hinder cooperation. Rewards are costly when effective because the actor must pay for the other's compliance. He will therefore want to offer the smallest reward possible. If initial success leads him to believe he has a great deal of influence, he will decrease his future offers. And if he has overestimated his influence, these rewards will be insufficient and an agreement will not be reached, thus limiting the experience of cooperation. Furthermore, the actor will be surprised by this turn of events and, as we will discuss further below, will probably attribute it to the other's unfriendly

[8] Heider, "Social Perception and Phenomenal Causality," p. 361; William Gamson, *Power and Discontent* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1968), pp. 172-76. Once we understand the meaning of trust in international politics, Gamson's argument— but not the one proposed here—follows almost by definition (see chapter 4, p. 120 and Robert Jervis, "Notes on the Concept of Trust," unpublished paper prepared for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues workshop on trust, September 1972). For an example, see Constantine Melnik and Nathan Leites, *House Without Windows* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1958), pp. 200-201.

intentions. He may also reevaluate the earlier interactions in light of his new belief and decide he had been deceived. On the other hand, because threats have relatively low cost when they do not have to be carried out, an actor who attributes success to their use will not be tempted to decrease their magnitude. Instead, his belief that the other is hostile will be reinforced and he will rely still more on negative sanctions. Furthermore, the overestimation of his power may lead him to overreach himself, thus further increasing the chances of war.

Two factors explain the overestimation of successful influence. First, such a perception gratifies the ego. The person has mattered; he has been efficacious; he is able to shape his environment. If, to return to an example cited above, the British were limiting their bombing of Germany in response to the German policy, the Germans would have had greater influence over the future conduct of the war and the degree to which their civilians would be attacked.

Second, and more important, the actor is familiar with his own efforts to influence the other but knows much less about other factors that might have been at work. He may not know what actions third parties have taken. His knowledge of the other's domestic processes is apt to be slight, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, his understanding of the role of internal conflicts in the making of foreign policy is likely to be inadequate. In the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, the most obvious and parsimonious explanation is that he was influential. Thus it is not surprising that the Cleveland administration assumed that Spain's reforms in Cuba "had resulted from American importunities, [but] the fact was that the Spanish government had been moved almost entirely by domestic considerations." Similarly, Stimson's overestimation of his role in resolving the 1929 Manchurian dispute is partly explained by the fact that "It is doubtful if . . . [he] realized the complexities of the rivalries in China and Manchuria, much less the practice of Soviet revolutionary strategy."[9]

Perceptions of Influence and Turning Points

The exaggeration of one's own importance also leads actors to overestimate their potential influence when the other is poised between taking actions which can greatly help or greatly harm the actor. Thus just as Robins and others believed they were responsible for many Bolshevik favors, so they also incorrectly felt that Allied promises of aid might have persuaded the Soviets not to ratify the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Three cases during the Second World War also illustrate this phenomenon. During the early years of the war, Britain and America bitterly debated what

[9] Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961), p. 107; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, p. 64.

policy would best keep Spain from joining the Axis. Although the British held that aid would provide Franco with an alternative to ties to Hitler, and the United States argued that threats and sanctions would be more effective, each country felt that the policy adopted would have great impact on Spain. In fact Franco's decisions were mostly guided by his fear of becoming dominated by Germany and his beliefs about who would win the war. Allied policies toward his country were a decidedly secondary concern. Similarly, the American agents in French North Africa overestimated the impact of aid on the loyalties and behavior of important groups and underestimated the role of factors beyond American control. Third, after comparing the debate over the Allied policy of unconditional surrender with the actual influences on the Axis powers' decisions, Paul Kecskemeti argued that

> Addicted to a naive stimulus-response philosophy, we tend to take it for granted that people's actions depend on nothing but the momentary stimuli they receive, stimuli that we, the manipulators, can control at will. Where this philosophy holds sway, the possibility that conduct might also have other sources is not even taken into consideration. . . . Accordingly, during the war, the enemy's own permanent and deep-rooted loyalties, his own spontaneous assessment of his interests, and similar autonomous factors were not taken into account when we tried to foresee and influence his conduct in the terminal situation. Nothing seemed to matter except what we did to him and what we told him then and there.[10]

Injury and Perceptions of the Other's Autonomy

The third part of our hypothesis is that when others' actions hurt or threaten the perceiver, he is apt to overestimate the degree to which the behavior was a product of internal forces and was aimed at harming him. This inference is fed by the phenomenon just discussed. If an actor overestimates his potential influence, he will conclude from the other's undesired behavior that the other must have had strong motives for his actions. It in turn feeds the tendency for actors to attribute other's desired behavior to their efforts, since the discontinuing of undesired behavior will not be seen as showing that the other was not seeking to harm the state in the first place. Here, as in the cases where the other's be-

[10] Richard Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, vol. 1: *Intervention and the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 128; Herbert Feis, *The Spanish Story* (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 108; William Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York: Norton, 1966), pp. 133, 241; *Strategic Surrender* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 233. Kecskemeti implies that this is a peculiarly American failing. But if this tendency is especially pronounced among American decisionmakers, it is also found in other nations.

havior is desired, actors overestimate the degree to which they are the focus of other's policy. This indicates a general propensity for actors to exaggerate their own importance.

The two types of this misperception correspond to the two ways in which an actor analyzes another's reasons for behaving as he did. He tries to infer, first, what goals the other was seeking, and, second, what forces led him to act as he did. In the first kind of inference, if the other's behavior has the *effect* of injuring the actor, he is apt to believe that this was the other's *purpose*. Research on how we form impressions of others has found "a tendency [for perceivers] to assume that people always intend to do what they do and intend it to have the effect it has." In international relations this is especially pronounced when the other's behavior is undesired. Rather than seeing any injuries as a by-product of a policy that was pursued with little regard for him, the actor puts himself at the center of the other's attentions. In coalition wars, each actor tends to overestimate the fraction of the enemy's resources that are devoted to fighting him. Small moves by the actor are seen as important enough to lead the other to take drastic counteractions. Thus because "On the night when Roosevelt gave his Fireside Chat [in December 1940], the Germans subjected London to one of the heaviest bombings of the war," Robert Sherwood concluded that the Germans "timed the creation of some major disturbances in the hope that it would blanket the speech in the morning's news and mitigate the effect that Roosevelt's words might produce on American and British morale." And a staunch supporter of Neville Chamberlain recorded in his diary the opinion that, in launching his attack in May 1940, Hitler "seized on the psychological moment when England is politically divided, and the ruling caste riddled with dissension and anger" as a result of domestic criticisms of Chamberlain. Chamberlain himself shared this view, writing to a friend: "as I expected Hitler has seized the occasion of our divisions to strike the great blow."[11]

When relations between the states are not completely hostile, conflict will be increased. The aggrieved side will not only note the injury done but will assume that this was the main goal the other side was seeking and, projecting this motivation into the future, will foresee greater harm unless it reacts strongly. Thus not only is consistency expected, but consistency based on the belief that the impact on the perceiver was the central cause of the other's previous behavior. For example, when Russia prosecuted several German engineers in 1928 Germany believed that this

[11] Mark Cook, *Interpersonal Perception* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), p. 53; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 228, also see pp. 296, 504; Robert Rhodes James, *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1970), p. 305; quoted in A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 410.

was part of a policy designed to weaken her. In fact the trial "was tailored for Russia's internal needs." Several of the United States' actions in occupied Germany were aimed at France, but Russia assumed that the motive was to harm her. Similarly, because Russia did not understand the degree to which Allied intervention in Russia in 1918 was aimed at defeating Germany, she expected the West to follow a more extreme and consistent anti-Soviet policy than it did. And while Stalin's bellicose speech in February 1946 may have been mainly intended to rally domestic support and Khrushchev's promise of support for "wars of national liberation" in January 1961 may have been designed as part of a propaganda battle with the Chinese, many Western observers shared William O. Douglas's view that the former was "the Declaration of World War III," and President Kennedy felt the latter was such "an authoritative exposition of Soviet intentions [that he] discussed it with his staff and read excerpts from it aloud to the National Security Council."[12]

Part of the explanation for these perceptions is grounded in the second type of analysis—beliefs about the sources of the other's conduct. Actor A usually overestimates the degree to which B's undesired behavior is a product of B's autonomous desires and underestimates the degree to which it is a response to an action of A's—usually an action that A and B interpret differently. Thus A sees himself as the object of B's unprovoked and inner-directed hostility. As we discussed in the previous chapter, actors are slow to see the causes of other's behavior as located in blunders, intragovernmental conflict, and domestic politics. They are also slow to see that their own actions may explain the other's undesired behavior. An anecdote from outside of politics illustrates this phenomenon:

One early morning a convoy of armored personnel carriers of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment rolled through a rubber plantation a few miles inside Cambodia. There assembled were several score

[12] Harvey Dyck, *Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 135; John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 26-27, 60-61; Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking, 1951), p. 134; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 302. For other examples, see John Wills, Jr., "Ch'ing Relations with the Dutch, 1662-1690," in John Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 248-50; J.A.S. Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy* (London: Athlone, 1964), pp. 206-207; Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Bismarck's Imperialist Venture: Anti-British in Origin?" in Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *Britain and Germany in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 64-67. A rare exception was Lloyd George's reaction to Wilson's peace proposal in 1916: "I know the American politician. He has not international conscience. He thinks of nothing but the ticket, and he has not given the least thought to the effect of his action upon European affairs." Sterling Kernek, "The British Government's Reactions to President Wilson's 'Peace' Note of December 1916," *Historical Journal* 13 (December 1970), 759-60.

Cambodian civilians who stared in wonderment, but no apparent fear, at the hulking APCs [Armored Personnel Carriers] and at the white-skinned giants atop them. The Cambodians are hungry, most of them have had no food for two days. But not a palm goes out in supplication. "Cambodians seem like nice people. They ain't spoiled like the gooks in Nam who always got their Goddamned hands out," says a gunner on an APC.

That said, he rummages around inside the APC and emerges triumphant with a carton of Chicklets which he begins tossing, pack by pack, from the track top to the Cambodians assembled down below. All the children, and a fair share of the adults, begin grappling in the dust for their first American goodies. The gum carton is soon exhausted. The Cambodian crowd moves on to the next APC, this time with open hands outstretched.[13]

In international affairs, the appeasers did not realize the extent to which Hitler's behavior was caused by his belief that England had shown that she would not fight for East and Central Europe. Similarly, in 1925 the Italians did not consider that their maladroit diplomatic initiative might have been responsible for the stiffening of the French position in colonial negotiations. More common than an actor's failure to realize that the other's undesired acts may flow from the actor's unintended invitation is the failure to appreciate that the other side's hostility may be a product of his fear of the actor. An experiment has shown that when a person with a competitive orientation plays the Prisoner's Dilemma game with a more cooperative adversary, and the latter reacts by adopting a competitive style of play, the former will infer not that the latter's behavior was a response to his moves, but that the latter is always competitive. Similarly, in the winter of 1949-1950 George Kennan made no impression when he argued that the American decision to establish military bases in Japan might lead to an undesired Russian reaction. So the outbreak of war reinforced "the tendency . . . to view Soviet intentions as something existing quite independently of our own behavior." "[T]he idea that in doing things disagreeable to our own interests the Russians might be reacting to features of our own behavior . . . was one to which the mind of official Washington would always be strangely resistant." Similarly, few American decision-makers have traced Chinese hostility to the American attempts to undermine the Chinese regime.[14]

[13] Peter Kahn, "In Cambodia: Impressions of the War," *Wall Street Journal*, May 26, 1970.

[14] Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 358; Harold Kelley and Anthony Stakelski, "Social Interaction Basis of Cooperators' and Competitors' Beliefs About Others," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 16 (1970), 66-91 (it should be noted, however, that

But this is not a uniquely American failing. Before World War I, both England and Germany failed to appreciate the extent to which the other's unfriendly acts grew out of the belief that the hostility it was receiving was unprovoked. Instead, each believed the other's "motives were fixed and independent of our behaviour, whereas our motives were a response to their behaviour and were varied accordingly." And before World War II, Japan was similarly unable to see that her expansion in China could have been a major cause of American hostility.[15]

The result, of course, is a neglect of the possibilities of favorably affecting the other's behavior by moderating one's own actions and an increase in illusory incompatibility. If the other's hostility is seen as rooted in autonomous drives, there is no reason to examine one's own policies to see if they may be self-defeating. There is no need to make special efforts to demonstrate your willingness to reach reasonable settlements. Further concessions would not alter the other's behavior. As Colonel House reported Woodrow Wilson's reasoning about the peace negotiations with Germany in the fall of 1918: "He fell back time and again on the theory offered when the last note was written: that was, if Germany was beaten, she would accept any terms. If she was not beaten, he did not wish to make any terms with her." Similar is the belief that the other state's decision to go to war is highly autonomous. The other will attack when, and only when, it is ready to. It can neither be appeased nor provoked. As Robert Kennedy put it during the Cuban missile crisis: "We all agreed in the end that if the Russians were ready to go to nuclear war over Cuba, they were ready to go to nuclear war and that was that. So we might as well have the showdown then as six months later."[16]

observers also drew the same inference); Kennan, *Memoirs*, vol. 1: *1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 395, 497-98; Allen Whiting, "What Nixon Must Do to Make Friends With Peking," *New York Review of Books*, October 7, 1971, pp. 10-14. Gabriel Kolko similarly argues that the United States misinterpreted Soviet behavior in Iran after the war because it ignored previous American actions in that country that contributed to Soviet policy. *The Politics of War* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 311.

[15] Lewis Richardson, "Mathematics of War and Foreign Politics," in James Newman, ed., *The World of Mathematics*, vol. 2 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), p. 1244; Robert Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), passim. See also Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy*. For an example of this phenomenon at the level of the individual rather than the state, see the discussion of Churchill's surprise at the Conservatives' strong reaction to his opposition to the party position on India in the mid-1930s. Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure* (New York and Cleveland: World, 1970), p. 236.

[16] Charles Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, vol. 4 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p. 83; quoted in Stewart Alsop and Charles Bartlett, "In Time of Crisis," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 8, 1962, p. 16 (the American decision-makers fortunately did not act in accord with this analysis). For other examples, see John Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold*

BELIEF THAT THE OTHER UNDERSTANDS THAT YOU ARE NOT A THREAT

The other side of this proposition is that, as we noted in Chapter 3, actors injure others more than they mean to because they do not see the degree to which their policies conflict with the other's interests. The problem is compounded because the actor usually does not understand the process just discussed which leads the perceiver to conclude that if the actor's behavior has harmed him, this must have been the actor's intention. The actor thus believes that even if he has inadvertently damaged the other's interest, the other will realize that this was not the actor's goal. The actor then fails to realize that the other will perceive more hostility than would a disinterested observer.

There are several reasons for this failing: lack of understanding of the context in which the other sees the actor's behavior; the familiarity that the actor has with his own intentions, which makes it harder for him to believe others might not see them as he does; and the self-righteousness that inhibits the conclusion that the other's undesired behavior was provoked. Such a conclusion may imply an unfavorable self-image. Raymond Sontag argues that Anglo-German relations before World War I deteriorated partly because "The British did not like to think themselves selfish, or unwilling to tolerate 'legitimate' German expansion. The Germans did not like to think themselves aggressive, or unwilling to recognize 'legitimate' British vested interests."[17]

It takes great insight to realize that actions that one believes to be only the natural consequence of defending one's vital interests can appear to others as directed against them. In rebutting the famous Crowe "balance of power" memorandum which justified a policy of "containing" Germany, Thomas Sanderson, a former permanent undersecretary in the Foreign Office, wrote: "It has sometimes seemed to me that to a foreigner reading our press the British Empire must appear in the light of some huge giant sprawling over the globe, with gouty fingers and toes stretching in every direction, which cannot be approached without eliciting a scream."[18] But few other Englishmen could be convinced that others might see them this way.

The result is that when an actor believes he is not a threat to another,

War, 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 90; Charles Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 213.

[17] *European Diplomatic History, 1871-1932* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1933), p. 125.

[18] "Memorandum," in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol. 3 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 430.

he usually assumes that the other knows he is not hostile. Earlier we noted that people usually identify other's intentions with the effects of their actions. Actors reverse this procedure with their own behavior; although they are aware of the difficulty of making threats and warnings credible, they usually believe that others are not likely to misinterpret behavior that is meant to be compatible with the other's interest. An actor's failure to understand that he may not have communicated his non-hostile intentions feeds spirals of misperception. For if the actor believes that the other is not only hostile, but perceives the actor as peaceful, he will feel it is clear that the other is aggressive and must be met with strength and firmness.