Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military, by Stephen Peter Rosen
Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970, by Jonathan Shimshoni
Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945, by Leon V. Sigal
The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914, by Jack Snyder
Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition, by Jack Snyder
The Militarization of Space: U.S. Policy, 1945–1984, by Paul B. Stares
Making the Alliance Work: The United States and Western Europe, by Gregory F. Treverton
The Origins of Alliances, by Stephen M. Walt
The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939, by Wesley K. Wark
The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War, by James J. Wirtz

Myths of Empire

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL AMBITION

JACK SNYDER

Cornell University Press
ITHACA AND LONDON

First published 1991 by Cornell University Press.

International Standard Book Number 0-8014-2532-8
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 91-55052
Printed in the United States of America
Librarians: Library of Congress cataloging information appears on the last page of the book.
♾ The paper in this book meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Contents

The classics of realist political philosophy and contemporary research findings both cast doubt on this view. Hobbes himself argued that individuals formed a state precisely in order to mitigate the pressures of anarchy. And Adam Smith, in noting that "there is a great deal of ruin in a nation," understood that the survival of great states does not normally hang by a mere thread.[59] More recently, Peter Katzenstein has found that the domestic political arrangements of small states are determined by their vulnerable position in international markets; conversely, the domestic structure of large states determines their strategy in world markets.[60] My own work finds that, among the great powers, domestic pressures often outweigh international ones in the calculations of national leaders.

This book's findings also have practical significance. A new understanding of the domestic political origins of strategic myths should affect how people assess strategic debates in their own states, and how policies affect strategic mythmaking in opposing states. A theory of the link between domestic politics and foreign policy is indispensable for thinking through the international consequences of Mikhail Gorbachev's domestic innovations and the appropriate American response to them.[61] More broadly, such a theory can help in assessing claims that the end of the Cold War division of Europe reflects the growing obsolescence of great-power war, as well as counterclaims that it may mean the end of the long post-1945 peace. The practical and theoretical implications of my findings will be taken up in the concluding chapter.

59. As quoted by Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, N.J., 1965), 6.

60. Peter Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985); Katzenstein, *Corporatism and Change: Austria, Switzerland, and the Politics of Industry* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1984); Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison, Wis., 1978).

61. For attempts to do this, see Jack Snyder, "The Gorbachev Revolution: A Waning of Soviet Expansionism?" *International Security* 12 (Winter 1987–88): 93–131; Snyder, "International Leverage," 1–31; and the Soviet chapter and concluding chapter of this volume.

[2]

Three Theories of Overexpansion

The idea that security can be achieved through expansion is a pervasive theme in the grand strategy of the great powers in the industrial era. What explains the prevalence of this idea and variations in its intensity?

The Realist Explanation: Rational Response to Anarchy

Realists argue that statesmen who believe expansion is the best means of achieving security are often making reasonable judgments. In their view states are doomed to unending competition in an anarchic setting, like Hobbes's state of nature. In the absence of a supranational sovereign to enforce rules, states must constantly be wary of depredations by others, looking to themselves for security and material strength. Even status quo powers may resort to aggression to gain control over scarce resources that might otherwise be turned against them. Thus, though aggressive behavior may make life "nasty, brutish, and short," the scarcity of security in an anarchic environment often makes preventive aggression necessary.[1]

Even when hindsight shows that a bid for security through expansion turned out to be a costly failure, Realists could—and do—argue

1. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (January 1978): 167–214, argues that the requirements of self-help under anarchy may force even status quo states to become aggressors. Likewise, Kenneth Waltz says that "states facing global problems are like individual consumers trapped by the 'tyranny of small decisions.'" He also remarks that "early in this century Winston Churchill observed that the British-German naval race promised disaster *and* that Britain had no realistic choice other than to run it." See his *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass., 1979), 110–11.

that the attempt was a rational response to international circumstances. Given the information available, they argue, it may have been reasonable to take a risk on achieving security through expansion, if statesmen had good reason to believe retrenchment would have been even riskier. For vulnerable states in a highly competitive anarchic environment, all strategies for achieving security are likely to have low success rates. In this sense it may not be contradictory to argue that a case of overexpansion was a rational response to the objective constraints and incentives of the state's international position.

But anarchy is not in itself sufficient to predict an expansionist security strategy. Realist scholars argue that the normal response to threat is to form a balancing alliance.[2] Therefore states should expect that expansion will reduce their security insofar as it threatens other states and provokes an opposing coalition. In light of that, the simple facts of anarchy and insecurity should not be enough for a Realist to expect states to adopt strategies of expansion. Other conditions, which would outweigh or nullify the fear of a balancing response to aggression, must be added to explain this strategic choice. Some might be conditions that prevail throughout the international system at a particular time, encouraging aggressive solutions to security problems for many states. For example, when the prevailing military technology available to all the great powers makes offense easier than defense, strategies of security through expansion should be widespread. Some of the conditions promoting expansion might be peculiar to the position of the individual state, giving it special incentives to solve its security problems through aggression.

The following Realist hypotheses about conditions that should give rise to expansionism are derived from the theories of political scientists and from historians' interpretations of individual cases. When these conditions are present, Realists would expect the state to adopt a strategy of security through expansion; when they are absent, Realists would expect the state to adopt a nonaggressive strategy.

Offensive Advantage

Whenever prevailing military technology favors the attacker, expansionist security strategies should be attractive.[3] An aggressive strategy

2. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, and Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987).

3. Jervis, "Cooperation"; Stephen Van Evera, "Causes of War" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1984); Stephen Van Evera, "Why Cooperation Failed in 1914," in Kenneth Oye, ed., *Cooperation under Anarchy* (Princeton, N.J., 1985), 80–117, a special issue of *World Politics* 38 (October 1985).

would allow states to capitalize on surprise and exploit the advantages of the attacker to compensate for weakness. They would have strong first-strike incentives to destroy opponents' military forces and seize their war-making capacity before others did the same to them.

Such situations of global offensive advantage are rare, however. Authorities on ground warfare usually claim that the defender almost always enjoys a net advantage, which may be smaller or larger depending on various technological and geographical conditions. Air power theorists predicted that the rise of long-range bombers and later of intercontinental missiles would create first-strike incentives if the forces of one side were vulnerable to a preemptive attack by the other. In fact, first-strike knockout blows have been rare. Though surprise attacks often succeed tactically at the outset of a war, the attacker normally finds that the diplomatic onus of aggression outweighs its fleeting operational benefits.[4] Most theorists argue, moreover, that the nuclear stalemate aids the side that is defending the status quo, since the threat to use nuclear force in defense of vital interests is more credible than its use in conquest.[5] In short, technological conditions aiding the attacker may exist in isolated instances and therefore may help explain some cases of expansionist strategies. Overall, however, they have not been common enough to account for the more general inclination toward such strategies.

Geography may place greater or lesser obstacles in the path of the attacker.[6] In land warfare, rough terrain and narrow frontages aid the defender, whereas flat terrain and wide frontages aid the attacker. In all forms of warfare, the logistical burden of projecting power over a distance tends to reduce the relative fighting power of the attacker. But if the attacker is invading weakly defended territories near its own home base and the defender must transport forces to support a distant client, distance will aid the attacker.[7]

4. On the reasons for the defender's advantage, see John Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe," *International Security* 7 (Summer 1982): 15–20. Richard Betts, "Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence," *World Politics* 37 (January 1985): 153–79, has shown persuasively that surprise gives the attacker significant advantages at the outset of a military campaign. In all of his cases in which numerically inferior attackers won opening engagements, however, surprise proved to be a wasting asset—that is, the attacker ultimately lost the war, especially as a result of balancing behavior that the aggressor's victories provoked.

5. Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989), 30–31, 35, 41, 227.

6. Jervis, "Cooperation," 195; Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly."

7. For a complete listing of the conditions in which offensive strategies are necessary or enjoy an advantage, see Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and Deterrence: When Is Offense Best?" paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1987.

Geography and technology may interact in shaping the incentives for expansionist strategies. For example, innovations in transportation technology, such as the building of railroads in the colonial periphery in the 1890s, may reduce the difficulty of projecting power into the hinterlands[8] and thus bring new territories and new strategic resources inside the cost-benefit frontier of the empire. Nonetheless, security problems on the turbulent frontier opened up by the new technology may still lure the empire beyond the cost-benefit equilibrium.[9]

Political conditions may also affect a Realist's calculations about offensive security strategies. Even if the defender enjoys military advantages, the instability of the political status quo may make a positional defense impossible. After the Second World War, for example, the political status quo in Europe was fluid. Each side had potential fifth columns in the other's camp, and the dividing line between the blocs ran down the middle of formerly united countries. Moreover, many of the European states were weak internally and militarily and consequently would have reason to join the bandwagon with the rising power rather than balance against it. Given this fluid situation, there were plausible reasons to believe that a political offensive was the best defense.[10]

Cumulative Resources

Whenever states can make significant net additions to their power resources through conquest, Realists would expect them to adopt strategies of security through expansion.[11] But open-ended strategies of cumulative gains, counting on a never-ending cycle in which new conquests provide the resources for still further conquests, are highly dubious.[12] At some point, according to Robert Gilpin's historical review of the experience of empires, costs always outstrip revenues from additional conquest.[13] Yet under some conditions more limited attempts to strengthen the state's position through conquest might in principle be worthwhile.

8. Daniel Headrick, *Tools of Empire* (New York, 1981).
9. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in International Politics* (New York, 1981).
10. Scott Parrish, "Soviet Reactions to the Security Dilemma: The Sources of Soviet Self-Encirclement, 1945–1950" (Harriman Institute certificate essay, Columbia University, April 1990), and his forthcoming dissertation.
11. Van Evera, "Causes of War," has the best discussion.
12. Robert Jervis, "Domino Beliefs and Strategic Behavior," in Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder, eds., *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland* (New York, 1991), 20–50, and other essays in the volume; Van Evera, "Causes of War."
13. Gilpin, *War and Change*, chap. 4.

The clearest case is a situation of near autarky. If a state could achieve direct physical control over the resources it needs to fight a long war against its strongest opponents, its security would be greatly enhanced. Blockades would not deprive it of crucial war matériel or food for its population. Moreover, once autarky was achieved, the state could take advantage of all the tactical and operational benefits of standing on the defense. Consequently a strategy of limited expansion might make sense for a security-conscious, nearly autarkic power. Still, this incentive would have to be weighed against the risk of provoking an overwhelming balancing alliance.[14]

Similarly, expanding to achieve a natural defensive frontier or to seize a strategically crucial defensive bottleneck might make sense for a security-conscious state. The problem is, however, that other states are likely to want to hold the strategic point, such as the Turkish Straits, for their own defensive reasons. Holding the position might make defense easier, but fighting to seize it may undermine security. In the extreme case, such a position could be so crucial that whoever holds it can render the other insecure, so that the opponents must fight over it, even if the fighting itself endangers their security. But in many cases the strategic value of the bottleneck may be exaggerated, and the struggle for it counterproductive.

Shifts in Relative Power

A state has an incentive for preventive aggression whenever its relative power is expected to decline.[15] By attacking immediately and conquering its rising opponent, the state can enhance its chances for long-run security. This should be true even if the chances of success in the preventive attack are low, as long as the chances of success in a defensive war later would be lower still. But this incentive must be weighed against the diplomatic and operational disadvantages of being the attacker. It must be compared, moreover, with the alternative strategy of appeasing the rising power.

14. The two cases of this type are Germany and Japan. David Calleo, *The German Problem Reconsidered* (Cambridge, 1978); James Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy, 1930–1938* (Princeton, N.J., 1968). Michael Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919–1941* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), 104, summarizes a December 1937 Japanese Planning Board meeting as acknowledging that "even if Japan occupied all of China and Southeast Asia, it would still find itself unable to wage a long war without relying on Anglo-American resources." Arguing for the rationality of a nonimperialistic, cooperative strategy for powers in this kind of situation are Davis Bobrow and Robert Kudrle, "How Middle Powers Can Manage Resource Weakness: Japan and Energy," *World Politics* 39 (July 1987): 536–65.
15. Jack Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motive for War," *World Politics* 40 (October 1987): 82–107.

In calculating their incentives for preventive aggression, states assess not only long-run shifts in underlying power resources, but also short-run shifts in the degree to which those resources are mobilized for war. The paper tiger image of the opponent rests in part on the argument that the opponent, though hostile, is not yet fully mobilized for war, materially or politically. Therefore there is an incentive to conquer the resources needed for self-defense, or to defeat potential enemies piecemeal before they are ready to move. The problem is that these conquests are likely to provoke the feared mobilization. Even so, if the mobilization is really inevitable in the long run, and if sufficient resources can be conquered in the short run, the strategy can in principle be a rational response to the state's international situation.

Multipolarity

Strategies of security through expansion make more sense in multipolar situations than in bipolar ones.[16] In multipolarity, an expansionist power may be able to defeat its opponents piecemeal if they fail to unite because they cannot agree on who should bear the costs of resistance. At the same time, great powers in multipolarity may have strong incentives to expand to achieve autarky, since they are less likely to be self-sufficient in the resources needed for national security than are bipolar powers. The most dangerous situation would be one in which some great powers were autarkic in security resources but others were not. To avoid one-way dependency, the latter would have a strong incentive to expand. Arguably, this aptly describes the situation of Germany and Japan vis-à-vis the United States and the Soviet Union before the Second World War. Yet the failure of their bids for autarky, snuffed out by the balancing reaction of the other powers, shows that this incentive must be weighed against other factors that affect its probability of success.

The Cognitive Explanation: Misleading Mental Shortcuts

Some common strategic myths may be artifacts of the shortcuts the human brain takes when processing information under uncertainty. To

16. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990): 5–56; Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44 (Spring 1990): 137–68. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 169, 178, 199, 207–8, stresses that bipolarity mitigates the effects of anarchy; one reason is that the certainty of each pole's internal strength makes it less tied to the fate of smaller powers.

simplify decision making, people focus inordinately on the most available data, use ready-made theories to impose order on the data, and employ rules of thumb to draw inferences.[17] Some of these shortcuts may introduce biases that predispose decision makers toward overexpansion.

Cognitive theory, unlike the Realist theory discussed above, is not organized in a tightly deductive form. Nor has anyone attempted to show systematically how hypotheses deduced from cognitive theory can explain patterns of great-power overexpansion.[18] Implicitly, however, many of the explanations offered for individual instances of overexpansion—those stressing beliefs and lessons of the past, for example—are cognitive in nature. Consequently it should be worthwhile to try to establish a coherent theoretical basis for those interpretations and to derive testable hypotheses from it.

Most cognitive hypotheses can be at least loosely derived from what is called the "cognitive miser" model.[19] Its central principle is economy of cognitive operations. Under complexity and uncertainty, people use several devices to simplify assessment and choice. The ones most pertinent to the study of strategic myths are, first, belief systems, and second, cognitive heuristics and biases.

People store what they have learned in simplified, structured form in belief systems. Incoming information is categorized in accordance with the preestablished categories of these beliefs. Consequences of alternative courses of action are assessed with the aid of causal beliefs. Belief systems serve the need for cognitive economy in several ways. They reduce the need for information, since expectations embedded in the belief system can be used to fill in gaps in information. They promote efficient theoretical thinking by organizing beliefs into hierarchies, subordinating a plethora of details under more general concepts. Moreover, stable belief systems protect against the mental burden of constant fundamental reassessments by resisting change in the face of disconfirming information. When disconfirming evidence is so overwhelming that it cannot be ignored, its disruptive impact on the economy of cognitive operations is managed by first adjusting only the beliefs lower down in the hierarchy of generalization, revising more central concepts only when absolutely necessary, and perhaps not even then. In this way the decision maker, though partially responsive to

17. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J., 1976); Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment* (Princeton, N.J., 1985); Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky, *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (Cambridge, 1982); Harold Kelley and John Michela, "Attribution Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Psychology* 31 (1980): 457–501.

18. Ralph White, *Fearful Warriors* (New York, 1984), is a quasi-popular book that uses several cognitive hypotheses to explain great-power conflict and enemy images.

19. Susan Fiske and Shelley Taylor, *Social Cognition* (New York, 1984), 15.

information from the environment, is buffered from the intellectual burden of dealing with its full complexity, uncertainty, and variety.

This system has tremendous advantages for cognitive economy, though its benefits are purchased at the price of being heavily dependent on the initial structuring of the beliefs. Future events will be seen as reruns of formative experiences or as the playing out of patterns instilled in early training. Consequently, for explaining strategic ideas and behavior, formative lessons drawn from early, vivid, or firsthand experiences take on special importance. When a whole generation undergoes the same formative experiences, such as the lessons of Munich, the strategic policy of the whole state is likely to be affected for many years.[20]

Such a process could explain variations in beliefs about the wisdom of strategies of security through expansion. When formative experiences of pertinent decision makers have taught them that dominoes fall, that states join bandwagons, that attackers win quickly through surprise, or that passivity jeopardizes security, then the belief in expansionism should be prevalent and difficult to reverse. A generation steeped in the lessons of appeasement at Munich would be quick to imagine dominoes falling and would feel a need to nip an opponent's growing assertiveness in the bud. Conversely, the opposite formative experiences should lead to the opposite strategic beliefs. A generation raised on the lessons of Vietnam would be quick to foresee quagmires resulting from an overextended containment policy.

At least some historians and area specialists have tried to explain the American Cold War belief system, the Bolshevik operational code, and German and Japanese imperialism in terms of such formative lessons. To test these explanations, I examine whether people learned the same lessons from the same experiences, whether they drew conclusions in a logically plausible way, and whether their conclusions preceded or followed the adoption of policies implied by the lessons.

Formative experiences could in principle explain why imperial myths have occasionally appeared, but it is puzzling that such beliefs should be fairly common among all the great powers. If lessons were being absorbed in an unbiased way, then paper tiger and domino beliefs should be widespread only if they were generally true. Since these beliefs contradict fairly well-established scholarly knowledge about the balance of power, it is necessary to explain why conclusions might be drawn in such a skewed way. Some additional features of information

20. Jervis, *Perception*, chap. 6; also Larson, *Origins of Containment*, 50–57, on processing information according to preestablished templates, called "schemas." For some qualifications, see Shelley Taylor and Suzanne Thompson, "Stalking the Elusive 'Vividness' Effect," *Psychological Review* 89 (March 1982): 155–81.

processing by the "cognitive miser," called "heuristics and biases" in the psychological literature, might in principle explain this.

For example, the common tendency to adopt a paper tiger image of the adversary might be explained by typical biases in the way we attribute causes to behavior. People tend to explain their own actions in terms of environmental constraints (a "situational attribution"), whereas they explain others' actions in terms of innate disposition (a "dispositional attribution"). A purely cognitive explanation is that environmental pressures stand out in our minds when we reconstruct our own actions, whereas the actor is the most salient object in the field of vision when we reconstruct the actions of another.[21] Situational attributions consequently require less mental work in explaining our own actions, but more work in explaining others'. In conflict relationships, this leads to attributions like "he acted aggressively because that's his nature, but I stood firm because circumstances forced me to."[22] Raymond Garthoff has extensively documented this kind of mutual double standard in how states cast blame in his study of the decline of Soviet-American détente in the 1970s.[23]

Some psychological studies suggest that people make dispositional attributions when adversaries behave aggressively but situational ones when they behave cooperatively. A purely cognitive explanation is that we expect our own actions to elicit the desired results, so that when they do we say, "My strategy worked." But if our actions are counterproductive, we blame the other person for being incorrigible rather than our own actions for being ineffective.[24] Over time, this bias in historical bookkeeping could foster an image of the enemy as an innate aggressor who will bow to forceful resistance—a paper tiger. For example, this fits perfectly Brezhnev's "correlation of forces" theory of détente: when America behaved as Brezhnev desired, he said it was because the power of the socialist camp gave America no alternative; but when America misbehaved, it was a reflection of the innate aggressiveness of capitalism.

Satisfying cognitive explanations for the domino theory are harder to think up. Laboratory findings suggest that people overrate the cumulative probability of a series of events. Thus, if three events must occur to produce an outcome and the independent probability of each is 0.8,

21. The relevant research is cited by Kelley and Michela, "Attribution Theory and Research," 477–78.

22. Jervis, *Perception*, chap. 3, traces these consequences in terms of a spiral theory of international conflict.

23. Raymond Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation* (Washington, D.C., 1985).

24. Robert Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," *International Security* 7 (Winter 1982–83): 20–22. Kelley and Michela, "Attribution Theory and Research," 478–79, note that experimental evidence is somewhat contradictory on this point.

people tend to estimate the probability of the outcome as 0.8, when it is in fact only 0.5.[25] This might help explain the ready acceptance of the domino theory.

One test for this argument is whether statesmen who exaggerate cumulative probabilities in the domino theory also exaggerate it in other circumstances. For example, the same bias should lead them to fear that firm deterrence strategies might set off a conflict spiral with the adversary. For example, a statesman who estimated that the chance of provoking a military mobilization was 0.8, that the chance that a mobilization would inadvertently trigger a war was 0.8, and that the chance that the war would become nuclear was 0.8, would erroneously calculate the cumulative probability of the whole chain as 0.8. In fact, people who worry the most about connections between falling dominoes probably worry the least about connections between rungs on the ladder of escalating hostility, and vice versa.[26] If so, this suggests that some different, probably noncognitive dynamic drives the domino theory.

More generally, the case studies in this book will cast doubt on cognitive explanations for strategic concepts by showing that beliefs and "lessons" correlate more strongly with personal and institutional interests than with formative experiences. It is more accurate to say that statesmen and societies actively shape the lessons of the past in ways they find convenient than it is to say they are shaped by them. Both Germany and Japan had numerous opportunities to learn from their own experiences that big stick diplomacy provokes opposition and that defenders attract allies while aggressors lose them. Bismarck was misremembered by subsequent German militarists as the man of "blood and iron, who used his sword to cut the tangles of politics on the battlefield,"[27] whereas in fact he had been careful to isolate his opponents by making them appear to be the aggressors.[28] Similarly, Japanese militarists might have learned a lesson when their assassination of the queen of Korea in 1884 drove the king to collaborate with the Russians. But in 1928 their murder of the relatively pliable warlord of Manchuria drove his son into an alliance with the Chinese nationalists.[29] In both Germany and Japan some important figures, like Bernard von Bulow and Kijuro Shidehara, came close to learning the right lessons, but they were ejected by a political system that could not tolerate accurate self-evaluation.[30]

25. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Judgments of and by Representativeness," in Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky, *Judgment*, 90–98; Nancy Kanwisher, "Cognitive Heuristics and American Security Policy," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33 (December 1989): 652–75, esp. 663–65.

26. Tversky and Kahneman attribute bias in assessing cumulative probability to the "representativeness heuristic," which suggests that people classify events and their causes in terms of superficial resemblance rather than a deep analysis of underlying processes. For example, the fall of Vietnam "resembles" the fall of Western Europe and thus seems like a plausible cause of it. But the war in Vietnam also "resembles" a Soviet-American war over Europe, and so by this same psycho-logic should be seen as a cause of it—and a deterrent to intervention.

27. Quoted in Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1984), 133.

28. Stephen Walt, "The Search for a Science of Strategy," *International Security* 12 (Summer 1987): 163–64.

Mental scripts and operational codes used by statesmen are not, at bottom, strictly cognitive. Rather, they are bound up with the social order, the political balance of power within it, its legitimation, and the justification of policies favored by particular social groups. Strategic beliefs exist more in the realm of ideology than in that of pure cognition. The next section presents my own explanation of the ideological origins of strategic ideas.

The Domestic Explanation: Coalition Politics and Ideology

The myths of empire arise as rationalizations for the interests of groups that derive parochial benefits from expansion, from military preparations associated with expansion, or from the domestic political climate brought about by intense international competition. Individually and in coalitions, such groups propagate the myth of security through expansion in order to advance their parochial interests in the guise of the general interests of the whole society.

Overexpansion and the myths of empire have been widespread among the great powers because imperialist groups enjoy at least some political advantages in most political systems, owing to their ability to organize for collective action, their monopolies on information, and their ties to the state. The extent of these political advantages is determined in large part by the type of political system in which these imperialist groups must operate. Their success is easiest in what I call "cartelized" political systems. In cartelized systems power assets—including material resources, organizational strength, and information—are concentrated in the hands of parochial groups, each with very narrow interests focused in a particular economic sector or bureaucratic sphere. In such systems, ruling coalitions are formed by logrolling among these concentrated interests, and their policies are justified by

29. John G. Roberts, *Mitsui* (New York, 1973), 155, 266.

30. Van Evera, "Causes of War," devotes a chapter to the subject of strategic nonevaluation. On Bulow's learning and political problems, see Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter*, vol. 2 (Coral Gables, Fla., 1969), 161; Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right* (New Haven, Conn., 1980), chap. 9.

mythmaking. Since interests favoring expansion tend to be disproportionately represented in such systems, overexpansion is more likely. In democratic systems, by contrast, power is diffused widely by the ballot and by norms of free debate. Diffuse interests opposed to expansion are more strongly represented and are more able to check the logrolling and mythmaking of concentrated imperial interests. In unitary systems, power is concentrated in the hands of a single dictator or a unitary oligarchy, which has diverse interests in a variety of economic and bureaucratic sectors. This concentration gives the unitary elite a relatively encompassing view of the state's interests and an incentive to keep overexpansion, imperialist mythmaking, and imperialist logrolling in check. In the case of the single dictator, however, incentives rooted in distributions of power and interest yield weak predictions, since there are no political checks on whatever strategic notions the dictator may happen to hold. Though overexpansion is not structurally required in this case, there is no political counterweight to prevent it.

The experience of the industrialized great powers suggests that coalition politics and ideology offer the single best explanation for the strategic ideas that contribute to overexpansion. Though the international factors stressed by Realism also play an important role, their effects are skewed by domestic coalition making and ideological mythmaking.

Political Advantages of Imperialist Groups

Overexpansion and imperial myths are common among the great powers because groups benefiting disproportionately from expansion or from the ideas that promote it often enjoy advantages in organization and persuasiveness. These advantages help such groups to sell imperial myths to state leaders and the public and thus to "hijack" state policy. Though the extent of these advantages varies greatly over time and across political systems, imperialist groups normally enjoy at least some net political advantage over anti-imperialist interests. In particular, pro-expansionist groups typically enjoy (1) organizational and motivational advantages owing to the comparative compactness and concentration of interests of those who benefit from imperialism; (2) a partial monopoly of information bearing on the costs and benefits of imperialism; and (3) close ties to the state.

Compact groups with concentrated interests. The benefits of empire are normally more concentrated than its costs, which are in most cases diffused through taxes. Private investors in imperial enterprises pay their own operating costs, but it is the state—the taxpayers—that pays

for infrastructure and military protection. This diffusion of anti-imperial interests among all taxpayers is in itself a major reason for their chronic political weakness. The theory of collective goods explains that it will be easy to organize a compact group, in which each member derives a large benefit from the successful promotion of the shared interest. But when benefits are diffused throughout a much larger group, each member will have a weaker incentive to work for the common goal, and coordinating common action will be more cumbersome.[31] An exhaustive study of the costs and benefits of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century has borne out these predictions of the theory of collective action. During this period the empire served to transfer income from a large number of middle-class taxpayers and regional economic elites to a more compact London commercial elite who had invested heavily abroad.[32] Military expenditure in defense of foreign economic interests was the most costly item in what the authors call the "imperial subsidy."[33]

Both economic sectors and bureaucratic organizations may have concentrated interests in expansion. Militaries and colonial bureaucrats are especially prominent throughout the case studies as compact groups having concentrated interests in expansion, big stick diplomacy, and arms races. Though militaries may not want war per se, their interest in organizational growth, wealth, prestige, and autonomy is usually served by ideas and policies that tend to create war as their "waste by-product."[34] Thus Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the chief of Wilhelmine Germany's naval staff, sought a fleet that inadvertently made war more likely because it provoked Germany's encirclement, then found himself unable to head off the war that he knew the fleet was unprepared for.[35] Likewise, the Kwantung army sought Manchuria as its own quasi-autarkic industrial empire to enhance its autonomy from the vagaries of politics in Tokyo, but in doing so it led Japan down the path to an open-ended war on the Asian mainland.[36] The relative compactness of

31. Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven, Conn., 1982); Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); Russell Hardin, *Collective Action* (Baltimore, 1982).

32. Lance Davis and Robert Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860–1912* (Cambridge, 1986), esp. 212, 221, 250, 252. For qualifications stemming from their focus on foreign investment rather than trade, see Michael Edelstein, "Discussion," *Journal of Economic History* 42 (March 1982): 131–32.

33. Davis and Huttenback, *Mammon*, 304.

34. Van Evera's phrase and analysis, from "Causes of War." See also Barry Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1984).

35. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions* (New York, 1975), 162–63.

36. On this point, in addition to Barnhart, see Sadako Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria* (Berkeley, Calif., 1964).

the professional military—its hierarchical nature, its habituation to discipline, the lack of an alternative employer for its specialized skills—has enhanced its dedication to and effectiveness in pursuit of its concentrated interests in imperial projects.[37]

Economic groups also figure from time to time as compact interests receiving concentrated benefits from expansionism. The motives and characteristics of these groups have been quite varied: in 1882 holders of Egyptian bonds wanted military intervention to secure their investment; in the 1890s noncompetitive Birmingham industrialists and workers sought protected markets in an expanded empire; highly competitive Manchester textile merchants half a century earlier had demanded that force be used to open up closed markets abroad; Ruhr steel makers cared about the German empire only because it justified the steel-hulled fleet.[38]

Not all compact economic groups have had a clear-cut interest in expansionism, however. Actively anti-imperialist economic groups appear in some of the case studies, but their motivations regarding imperial overexpansion were typically ambivalent and changeable. For example, Manchester industrialists mobilized by Richard Cobden funded the popular anti-interventionist propaganda of the Anti-Corn Law League, but once mass pressure was successfully exploited to push through free trade in grain, the industrial magnates dumped Cobden's peace program and instead backed Palmerston's trade-promoting gunboat diplomacy.[39] Likewise, Junkers and some Tory landlords disliked paying taxes for fleets and foreign interventions, but this interest was not their highest priority. The *zaibatsu*, large trading and manufacturing conglomerates that dominated the Japanese economy of the 1920s, depended on access to American raw materials and markets, and so they favored Shidehara's policy of cooperating with the democracies. But they also counted on expanded access to Chinese markets and resources, so they simultaneously helped fuel the expansionist side of Japanese diplomacy.[40]

Because the costs of empire are diffused through the state, few compact groups have strong interests opposed to empire. In light of collective goods theory's conclusions about the difficulty of effectively

37. Van Evera, "Causes of War"; Francis Rourke, *Bureaucracy and Foreign Policy* (Boston, 1969), chaps. 2–4.

38. All of these are discussed in the case-study chapters below.

39. William Grampp, *The Manchester School of Economics* (Stanford, Calif., 1960), esp. 117; Asa Briggs, *Victorian People*, rev. ed. (Chicago, 1970), 17, 23.

40. For example, Mitsui was one of two *zaibatsu* that controlled three-fourths of Japanese colonial investment, but it also had a diversified portfolio of banking, trading, mining, and some manufacturing concerns, making it "a splendidly balanced money machine that functioned well in war or peace, in boom or depression." Roberts, *Mitsui*, 5, 135.

organizing diffuse interests, this helps explain the endemic bias toward overexpansion.

As collective goods theory would predict, imperial interests were especially concentrated in the two most extreme cases of overexpansion, Germany and Japan. German state-financed colonialism, for example, benefited the navy, Krupp steel, and other contractors while providing essentially zero return on the public's investment.[41] In Japan, very narrow army and navy concerns, speciously rationalized in terms of the national interest, dominated strategic calculations.[42]

British and American internationalist business enterprises fall at the other extreme. As a rule, they made economically productive investments abroad at low military overhead while using cheap food prices or social welfare programs at home to win mass allies away from competing protectionist interests.[43] Thus economic calculations by German and Japanese imperialists and protectionists, who extracted rents from other sectors of society, had no relation to marginal costs and benefits to society as a whole. Calculations by American and British internationalists, who earned profits from productive ventures, came closer to mirroring the costs and benefits to society as a whole.

Information monopolies and other propaganda advantages. Another cause of endemic overexpansion is that self-interested groups favoring militarism and imperial expansion often enjoy an information monopoly. Those who engage in imperial activities and preparation for war automatically gain special knowledge about key elements in strategic cost-benefit calculations, such as local conditions in the hinterland, the strength of the opponent, and the effectiveness of various techniques of fighting.

Such groups exploit their reputation for expert knowledge to justify their self-serving policies in terms of diffuse national interests. Rationales that explain the need for expansion in terms of national security are especially convenient for this purpose. Thus the German navy under Tirpitz invented the theory of the "risk fleet" to explain why naval expansion was needed to forestall imminent strangulation of the German economy. By using the German navy's own internal studies, Paul Kennedy can today destroy the logic of the Tirpitz risk fleet theory in thirty pages. But at the time, those studies were tightly held,

41. Woodruff Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1978).

42. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares*, 268–69.

43. Thomas Ferguson, "From Normalcy to New Deal," *International Organization* 38 (Winter 1984): 41–94; Peter Gourevitch, "International Trade, Domestic Coalitions and Liberty: Comparative Responses to the Crisis of 1873–96," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8 (Autumn 1977): 281–313.

unavailable to those who might have used them to counter the potent propaganda of the Navy League.[44]

Likewise, the "man on the spot" at the edge of everyone's empire was always inventing domino theories to explain why a small investment in pacifying that part of the "turbulent frontier" would forestall the loss of more lucrative adjacent dominions.[45] For example, a major role in promoting Russophobia in Great Britain in the years before the Crimean War was played by a cabal of Near Eastern experts who literally conspired to oversell the Russian threat to India and the Turkish Straits, thus propelling themselves into high parliamentary, military, and diplomatic positions.[46] Similarly, those with a stake in British economic penetration of Egypt in 1882 exaggerated the threat to Suez, a "domino" linked to India, in order to sell a policy of military intervention.[47] In all the cases I examine, overexpansion was to some degree promoted by exploiting information monopolies and reputed expertise.

Success in propaganda battles hinges not only on information monopolies, but also on having the organizational and material resources to support favorable politicians, buy journalists, and fund mass organizations and think tanks. Hobson's argument focused on the ability of capital exporters to buy off or co-opt the press and the intelligentsia to help sell expansionism.[48] Industrialists' money and Tirpitz's organizational resources were important factors in Wilhelmine imperialist mass movements.[49] In the British case, Palmerston gained a favorable hearing in the press for his assertive policies by giving exclusive information to journalists who toed the line and diplomatic posts to their sons.[50]

The effectiveness of propaganda depends on the vulnerability of the target as well as the propagandist's advantages. This factor also favors elite groups with concentrated interests in empire over mass groups

44. Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy, 1870–1945* (London, 1983), chap. 5.

45. Malcom Yapp, *Strategies of British India, 1798–1850* (Oxford, 1980), 127 and passim.

46. Florence Macalister, *Memoir of Rt. Hon. Sir John McNeill* (London, 1910), 132–33, 175.

47. A. G. Hopkins, "The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt," *Journal of African History* 27 (1986): 363–91, at 384, says: "It remained only to make the occupation palatable to parliament and the public. This was achieved by emphasizing the national interest rather than by referring to specific business and financial concerns, and by stressing the spurious danger to the Canal and to the freedom of the seas."

48. J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1965), 56–61.

49. Eley, *Reshaping*, 140–47 and passim, documents and qualifies this.

50. Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784–1841* (New York, 1982), 474–91, 614–17.

with more diffuse interests. Imperial ideologies have sold best among people whose minds can be swayed by new, persuasive "information," such as groups with uncertain or cross-pressured interests, or those newly mobilized into the political process.

The mass constituencies for the Wilhelmine Navy League and Agrarian League, Palmerston's "liberal" imperialism, Stalinism, and McCarthyism all fit that profile; the case of Japanese militarist populism is especially instructive. Objectively, Japanese farmers suffering from the depression of the early 1930s had little interest in empire as a solution to their problems. Indeed, rice from the colonies of Korea and Taiwan depressed the price of domestically grown rice by about a fifth during the 1920s.[51] For this reason, as late as 1930 the platform of the major peasant league featured Marxist-style denunciations of imperial expansion. Nonetheless, farmers were ambivalent on the issue, since wars and the army had traditionally provided one of the few paths of upward mobility for rural youth. Moreover, the wealthier farmers, who played a key organizing role in agrarian organizations, had no sympathy for anything that smacked of Marxist appeals to the rural proletariat. In these circumstances the army's populist imperial propaganda, reinforced by well-established reservist organizations in the villages and the arrest of anti-imperialist agrarian organizers, succeeded in creating an enthusiastic mass base for expansionism.[52] In such ways, imperialist elite groups have often been able to use their inherent advantages in organization and information to mobilize groups with uncertain or contradictory interests.

Yet groups with concentrated interests in expansion suffer one disadvantage in the propaganda battle: the transparency of their self-interest. At least in America, some studies have shown that obviously self-interested propaganda hurts the case of its proponents, whether business or labor.[53] Consequently, unless more credible sources like the press or the state can be bought or co-opted, the group's propaganda may be discounted as coming from an obviously biased source.

The propaganda advantages typically enjoyed by imperialist interests help explain the endemic bias toward overexpansion in all great powers. Extreme advantages help explain the extreme overexpansion in the

51. Hugh Patrick, "The Economic Muddle of the 1920s," in James Morley, ed., *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan* (Princeton, N.J., 1971), 218.

52. Ronald P. Dore, *Land Reform in Japan* (London, 1959), 89–91, 97, 116–20; Richard Smethurst, *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism: The Army and the Rural Community* (Berkeley, Calif., 1974).

53. E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People* (New York, 1960), 53; Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public* (Chicago, 1991), chap. 8.

worst cases. In Germany and Japan, militarists and navalists enjoyed greater monopolies on strategic information and analysis than did their counterparts in societies with a free press and systematic oversight by the cabinet and Parliament. In the Soviet Union, tighter control from the top counteracted the unavailability of competing analysis from below. In each case, however, the extent of the propaganda advantage seems to hinge more on the social environment in which the interest groups operated than on the characteristics of the groups themselves.

Ties to the state. Another explanation for endemic overexpansion is that representatives of parochial imperialist groups are often overrepresented in the highest organs holding legitimate state power. In Britain, financial circles geared toward foreign investment were so socially intertwined with the political elite that most of them saw little distinction between national interests and those of the City of London.[54] In the early Cold War years in America, the upper echelons of the State Department were disproportionately staffed by Wall Street internationalists, including both Republicans like John Foster Dulles and Democrats like Robert Lovett and Averell Harriman, who had spent the interwar years investing abroad, representing European clients, and setting up global market-sharing cartels.[55] Germany and Japan were much more extreme cases of interest group penetration of the state. Meiji Japan was founded by a military coup, and a military clique oversaw the selection of government leaders, often choosing military men for key positions.[56] In Germany, Junker landowners, statesmen, and soldiers likewise formed an elite that mingled parochial interests and legitimate public authority. Its direct interests, however, were more noticeably protectionist and militarist than expansionist per se. Much of the imperialist impetus in Wilhelmine Germany came from bourgeois groups that were more peripheral to the Junker "power elite."

Arguably, the state itself has an interest in war and empire. As Charles Tilly has put it, "war made the state and the state made war."[57] War provides a justification for strengthening the state against other

54. This is argued by P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas, II: New Imperialism, 1850–1945," *Economic History Review* 40 (February 1987): 1–26; and Hopkins, "Victorians and Africa," overturning the very narrowly argued view of D. C. M. Platt, *Finance, Trade, and Politics in British Foreign Policy, 1815–1914* (Oxford, 1968).

55. Ronald Pruessen, *John Foster Dulles: The Road to Power* (New York, 1982); Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men* (New York, 1986).

56. Peter Duus, *Party Rivalry and Political Change in Taisho Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

57. Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), 42.

domestic groups so it can compete with other states. In war, the state commands more resources and gains more extensive legal prerogatives. This parochial interest is mitigated, however, by the state's encompassing interest in the long-run health of the society it governs.[58] Sovereigns who squander their nations' resources in unproductive wars will be impoverished, defeated by other states, and deposed by their subjects, whom they exploit and fail to protect. On balance, the interests of the state and of parochial groups tied to the state provide an endemic, though limited, bias in favor of overexpansion.

Domestic Political Context: Empowering Parochial Interests

The characteristic advantages of imperial groups—compactness, information monopolies, and ties to the state—are more valuable or easier to achieve in some political contexts than in others. Without specifying the broader political context, these characteristics are insufficient to explain how parochial groups influence state policy for their own benefit. Compactness and concentration of interests, for example, can be a disadvantage in some political contexts. A compact group by definition encompasses fewer individuals than the diffuse groups to which it hopes to pass the costs of its preferred policies. In a democratic system, where political power hinges in part on getting a large number of votes, compactness is at best a two-edged sword. It may help in organizing lobbying, but it must overcome the inherent lack of numerical strength. Similarly, concentration of interests by definition implies that the parochial group's policies are at odds with the interests of the general mass of voters, most of whom do not share this concentrated interest. Consequently, persuading the majority of voters to approve a parochial agenda is inherently difficult. In such a political system, the power of parochial imperial groups depends greatly on their information monopolies or on their direct penetration of the state. But these too depend in part on the broader character of the political system.

Fully developed democracies normally have institutions that break down or limit information monopolies. For example, a pluralistic press guarantees access to a broad range of viewpoints. Universities provide independent experts to analyze public questions. Representative branches of government have the right to extract information from state bureaucracies. Though these institutions can sometimes be captured by lobbyists or defeated in argument by parochial propagandists, the political

58. On encompassing interests, as the opposite of parochial interests, see Olson, *Rise and Decline*, 47–53, 90–93.

context makes the parochial group's task more difficult and limits its success.

The feasibility of penetrating the state also depends on the broader political context. In a democracy, the state must consider the cost in votes of pursuing policies desired by compact groups with parochial interests. If the state is strong vis-à-vis its society, it might be able to ignore such constraints. But at the same time, such a strong state could also ignore the pleas and inducements of parochial groups lobbying for empire. In that case, overexpansion and imperial mythmaking could occur only if the state itself—or "the ruling class"—had a parochial interest in such policies.

A strong state or an encompassing ruling class, with diverse interests spread across various economic and bureaucratic sectors, might have some parochial interests in overexpansion and mythmaking, but they should be limited. The strongest and most persuasive groups, those at the core of the ruling class and those staffing legitimate state institutions, may have an incentive to rake off modest excess profits from imperial activities while passing costs on to taxpayers, conscripts, and consumers. Such groups may also have an incentive to engage in modest inflation of foreign threats to get the population to perceive national conflicts of interests as more salient than class conflicts. They may likewise have an incentive to portray international conflicts and foreign policy fiascoes as the fault of another state.[59]

Such groups should have a healthy sense of when to stop, however, lest this behavior kill the goose that lays the golden egg.[60] Unified ruling groups that are firmly in the saddle have almost no incentive to pocket "superprofits" or to propagate nationalistic myths at the cost of ruining their societies in costly wars. "Structural Marxists," for example, argue that there is no reason to expect Wall Street monopoly capitalists to be so foolish as to run their system into the ground through mindless overexpansion.[61] Instead, it is more plausible to expect them to cede power to the bourgeois state to act in the enlightened, long-term interest of the imperialist system as a whole and the capitalists that derive such disproportionate benefits from it. Indeed, all the unified oligarchies surveyed in this book—the American East Coast foreign policy Establishment, the Soviet Politburo, the

59. Van Evera, "Causes of War," stresses this motive for mythmaking and the falsification of history.

60. Ronald Rogowski, "Structure, Growth, and Power: Three Rationalist Accounts," *International Organization* 37 (Autumn 1983): 722; Douglass North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York, 1981).

61. Stephen Krasner, *Defending the National Interest* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), 21–26; Franklyn Griffiths, "The Sources of American Conduct: Soviet Perspectives and Their Policy Implications," *International Security* 9 (Fall 1984): 3–50.

British Whig oligarchy, and the founding fathers of the reformed Meiji state (the *genro*)—demonstrated some ability to limit overexpansion for this reason.[62]

In short, there is a paradox in simple interest group theories of overexpansion: narrow, peripheral interest groups have the strongest motives for reckless overexpansion, but their ability to "hijack the state" to that end remains insufficiently explained; conversely, core interest groups have the power but lack a strong motive. Groups with a small stake in the fate of the society as a whole should be the ones most strongly swayed by a parochial interest in passing along the costs of ruinous imperial enterprises. But these groups should be the weakest politically. Almost by definition, their ties to the ruling class and power within the state must be weak if they take such a parochial view of their interests. Thus the power to force through self-interested policies of overexpansion should in most cases vary inversely with the motive for doing so.

This paradox might be resolved in several ways. For example, members of the ruling group might come to believe their own propaganda, or their short political time horizons might leave them insensitive to the long-run costs of overexpansion. A more satisfactory resolution of the paradox stresses the logrolling of individually weak parochial groups into a single, powerful coalition. The following sections examine these various approaches.

Self-delusion, or "blowback" from propaganda. The paradox would disappear if the state and ruling class came to believe the imperialist propaganda they used to mobilize nationalistic support and justify extracting resources from society. Thus a politically strong group could become the agent of extreme overexpansion if cynical, mobilizing elites inadvertently socialized successor elite generations to believe the imperial myths, failing to explain their instrumental origins. It could also happen as a result of subconscious psychological processes, which convince people that what is good for them is good for their country. In either case, the line between fact and fiction could become blurred in the elite's own mind, an outcome that Stephen Van Evera calls "blowback."[63]

Indeed, the blurring of sincere belief and tactical argument has been common, and it would not be surprising if the elites purveying such

62. On the *genro*, see Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War* (Baltimore, 1981), 303–5.

63. On motivated bias in perception and belief, see Irving Janis and Leon Mann, *Decision Making* (New York, 1977); and Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, chap. 5. "Blowback" originally referred to the recoil of anti-tank weapons.

arguments were unable to maintain the distinction between valid strategic concepts and opportunistic strategic rhetoric. "If we made our points clearer than the truth," said Dean Acheson of Cold War containment rhetoric, "we did not differ from most other educators and could hardly do otherwise.... The purpose of NSC 68 was to so bludgeon the mass mind of 'top government' that not only could the President make a decision but that the decision could be carried out."[64] Likewise, John Foster Dulles wrote in a 1942 pamphlet that all empires had been "imbued with and radiated great faiths" like "Manifest Destiny" and the "White Man's Burden," adding that we too "need a faith... that will make us strong, a faith so profound that we, too, will feel that we have a mission to spread it through the world." Two years before, Dulles had remarked that all states "attempt to cloak self-interest in ways which will appeal to those of its members who have moral standards."[65]

Even if the elite avoids internalizing its own myths, it may nonetheless become politically entrapped in its own rhetoric. Insofar as the elite's power and policies are based on society's acceptance of imperial myths, its rule would be jeopardized by renouncing the myths when their side-effects become costly. To stay in power and to keep central policy objectives intact, elites may have to accept some unintended consequences of their imperial sales pitch. For example, Harry Truman and Dean Acheson used the universalist rhetoric of global confrontation with communism to sell their containment policy for Europe, but then were constrained to accept the logic of critics who turned their arguments against them, demanding a similar anticommunist crusade in East Asia and in domestic politics. In this way, the blowback of imperial myths may depend not only on the elite's intellectual confusion, but on the political context that forces elites to live up to their own rhetoric.

Elite time horizons. The paradox between the parochial motive for overexpansion and the power to authorize it would also disappear if the ruling interest group had a short time horizon. For example, a declining core interest group that still controlled some of the levers of military power might use them recklessly to try to retain its slipping position. A long-shot gamble on a successful war might make sense as a last-ditch attempt to shore up the declining elite's prestige and social role. In Germany and Japan, the impending eclipse of traditional

64. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York, 1969), 374–75. NSC 68 was a 1950 strategic planning document advocating a policy of global containment, discussed in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York, 1982), chap. 4.

65. Pruessen, *John Foster Dulles*, 200, 258.

oligarchies—the *genro*, the Junkers, and their military offshoots—might be seen as providing just such an incentive for increasing recklessness.

In both these cases, however, the problem was not just that declining oligarchs became reckless, but that their decline left the polity without responsible centralized leadership. The *genro* and old-style Prussians like Bismarck and the elder Moltke were gone, and with them went their encompassing, long-run social vantage point. In their place were a plethora of contending bureaucracies, military factions, or interest groups, logrolling their concentrated interests in ways that produced expansionist ideas and policies much more overcommitted than any of the interest groups sought individually.

Indeed, at some point in each of the cases, the expansionism that resulted from the process of domestic coalition making was more extreme than that advocated by any single group. Tirpitz wanted a fleet but opposed a preventive war. Colonel Ishiwara, who had planned the 1931 fait accompli in Manchuria, recoiled when Prince Konoye's cabinet insisted in 1937 on a quick, victorious campaign to finish the war in China.[66] The Soviet military-industrial complex wanted an arms race with the West, but not the Berlin crisis that Khrushchev cooked up in a misguided effort to head off an arms race.[67] Neither the East Coast internationalists nor the Republican neoisolationists wanted land wars in Asia, but the Cold War consensus forged from the programs and rhetoric of each made such wars hard to avoid.[68] Victorian Toryism and radicalism both had strong anti-interventionist components, but Palmerston's governing formula of "liberal" imperialism abroad and social stasis at home realigned politics in such a way that reformists and anti-imperialist elements were isolated and checkmated.[69]

Thus a simple interest group explanation for overexpansion faces a double paradox: First, how do weak parochial interests hijack the state? Second, how do they produce a degree of expansion that none of the interests individually desires? To explain this fully, it is necessary to look beyond individual groups to the underlying political structures that shape how those groups interact in the domestic political process.

The Cartelized System

Parochial interests in imperial overexpansion have the greatest opportunity to control state policy in a cartelized political system. A

66. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares*, 99–101.

67. Jack Snyder, "The Gorbachev Revolution: A Waning of Soviet Expansionism?" *International Security* 12 (Winter 1987–88): 93–131.

68. I argue this in the American case, below.

69. This is argued briefly in Richard Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism, 1865–1915* (London, 1974), 20, and more extensively in the British case, chapter 5 below.

cartelized system is dominated by a number of interest groups or "cartels," each with concentrated interests different from those of other such groups. Because imperial and military interests are commonly more concentrated than anti-imperial and antimilitarist interests, a cartelized political system will give a chair at the bargaining table to imperial interests whereas diffuse groups with diffuse interests, like taxpayers and consumers, are excluded.[70] Although not everyone around the table will be actively imperialist, some are enough, because of the way a group of cartels will integrate their diverse interests.

Bargaining among compact groups with different, highly concentrated interests proceeds by logrolling. In this arrangement each group gets what it wants most in return for tolerating the adverse effects of the policies its coalition partners desire. Short-run costs are passed to groups outside the coalition. Long-run social costs remain uncalculated because of the highly parochial perspectives of the groups participating in the logrolled coalition.

Cartelized politics can produce somewhat different forms and degrees of overexpansion, depending on precisely which groups are represented and on the strength of the coalition leaders who act as brokers. Two principal forms of logrolled overexpansion are multiple expansion and offensive détente.

Multiple expansion. Multiple expansion means pursuing several distinct imperial projects; each may individually involve some small risk of overexpansion, but when combined they produce an overwhelming strategic overcommitment and self-encirclement. This occurs when several competing imperial or militarist interests sit at the table with neither anti-imperial interests nor strong brokers. Each interest group insists on its own program of expansion, so the result is far more overcommitted and provokes far more enemies than any of the individual interests thinks is wise. Yet none is strong enough to bar the others' programs, and none is willing to sacrifice its own highly concentrated interests to make the national policy solvent as a whole.

A fairly simple example is the case of the Japanese military in the late 1930s. The army insisted on a mainland empire, which created a resource-eating quagmire in China and led to armed clashes with the Soviet Union. This in itself was overextension, which naval policy compounded. The navy did not want to fight a war with America, but they wanted to prepare for one on a massive scale. Given the drain on

70. On logrolling (or "vote trading"), see Dennis Mueller, *Public Choice* (Cambridge, 1979), 49–58; William Riker and Steven Brams, "The Paradox of Vote Trading," *American Political Science Review* 67 (December 1973): 1235–47.

imperial resources from the China War, the navy could hardly justify maintaining—let alone expanding—its own share of the budgetary pie unless war with America was imminent or the naval operations could somehow extricate Japan from this geopolitical impasse. In this atmosphere, the navy accepted the strategy of a southern advance toward the Indonesian oil fields. Though fearing this would get Japan into a hopeless war with America, the navy leaders recognized that their budgetary and political position would evaporate the instant they admitted that war with America would be unthinkable no matter what resources the navy was given. Separately, the army and the navy would have undertaken moderate overexpansion and a counterproductive arms race, but each might have avoided a fight to the finish with America. But in logrolling and interacting together, they produced a more extreme strategic insolvency.[71]

An overcommitted coalition policy can cause a variety of second-order complications that mire the cartels still further. As the consequences of overexpansion become apparent, groups within the coalition jockey to shift the burdens of adjusting to overexpansion onto others. They may use imperialist appeals to mobilize mass allies in support of their own particular program, becoming captives of the success of this rhetoric. At the same time, coalition leaders must invent further strategic myths to explain why the state has become encircled. With multiple groups strongly committed to their own programs and no strong broker to enforce priorities, these secondary effects of the logrolling process deepen the overexpansion.

In the case of Wilhelmine Germany,[72] the interests of the navy and heavy industry in building a fleet made an enemy of Britain, while the army's rigid war plan ensured that France would be an enemy. Russia was an enemy in part because of her rivalry with Germany's ally Austria, but also because Germany kept trying to coerce Russia to accept a one-sided tariff arrangement, excluding Russian grain from Germany to please the Junkers while demanding low Russian tariffs for German manufactures to please the Ruhr. Complicating matters further, neither the Junkers nor the industrialists were willing to bear the tax burden to pay for the land and naval arms races these policies provoked.

71. On army-navy logrolling, see Barnhart, *Japan Prepares*, 36–38, 211, 266, 268–69; placing this in a broader political context, Gordon Berger, *Parties out of Power in Japan, 1931–1941* (Princeton, N.J., 1977), 79, 81, 114–15.

72. The following account draws on Kehr and his modern follower, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871–1918* (Leamington Spa, N.H., 1985), who stress elite interests and social imperialist manipulation, and on Eley, *Reshaping*, who stresses the autonomous impetus for imperialism from the middle class.

Recognizing that the general insolvency of the "marriage of iron and rye" was jeopardizing their individual programs, each cartel used strategic ideologies to mobilize mass support to pass the costs of overcommitment to its coalition partners. In turn, mass groups exploited the elites' imperialist ideologies to argue that if the world was really as the cartels portrayed it, then the old elite groups were not acting aggressively enough to parry its dangers. Coalition makers caught in this maelstrom had to develop their own strategic ideologies to explain how their program would succeed—or later, why it was running into so much trouble abroad. The more overcommitted Germany's foreign policy became, the more the individual cartels needed to mobilize support to protect their programs, and the more the coalition leaders had to invent myths to justify German overexpansion. The whole process was like riding a tiger: the impetus for overexpansion and its ideological justification fed on itself to the point that the only safe option for the players and the coalition makers was to stay on the tiger, making a desperate gamble that would result in either world power or collapse.

Offensive détente. A more moderate outcome of logrolling is offensive détente. In these cases both imperial and anti-imperial interests were represented among the ruling cartels. In Taisho Japan in the 1920s, for example, military and naval imperialists had seats at the table, but so did light industrial trading cartels (*zaibatsu*), which needed good relations with America and China. The logrolling problem was to devise a formula that would give each of several key players what they wanted most: an autarkic mainland empire for the army, a capital ship building program for the navy, and détente and free trade for the *zaibatsu*. Shidehara diplomacy, which envisioned America's acquiescence to Japan's gradual "Finlandization" of China, was the strategy for meeting most of these irreconcilable interests simultaneously.[73] Like most strategies of offensive détente, it was too clever by half and broke down by provoking Chinese and ultimately American resistance.

Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev also pursued a strategy of offensive détente. He offered an arms buildup to the military, Third World expansion to the orthodox ideologues, and détente and technology transfer to the cultural and technical intelligentsia.[74] His rationale was the "correlation of forces" theory, which held that unilateral Soviet gains and détente were not only compatible, but mutually reinforcing.

73. Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism* (New York, 1978), 301–2.

74. Apart from Snyder, "Gorbachev Revolution," the work that comes closest to making this argument is Harry Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Detente* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983).

In both of these cases, pro-expansionist and pro-détente cartels failed to cancel each other out and reach a compromise at some midpoint. Rather, each insisted on getting what it wanted most. Incompatibilities were ignored, deferred, or rationalized away. Cartel deals and their legitimating ideologies blocked criticism of dubious imperialist policies by anti-imperialist elites. Thus incompatible or unreachable goals were not evaluated, scaled down, and reconciled, as a unitary rational actor would have handled them, through a value-integrating compromise at some optimum point.

Despite these similarities, the Brezhnev and the Shidehara cases differed radically in their ultimate outcome. The Soviets ultimately learned that the "correlation of forces" theory was, as Gorbachev has implied, a "world of illusions."[75] The Japanese pushed on further, still clinging to the paper tiger theory that the rapacious United States would somehow not resist Japanese hegemony until it was too late. The main difference was that in the Soviet case relatively strong central authorities controlled the logrolling, as in the late Brezhnev era, or moved to end the pernicious game entirely, as in the Gorbachev years. With the passing of the *genro*, Japan had no similar body to impose a more encompassing perspective on the parochial contending factions.[76]

In most of these examples of cartelized politics, the logrolled policy created an outcome that was disastrous even for the logrollers themselves. In such cases, why don't at least some of the logrollers defect from a coalition agreement that is turning out to have negative payoffs? Several answers are possible, and one or more may apply in any given case of overexpansion. In some, coalition dynamics are central to the failure to retrench; in others, the coalition setting is an exacerbating factor.

Collective action problems within the coalition. Self-restraint among the participants in a logroll contributes to the collective good. But each logroller has a stronger incentive to pursue its parochial interest in expansion than to promote the collective interest in restraint. This problem of collective action is complicated by uncertainty about the long-run costs of expansion. Theorists of logrolling (or "vote trading") note that the negative consequences of a particular deal may be difficult to foresee.[77] Logrollers can easily calculate the direct concentrated

75. *Izvestiia*, 19 August 1986. Thanks to Robert Legvold for this citation.

76. Duus, *Party Rivalry*, 249, notes that "by dividing the powers of decision making among so many competing elements, the [*genro*] oligarchs had forced anyone who assumed power to adopt the tactics of compromise." After the passing of the Meiji *genro* by the late 1920s, this led to a system of logrolling among cartels.

77. Steven Brams, *Paradoxes in Politics* (New York, 1976), 102–4, notes the negative consequences of vote trading may be difficult to foresee.

benefits to themselves from the deal, whereas their costs accrue only through the indirect, long-run effects of overcommitment. Once these costs become apparent, the logrollers have three basic choices.

The first is to dissolve the coalition and agree to sacrifice their concentrated benefits in the overall interest of a solvent policy. Any group that follows this course risks discrediting itself by admitting that its former arguments were based on self-seeking myths. It also risks the danger that other groups will continue logrolling even if it defects. In that case it would lose the benefits of logrolling but still bear its costs.[78]

The second option is to jockey for advantage within the coalition, making other groups bear the rising costs of the logroll. This requires intensified mythmaking and mobilizing mass allies, both of which exacerbate the problem of overexpansion.

The third option, which can be combined with the second, is to keep the coalition intact, hoping that some risky gambit will succeed in making the logroll solvent. With luck this might be achieved, for example, by a successful preventive war, by the achievement of cumulative gains through empire, or by successful coercive diplomacy to break the encircling alliance. Justifying this route within the coalition and to the mass public requires still further salesmanship on behalf of the myths of empire.

Pressure from above and below. In some political systems, the destructive dynamic of cartel logrolling may be prevented by pressure for imperial retrenchment from above (from central state authorities) and from below (from the mass population). But in cartelized systems, such pressure is likely to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. State leaders are not autonomous, farsighted authorities, focused on long-run state interests. Instead, they are coalition managers whose position depends on keeping the logroll going. Of course, where the broker has significant independent authority, this problem is mitigated. The stronger the coalition broker vis-à-vis the separate groups participating (that is, the more the cartelized system resembles a unitary system), the more likely it is that the state will retrench from overexpansion.

Similarly, mass pressures in a cartelized system are more likely to be a source of trouble than a salutary constraint. Under such conditions, the interests of the general public are not articulated through well-institutionalized, competitive elections. Rather, mass groups are mobi-

78. Brams, *Paradoxes*, 102–4, argues that even when externalities from other vote trades outweigh the benefits from one's own trade, continued trading may remain rational for the individual, out of fear of exploitation (that others will continue to trade votes anyway).

lized through ideological appeals by elite cartels in ways that simply contribute to the cartelized nature of politics. In the absence of developed democratic institutions, mass mobilization is a spur to reckless political behavior by elites rather than a check on it.[79]

Blowback. Mythmakers can become trapped by their own myths in any kind of political system. This is especially likely in cartelized systems, for two reasons. First, through logrolling, parochial interests capture the state's propaganda apparatus and don its mantle of disinterested authority. Thus the state obscures the parochial origins of the myths of empire, which are therefore more likely to be mistaken for truth, even by a large part of the elite. Second, cartels' competitive mobilization of mass groups is especially likely to cause severe blowback. The political position of the cartels may become heavily dependent on their mass backers, who in a cartelized system are unlikely to have access to the information and analysis needed to distinguish myth from reality.

Immobile interests and short time horizons. One reason groups in cartelized systems have such concentrated interests is that their assets are not very mobile. Such cartels frequently find themselves wedded to a narrow economic sector or bureaucratic skill that is becoming obsolete. As a result, they have an incentive to adopt reckless strategies, which sometimes include war and expansion, to recoup waning advantages and forestall social change. Their declining prospects lead them to discount the long-term costs and risks of such policies.

The Democratic System

When political power is highly dispersed throughout society, as in an electoral system with universal suffrage and administrative institutions beholden to elected officials, diffuse interests will have a stronger voice.[80] Thus democracy creates checks on concentrated interests that would promote overexpansion.

79. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn., 1968); Jack Snyder, "Averting Anarchy in the New Europe," *International Security* 14 (Spring 1990): 5–41.

80. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York, 1957); Mueller, *Public Choice*, 98–106; and especially Norman Frohlich and Joe Oppenheimer, *Modern Political Economy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1978), 127–29, who directly contrast logrolled "coalitions of minorities" with two-party competition for the middle of the spectrum. George Rabinowitz and Stuart Macdonald, "A Directional Theory of Voting," *American Political Science Review* 83 (March 1989): 93–122, at 93, claim of Downs's theory that "no other formal paradigm has had such wide use or such great impact on how people think about politics."

In the simplest case, there is a spectrum of voters with interests ranging from strongly pro-imperial to strongly anti-imperial. In a democratic system, parties must present platforms to try to capture the voters in the middle of this spectrum if they are to have a chance to win.[81] Median voters are likely to have a variety of diffuse interests for and against empire and military programs. They object to taxes and to the conscription of their sons to conquer and administer the empire. Their other interests affected by empire tend to be mixed. Some may have jobs that depend on military programs or imperial trade, and they may have investments in imperial enterprises, but for some their wages may be lower because capital has been exported abroad. They may purchase products that cost less because they come from an exploited colonial economy—or that cost more because they come from a subsidized, protected, autarkic empire. Their physical security may be greater because of astute imperial expansion or military expenditure—or less because of foolish expansion or an arms race. Thus, subject to a plethora of diffuse, cross-cutting interests, median voters face net incentives that reflect those of the society as a whole. On average, they will tend to support only imperial enterprises that are profitable for the society and reject those that are not.

In this they roughly mirror the incentive structure of the unitary rational actor or the ruling oligarchy with encompassing, long-run interests.[82] The structural incentive to compete for the middle of the spectrum in competitive democratic politics forces politicians to reject the appeals of concentrated interests if they would alienate median voters. Strongly pro-imperial interests therefore have the choice of voting for slightly pro-imperial candidates or not voting at all.[83]

The classic example is Gladstone's Midlothian campaign of 1880, the first attempt at modern mass politics after the Second Reform Bill of 1867 vastly widened the franchise. By appealing to the widespread sense that Disraeli's interventionist policies and costly brushfire wars represented a perversion of the national interest, Gladstone co-opted

81. Though the classic statement of this view restricts this hypothesis to the case of two-party, winner-take-all competitions, Ronald Rogowski, "Trade and the Variety of Democratic Institutions," *International Organization* 41 (Spring 1987): 209, argues that proportional representation systems have similar effects.

82. Peter Aronson and Peter Ordeshook, "Public Interest, Private Interest, and the Democratic Polity," in Roger Benjamin and Stephen Elkin, *The Democratic State* (Lawrence, Kans., 1985), 87–178, esp. 110–11, argue on similar grounds that a Downs type of two-party democracy should produce an optimal level of a public good.

83. Likewise, under these political conditions, governments that want to pursue imperial activities must chose low-cost, low-publicity strategies, like the Reagan doctrine. Thanks to Stephen Walt for discussion on this point.

median voters and won a striking victory.[84] Although this electoral strategy does not always prevail in mass democracies, that democracy empowers people with diffuse anti-imperial interests is a major factor explaining why the overexpansion of the American and British empires has been moderate.

The "intelligence of democracy" does not always work so perfectly, however. Several impediments may prevent outcomes from matching the predictions of the median voter model. One reason is that cross-pressured median voters, sometimes lacking good information or analysis regarding their own interests, are good targets for demagogic propaganda. Nixon can oversell détente to them, or Truman can oversell the Cold War.[85] If elite groups collude to withhold information and rig public debates on behalf of a logrolled coalition, formal democratic voting may make little difference.

Another reason is that representative institutions may work imperfectly and create cartelized blocs within different segments of the elected government. In the United States, for example, power over foreign affairs is shared between the presidency and various congressional bodies. Though these institutions are all made up of politicians subject to the preferences of voters, they are elected at different times by different constituencies, some of them parochial or manipulatable. When this is the case, policy-making necessarily involves bargaining among various party and regional factions and specialized legislative committees, as well as unelected bureaucratic professionals. Even in a democracy this bargaining process, which provides opportunities for logrolling, may resemble a limited form of cartelized politics.

A further problem is that some blocs of voters may have concentrated interests in predatory behavior. In Britain in the 1890s, for example, voters in Birmingham's declining industries were a significant constituency behind Joseph Chamberlain's bid for a protected, autarkic empire. Junker and Nazi promises of Ukrainian *Lebensraum* for German farmers had similar effects. If these interests vote as blocs, then democratic politics may resemble cartel politics.[86]

Finally, as some rational-choice theorists argue, the striving of politi-

84. John Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party* (New York, 1966), 124, 162, 247. Once in office, Gladstone approved the occupation of Egypt, but this was not in itself costly overexpansion.

85. John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York, 1972), chap. 10.

86. Frohlich and Oppenheimer, *Modern Political Economy*, 130, suggest that the cutoff line between the two kinds of politics is the point at which "50 per cent of the voters are in a minority position on some issue and feel more strongly about that issue than they do about all others combined."

cal parties to co-opt the middle of the political spectrum may operate inefficiently when opinion is ranged along more than one dimension.[87] There may be no unique, stable strategy when views on empire vary independently from views on, say, tariffs or the welfare state. During partisan realignments in American politics, the existence of competing lines of cleavage has tended to turn voters into cartelized blocs, available for recruitment to a logrolled coalition. This gives concentrated elite interests, including imperial interests, a chance to lead coalitions in directions they favor. For example, disagreements about European and Asian commitments during the early Cold War period were not settled in a presidential electoral showdown, in part because partisan divisions did not coincide with foreign policy cleavages. Rather, foreign policy disputes were settled through congressional logrolling, in which support for Asian commitments was traded for support for European commitments in a global Cold War consensus.[88] Especially when cartelized blocs are recruited into political coalitions by elite interest groups, outcomes in democratic political systems may resemble a less extreme version of the outcomes found in cartelized systems.[89]

The Unitary Political System

A unitary system is dominated by a single ruler or by a ruling group sharing common interests, which I will call a unitary oligarchy. As an ideal type, the unitary oligarchy has group interests that are diffuse and encompassing, not parochial. The unitary oligarchy's interests are

87. A formal proof, related to the Arrow Paradox, is offered by Richard McKelvey, "Intransitivities in Multidimensional Voting Models and Some Implications for Agenda Control," *Journal of Economic Theory* 12 (June 1976): 472–82. For a formal argument that convergence toward median preferences will occur even in multidimensional policy spaces, see Gary Cox, "The Uncovered Set and the Core," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (May 1987): 408–22. Also generally supporting Downs is Gary Cox, "Electoral Equilibrium under Alternative Voting Institutions," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (February 1987): 82–108.

88. James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Washington, D.C., 1973), on realignment; on the Cold War logroll, H. Bradford Westerfield, *Foreign Policy and Party Politics: Pearl Harbor to Korea* (New Haven, Conn., 1955); for the American case, see chapter 7 below.

89. Democracies have been about as likely to become involved in wars as nondemocratic states, but virtually all great power wars have been provoked primarily by nondemocratic states. Also, democracies have never fought each other. Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80 (December 1986): 1151–69; Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (Spring 1988): 653–73, esp. 658–62; Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali, "Regime Types and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33 (March 1989): 3–36; Steve Chan, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . . : Are the Freer Countries More Pacific?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28 (December 1984), 617–48.

diffuse insofar as its assets and skills are mobile across economic and bureaucratic sectors. In managing the flow of resources to and from varied sectors of society, the unitary oligarchy has no parochial reason to back the success of some sectors over others. Similarly, the unitary oligarchy's interests are encompassing insofar as it is the steward of the whole national economy and has the biggest stake in the long-run survival of the state. Moreover, by definition, the interests of the unitary oligarchy are relatively homogeneous within the oligarchical group, so it has no parochial factions to engage in logrolling.

In this ideal case, the unitary oligarchy has little incentive for imperial overexpansion. Perhaps such a ruling group might have an incentive to use threat inflation and symbolic victories to enhance its power at home when the legitimacy of its rule is in doubt,[90] but this incentive should normally be held in check by its encompassing concerns. As the proprietor of the national economy, the unitary ruler has a powerful incentive not to provoke a self-encirclement or to drain resources in counterproductive overexpansion.[91] Thus the unitary ruling group should tend to weigh both the costs and the benefits of empire from a broadly national point of view. Trade-offs should be resolved not by ignoring diffuse interests, as logrolling cartels would do, but by seeking the optimal point where the sacrifice of some interests in the pursuit of others is minimized.[92] Calculating in this way might occasionally result in some overexpansion, but it should usually be limited, and corrective learning should be prompt.

This reasoning fits fairly well with the policies adopted by the unitary oligarchies studied in this book—the Meiji founding fathers, the Whig aristocracy, the Soviet Politburo, and to some extent, the U.S. East Coast foreign policy Establishment. In these cases, when interest groups or individual leaders were about to embark on programs of excessive expansion, the oligarchy as a whole tended to check their excesses.

Some qualifications must be added in moving from the ideal type to the real cases of unitary oligarchy, however. In some cases the real

90. Jack Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Manus Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston, 1989), 258–86.

91. As Rogowski, "Structure, Growth, Power," 722, puts it in his useful review of North, *Structure and Change*, "Rulers are motivated to maximize profits, that is, the surplus of their revenues over the costs to them of providing protection and justice. Yet rulers are constrained against simple depredation by the requirements of social efficiency and the availability of substitutes." This constraint should operate with some stringency in the case of imperial expansionists, since they are competing with other imperial powers.

92. On value trade-offs by rational actors, see John Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton, N.J., 1974), or the discussion on indifference curves in any economics textbook.

unitary oligarchy had a mixture of parochial and encompassing interests, which affected its choices about imperial expansion. These partly parochial interests typically stemmed from the organizational or economic origins of the ruling group. For example, in two cases the unitary ruling group had especially strong connections to a narrow interest: the ties of the Meiji *genro* to the Japanese military, and the ties of the Soviet Politburo to the Communist party apparatus. The stronger the ties of the unitary oligarchy to a narrow imperial interest, the greater the likelihood that it would tolerate some overexpansion. Still, such ties to narrow interests had to be weighed against the oligarchy's encompassing interests as the proprietor of the national polity and economy.

An even more fundamental qualification is necessary when all power lies in the hands of one person. As with a unitary oligarchy, the diffuse and encompassing interests of a single dictator should in principle check any inclinations toward overexpansion. But the validity of this hypothesis depends greatly on the dictator's continuing ability to calculate long-run costs and benefits rationally. Though the dictator may face no social incentive for overexpansion, there may be no immediate social sanction either. Thus there is no direct check on the leader's personal quirks or strategic mythology. Blowback is a particular risk when the dictator's political ideas were formed in an environment dominated by mythmaking cartels (as in Hitler's case) or the use of foreign threats for national mobilization (as in Stalin's). The logic of unitary rule does not impel a Hitler toward overexpansion, but likewise it does nothing to check him.[93]

Conclusions and Caveats on Coalition Politics

The domestic structure explanation can account both for the endemic bias toward overexpansion and for variations in its intensity. All three types of domestic structure—unitary, cartelized, and democratic—offer some opportunities for concentrated interests in empire, militarism, and threat inflation to push to the fore. Yet concentrated interests in empire have a much greater chance to dominate political decision making in the cartelized system than in the others. It is easier for their programs to get adopted and harder for them to be reversed.

Some qualifications, which may already be obvious from the examples above, should be made more explicit. The three systems are ideal types. Real systems are likely to be hybrids that entail some unique consequences of their own. Thus, Wilhelmine Germany combined

93. Olson, *Rise and Decline*, 52, argues that this is a problem not only for single dictators but for all encompassing groups.

dominant cartels with nascent democracy in a way that made the outcome worse than if the cartels had simply logrolled among themselves. In another hybrid pattern, Brezhnev's Russia combined some of the stabilizing features of a unitary oligarchy with some of the expansionist characteristics of interest group logrolling. Gorbachev's Russia has been attempting a different combination, aligning the strong center with democratizing forces against the orthodox ideological, old industrial, and military cartels. If this works, it could produce a favorable alignment for empowering diffuse anti-imperial and antimilitarist interests. The ideal types may yield some gross predictions that help explain very general variations across the cases, but more precise analysis depends on complex variations on the main patterns that are peculiar to the individual case.

Factors Shaping Domestic Structure

Given the different consequences that flow from unitary, cartelized, and democratic political structures, it will be useful to determine the origins of those structures. For example, understanding and evaluating Gorbachev's attempt to break the Soviet Union's imperialist cartels requires a theory of the origins of domestic structures and the conditions that promote changes in them.[94]

Building on the work of Alexander Gerschenkron, I hypothesize that the timing of a state's industrialization correlates closely with the concentration of power in its society and with the concentration of its elites' interests.[95] Early industrialization, as in Britain and the United States, is associated with diffuse elite interests and the development of mass democracy. Late industrialization, as in Germany and Japan, is associated with immobile, concentrated elite interests and cartelized politics. "Late, late industrialization," as in the Soviet Union, is associated with a hypercentralized political and economic system, producing a relatively unified elite with relatively encompassing interests.[96] This is

94. Snyder, "Gorbachev Revolution."

95. In addition to Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), this argument also rests on Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966), and in part on arguments about the mobility of capital by Jeff Frieden, *Debt, Development, and Democracy: Modern Political Economy and Latin America, 1965–1985* (Princeton, N.J., 1991), chap. 1. I do not claim that the timing of industrialization *causes* a particular distribution of power and interests in society. The reverse seems just as likely. That is, the preexisting distribution of power and elite interests affects the timing and nature of the state's industrialization. For my present purpose, it is sufficient to hypothesize that they correlate.

96. In addition to Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness*, see James Kurth, "The Political Consequences of the Product Cycle: Industrial History and Political Outcomes," *International Organization* 33 (Winter 1979): 1–34; Peter Katzenstein, "Conclusion," in

borne out by my cases, in which the type of political system generally correlates with the timing of industrialization. Moreover, for all types of system, the distribution of power and interests in the political system fluctuates during the period of most rapid industrialization. At this juncture, the large number and heterogeneity of distinct social groups causes some cartelization of politics even in early industrializers, though this effect is temporary.

Though domestic structure correlates most strongly with the character of the industrialization process, other factors may also affect the domestic distribution of power and interests. The international environment, for example, may affect the cartelization of the political system. The cases discussed here offer several examples in which cartelization was increased by international economic depression, protectionism in other states, or the rise of other kinds of external threats. Such international challenges strengthened the domestic political hand of military and autarkic cartels by demonstrating the need for expansion to achieve a self-sufficient empire and by undercutting the resources of liberal, free-trading interests. External threats were insufficient to cartelize early industrializing states, but they exacerbated the cartelization of late industrializers.

The Timing of Industrialization

Early industrialization is associated with diffuse elite interests, mobile capital, and the diffusion of power in a democratic political system. In Britain, capital accumulation for the small-scale, decentralized textile industry was achieved gradually and early through the commercialization of the landed upper class. As early as the eighteenth century, landed aristocrats were receiving much of their income from their commercial ventures, not just from agricultural rents. Their capital was mobile, and their interests were diffuse. They shared many economic interests with the bourgeoisie, so they were not sharply threatened by a controlled devolution of power. When it became clear that agricultural protection was becoming a drag on economic development, many of them were willing to give it up rather gracefully, because of the cushion provided by their commercial interests.[97]

Peter Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty* (Madison, Wis., 1978), esp. 323–32; and Moore, *Social Origins*. Ronald Rogowski, *Commerce and Coalitions: How Trade Affects Political Alignments* (Princeton, N.J., 1989), 163–65, points out that Gerschenkron's arguments do not hold in Latin America because labor scarcity there created different coalition incentives than in late nineteenth-century Germany. For a general critique of Gerschenkron's work, see Charles Maier, "Foreword to the Cornell University Press Edition," in Alexander Gerschenkron, *Bread and Democracy in Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989), vii–xxx.

97. In addition to Barrington Moore, see David Spring, ed., *European Landed Elites in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1977).

In Germany, by contrast, late industrialization correlated with a pattern of concentrated, immobile elite interests and a cartelized political system. Junker economic assets were not diversified into mobile, commercial investments, either before or after Germany's industrialization. Rather, they were tied to the exploitation of immobile factors of production. The "expansion of grain-growing" in East Elbia rested on "a repressive labor system using labor dues and serfdom" and depended on the "Junkers' personal economic control." This contrasted sharply with the British pattern of enclosures for sheep raising, the "gradual release of labor power" that became available for manufacturing, and the natural diversification of capital from sheep raising into the financing of textile production and other commercial ventures.[98]

When Germany finally did industrialize, it exploited what Alexander Gerschenkron has called the "advantages of backwardness," adopting off-the-shelf technology and knowing in advance what industrialization should look like. Germany's industrialization was centrally financed by bank capital; it truncated the textile stage to focus on large-scale iron and steel production and proceeded rapidly. This produced centralized industrial structures with concentrated interests and left the preexisting military-feudal elite unintegrated into the nation's economic transformation.[99] Rapid industrialization also caused rapidly increasing demands for expanded political participation, which could be accommodated to prevailing elite interests only by the selective recruiting of mass groups as fractious junior partners in elite cartels.[100]

Japan's variant of late development was different in many respects from Germany's but similar in the essentials. Unlike Germany's rapid industrialization, Japan's proceeded from a textile base and at the outset broke the power of the top level of the landed elite. Nonetheless, it manifested many of the key characteristics of late, "top down" industrialization.[101] It was to a significant degree centrally financed, and it worked through the medium of highly concentrated commercial and industrial cartels, which counted on coercive state power to keep wages down at home and to conquer exclusive markets abroad. The ruling oligarchy provided pork-barrel subsidies for rural landlords in exchange for limited mass support in an electoral system skewed

98. Hanna Schissler, "The Junkers," in Robert G. Moeller, *Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany* (Boston, 1986), 24–51, esp. 40.

99. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness*, 25–26; Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London, 1968), 37–40, 48.

100. Eley, *Reshaping*; Hans Jurgen Puhle, "Lords and Peasants in the Kaiserreich," in Moeller, *Peasants and Lords*, 81–109.

101. Kazushi Ohkawa and Henry Rosovsky, "A Century of Japanese Economic Growth," in William W. Lockwood, *The State and Economic Enterprise in Japan* (Princeton, N.J., 1965), 47–92, esp. 51–52; G. C. Allen, *A Short Economic History of Japan* (New York, 1981).

against the working class.[102] And most important, the transformation was carried out by a modernizing military elite that retained many of its parochial corporate interests along with its more encompassing national concerns. Thus politics was cartelized among a number of elite sectors with distinct, concentrated interests—especially the army and the navy, but also the local landlords and the *zaibatsu*.

Russia's variant of the pattern of late development was so extreme that it created a new pattern, different in kind from Germany's. Extreme backwardness led to the destruction of the old elite and urban classes, largely through international competition, allowing a modernizing Bolshevik elite to create and dominate an extremely centralized political and economic structure. But the partial devolution of totalitarian institutions into concentrated military-industrial and party interest groups produced a comparatively mild form of cartelization, mitigated by the relatively encompassing interests of the Politburo elite.[103]

In short, variation in the type and timing of industrialization explains most of the variation on three other dimensions in the causal chain leading to overexpansion. Late industrialization produces a cartelized political structure, which magnifies the effectiveness of concentrated interests in expansion, favors the development of expansionist strategic myths, and promotes self-encirclement and imperial overextension. In contrast, early industrialization produces a democratic political structure, which empowers diffuse interests opposing overexpansion, promotes learning when strategic myths are proved false, and keeps expansion relatively close to the point where its marginal benefits make up for its marginal costs. Late, late industrialization produces roughly similar results by vesting power in a unified elite with relatively encompassing interests.

Table 1. Timing of industrialization and overexpansion

	Early	Late	Late, Late
Cases[a]	U.S., G.B.	Germany, Japan	USSR
Elite interests	Diffuse	Concentrated	Encompassing
Type of politics	Democratic	Cartelized	Unitary
Strategic mythmaking	Moderate	Extreme	Moderate
Strategic learning	Prompt	Backward[b]	Prompt
Overexpansion	Moderate	Extreme	Moderate

[a]The real cases do not conform precisely to the ideal types and often reveal combinations of two patterns.

[b]By this I mean that failure leads to ever more reckless attempts at expansion.

102. Duus, *Party Rivalry*.

103. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness*, chap. 6; Snyder, "Gorbachev Revolution."

The Process of Industrialization

The very process of industrialization, regardless of its type and timing, tends to produce some cartelization of political interests. Rapid economic change crowds the social spectrum with groups and classes from seemingly disparate epochs: the atavistic, the currently dominant, and the newly emerging. In extreme cases, atavists such as hereditary monarchs, traditional military castes, and landed aristocrats share the historical stage with the bourgeoisie and an organized working class. Even if no single group has extremely concentrated interests, it will be hard to reconcile all their interests through an integrative compromise. Under such conditions, older social groups need, to a greater or lesser degree, to defend entrenched interests that emerging groups fundamentally challenge.[104]

As a result, industrialization tends to produce a sociopolitical stalemate at the point when new groups have grown in strength but old ones have not yet been eliminated or sufficiently adapted to the new order. In the British case, historians call this the "mid-Victorian equipoise."[105] In these circumstances, ruling majorities can be formed only by logrolling deeply opposed interests. Moreover, the sudden social mobilization caused by rapid industrialization creates mass targets vulnerable to imperial ideologists. The German "marriage of iron and rye" and the Palmerstonian formula of liberal imperialism abroad and social stasis at home both reflect this dynamic.

Though the pileup of classes caused cartelization and logrolling in both the early and the late industrializers, in Britain cartelization was a passing phase. The relatively diffuse interests of the old elite made it possible to adjust gradually to the diffusion of power to new social groups, resulting by the 1880s in two-party mass politics. In Germany cartelization was more permanent. Even after the First World War curtailed the power of the Junkers, the relative immobility of many groups' economic assets, whether in agriculture or heavy industry, helped recreate the Wilhelmine social stalemate in a new Weimar form.[106] Finally, the Soviet case was different from either of these. Since the breaking of the old classes largely preceded the rapid industrializa-

104. Though Peelite Tories took the long view and accepted the repeal of agricultural protection in 1846, for example, most Tories remained unreconciled to this and other reforms for decades. J. B. Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System* (Hamden, Conn., 1972).

105. W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise* (London, 1964).

106. David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, 2d ed. (New York, 1986); Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983); Robert G. Moeller, "The Kaiserreich Recast? Continuity and Change in Modern German Historiography," *Journal of Social History* 17 (Summer 1984): 655–83.

tion of the 1930s, there was no pileup of diverse social groups at that point.[107]

Testing the Competing Explanations

Three competing explanations for self-encirclement and overexpansion have been proposed: Realist, cognitive, and coalition politics and ideology. Five case studies are used in constructing a variety of tests of covariation, many pitting two or more theories head to head in conditions where they should make opposite predictions. The purpose is to eliminate theories that fail many tests and to show in what ways the surviving theories contribute to explaining the outcomes of the cases.

What Is to Be Explained?

All three theories seek to explain counterproductive aggressive behavior—specifically the presence, absence, and extent of "overexpansion." Overexpansion comes in two general forms, "self-encirclement" and "imperial overextension." The degree of self-encirclement is measured primarily by the ratio of the war-waging resources of one's enemies to those of one's allies: where a country manages to get its side outnumbered, it is said to be self-encircled. Defeat in a major war, persistence in a losing arms race, and counterproductive attempts to break the opposing alliance with threats are corroborating evidence of self-encirclement. "Imperial overextension" means expansion beyond the point where material costs equal material benefits, measured where possible in quantifiable economic and security terms.[108] Where hard measures are elusive, judgments by the protagonists' successors, by contemporary observers, and by historians serve as surrogates.

All three theories also claim to explain, as intervening variables, decision makers' advocacy of strategic concepts. These concepts are treated as simple dichotomies: advocacy of security through expansion or through retrenchment; expectation of dominoes or quagmires as the general rule; anticipation of balancing or bandwagoning in response to threats; images of the opponent as threatening but irresolute or defensive but provokable. Public statements and private beliefs are both important sources of evidence in measuring these intervening variables. Since the coalition politics theory argues that politicians may be constrained to act in accordance with their rhetoric, public statements

107. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Russian Revolution and Social Mobility," *Politics and Society* 13 (1984): 124–26.

108. Here I follow Gilpin's criteria.

are no less important than private ones in assessing the prevalence of particular strategic concepts.

Measuring the Causal Variables

I use two strategies, one direct and one indirect, for measuring the "independent" or causal variables of the three competing theories in the case studies. First, I measure the causal variable directly. For example, to measure the cartelization of group interests, I report the findings of economic historians regarding the concentration of groups' assets in particular sectors and their mobility between different uses. Second, I measure the causal variable indirectly, by a process tracing method.[109] Thus, to determine whether the political system is cartelized, I observe the political process to see if groups behave as they would in a cartelized system—that is, whether they logroll.

Case Selection

The five countries chosen have been the main contenders for power in the international system in the industrial era. The imperial behavior of each country is traced over two to four periods, including times of greater or lesser overexpansion. Periods in which the expansionism and the relative power of the country were at a peak are covered in extra detail. I do not cover the problems of decolonization faced by declining powers, though the coalition politics theory might be relevant to this.[110]

France and Italy, powers of a somewhat lesser rank, were excluded to make the research more manageable. They might well fit the coalition politics theory. Italy, a late industrializer with a ruling coalition mirroring the German marriage of iron and rye, was a chronic overexpander, spending twice the government's annual revenue to conquer useless Ethiopia.[111] Likewise, Napoleon III of France is often portrayed as the prototype social imperialist coalition manager, using a flamboyant foreign policy to help manage a heterogeneous society poised between tradition and modernity. In all likelihood his case would have many parallels with that of Palmerston.[112]

109. On process tracing, Alexander George and Timothy McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making," in *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*, vol. 2 (Greenwich, Conn., 1985), 21–58.

110. Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France* (Princeton, N.J., 1984).

111. Dennis Mack Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire* (New York, 1976), 67, 99.

112. Charles Maier, "'Fictitious Bonds . . . of Wealth and Law': On the Theory and Practice of Interest Representation," in Suzanne Berger, ed., *Organizing Interests in Western Europe: Pluralism, Corporatism, and the Transformation of Politics* (Cambridge, 1981), 40.

Tsarist Russia was also omitted, though it too might fit the coalition theory. Russia's rapid industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century corresponded with a period of imperial expansion, though Russia was expansionist in earlier periods as well. One study of Russian foreign policy-making between 1905 and 1914 shows that Russia was least expansionist in the period of strong unitary government under Stolypin and most expansionist when various bureaucratic cartels advanced their own imperial schemes under weak premiers.[113]

Preindustrial states, including the prominent case of Napoleonic France, were excluded for two reasons. First, many of them had absolute rulers, and the predictions of the coalition theory are weakest and least interesting in such cases. These cases would not test the main claims of the coalition politics theory. Second, preindustrial societies, lacking modern class, sectoral, and bureaucratic structures, would be more difficult to compare with the contemporary cases that are of greatest interest. Qualitatively different categories would be required for identifying groups, interests, institutions, and cleavages.[114]

Also absent are cases of overextension or self-encirclement by small powers. I would not expect the coalition politics theory to fit small powers. The literature on political economy suggests that domestic structure is a good predictor of foreign economic strategy for big powers, but for small powers foreign economic circumstances shape domestic political institutions. Cartelization has opposite effects in big and small powers. In big countries, cartels try to use state power to conquer or to "beggar their neighbors." In small countries, cartels work out arrangements for sharing the unavoidable burdens imposed by international pressures.[115]

113. David M. McDonald, "Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and Changes in the Formation of Russian Foreign Policy (1895–1914)" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1988). I make a similar argument about tsarist military policy in Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 163, 196.

114. A ready-made scheme for identifying preindustrial social cleavages may be found in S. M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments," in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York, 1967). In the case of preindustrial France, the Wars of the Revolution were touched off by the Brissotin faction's calculated use of social-imperialist bombast to forge a ruling majority in the stalemated assembly. T. C. W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London, 1986), chap. 3.

115. Peter Katzenstein, in *Small States in World Markets* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985) and *Corporatism and Change: Austria, Switzerland, and the Politics of Industry* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1984) argues that small states' domestic structure is shaped by the need to adjust to the international environment; conversely, Katzenstein, in *Between Power and Plenty*, shows that large states' foreign economic strategies are shaped by their domestic structures, as shaped in turn by the timing of their industrialization. Also, a Gerschenkron-based coalition theory may not apply to "late, late" developing countries in the Third World, because their resource endowments differ from those of the European states that Gerschenkron studied. Rogowski, *Commerce and Coalitions*, 163–65.

Tests

The cases permit three kinds of tests of the rival explanations for variations in overexpansion and strategic beliefs. Tests of covariation across countries—extremely overexpansionist powers like Germany and Japan versus moderately overexpansionist powers like the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union—assess whether these variations in outcome match variations in strategic circumstances (the Realist explanation), intellectually formative experiences (the cognitive explanation), or type of political system (the coalition politics explanation).

Second are tests of covariation over time within a country. Do periods of isolation and expansion follow from changes in political structure—for example, Shidehara diplomacy during "Taisho democracy" and the southern advance under militarist logrolling (the coalition theory)? Or do they follow from an intensification of the security dilemma (the Realist theory) or from salient new lessons (the cognitive theory)? Or does a combination of two theories explain the outcome? For example, does a moderate intensification of the security dilemma trigger big domestic changes, which lead to overexpansionism?

Third are tests of covariation across individuals and groups within cases. Do variations in beliefs line up with variations in interests or in information or formative experiences? This test is an important hurdle for the interest group and cognitive theories. It cannot be used to eliminate the rational actor theory, however, because even though the views of many statesmen and strategists may coincide with their parochial interests, the political system may nonetheless have selected the winner of the strategic debate on the merits of the arguments.

Finally, tests can discriminate between the different kinds of domestic politics explanations. Can the outcome of the cases be explained by the process of logrolling alone, without invoking the role of strategic ideology? Conversely, can interest group ideology in itself explain the outcome without reference to logrolling? Or are both logrolling and strategic ideology necessary to explain the outcome?

In principle, these tests might have concluded that only one of the theories had any explanatory power. In fact my findings are more complicated. The single most successful explanation was the theory of coalition politics and ideology. Cognitive explanations were the least successful. By itself, the international system explanation was insufficient to explain the cases of overexpansion. In conjunction with preexisting domestic conditions, however, international circumstances occasionally played a key role in strengthening the hand of imperialist cartels. Realistic adaptation to international conditions explained the behavior of democratic states quite well. For these cases, domestic structure

explained why the state was able to adapt well to the incentives of its position in the international system.

Thus the two explanations that achieved some success, the domestic and Realist theories, were both rooted in the concepts of power, interests, and coalitions among conflict groups. Using the broadest sense of the term, these are both realist theories. This pattern of findings suggests a need to develop hypotheses about power, interests, coalitions, and ideology that can operate simultaneously at the domestic and international levels. It is useful to know that the domestic aspects of coalition making strongly influence a state's conflict behavior, but it would also be useful to have a theory that would explain parsimoniously how domestic and international coalition politics interact. I make no attempt to do this here, but my results suggest that it is a necessary next step.

Criteria for Historical Judgments

Primary research covering the domestic and international politics of five great powers over a span of 150 years is not feasible for one author. Therefore I have had to rely on the work of historians. When historians addressed a question I was investigating, and when a consensus existed among them, I have followed that consensus. Often, however, I have asked questions that cut across the categories historians have worked within. In many cases there existed a fairly well developed historical literature on separate aspects of the larger question I was asking. Thus there was typically a literature on strategic ideas, another on domestic sources of foreign policy, another on economic change and political development, and so forth, but there was little available on the connections among them. In most instances I have assembled an overall interpretation of the case that combines existing interpretations of its separate aspects. Thus I have relied on historians and area studies specialists to provide the building blocks for my arguments, but I have combined them in ways that historians, for the most part, have not used.

The most innovative historical interpretation is of the Palmerston case study. Because as a whole it is significantly different from any existing interpretation, I develop the argument in extra detail to demonstrate my case. The other cases offer arguments that are more closely drawn from existing literature, so I often cite sources rather than recite details. In part of one case, Soviet foreign policy in the late 1940s, there is insufficient evidence to choose among competing explanations.

Overall, I make no claim that the case studies in this volume offer a conclusive test of the theories. Because many of the issues I confront

are subject to continuing historical debate, and because many others involve questions that historians have not directly addressed, my interpretations are far from definitive. Nonetheless, I do claim that these cases go beyond mere illustrations of theoretical points. They rely on the best, most recent, and—when possible—most widely shared judgments of historians. They are set up as systematic tests, using methods of controlled comparison. In this sense the cases constitute a preliminary test, subject to further historical and theoretical scrutiny.