DIPLOMACY

New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy

Edited by

Paul Gordon Lauren

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To Susan

for her love, patience, and understanding

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Systems Theories and Diplomatic History

Robert Jervis

MOST STUDIES THAT WE CALL "INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS" are really studies of foreign policies, analyzing as they do the causes of an individual state's actions. There is nothing wrong with this, but focusing upon the international system and patterns of interaction can be equally illuminating. I want to explore this by examining some of the important insights of systems theories.[1]

What Is a System?

The term, "international system," is usually used very loosely, as little more than a synonym for the environment in which states operate. I think that the term more usefully applies when two conditions are met: first, one cannot infer the outcomes from the attributes and behavior of the actors and, second, interconnections are present with the result that changes in some parts of the system produce changes in other parts. These conditions lead to a major characteristic of systems: the consequences of behavior are often not expected or intended by the actors.

WHOLE DIFFERENT FROM THE SUM OF THE PARTS

In a system the whole is different from the sum of the parts, not in any metaphysical sense, "but in the more important pragmatic sense that given the properties of the parts and the laws of their interaction, it is not a trivial matter to infer the properties of the whole."[2] It is often claimed that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, but while this way of putting it is more dramatic, it is also less accurate because there is a lot in the parts that is omit-

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ted from a consideration of the system. The important point is that even complete knowledge of the actors, their characteristics, their goals, and their intentions does not allow us to understand the system. "The whole might be symmetric in spite of its parts being asymmetric, a whole might be unstable in spite of its parts being stable in themselves. . . . Properties of a social group, such as its organization, its stability, its goals, are something different from the organization, the stability, and the goals of the individuals in it."[3] A system can be bipolar or multipolar; actors cannot be. And while we may talk about the stability of actors and the stability of the international system, the meaning of the concepts is not exactly the same.

A system cannot be described by adding up the policies of the individual states or summing their bilateral relations. Adding up the aggressiveness of each state cannot tell us how violent the system will be. For example, it is a gross misunderstanding to argue that "a system of merely growth-seeking actors will obviously be unstable; there would be no provision for balancing or restraint."[4] If this kind of additive operation were possible, then we could dispense with the concept of a system. In fact, the central idea of a balance of power system is that each state's expansion works to contain that of others, just as in the free market the interaction of each person's greed keeps profits low and advances the interests of the wider society. The other side of the coin is that a major war can occur even if all members of the system are following moderate foreign policies. World War I is an example. Even if the Germany of the Kaiser was expansionist, her goals, while perhaps too ambitious for the good of Europe or her own good, were not like those of Nazi Germany. If we were to add up each state's expansionism in this period, we would expect a moderate international system.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

The second characteristic of a system is what Ashby calls conditionality.[5] The relations between two actors depend in part on the relations between each of those actors and other actors in the system. This means that whether actors ally with or oppose each other is influenced by factors outside of their bilateral relationship. Thus, Lenin argued in 1920 that "an independent Poland is very dangerous to Soviet Russia: it is an evil, however [that] also has its redeeming feature; for while it exists we may safely count on Germany because the Germans hate Poland and will at any time make common cause with us in order to strangle Poland."[6] As one Japanese leader put it in November 1941: "We have come to where we are [in our relations with the United States] because of the war between Germany and Great Britain."[7] A few years earlier, Japan had signed a treaty with Germany in the expectation that such a tie would discourage the United States from opposing Japan's efforts to dominate China. In fact, American opposition increased as it saw Japan linked to the power that was menacing Britain. More recently, Sadat's

visit to Jerusalem led the Syrians into closer cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization because they both opposed conciliation of Israel, and this led to greater conflict between the Syrian and Christian forces in Lebanon, which in turn strengthened the bonds between the Christians and Israel.[8]

A system, then, is interconnected. Events in one area influence other areas. Changes in the relations between two states lead to alterations in the relations between other states. One minor example can stand for many: British relations with Persia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century depended in part on British relations with Russia, which in turn were influenced by Britain's relations with France. During the Napoleonic wars, France was Britain's main enemy, Russia therefore had to be courted, and Russian encroachments on Persia—which would threaten India—had to be ignored. When relations with France improved, relations with Russia deteriorated, and Britain came to Persia's support.[9] With the beginning of the twentieth century Germany became Britain's chief concern, giving England a major incentive to establish good relations with Russia. To this end, she first agreed to divide Persia into spheres of influence and then tolerated Russian violations of the agreement.

In a system, policies and events have ramifications that extend through distant periods of time, areas of the globe, and states involved. For example, Paul Schroeder argues that it was not Germany that was most injured by the French takeover of Morocco in 1911. The more important consequences were less direct: "What the French protectorate in Morocco actually did was to pave the way for Italy to attack Turkey over Tripoli and to spread the war into the eastern Mediterranean to encourage Russia to advance her plans for the Straits, and to promote the assault of the Balkan states upon Turkey, thus raising life-and-death questions for Austria."[10]

Statesmen are often aware of this interconnectedness and diplomatic history is full of instances in which a decision is made because of the expected indirect consequences. Thus, Schroeder continues: "This is not merely what happened in the event; it was what sensible leaders foresaw and planned for, what was in good part provided for in written agreements."[11] In 1889, when Bismarck proposed to England a treaty of mutual guarantee against attack by France, he argued that the British would gain not only security from France, but also from Russia and the United States, since these states would contemplate war with England only if they thought France would assist them. Neutralizing the threat from France would then induce other states to be more cautious.[12] In other cases, observers see important ramifications that are missed by the statesman taking the action. The former's greater objectivity and distance from the details may allow them to grasp the essentials. Thus, although the British did not think that the signing of the naval treaty with Germany in 1935 presaged any basic shift in policy, some observers realized that because Britain would need to keep more of her ships in the North Sea

she would be unable to keep her pledge to send her main fleet to Singapore in the event of a war with Japan, and so the Japanese would therefore feel fewer restraints.[13] Similarly, in the 1920s and early 1930s, Japan did not think that her China policy would strongly influence her relations with other countries, especially the United States. "From the Japanese point of view, China and America were separate problems."[14] Many observers saw the links that would create such problems for Japan in the coming years.

Systems vary in how interconnected they are. As one student of systems theories has put it: "Everything is connected, but some things are more connected than others. The world is a large matrix of interactions in which most of the entries are very close to zero."[15] A change in relations between Argentina and Chile, for instance, has little effect on Pakistan. Some points of elaboration can be noted. First, almost by definition, a great power is more tightly connected to larger numbers of other states than is a small power. Because it has involvements all over the world, a great power is at least slightly affected by most changes in relations of other states. Growing conflict or growing cooperation between Argentina and Chile would not affect Pakistan, but it would affect America and American policy toward those states, and American policy toward other South American countries. Second, many interconnections are not direct, but involve links through regional or great powers. Although most states had no direct concerns in Vietnam, they were affected by what happened there because of the changes in U.S. policy that the war produced. Many of the effects went beyond the bilateral relations between each of these states and the United States and extended to their relations with each other. To the extent that Vietnam led the United States to pull back from being a world policeman, it took the lid off local conflicts and encouraged regional powers to play a greater role.

The belief that the world is tightly interconnected supports the theory and practice of deterrence. The notion of commitment—a state staking its reputation on responding strongly if its adversary should take a proscribed action even though such a response would not have been in the state's interest had it not given the pledge—rests on the belief that a default in one instance will lead others to expect further defaults. If this is the case, states will see very high costs in capitulation.[16] Even in the absence of a commitment, one retreat can have widespread impact if others believe it shows that the state is likely to back down on other issues in the future. But such dynamics will not operate if the world is not tightly interconnected. To the extent that states are strongly influenced by internally established goals and the configuration of the specific situation, their appetites will not grow with the eating. Local conditions will be of most importance and neither the state's past behavior nor the outcomes of previous disputes in other areas will strongly influence the course of later conflicts. This was Halifax's point in March 1938: "Much of the argument for the need of a deterrent rested on the assumption that when Germany secured the hegemony over Central Europe, she would pick a quarrel with

France and ourselves. He did not agree." That he was incorrect should not blind us to the validity of this position in many other cases.[17]

Interconnectedness can exist between two actors over time. One state's behavior toward another can so strongly influence the other's behavior, which in turn so strongly influences the first state's later behavior, that understanding is not well served by trying to deal with each action separately. Rather, the actors must be seen as forming a system, and it is the system that we must seek to understand. The characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the individual states do not matter and their behavior is insensitive to a wide range of variation in their goals. Some of the best known examples are spirals of arms and hostility, called "Richardson processes" after the scholar who performed the path-breaking investigations of them. In arguing that mathematical equations can portray state behavior, Richardson admits that they describe "how people would behave if they did not stop to think."[18] But, he claims, this does not do injustice to the process because the states are responding to each other almost automatically.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Because the behavior of states is interconnected, their goals conflict, and none of them is strong enough to control all the others, states' actions often produce unintended consequences.[19] Behavior frequently yields results that are opposite from, or at a tangent to, those sought and predicted, thus leading to what are often called ironies of history. In 1938 representatives of British bicyclists argued that if bicycles were required to have rear lamps "the mortality among cyclists would immediately go up enormously" because motorists would drive faster, expecting to be able to see all bicycles, and would run over those whose lights had burned out.[20] One of the reasons why the United States annexed Texas was the fear that if the latter remained independent she would fall under the sway of European powers, especially England. Indeed, because the slavery issue was so divisive, this was the most powerful appeal that could be made to all sections of the American polity. Britain wanted to prevent annexation in order to curb American power, and she developed several diplomatic maneuvers to this end. But their main effect was to increase American incentives to take Texas into the Union.[21]

Unexpected and unintended results can also be produced through longer and more complex chains of interconnections. For example, at the same time that Britain was trying to form the first coalition against Napoleon, Russia and Prussia were excluding Austria from the second partition of Poland. Britain's need for Russian support against France gave Russia much of the leverage she needed to carry out this maneuver. But the result of this anti-Austrian move was to embitter Russo-Austrian relations to the point where no coalition was possible.[22] Thus, Britain's strong incentives to rally other

states to the alliance encouraged others to follow policies that undermined her own efforts. A more recent, although debatable, example is provided by Liddell Hart in discussing

> what would have happened in Europe if we had not committed ourselves to the Polish Guarantee [in 1939]. How would our restraint have affected the strategic balance? If we had not given that delusory guarantee, Poland would have been forced to accept Russia's help, as the only chance of withstanding German pressure. And Russia would have been forced to give Poland such support, because of her then existing value as a buffer-State, and as an auxiliary army. In these circumstances, it would have been much less likely that Germany would have attacked Poland than it was when an isolated Poland depended merely on an illusory promise of help from the Western Powers, and Russia had been temporarily bought off.[23]

At times the result will be desired by the state but the steps intervening between its actions and the outcome will be very different from those it expected. The existence of many powerful actors pulling in different directions means that sometimes their moves will cancel each other out. For example, once they recovered from their surprise, most American decision makers welcomed Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977. It is probable that American policy helped bring about this outcome, but not in the way that President Carter expected. By pushing for a comprehensive settlement which included a large role for the Soviets and Palestinians, the United States menaced Sadat. The latter apparently saw that the only way to regain control of the situation was to take a dramatic initiative. He was trying to counteract American policy, but in doing so he was also moving toward a goal that America sought.

More often, the unintended consequences are undesired. Perhaps the most common examples are the operation of a balance of power, mentioned earlier, and arms races in which states end up worse off than they were before the interaction started. The latter dynamic can be seen in terms of the security dilemma, one of the foundations of international politics.[24] Because of the lack of an international sovereign, states must be prepared to protect themselves. But the means chosen to reach this end—for example, armed forces or alliances—usually decrease the security of others. The state may not seek this objective. It may have no aggressive designs, and may even want to see the other secure. But the other cannot know that the state is peaceful or be sure that, even if it is, it will remain so. The other must regard the state's arms as threatening and act accordingly. This means that two states which want only security and wish to maintain the status quo can get into conflicts with each other. The compatibility of their goals does not insure cooperation. To look at this process from another perspective, the existence of wars does not prove that men and states are evil or greedy or misunderstand each other.[25] Conflict is created by the anarchic system and resulting security dilemma.

The problem is most acute when offensive military strategies are more effective than defensive ones—that is, when it is highly advantageous to strike first. Both long- and short-run problems are thereby created. In the short run, there are strong pressures to attack in a crisis. Even a state that prefers the maintenance of the status quo to launching a war will attack if the alternative to striking is not the status quo, but being defeated by an adversary that gets in the first blow. This is part of the explanation for the immediate outbreak of World War I. Because each side thought that moving first gave great military advantages, the mobilization races were particularly difficult to stop. The situation was unstable because measures taken to protect the state if war broke out made war more likely. Long-run dynamics also magnified the security dilemma. It is not clear that either side could have increased its security without endangering the other side. One scholar poses the common question about the origins of the war by asking: "Did Germany unleash the war deliberately to become a world power or did she support Austria merely to defend a weakening ally?"[26] This implies that it was possible for Germany to have just maintained her position—to have neither lost power nor to have expanded. But, could Germany have been able to gain a good measure of security without gravely menacing several of the other powers? The title of one of Fritz Fischer's books—"world power or decline"—may catch the nature of the situation more accurately than Fischer's argument.[27] That this phrase was orginally the title of a book by a German expansionist should not lead us to conclude that this view was nothing more than a rationalization for aggression. Even if it is not driven by unreasonable ambitions, deep internal conflicts, or unstable leaders, a state may choose expansionism rather than accept decline if the status quo cannot be maintained.

Unintended consequences are also common in domestic politics when there are many independent actors whose behavior affects each other in complicated ways. Jay Forrester argues that for this reason urban policies usually produce outcomes opposite from those that are sought. Most official attempts to increase employment and the supply of housing reduce these commodities. Straightforward policies fail because the environment in which they operate is a complex one, with large numbers of strong and obscure connections among its elements. A move that initially increases the supply of low-cost housing will have lots of side effects—for example, making a whole area of its city more valuable—and these, in turn, have unforeseen consequences—such as attracting more people into the area and reducing the land available for employment-generating industry—which will defeat the purposes of the policy.[28]

An implication of this analysis is that in politics, as in military endeavors, the indirect approach is often best. To pursue a policy that heads straight for your goal may be to insure that you will not reach it. You must instead head off on a tangent, or even in the opposite direction. Thus, during the first stages of the Berlin blockade, allied authorities feared a water shortage because much of the water had been supplied by the East. West Berliners

knew this and started to fill their tubs as insurance, thus dangerously depleting the water supply. The authorities reacted not by urging people to use less water, but by assuring them that the supplies were ample and that they could use all the water they wanted. As a result, the demand for water quickly dropped to manageable levels.[29]

Policy makers, too, must use the forces generated by the effects that their policies have on other states. One definition of a skillful diplomat would be one who can do this, who can see the interconnections in the system, understand how others see their interests, predict their reactions, and take advantage of the complexities rather than work against them. The policies adopted then will not be the obvious ones and the links between them and the statesman's goals will be obscure to many at home (raising problems for democracies) and abroad (raising a question discussed below). For example, one way in which Germany reduced French resistance to British entry into the Common Market was by advocating monetary policies that France and Britain opposed. The former could then reason that the latter's participation in the EEC would bring it a needed ally on this important issue. Similarly, in the first decade of the twentieth century, some of the British officials in South Africa advocated a paradoxical policy for insuring consolidation of British power over the Boers. They called for

> the immediate consolidation of the various areas of British South Africa into one nation. Although unification would at first place Boers in authority over all of South Africa, it would, they believed, ironically cause their eventual political decline. No matter which group stepped into power, unification would create conditions of economic prosperity and political security which had been lacking ever since the war. With prosperity and security would come British immigrants in greater and greater numbers. Assuming a condition containing equitable franchise and constituency provisions, the result, they insisted, would be an eventual transfer of political power from the Boer population to the British.[30]

More recently, the main gains to the United States of its opening to China were not improved Sino-American relations—since these are of little importance—but the changes in Soviet-American relations.

These examples raise the question alluded to above: Can policy makers learn to take advantage of these processes when others with conflicting interests are also trying to do so? The systems we are dealing with are composed not of inanimate objects, but of people—goal-seeking actors who are trying to manipulate each other. If they all realize that straightforward policies are not likely to reach the desired goals, how will they react to each other? If the others are expecting indirect policies of the type outlined above, will those policies then fail? I have no good answers to these questions except to note that in some cases others lack sufficient freedom of maneuver to be able to take advantage of an understanding of the system. Some strategic positions make a state vulnerable and rob a person of the ability to turn the tables on his adversaries even if he knows what they are up to.

Systems Effects

What kinds of effects are produced by the dynamics that we have discussed? We cannot give anything like an exhaustive list, nor, more important, can we specify the detailed conditions under which each will occur. But we can at least make a start.

First, we should note that the concepts of positive and negative feedback help clarify two well known processes and theories. *Positive feedback* leads to instability and can be defined as being present when a change that pushes a variable in one direction calls up reinforcing changes that move the variable even further in that direction. *Negative feedback* occurs when a change that pushes a variable in one direction calls up counterbalancing forces that restore the variable to something approximating its original position. Therefore, it makes the system stable.[31] In most systems theories, in realms other than international politics, negative feedback is a way in which the actor protects himself from changes in the environment. If a cold-blooded animal begins to overheat, it will move into the shade or turn its body so that less of it is exposed to the sunlight. In international politics, negative feedback is displayed in the ways in which the members of the system control a disturbing actor. The most obvious and important illustration is the operation of the balance of power. If one actor grows powerful enough to threaten domination, others will submerge their differences and unite against him. If they are successful (and success is neither automatic nor easy), the power of the offending state will be curbed, and the basic characteristics of the system will be maintained.

Positive feedback occurs when accretions of power to one actor, far from calling up counteracting forces, lead to further gains. Hitler's victories in the spring of 1940 led Mussolini to join him. Just as delegates in a presidential convention rush to get on the bandwagon of a winning candidate, so many states will side with a power that is gaining the ascendancy. And the more states that do so, the more others will follow suit. Some go more willingly than others; some may go out of fear and others out of the hope to get a share of the spoils; some may go because of changes in internal politics. But the result is that more and more states fall under the sway of the leading power. A variant of this process is described by the domino theory, which stresses the importance of perceptions of the major powers' resolve. In defending the Truman Doctrine, an administration spokesman argued: "Anything that happens in Greece and Turkey inevitably has an effect on the rest of the Middle East, on western Europe, and clear around into the Pacific, because all these people are watching what the United States is doing. . . . [I]f the countries of the world lose confidence in us they may in effect pass under the Iron Curtain."[32] Similarly, President Nixon defended his refusal to compromise on U.S. control of the Panama Canal by arguing: "If the United States

retreats one inch in this respect, we will have raised serious doubts about our bases throughout the world."[33] In pushing for aid to Vietnam in the spring of 1975, Kissinger argued: "We cannot pursue a policy of selective reliability. We cannot abandon friends in one part of the world without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere." He felt a heightened sense of urgency because at this time negotiations in the Middle East were resuming and he believed that both Egypt and Israel would not place much faith in American pledges to them if the United States did not do all it could in Southeast Asia.[34]

Of course other inferences and ramifications are possible. Other states might be less influenced by the fact that the United States finally "abandoned" Vietnam than by the fact that it spent tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars to try to save it. Or, they might conclude that once America was no longer tied down in Vietnam she would be able to concentrate on areas of greater importance, such as Europe and the Middle East. If others accepted either of these chains of reasoning, they would place more, rather than less, faith in America's other commitments.

Furthermore, the domino theory neglects or denies an important counteracting dynamic. A power may react to a defeat by becoming more resolute in the next conflict in order to avoid the very effects described above. Here is a possible situation where the actors' anticipation of the system's dynamics can lead them to alter their behavior to avoid the "natural" outcome. This is not an uncommon pattern. One reason why Britain felt she had to support Russia in 1914 was that she had failed to do so in the previous Balkan crisis and feared a Russian defection from the entente if Russia were disappointed too often. And the United States followed this logic when she jumped at the chance to use force in the Mayaguez incident to demonstrate that her defeats in Vietnam and Cambodia did not mean, as she had been predicting, that her resolve would henceforth be eroded. (Of course, it will be dangerous if the state that retreats once feels compelled to stand firm the next time, but its adversary expects the retreat to be repeated.)

In the kinds of cases described by both the domino theory and the balance of power theory, the behavior of the major power produce changes throughout the system. But the content of the changes is very different, and the obvious question is under what conditions each kind of feedback occurs. Negative feedback is likely to occur when decision makers believe that the gains of opposing the potential hegemonic state are greater than those of failing to do so. This calculation is determined by estimates of the value of controlling the hegemon, the value of siding with it, the costs of opposition (which will vary, depending on whether or not the hegemon is brought down), and the perceived probability that the hegemon will fail (which, in turn, is influenced by what each state, including the decision maker's own state, does). While some of these estimates are influenced by nonsystemic factors and thus require detailed examination of each state and each decision maker, one important factor involves the international system. When each

state wants to see the hegemon controlled, but believes that participating in the opposition is costly and dangerous, we have an example of what is called a public or collective goods problem.[35] *Collective goods* are those that, if acquired, benefit everyone whether or not he has contributed to their acquisition. National defense, for example, is a collective good. If the nation is defended, everyone in it is defended, whether or not he has paid his taxes. If the hegemon is defeated, all states benefit, whether or not they participated in the coalition. Since joining the coalition is costly, the state's first choice would be to have the hegemon defeated without having to join in the opposition. In other words, the state would like to be the "free rider," taking advantage of the efforts of others. But since this is true of each of the states, there is a danger that no one will oppose the hegemon, even though all want it stopped. Indeed, all would join a coalition if the only choices were doing so or being dominated by the hegemon. Furthermore, if the state thinks that the hegemon will win even if the state opposes it, joining is pointless. Since the participation of small states makes less of a difference in the outcome than does the participation of larger states, we would expect them to follow balance-of-power prescriptions less frequently and to be more subject to domino dynamics than are larger powers. Systems composed of many small powers will therefore be more subject to positive feedback and instability than will a system that contains several powers large enough to believe that their action could tip the balance.

Other interactions involve dynamics more complex than positive and negative feedback and can best be seen in relations among three states. Unfortunately, many of the limits apparent in our earlier discussion reappear; we cannot always determine which pattern will occur, partly because many of the influences at work involve not the system but the decision makers' values, beliefs, and calculations. Nevertheless, we can isolate a number of recurring patterns.

When a state is faced with two possible adversaries, for example, it usually seeks to insure that they do not collaborate against it. At best, the state may be able to "divide and conquer" the other two. But even if it cannot, it can at least try to avoid the worst contingency. The Anglo-French dispute over Egypt gave Bismarck greater freedom of maneuver because it made it unlikely that these two powers could cooperate and increased their need for German support, thereby enabling Germany to take actions which could harm either of them. One scholar argues that this conflict "is probably the main reason why Bismarck was soon quarrelling with England over colonial rivalry in Africa."[36] When two of the state's potential adversaries do not of their own accord oppose each other, the state may sow discord between them. Thus, after a war, the winner may change borders to create conflict among those who might seek revenge. Philip of Macedon made Thebes cede a border territory to Athens so that the latter could not afford to alienate him,[37] and in 1945 Russia insisted on moving Poland a hundred miles to the west, not only

gaining land for herself, but also increasing Poland's need for Soviet support against Germany.

Alternatively, the state may conciliate another to patch up a quarrel which is making either of them dependent on a third party. In the 1880s, Giers, the Russian foreign minister, wanted to curb his country's expansion in Central Asia, which was threatening British India and thus limiting Russia's diplomatic flexibility. As long as war with England was a real possibility, Russia's bargaining power with others was reduced because her need for allies was so great.[38] In other cases the third party can, even without knowing it, open the way to conflict between two others by decreasing its pressure on one or both of them. It has been argued that the "U.S. self-limitation on use of its military power against China [in the mid and late 1950s] . . . first reduced, and then eliminated Chinese dependence on the military power of the Soviet Union to ward off attack from the United States. Without this tacit American reassurance to the Chinese, the breach between the Soviet Union and China might never have taken place."[39] And to the extent that China feared the possibility of a Soviet-American common front, the Vietnam War was a blessing to her, for it allowed her to work against the interests of either or both those powers in relative safety.

Of course, refraining from behavior that would bring potential adversaries together may be at some cost to the state if it means not stopping others from reaching goals which are not in the state's interest. Thus, Britain might have been able to split the Axis by granting Mussolini a free hand in the Mediterranean, but the international and domestic price might not have been worth paying. At least in the short run, it is cheaper to break up a potentially hostile coalition by creating and playing on divisions among its members than to make concessions to one of them. But even when the former alternative is available, it carries a longer run cost: if the conflict between two of the others is not only sufficient to prevent them from allying, but also high enough to create a risk of war between them, the state may have avoided one danger only to have created others. Although it may be able to take advantage of these tensions, it may also find itself drawn into them. It may face pressures to join one or the other of the disputing pair. Or one of the others may find that the best way to attract allies is to promise opposition to the state. These, of course, were some of the dangers in Bismarck's policies toward Russia and Austria after the Franco-Prussian War. Bismarck and his colleagues argued that "because of her weak geographical location Germany had no interest in a lasting peace in the Near East; she was hated by her neighbours who would probably unite against her as soon as they had their hands free."[40] However, for a power to encourage conflict between her neighbors not as a temporary expedient to tide her over a particularly vulnerable period, but as the basis for long-term security, is to court multiple dangers.

In dealing with relations among three states, one obvious question is whether two will form a firm alliance against one. For this to happen requires

either that one issue dominates the states' concerns or that all the issues divide the states in the same way. When issues cross-cut, on the other hand, countries that are adversaries on one issue are allies on another, thus giving each state incentives to find solutions to each conflict that are relatively satisfactory to all concerned. There may even be competition in reasonableness as states that are nominally working together on an issue vie with each other to get in the good graces of the adversary whose help they will need later. This condition of multiple cross-cutting conflicts is most likely to arise when security threats are diffuse. (Of course, states can unite against another in the hope of making positive gains, but offensive coalitions are hard to maintain because the benefits are often uncertain, mutual rivalries and suspicions are great, and the incentives for the victim to split the coalition by buying off one of its members are high.)

A state must calculate whether pursuing quarrels with several others will unite them against it or whether the conflicts among the others are so strong that they cannot cooperate. If the others cannot unite, then the state is free to exert pressure on each of them. Indeed, at least some of the others may be compelled to seek the state's support if they cannot find allies elsewhere. This was the expectation that underlay Germany's policy toward England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of the powers had grievances against England, and it was the fear of facing a united front on which Bismarck successfully played during the Balkan crisis of 1887 in order to gain British support for the coalition that he built to stalemate Russia in the Balkans.

As the previous example shows, a state's bargaining power is determined largely by the availability of alternatives rather than by its economic and military resources or its contributions to the common cause. A state which has no choice but to ally itself with another cannot exact much of a price for its commitment. The easier it is for the state to defect, the more it can compel its partners to conform to its wishes. The threat to defect is credible if there are other policies nearly as attractive as the alliance. This can be the case either because the alliance is failing to meet the state's needs or because joining with others has positive attractions. The pull can come from having relatively few direct conflicts with the other side (and in the first years of this century Britain had few direct conflicts with Germany and probably could have exploited this in her bargaining with France more effectively than she did) and from wanting things that the other side can grant relatively easily, such as the territory of a former ally. The push can be generated by the belief that the current alliance will not last or by the state's need for assistance that its allies cannot or will not supply.

Since statesmen understand the advantages to be derived from the ability to change sides, they often exaggerate both their dissatisfaction with their current alliance and the attractiveness of the other side. In the mid-1920s Germany played up the possibility of ties with Russia in order to try to extract

concessions from the West.[41] Similarly, in May 1972 Russia argued that the American mining of Haiphong was increasing the pressure on her to draw closer to China. The Sino-Soviet split was not irreconcilable, Russia implied, and there were limits to the indignities she would endure in cooperating with the United States.[42] The same logic was at work in the summer of 1977 when Chinese leaders, angered at President Carter's unwillingness to make the concessions that would lead to normalization of relations, argued that Russia threatened the West more than she did China. "[I]f you compare the two sides, Europe and China, in terms of which part is of greater interest to the Soviet Union, I think it is Europe." Dismissing the significance of the Soviet-American détente, the Chinese spokesman said: "If one poses the question as to which will be the first to be bitten by the polar bear, it is not necessarily China. Perhaps it will be Europe."[43] If the Chinese leaders believed this, they had less need for American support.

The other side of this coin is that the state which benefits greatly from an alliance or which can defect to the other side only at great cost will have to make concessions to its present partners. To admit one's need for the alliance and one's lack of alternatives is to invite depredation. For this reason, Thomas Sanderson, the British permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office, in 1905 wrote the ambassador in Berlin: "I wish we could make the lunatics here who denounce Germany in such unmeasured terms and howl for an agreement with Russia understand that the natural effect is to drive Germany into the Russian camp and encourage the Russians to believe that they can get all they want at our expense and without coming to any agreement with us."[44]

A state that is trying to rally others to a coalition against what it perceives to be a grave menace faces a dilemma. In order to persuade others to join, the state will want to stress the danger that the adversary constitutes to them all and its commitment to the common defense. But to do this is to acknowledge that it believes it imperative to form an alliance, thus allowing others who are, or pretend to be, less alarmed to exact a higher price for their cooperation.

These factors help to explain the relations within and between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Britain was in a weak position vis-à-vis her partners because she could not be sure that they would not defect. In 1911 Grey denied that Germany's annexation of Alsace-Lorraine "has made a combination between France and Germany against us impossible,"[45] and therefore took great care not to offend France. He also doubted whether they could rely upon Russia. Russian leaders realized this and understood that it gave them the freedom to disregard British interests in areas like Persia. Since Britain felt that one reason why her partners might desert the Entente was the fear that the coalition was not strong and resolute enough to contain the Triple Alliance, she had to reassure France and Russia. For if they thought the Entente was failing, they would rush to strike a bargain with Germany; signs of weakness in the Entente could set off positive feedback that would destroy

it. The very vulnerability of France and, to a lesser extent, Russia made them more likely than England to cut their losses if the Entente could not provide for their security. As Grey put it as early as 1905, "The weak point is that [France] might some day have a scare that we intend to change [our policy of supporting her]. . . . If . . . by some misfortune or blunder our Entente were to be broken up, France will have to make her own terms with Germany."[46] So in the next nine years France had few causes for complaint on this score. Britain even decided against sending a military band to Germany on the grounds that it might unduly disturb her ally. More significant, one of the reasons why she did not try to restrain her allies in 1914 was the fear that the attempt to do so would break up the Entente, leaving her at Germany's mercy.

This analysis indicates that the common claim that the rigidity of the alliances was a major power cause of the war is misleading. Although no major power had shifted sides during the ten years preceding the war, Britain, and to a lesser extent Germany,[47] feared such shifts and so made concessions to partners. Had the alliances been rigid—or had Britain and Germany thought they were—the distribution of power within them would have been different and the outcome of the disputes between the two sides might have been different. A second point follows: Even if it is true that this configuration contributed to the war, one cannot claim that the same logic makes the bipolarity of the Cold War also unstable. The two kinds of systems are very different, although both are often labeled bipolar.[48] In the earlier period each camp was composed of states of relatively equal strength. Therefore, the defection of any one of them could tip the balance. This produced the internal bargaining situation described above. The post–World War II bipolarity is different. Here each camp is dominated by a single state. The others contribute relatively little. When France threatened to virtually withdraw from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United States did not offer major concessions to dissuade her, and when she acted on her threat the effects were hardly noticeable. Thus, in the current system, small allies cannot drag their mentors into conflicts in the way that they could before World War I. (It should also be noted that the pre–World War I configuration is not automatically conducive to war. Allies could use their greater bargaining power to restrain their partners.)

Balance Theory—"The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Friend"

One kind of interaction dynamic merits special attention. Although there are many exceptions to the rule, it can be thought of as providing a baseline

that represents what would happen if the main forces in the situation were the only things at work. It neglects blunders, exceptional skill, and idiosyncratic choices.

Known as balance or consistency theory, this view echoes the old Arab proverbs: "The friend of my friend is my friend; the enemy of my friend is my enemy; the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Actors who are friendly with each other share mutual friendships and enmities. A configuration which is described by these proverbs is balanced or consistent.[49] Consistency develops through interconnections. Two states with no direct bilateral conflicts can become enemies if one supports and the other opposes a third state. States can cooperate not because their direct interests coincide, but because they are linked through support of or opposition to a third power. Often the relations between two states are determined by the relations between each of them and others in the system. Thus, a state that wants to form an alliance with another may become hostile to the other's adversary. In 1914, for example, several British leaders argued that "the best method of persuading the Balkan States to join the Allies would be in alliance against their common and traditional enemy, the Turk."[50]

Although many configurations are not perfectly balanced, a topic to which we will return, the reasons for balance are fairly obvious. Two states which have a quarrel with a third can benefit from working together. It is hard to imagine that China and the United States would have maintained indefinitely a high level of hostility in the face of Soviet conflicts with both of them. A state which opposes another will usually develop bad relations with a third state that supports the other because this support will have the effect, even if it does not have the intent, of harming the first state. Finally, two states which have good relations with a third state are likely to gain by working together. In many instances, the same considerations that lead each of them to cooperate with the third state will lead each to cooperate with each other. In other instances, the links that each country has to the third will earn them a common enemy. And the third state may seek to bring its two allies together. Doing so will sacrifice the benefit of being indispensable to two others who must rely on the state because they cannot cooperate with each other, but this advantage is hard to gain when there are fourth states around that can bid for the friendship of either of the other two. If a state's two allies have serious conflicts with each other, the obvious danger is that the one the state fails to support will gravitate to the state's enemies. Developing good relations among all three states will help maintain the alliance and so will bolster the state's position. Therefore, it is not surprising that the German ambassador to Japan in 1941 argued that his instructions to encourage German-Japanese-Russian cooperation justified his pledge that Germany would "do everything within her power to promote a friendly understanding" between Russia and Japan.[51] And in 1906 the French prime minister told the Russian foreign

minister that France was "anxious that Russia and England should come to agreements, that France meant to remain the Ally of Russia and the friend of England and would not drop either one or the other."[52]

In consistent international systems the states are divided into two camps. Each state has friendly relations with all other members of its alliance and hostile relations with all members of the opposite camp. No states are cross-pressured by supporting or opposing only one of two allied states, or by supporting or opposing two states which are at odds with each other. Systems are likely to be most consistent when there is a dominant conflict around which all states orient themselves. There is, then, only a single question that a state asks another: Is it aiding the state or supporting the main adversary? Thus, Churchill's defense of aiding the Soviet Union in June 1941: "I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons."[53] The same thought was put less graphically by George Canning in 1808 when he described the basic principle of his foreign policy: "Any nation of Europe that starts up with a determination to oppose a power which . . . is the common enemy of all nations, whatever may be the existing political relations of that nation and Great Britain, becomes instantly our essential ally."[54] In the tense atmosphere of 1948, General Eisenhower similarly defined a friendly country as one that opposed the Soviet Union.[55]

In such cases the major powers, and many minor ones, feel that the conflict is the most important cleavage in the system. For states big enough to be able to influence the outcome significantly, doing so is worth the use of a large proportion of their resources. The gains that might accrue from maintaining good relations with both sides are less than the value of helping to determine the shape of the postwar world. Great pressure will be put on smaller states for them to take a stand too, as each side strives for every possible advantage. So most states will feel both pushes and pulls toward alignment. Few significant states wanted and were able to stay neutral in world wars I and II. As the French ambassador to Moscow reported before World War II, the question was not "whether the U.S.S.R. will, or will not, be with us, but *with whom* they will be."[56]

If two great powers feel their relations are characterized by overriding conflict, but the smaller states are more concerned with local conflicts, then the pressures for balance lead to negative feedback. The gains for a great power lead, not to dominoes falling, but to compensating gains for the other side, because the power that wins the support of a local state will find itself opposed by the state's enemies. Thus, the British plans for getting all the Balkan states on their side in World War I foundered on the rock of local conflicts. Bulgaria would not fight on the same side as Rumania and Greece. Recent events in the Horn of Africa show the same dynamics. A leftist revolution led Ethiopia to switch allegiance from the United States to the USSR. But

Ethiopia was engaged in serious quarrels with its neighbors, some of whom also had close ties to the Soviet Union. These states reacted with hostility to Ethiopia's new patron and with friendship to her enemy. The Sudan's movement away from the Soviet Union was accelerated and Somalia closed the Soviet base at Berbera, expelled all Soviet and Cuban personnel, and broke diplomatic relations with those states. Furthermore, even though the United States was trying to decrease arms sales to the Third World, it was willing to sell arms to the Sudan, and it might well have sold them to Somalia had that country not attacked Ethiopia. So if the pressures toward balance are strong, a state that seeks to win over several countries in an area must encourage good relations among them. This strategy is risky because it entails the danger that they all will turn against the state, but it may be the only route to a major diplomatic victory.

If the existence of conflicts among the small states limits the damage suffered by a great power which falls out of favor with one of them, the friction between two great powers gives the smaller states freedom of action.[57] The small power that becomes the target of hostility from a larger state is likely to receive the support of the latter's rivals. Most of us have had the experience of angering a powerful person and finding that, instead of being an isolated, one had gained the support of those who disliked or opposed the person. The same effect occurs with political alignments. Russian support for India was solidified by the Sino-Indian War. Egypt's break with Russia in 1972 made it possible for that country to obtain aid from the United States, just as the American refusal to help build the Aswan dam paved the way for closer relations between Egypt and Russia.

Because countries are likely to develop conflicts with their neighbors, balance often leads to a checkerboard pattern. Kautilya, the ancient Indian student of international politics, noted that states on either side of a third state become allies, and states on either side of those two join with each other and the state in the middle.[58] Of course, few situations actually conform to all details of this ideal, but many show traces of it as the underlying dynamics make themselves felt.

Although there are always pressures toward balance, they do not always prevail. Some of the special circumstances that produced imbalance in the pre-World War I era will be discussed later. Here we want to stress the tensions created when a balanced configuration is not in the interest of one of the actors. Obeying one of the Arab proverbs—the enemy of my friend is my enemy—is often costly to the state. As we noted earlier, to increase its bargaining power, a state may try to make itself indispensable to two others which are in conflict with each other rather than joining either side. The point of balance theory, however, is that this will be hard to do and there will be a tendency either for the two other states to overcome their antipathy and work together against the third, or for the state to become the enemy of one of them.

A state is also not likely to obey the rules of balance in its behavior toward another which is providing limited assistance to the state's adversary if it thinks that a conciliatory policy can woo the other to its side. Balance theory says that if relations between the United States and Russia are bad, Russia should respond to a Sino-American reapproachment by becoming hostile, or more hostile, to China. But if the Russian leaders believe that China's support for the United States is not permanent, they could offer concessions in the expectation of winning her over. The predictions of balance theory will hold, however, once the state has concluded that the third power is irrevocably tied to its enemy.

Another balanced pattern that is not in the interest of some of the states is one in which a single state faces a more powerful coalition. This was the situation toward the end of the struggles against Napoleon and Hitler. Since this is not a situation that the weaker party desires, it will make great efforts to avoid it, and, with a modicum of resources and skill, should be able to do so. Napoleon and Hitler became isolated because of their great ambitions. At the beginning of the conflicts they thought they had sufficient power to win. By the time they realized that this was not true, they could not buy off any of the members of the opposing coalitions because the latter were convinced both that victory was in sight and that it was necessary to maintain the coalition in order to contain the aggressor who would remain a threat even after the war. But in the more common peacetime case, the problem facing an isolated state is usually not as great. The ties among the other states, not having been through the forge of wartime collaboration, are weaker, and the degree of hostility between the state and each of the others is lower and less uniform.

The more isolated the state is, the more it will be willing to sacrifice to better its position. Unless the state is so weak as to be an obvious candidate for dismemberment (Poland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), or has been so reckless as to convince all the others that it is such a menace that it must be stopped by force, it should be able to offer sufficient inducements to win over at least one ally. Even if it cannot succeed quickly, an isolated state will rarely accept its vulnerability. In the Balkan crisis of 1887, Bismarck was able to threaten to unite all the continental powers against England unless she joined with Austria and Italy to contain Russia in the Balkans—a coalition in which Bismarck himself could not participate without sacrificing his good relations with Russia. This threat was potent because the others had grievances against England. So unless England were to accept dependence on Germany she had to change this situation. To do so was costly, and for years it appeared that working with Germany might be the best course. But the dangers of isolation and dependence were great enough so that Britain could not rest easy with this configuration, and so sought to reduce the grievances others had against her and to generate alternative sources of support. The fact that a system in which all were united against England would be balanced did not thereby make it a likely outcome.

Britain was less successful in the interwar period. As early as the first defense reviews of the 1930s, British leaders realized that even with the support of France she could not simultaneously oppose Germany, Italy, and Japan:

> We consider it to be a cardinal requirement of our national and imperial security that our foreign policy should be so conducted as to avoid the possible development of a situation in which we might be confronted simultaneously with the hostility, open or veiled, of Japan in the Far East, Germany in the West, and any Power on the main line of communication between the two.[59]

That her efforts failed is largely explained by nonsystemic factors. Public opinion made it difficult for England to buy off Italy. American policy, based to a large extent on considerations of morality and public opinion, made conciliation of Japan very costly. The view that Chamberlain expressed in 1934 was a common one: "I have *no* doubt we could easily make an agreement with [the Japanese] if the U.S.A. were out of the picture. It is the Americans who are the difficulty and I don't know how we can get over it."[60] And British statesmanship in the period was deficient. So the bonds among Germany, Italy, and Japan tightened. But even though she did not succeed in doing so, preventing this was one of England's prime objectives.

The utility of balance theory can best be demonstrated by taking a period of history and showing how the kinds of propositions we have been discussing can bring together disparate phenomena, shed new light on familiar incidents, locate previously unnoticed patterns, and provide satisfactory explanations for puzzling behavior. These are the tasks of the next section.

Balance Theory and Pre-World War I Diplomacy

The broad outlines of pre-World War I diplomacy conform to much of balance theory. One of the striking things about this war is that many states seem to be on the wrong side. If we look at the bilateral conflicts, it is not surprising that France fought Germany and Russia fought Austria. But Austria and France had no quarrels and Russia and France had few common interests. Even more strikingly, Germany and England seemed like natural allies, as many German statesmen and not a few Englishmen noted throughout this period. By contrast, the far-flung British Empire was directly threatened by Russia and France. British and French colonies touched each other at many points, and the French outrage at the British occupation of Egypt created constant friction from 1886 to 1904. Russia was even more of a threat. Her expansion in Central Asia brought the two countries close to war and even her defeat by Japan and the revision of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1905 that insured Japanese support in the event of a war with Russia did not totally set England's mind at rest. The Russian desire for Constantinople

was another source of tension, one that diminished but did not disappear when Britain decided that the northeastern Mediterranean could not be defended and that she had to rely on her Egyptian bases.

Many of the conflicts that developed in this period can be understood only in terms of the dynamics of balance. States developed enemies and allies out of their relations with others. To concentrate on the main features, we will ignore Italy and Japan and postpone treatment of England. Of the relations among the other four major powers—Germany, Austria, France, and Russia—the main line of conflict was between Germany and France and a secondary line was between Russia and Austria. Even had France become reconciled to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, geography would have made France and Germany rivals if not enemies. The clash between Austria and Russia was not quite as deep. Although controlling if not suppressing Balkan nationalism was a vital interest for Austria, the Russian stake in the Balkans was not immutable. There were other outlets from Russian expansionism and the depth of Pan-Slav feeling was much less in some Russian factions and leaders than in others. But as long as the Russians did sponsor Balkan nationalism, she would menace Austria-Hungary's international standing and domestic stability. If Russia and Austria were enemies, balance theory predicts that Germany cannot be friends with both. Thus, during the Balkan crisis of 1875–1878, "Any marked improvement in friendship with Russia would have to be purchased with a deterioration in relations with her rivals."[61] Of course, Bismarck did maintain good relations with both adversaries, which is testimony both to special circumstances and to his great skill—neither of which, however, might have lasted out the century.

Even if the system becomes balanced, the theory cannot tell us how it will be balanced—that is, whether Germany will side with Russia or Austria. On this point other systems dynamics are relevant, although not completely determining. German statesmen believed that Austria, being the weaker of the two, would more surely be forced into alliance with France if she were deserted by Germany. Russia was strong enough to stand by herself. Furthermore, the reactionary nature of Russia's regime inhibited cooperation with France and conflict over Central Asia and Constantinople made a link between Russia and England unlikely. Russia was then strong but isolated and, even without a tie to Germany, might not be able to afford bad relations with her or establish good relations with her enemies. Thus, part of the reason why German decision makers chose Austria was that they underestimated the strength of the forces impelling the system toward balance. They thought that the antipathy between France and Russia was great enough to prevent their allying even if both had grievances against Germany.

Once Germany's choice was made, however, balance theory does offer a firm prediction. If Germany had allied with Russia, the theory says that Austria and France would have worked together. Austria was the enemy of Russia, and since Russia and Germany were allies, would become the enemy

of Germany too. Since France was also Germany's enemy, they would become friends. Another positive bond would have been the shared enmity toward Russia. In Austria's case, this was a direct relationship; in France's case, mediated by the ties between Russia and Germany. If England became involved, the theory says that she would have either developed friendly relations with Germany and Russia, coupled with hostile relations with France and Austria, or else allied with the latter two powers and opposed the former two. Again, it cannot say which of these patterns would have occurred, but it does say that England would not have allied with Germany and against Russia or with France and against Austria. Of course, Germany did not choose Russia as a partner, and so we cannot say whether the theory's predictions would have been borne out. But I think they are plausible. So did German statesmen, who feared that abandoning Austria would lead that country to turn to France.

Before turning our attention to England, we should discuss the obvious and important exception to our generalization—the period from the Franco-Prussian War to 1890 (excepting 1878–1881), in which Germany maintained good relations with both Russia and Austria. Bismarck's skill was a necessary ingredient. By its nature, skill is difficult to generalize about, and all we can do here is note Bismarck's ability to empathize with others, to alter forms of inducements and pressures as the situation changed, and to construct intricate arrangements that were hard for his contemporaries—and later scholars—to fully understand, let alone combat. Because his alliance systems were not balanced, he had to walk a number of delicate lines. "It was necessary to support Russia just enough to convince her of the advantages of German goodwill, but not enough to make her believe this could be got for nothing, and not enough to estrange England or irritate Austria. On the other hand, he had to support England and Austria enough to maintain good relations . . . as well as to preserve the atmosphere of suspicion between England and Russia. Too much support here, or the appearance of it, might, however, antagonize the Russians."[62] Whether this skill was put to the best uses and whether a less devious policy would have better served the cause of peace and the long-run interests of Germany is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the virtuosity of his performance is not to be doubted.

Even Bismarck's skill might have been to no avail had it not been for propitious circumstances. His primary goal was to isolate France. To reach both this end and to make secondary gains, he sought to make Germany indispensable to all the others and insure that they could not get what they wanted without his brokerage. French weakness in the years immediately following the Franco-Prussian War helped reduce her value as an ally. Colonial expansion, encouraged by Bismarck, both distracted France from continental issues and created conflicts with England, thus increasing both states' need for German diplomatic assistance. Britain, although stronger, was potentially vulnerable, as her leaders fully realized by the turn of the century. Her de-

cision not to intervene in the war for Schleswig-Holstein despite her previous pledge,[63] her weakness on the issue of the Belgian railroads in 1869, which raised doubts about her willingness to run risks even for Belgian independence,[64] the sorry state of her navy in the period before the 1890s,[65] all diminished her diplomatic weight. Her widespread empire, furthermore, brought her many enemies. Germany, which cared less for new territory could afford to help Britain. And she could extract a price for such cooperation because she could also afford to remain neutral in England's disputes or even rally the others against her. Even after the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 eased Britain's position, she was still partly dependent on German goodwill because of her severe conflicts with France and Russia.

Germany's policy in the post-Bismarckian era relied on these conflicts for its success. Because England could not ally with France and Russia, German leaders believed that she would have to turn for support to the Triple Alliance. So it was safe, indeed wise, to antagonize England and to threaten her interests in order to show her that failing to support Germany would be very costly. Of course, the fatal errors were the linked ones of overestimating the strengths of the conflicts dividing England from Russia and France and failing to see that German pressure was leading England to see Germany as an unreasonable and greedy state that was not a fit alliance partner. But this should not obscure the point that England's alternatives *were* sharply limited, especially before Fashoda and the Russo-Japanese War.

The isolation of England and France helps to explain why Bismarck was able to construct a system that violated balance theory. Although Russia was unhappy with the German support for Austria, she could not leave the coalition because she had no alternative allies. To make a Franco-Russian pact even more difficult, Bismarck tried to maintain good relations with France, thereby putting Germany in a position to grant or withhold assistance to her. Bismarck also made sure that Russia received something from her ties with Germany so that severing them would be a loss. The main gain for Russia was a moderation of German support for Austria. To break with Germany could easily lead to greater Austrian influence over Germany, which Russia could ill afford. Thus, the Russians were forced to reestablish the Dreikaiserbund after having broken it in the wake of the Balkan crisis of 1877. The Russians had recognized "the facts of life: lofty treatment of Germany did not mix well with fear of English attack and Austrian intrigues,"[66] Crucial here, as in the case of relations with England, was Germany's indispensability. Only if Germany could insure that Russia could not ally with France or England would even great skill permit the maintenance of this unbalanced system. Although Bismarck's successors ended this ambitious policy, it is doubtful whether even he could have maintained it indefinitely. Many of the important factors in Russia's isolation were beyond his control (e.g., the French recovery after her defeat in 1871) and even Bismarck made some er-

rors—such as freezing Russia out of the Berlin money market, with the result that Russia turned to Paris.

If unusual circumstances and skill account for the one major and lasting deviation from balance theory, blunders and nonstrategic factors can also produce similar results. Thus, the Kaiser sometimes supported Austria's enemies and did so not because of complex calculations, but because of ties of personal loyalty. Similarly, strong ideological preferences can interfere with the operation of balance dynamics, as they delayed the ties between France and Russia in the 1890s and China and the United States in the 1960s.

The pressures which brought England into alignment with France and Russia and into opposition to the Triple Alliance are similar to those discussed earlier, but with the significant difference that the process was gradual and that English statesmen were not entirely aware of why events were unfolding as they were. Furthermore, if these leaders had been able to foresee the consequences of their initial policies, they might have chosen differently. They did not want to join a continental alliance and strongly resisted the German blandishments to do so. Overt French approaches might not have been any more successful. It can be objected that the ties with France were not necessary to turn Britain into Germany's enemy. Since Germany was the strongest state on the continent, England had to oppose her. She would win any war in which England was neutral, and the result would be to gravely menace British security. In retrospect, this may be correct. But British statesmen did not see it this way and did not automatically line up against the potentially dominating German power.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 alleviated, but did not solve, England's problem of isolation. To solve it by reaching a general understanding with Germany would be to increase French and Russian grievances against England and to divide Europe into two hostile alliances. The obvious alternative was to try to deal with the specific issues on which England clashed with France and Russia and which made England's isolation so dangerous. This led to negotiations for a colonial entente in which France ended her two decades of opposition to British rule in Egypt in return for England's acquiescence in French control of Morocco. British leaders gave little thought to the implications of such an agreement for continental politics—or, rather, they did not think there were any. Indeed, there might have been no such implications if Cromer and Balfour had not insisted that France not only vote with England and Egyptian matters, but also provide active diplomatic support to help overcome the opposition of other powers. The French resisted, but finally offered to concede in return for a reciprocal grant of British support for the French efforts in Morocco. Lansdowne, who had not cared about the British demand in the first place, "immediately accepted, without realizing how far this clause threatened to lead him. In his view, it was merely a question of 'moral support.'"[67] Most British statesmen believed that this stance was compatible with the maintenance of good relations with Germany.

As one leader said when denying that the entente was a menace to the Triple Alliance, "Our earnest wish is to be friends with both [France and Germany], and not only them, but with other countries also."[68]

Even during the first Moroccan crisis, England did not consider that she had permanently aligned herself with France, as Grey made clear in his report of a conversation with the German ambassador in early 1906: "Count Metternich said that, if England was to use the French *entente* always to side with France against Germany, of course Germany would come to look on England as her enemy, I said there had been no question of always siding with France against Germany. Since the *entente* was framed there had been one point of difference—the subject of Morocco—which happened to be one of the very subjects covered by a definite agreement between England and France. . . . I could again assure him that, were the Morocco difficulty satisfactorily settled, it was our desire to show that the *entente* was not to be used in a sense hostile to Germany."[69]

But Grey was not able to act on his desire. The problem was twofold. First, the Germans misinterpreted the degree of British support for France. On the one hand, they overestimated the initial British commitment and thought that unless they reacted strongly a pattern of cooperation would be set. On the other hand, they thought that strong opposition to the French claims on Morocco would break up the entente. German pressure nearly worked, and might have done so had she not overplayed her hand. But the pressure was probably not needed. The colonial agreement would not have automatically led to continued and close Anglo-French cooperation. In 1890 Britain and Germany signed an agreement similar to the entente in which Germany limited her claims in East Africa in return for Britain's ceding Helgoland. But this agreement had no ramifications because the two states could carry it out by themselves. They did not earn the enmity of any other state; there was no opposition to cause the two states to work more closely together. Had there been no opposition in Morocco, the entente might have been similarly short lived. The second problem was that Britain did not understand the legitimacy of German grievances. Although the German claims of economic interests in Morocco were patently false, her wider argument had more validity. France had provided compensation to England and Italy, so why should Germany not claim her reward? Was Germany not a world power like England which had to be consulted on all changes of the status quo? Furthermore, England was at least potentially menacing Germany by even temporarily joining with France.

Partly because she did not see the degree of justification for Germany's demand for compensation and hostility toward England, English statesmen were greatly alarmed by Germany's behavior. First, they thought that Germany's attempt to bully France indicated that Germany would not tolerate an equal power on the Continent. Then, as German hostility became aimed as much toward England as toward France, British leaders saw a direct threat to

their own security. Since they believed that the German behavior was not a reasonable response to anything they had done, they concluded that her hostility was gratuitous and showed that she was a danger, being exceptionally greedy and believing that others could be bullied into doing her bidding. A twofold response was needed: France had to be supported lest she give way and allow Germany full sway over the Continent, and England herself had to oppose Germany. Eyre Crowe put the British perception well: initially, the entente "had been but a friendly settlement of particular outstanding differences, giving hope for future harmonious relations between two neighbouring countries that had got into the habit of looking at one another askance; now there had emerged an element of common resistance to outside dictation and aggression, a unity of special interests tending to develop into active cooperation against a third power. It is essential to bear in mind that this new feature of the *entente* was the direct effect produced by Germany's effort to break it up, and that, failing the active or threatening hostility of Germany, such anti-German bias as the *entente* must be admitted to have at one time assumed, would certainly not exist at present, nor probably survive in the future."[70]

Of course, there were other sources of conflict between England and Germany, especially the German naval building program. By itself this would have been a powerful impetus to close ties with France (although the German policy was initially predicated on the belief that England could never ally with France and Russia). But, in the absence of the dynamics discussed above, the chances for a negotiated settlement of the naval race would have been greater. And even without one, British hostility would have been significantly less. England still would have viewed the German navy with alarm, both because it constituted a threat to her power and because it indicated that German intentions were hostile. But the German actions were perceived as especially dangerous because they were seen in the context of suspicion growing out of the German reaction to the entente. The navy greatly contributed to the British decision makers' fears of Germany, but would their reaction have been as strong had they not been already predisposed to believe the worst?

Ironically, the presence of specific disputes with France and Russia, and the absence of such disputes with Germany, help explain Britain's alignment with the former.[71] Crowe's argument on this point has a good deal of merit: with France and Russia there were "ancient and real sources of conflict, springing from imperfectly patched-up differences of past centuries, the inelastic stipulations of antiquated treaties, or the troubles incidental to unsettled colonial frontiers."[72] These required special efforts if they were not to lead to a rupture. Thus, "The Anglo-French *entente* had a very material basis and tangible object—namely, the adjustment of a number of actually—existing serious differences. The efforts now [January 1907] being made by England to arrive at an understanding with Russia are justified by a very similar situation. But for an Anglo-German understanding on the same lines

there is no room since none could be built up on the same foundation. . . . [T]here are no questions of any importance now at issue between the two countries. Any understanding must therefore be entirely different in object and scope."[73] The resulting problem was described in a minute by Crowe six months earlier: "With Germany we have no differences whatever. An understanding which does not consist in the removal of differences can only mean a plan of cooperation in political transactions, whether offensive, defensive, or for the maintenance of neutrality. It is difficult to see on what point such cooperation between England and Germany is at this moment appropriate."[74] Grey agreed: "There was nothing out of which [an Anglo-German] *entente* might be made. At present, there was nothing to discuss between the two Governments. . . . I regarded the relations between England and Germany as being now normal, and I saw no reason for saying anything about them."[75]

Around the turn of the century, England rejected several German overtures, largely on the ground that she did not want to enter into a general agreement that would link her to the continental alignments. Instead she opted for limited ententes which, she believed, would have fewer implications and leave her with fewer obligations. But the effect of this course of action was the same as that of the rejected alternative. In reply to a parliamentary question as to whether the negotiations with Russia involved "general political relationships," Grey said:

> The direct object of the negotiations is to prevent conflict and difficulties between the two Powers and in the part of Asia which affects the Indian frontier and the Russian frontiers in that region. If these negotiations result in an agreement, it will deal only with these questions. What the indirect result will be as regard general political relationships must depend on how such an agreement works in practice and what effect it has on public opinion in both countries.[76]

As we have seen, the crucial "indirect results" of the ententes depended in part on the British statesmen's failure to anticipate the effects of their policy, their lack of empathy with the German position, and the alarming inferences they drew from German behavior. This raises the question of whether this outcome would have occurred in the absence of these peculiarities of British statesmen and decision making. To reply in the negative is to stress the importance of factors that are, from the standpoint of the system, accidental. Obviously a definitive answer is impossible, but two points indicate that the British response was, at least in part, the product of the dynamics of the system. First, the British interpretation of and reaction to German behavior, although questionable in light of evidence available to later scholars, was not strikingly unusual. Statesmen often fail to understand how others see their own state's actions and underestimate the degree to which their behavior harms others.[77] Second, even had the British perceptions been more accurate, the initial decision to support France in the face of German opposition did align England with the former. Given the competition between

the Triple Alliance and its adversaries, it is not at all clear that England could have maintained good relations with both sides. A better British understanding of the situation might have led them to react a bit less sharply to the German hostility, but would not have altered the basic dilemma that to support France was to incur the wrath of France's enemies. Irrespective of the special problems of British decision making, there were strong pressures operating that made it likely that the system would be balanced.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to demonstrate that focusing on the international system and the patterns of interaction within it illuminates a great deal of international politics. Much of the complexity of international affairs and many of the problems of foreign policy making arise from the fact that policies operate in an interconnected environment in which the actors have diverse and conflicting goals. Thus, small issues can have great significance and minor acts can have major consequences. Often the results are not those expected by any of the statesmen. The interconnections are difficult to detect and susceptible to the divergent pressures of independent actors. Nevertheless, scholars can identify a number of common kinds of systems effects and specify some of the conditions under which they are likely to occur. Such analysis is both limited and useful. Useful because it is highly parsimonious. Because systems theory starts with the most important factors, it allows us to grasp a great deal of what is happening by looking at only a few causes or independent variables. It often gives us a baseline of expected behavior which both predicts and explains a lot of state action and also calls our attention to deviations that call for special analysis. The principles that provide the dynamics of the systems are fairly simple; and this makes the theories we have discussed manageable. But the ways that the dynamics work themselves out in any situation are usually complicated; and this is why it is so useful to employ the theories. Without them it is easy to get lost in a mass of confusing detail and miss the essentials.

But systems theories of the kind I have presented are also limited because they ignore domestic politics, personalities, and accidents. Even when the external pressures are strong, they may be resisted. For example, to explain the British behavior in the last week of July 1914, one must understand not only the international system but also the internal conflict. Although those who had been most active in setting British foreign policy in the previous years wanted to stand by the entente, others in the Cabinet disagreed, and the policy adopted had to satisfy both groups. In other cases, characteristics of individual decision makers matter. Some statesmen are skilled; some are blunderers. Some are very timid; others will run risks that any sensible per-

son would avoid. Sometimes the aberrant behavior has little long-run effect because it is counteracted by others. But, even when this is the case, the short-run impact—and the cost in resources and human lives—can be very high. And in other cases the behavior can produce ramifying changes whose effects will be felt for generations. Starting with a systems perspective helps us to see the patterns that stay the same as personalities and domestic politics change; but it is clear that these patterns are not always present, and so we must also be alert to the role of chance and contingency.

Notes

1. The best-know applications of systems theory to international relations are Morton Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957); Stanley Hoffmann, "International Systems and International Law," in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (eds.), *The International System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 205-237; and Richard Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963). For an excellent critique and the development of much better arguments, see Kenneth Waltz, *A Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979). For discussions of systems theory as a general approach, see Walter Buckley (ed.), *Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968); Howard Pattee (ed.), *Hierarchy Theory: The Challenge of Complex Systems* (New York: Braziller, 1973); John Sutherland, *A General Systems Philosophy for the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (New York: Braziller, 1973); Siegfried Nadel, *The Theory of Social Structure* (London: Cohen and West, 1957); C. H. Waddington, *Tools for Thought* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977); and W. Ross Ashby, *Design for a Brain* (New York: Wiley, 1952).
2. Herbert Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), p. 86.
3. Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 73.
4. Donald Reinken, "Computer Explorations of the 'Balance of Power,' " in Morton Kaplan (ed.), *New Approaches to International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), p. 469.
5. W. Ross Ashby, *Introduction to Cybernetics* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968).
6. Herbert Molly Mason, Jr., *The Rise of the Luftwaffe, 1918-1940* (New York: Dial Press, 1973), pp. 99-109.
7. Nobutaka Ike (ed.), *Japan's Decision for War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 237.
8. For a good discussion, see Marvine Howe, "Showdown in Lebanon, Again," *New York Times*, July 12, 1978.
9. Edward Ingram, "An Aspiring Buffer State: Anglo-Persian Relations in the Third Coalition, 1804-1807," *Historical Journal* 16 (September 1973): 509-533.
10. Paul Schroeder, "World War I as Galloping Gertie," *Journal of Modern History* 44 (September 1972): 337-338.

11. Ibid.
12. E. T. S. Dugdale (ed.), *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914*, vol 1, *The Bismarck Period* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), pp. 369-372.
13. Historical Office, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers 1935*, vol 1, *General, the Near East and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 168.
14. Akira Iriye, "The Role of the United States Embassy in Tokyo," in Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Ikamoto (eds.), *Pearl Harbor as History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 126.
15. Pattee, *Hierarchy Theory*, p. 23.
16. For a further discussion, see my "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31 (January 1979): 314-322. For an additional treatment of deterrence, see Paul Gordon Lauren's chapter in this book on bargaining.
17. Quoted in Keith Middlemas, *The Strategy of Appeasement* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1972), pp. 190-191. Debate on this point is usually at the heart of discussions on how to respond to aggression.
18. Lewis Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Pittsburgh: Boxwood Press, Chicago: Quadrangle, 1960), p. xxiv.
19. Waltz, *Theory of International Relations*, Chapter 4.
20. William Plowden, *The Motor Car and Politics, 1896-1970* (London: Bodley Head, 1971), p. 241.
21. David Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), pp. 113-207.
22. John Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 21-23.
23. Basil Liddell Hart, *Why Don't We Learn From History?* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1944), p. 39.
24. For an extended discussion, see my "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (January 1978): 167-214.
25. Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
26. Konrad Jarausch, "The Illusion of Limited War: Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg's Calculated Risk, July 1914," *Central European History* 2 (March 1969): 50. For more discussion of the outbreak of World War I, see the chapters by Ole Holsti and Samuel Williamson in this book.
27. Fischer, *World Power or Decline*, trans. by Lancelot Farrar, Robert Kimber, and Rita Kimber (New York: Norton, 1974). Fischer's main argument can be found in *War of Illusions*, trans. by Marian Jackson (New York: Norton, 1975).
28. Jay Forrester, *Urban Dynamics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969).
29. Frank Howley, *Berlin Command* (New York: Putnam's, 1950), pp. 202-203.
30. Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1968), pp. 75-81.
31. This usage stretches the technical definitions of feedback, which applies only in

hierarchical systems, but I think the meaning is close enough to merit my employment of the term.

32. U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Legislative Origins of the Truman Doctrine*, Hearings Held in Executive Session, Historical Series (executive hearings held in 1947 and made public in 1973), 80th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 160.
33. Quoted in Stephen Rosenfeld, "The Panama Negotiations—A Close-Run Thing," *Foreign Affairs* 54 (October 1975): 2.
34. Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval* (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 175–176, 143–144, 237–238.
35. The basic discussion of the problem is in Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).
36. Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 140.
37. Andrew Burn, *Alexander the Great* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), p. 45.
38. W. N. Medlicott, "Bismarck and the Three Emperors' Alliance, 1881-87," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 27 (1945): 67–68.
39. Herbert Dinerstein, "The Soviet Outlook: America, Europe, and China," in Robert Osgood et al., *Retreat from Empire?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 125. Of course, this was not America's intention. Indeed, a major reason for American restraint vis-à-vis China was the fear that the use of force against her would trigger Soviet involvement.
40. Bruce Waller, *Bismarck at the Crossroads* (London: Athlone, 1974), p. 44.
41. Kurt Rosenbaum, *Community of Fate* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1965), pp. 129, 145, 241.
42. Hedrick Smith, "Soviet Hints Mining Fosters Cooperation with China to Aid Hanoi," *New York Times*, May 18, 1972.
43. Harrison Salisbury, "China 'Quite Unhappy' with Carter over Taiwan, a Top Leader Says," *New York Times*, August 30, 1977.
44. George Monger, *The End of Isolation* (London: Nelson, 1963), pp. 177–178. For more discussion of alliances in general, see Roger Dingman's chapter in this book.
45. Quoted in C. J. Lowe and M. L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, vol. 1, *British Foreign Policy, 1902–14* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 25.
46. Ibid.
47. Germany feared Austria's disintegration more than her defection. But the effect was the same.
48. Kenneth Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964): 900–902; Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 429–450.
49. There is a large literature on consistency in psychology. For a summary see Robert Zajonc, "Cognitive Theories in Social Psychology," in Gardner Lindzey and Elliott Aronson (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968 ed.), I: 345–353. A good discussion of consistency in small groups is in Howard Taylor, *Balance in Small Groups* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold,

1970). Applications to international politics are presented by Frank Harary, "A Structural Analysis of the Situation in the Middle East in 1956," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 5 (June 1961): 167–178, and Brian Healy and Arthur Stein, "The Balance of Power in International History," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17 (March 1973): 33–62.

50. Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill*, vol. 3, *1914–1916, The Challenge of War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p. 200. The problem, however, was that the Balkans were rife with local conflicts and so, as we will discuss below, it was unlikely that all these states would fight on the same side.
51. James Morley, "Introduction," in James Morley (ed.), *Deterrent Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 188.
52. Great Britain, Foreign Office, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, 11 vols., ed. by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, vol. 4, *The Anglo-Russian Rapprochement, 1903–7* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), p. 245. [Hereafter cited as Britain, *British Documents on the Origins of the War.*]
53. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 3, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), p. 370.
54. Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder*, p. 197.
55. Charles Maier, "Introduction," in George Kistiakowsky, *A Scientist in the White House* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. xxi.
56. Quoted in Lewis Namier, *In the Nazi Era* (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 171.
57. This analysis also holds if all states are of relatively equal power, in which case the line between gaining freedom of action and limiting losses disappears.
58. George Modelski, "Kautilya," *American Political Science Review* 58 (September 1964): 554–557.
59. Quoted in Peter Dennis, *Decision by Default* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1972), p. 58.
60. Quoted in N. H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 1, *Rearmament Policy* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976), pp. 394–395.
61. Waller, *Bismarck at the Crossroads*, p. 23.
62. Ibid,. p. 202. See also p. 133.
63. Keith Sandiford, *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1975).
64. Gordon Craig, *War, Politics, and Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 153–178.
65. Arthur Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power* (New York: Knopf, 1940).
66. Waller, *Bismarck at the Crossroads*, p. 242. Again, the short-run success of Bismarck's policy may have been outweighed by the long-term results. "Russo-German relations," Waller states, "were strained and the hand of those most suspicious of Germany was strengthened....The price paid for an Austro-German united front against Russia in the armaments question was increased, or at least sustained, Austrian suspicion of Germany and her eastern neighbour."
67. Pierre Guillen, "The Entente of 1904 as a Colonial Settlement," in Prosser Gif-

ford and William Roger Lewis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 365. See also Monger, *The End of Isolation*, pp. 158-159.

68. Quoted in A. J. Anthony Morris, *Radicalism Against War, 1906-1914* (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 46.
69. Britain, *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol. 3, *The Testing of the Entente, 1904-06* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 263.
70. "Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany," January 1, 1907, printed in ibid., p. 402.
71. Most Anglo-German disputes were viewed by both sides as aspects and indicators of the general state of their relations, and not as problems that could be fruitfully dealt with in isolation.
72. Britain, *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol 3, *The Testing of the Entente, 1904-06*, p. 408.
73. Ibid., p. 418.
74. Ibid., p. 358.
75. Ibid., p. 361.
76. Quoted in Morris, *Radicalism Against War*, p. 65.
77. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 70-74, 354-355.

10
Theories of, and Approaches to, Alliance Politics

Roger V. Dingman

THE QUESTION OF HOW TO STUDY ALLIANCES does not lend itself to an easy answer. Although I have spent some years in doing so, I cannot provide a checklist of what one should do in analyzing either alliances in general or a particular alliance. Instead, I propose to offer in this chapter some reflections, based on my own experience, which may be of use to other scholars. My thoughts concern three broad issues: the limitations of much of the existing literature on the theory of alliance; the historian's need for a working conceptual understanding of alliances; and the relative utility of various methods, new and old, for analyzing alliances.

Theories, Approaches, and Their Limitations

Perhaps I can best begin by recalling an incident that occurred at Stanford University several years ago. In giving a talk on the 1951 alliance between Japan and the United States, I proposed a definition of alliance, and then analyzed the formation of this particular one. When I had finished speaking, a distinguished philosopher in the audience offered some advice. "Drop that definition," he counseled, "and just proceed with your story." When I asked why, he responded with a paradox. "Everyone," he said, "knows what an alliance is; but no two scholars or editors can agree on a definition. Yours might well prejudice those who must pass on the merits of your work against it."

At the time I thought such advice politically wise but somehow intellectually unsound. But after examining relatively recent works of historians and international relations theorists, I came to the conclusion that my philosopher friend had spoken a truth of sorts. Rare, indeed, was the historian who attempted to define an alliance. One of the most distinguished European