

# Let Us Now Praise Great Men

Bringing the Statesman Back In

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In January 1762, Prussia hovered on the brink of disaster. Despite the masterful generalship of Frederick the Great, the combined forces of France, Austria, and Russia had gradually worn down the Prussian army in six years of constant warfare. Austrian armies had marched deep into Saxony and Silesia, and the Russians had even sacked Berlin. Frederick's defeat appeared imminent, and the enemy coalition intended to partition Prussia to reduce it to the status of a middle German state no more powerful than Bavaria or Saxony. And then a miracle occurred. The Prusso-phobic Czarina Elizabeth unexpectedly died, only to be succeeded by her son Peter, who idolized the soldier-king. Immediately Peter made peace with Frederick and ordered home the Russian armies. This reversal paralyzed the French and Austrians and allowed Frederick to rally his forces. Although Peter was soon ousted by his wife, Catherine, the allied armies never regained their advantage. In the end, Frederick held them off and kept Prussia intact.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick's triumph in the Seven Years' War was essential to Prussia's eventual unification of Germany and all that followed from it. Conceiving of European history today without this victory is impossible. It is equally impossible to conceive of Prussian victory in 1763 without the death of Elizabeth and Peter's adoration of Frederick. In the words of Christopher Duffy, "It is curious to reflect that if one lady had lived for a very few weeks longer, historians would by now have analyzed in most convincing detail the reasons for a collapse as 'inevitable' as that which overtook the Sweden of Charles XII."<sup>2</sup> In short, had it not been for the idiosyncrasies of one man and one woman, European history would look very, very different.

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1. Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great: A Military Life* (New York: Routledge, 1985), pp. 226–243; and Dennis E. Showalter, *The Wars of Frederick the Great* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 309–320.
  2. Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, p. 233.

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The story of Prussia's reprieve is, admittedly, an extreme example of the role that individuals play in international relations, but such influence is by no means exceptional—far from it. How can we explain twentieth-century history without reference to Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, or Mao Zedong? Nor would any policymaker in any capital try to explain the world today without recourse to the personal goals and beliefs of Bill Clinton, Vladimir Putin, Jiang Zemin, and Saddam Hussein, among others. Indeed the policymaking community in Washington takes it as an article of faith that who is the prime minister of Great Britain, the chancellor of Germany, or the king of Saudi Arabia has real repercussions for the United States and the rest of the world. As Henry Kissinger remarked, "As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make."<sup>3</sup>

For these reasons, the tendency of scholars to ignore the role of personalities in international relations is particularly troubling. Most political scientists, when pressed, will admit to the importance of personal idiosyncrasies and human error in determining the course of international relations. Most will further concede that because they do not attempt to explain the roles of either human error or personality in international relations, they cannot explain all of the variance in the affairs of nations.

However, political scientists most frequently have argued that they must set aside both *fortuna* and *virtú*, and instead focus only on impersonal forces as the causes of international events. Their reasons for doing so fall under three rubrics. First, many political scientists contend that individuals ultimately do not matter, or at least they count for little in the major events that shape international politics. Instead they argue that the roar of the anarchic system, domestic politics, and institutional dynamics drown out the small voices of individual leaders. Second, other political scientists posit that although individuals may matter from time to time, their influence does not lend itself to the generalizations that political scientists seek. Simply put, individuals are too individualistic. Third, several leading international relations theorists have raised a number of specific objections that they argue render the study of individuals theoretically hopeless.

We believe that political scientists are simultaneously too modest and too arrogant in these claims. Too modest because political scientists need not throw

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3. A background talk with reporters in January 1975, as quoted in Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 13.

up their hands and believe that they have nothing useful to say about the role of individuals in international relations. The theoretical objections raised over the years do not stand up under closer examination and should not prevent us from mining this rich ore. Too arrogant because too many political scientists imply or assert that the impersonal forces on which they focus their attention explain the vast majority of events in international relations. In so doing, they marginalize the crucial impact of individuals on war and diplomacy and neglect the extent to which social science can tease out useful generalizations regarding the role played by individuals.

It is time to rescue men and women, as individuals, from the oblivion to which political scientists have consigned them. This article is not intended as a comprehensive account of the importance of individuals—such an effort would require the work of many lifetimes—but it is intended to question scholars' current assumptions about international politics and show the plausibility of analyzing international relations by focusing on the role of individuals.

What is the impact of individuals on international relations? What aspects of state behavior do they affect? Under what conditions are they influential? These are the questions this article seeks to answer. We contend that the goals, abilities, and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state. Indeed individuals not only affect the actions of their own states but also shape the reactions of other nations, which must respond to the aspirations, abilities, and aggressiveness of foreign leaders. Of course, individuals matter more to international relations under certain circumstances. Individual personalities take on added significance when power is concentrated in the hands of a leader, when institutions are in conflict, or in times of great change. Individuals also shape many of the drivers identified by other theorists, such as the balance of power, domestic opinion, and bureaucratic politics. These paradigms suffer when individuals are ignored.

This article has four parts. We first rebut the specific, theoretical arguments denigrating the utility of theories of the impact of individuals on international relations. We then counter the argument that individuals do not have a significant impact on international events by examining five historical cases that show that the role of individuals was crucial to the outcome of each. We next refute the argument that it is impossible to generate hypotheses regarding the role of individuals, by teasing out plausible, testable hypotheses from the cases in the previous section. We conclude by noting how the study of individuals enriches our understanding of international relations.

### *Rebutting the Theoretical Objections*

The study of individuals has not been attacked so much as ignored by international relations theorists. This is not to say that no work has been done on this topic. At least since the time of Aristotle, scholars have tried to explain politics in terms of individual behavior. Indeed classical realist thinkers such as Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Hans Morgenthau all explicitly acknowledge the impact of individual personalities on international relations. Since then, however, work on individuals in political science has generally been left to psychologists, historians, and area studies specialists.<sup>4</sup> These scholars have produced many excellent studies on the importance of individuals, but they have not treated the subject in a systematic fashion that would help answer the general questions of when and how individuals affect international relations. These works provide a foundation on which to build, but as they are, they remain incomplete.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Other useful work for understanding the role of individuals in international relations comes from historians and area studies experts. Fred I. Greenstein has published an exemplary work demonstrating how the personality traits of postwar presidents have shaped U.S. foreign policy. See Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton* (New York: Free Press, 2000). See also James M. Goldgeier, *Leadership Style and Soviet Foreign Policy: Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); and David Shambaugh, ed., *Deng Xiaoping: Portrait of a Chinese Statesman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Daniel Markey has written an interesting study of how individuals' desire for prestige affects international relations. Markey, "The Prestige Motive in International Relations," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2000.

5. Political psychologists and political scientists drawing on their insights also devote considerable attention to the biases and perceptions that may shape human behavior, paying particular attention to the behavior of leaders and elites in general. See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976). Three valuable examples of works on leaders and perceptions are Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Paul Hart, Eric K. Stern, and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *Beyond Groupthink: Political Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy-making* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); and Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1980). For an interesting work comparing the role of new leaders on the formulation of public policy, see Valerie Bunce, *Do New Leaders Make a Difference?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981). A good summary of literature on leadership can be found in Robert J. House and Mary L. Baetz, "Leadership: Some Empirical Generalizations and New Research Directions," in L.L. Cummings and Barry M. Staw, eds., *Leadership, Participation, and Group Behavior* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1990), pp. 1–84. Other important works include Harold D. Lasswell, *The Analysis of Political Behaviour: An Empirical Approach* (London: Kegan Paul, 1947); Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: Dover, 1964); and Harold D. Lasswell and Daniel Lerner, eds., *World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965). For a sample of more recent interesting works on individual decision-making, see Scott Plous, *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993); and Herbert C. Kelman, *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965). For an interesting assessment of different views of the individ-

One exception to political scientists' neglect of individuals is Kenneth Waltz's seminal work, *Man, the State, and War*. Waltz famously outlines three levels of analysis, calling them "images" of international relations. In the first image, the behavior of nations springs from the behavior of individuals. Waltz's second image considers the behavior of nations to be driven by their internal organization, positing that different kinds of governments and social structures produce different kinds of international behavior. Finally, the third image contends that the behavior of nations is driven by their relative position—in terms of both power and geography—in an anarchic international system.<sup>6</sup>

Although Waltz is unusual in even considering the first image, he nonetheless rejects it. Waltz, and those following in his tradition, believe that the third image best explains international relations—or the most important elements of it, such as the causes of great power wars and alliances.<sup>7</sup> Champions of the third image have many critics. Nevertheless, even scholars who challenge Waltz's focus on the third image generally do so in the name of second-image factors, such as bureaucracy, culture, and political systems. Thus even Waltz's critics neglect the first image.<sup>8</sup>

OBJECTION 1: THE FIRST IMAGE CANNOT PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BECAUSE HUMAN NATURE IS A CONSTANT, WHEREAS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS VARY

In *Man, the State, and War*, Waltz argues that if human nature is constant, the behavior of nations—the example he employs is war making—should also be

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ual throughout history, see Janet Coleman, ed., *The Individual in Political Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). For works that assess when personality factors should be examined to explain political outcomes, see Fred I. Greenstein, *Personality and Politics* (Chicago: Markham, 1969); Fred I. Greenstein, "The Impact of Personality on Politics: An Attempt to Clear Away the Underbrush," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (September 1967), pp. 629–641; Margaret Hermann, "When Leader Personality Will Affect Foreign Policy: Some Propositions," in James Rosenau, ed., *In Search of Global Patterns* (New York: Free Press, 1976), pp. 326–333; and Margaret Hermann, "Leaders and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," in Dan Caldwell and Timothy J. McKeown, eds., *Diplomacy, Force, and Leadership* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), pp. 77–94.

6. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), especially pp. 16, 80–81, 159–165.

7. In his words, only a theory drawn from the third image can offer a "a final explanation because it does not hinge on accidental causes—irrationalities in men, defects in states." *Ibid.*, pp. 231–232. See also pp. 224–238; and Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 60–68.

8. For example, the world system, domestic politics ("second image"), and other mainstream approaches also slight the importance of individuals. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For an example of the second image as

constant. That is, nations should always be at war. Because nations are not always at war, Waltz claims that human nature cannot possibly explain why nations go to war.<sup>9</sup> On this point, Waltz is simply mistaken: Human nature is not a constant; it is a variable. By defining the first image solely in terms of an inefable quality shared among all humans, Waltz has constructed a straw man. Not all men and women are entirely evil, aggressive, greedy, or vainglorious. A few are, but a few others are wholly generous, humble, and restrained. The vast majority of humans, however, possess a mix of traits. Thus “human nature” entails a tremendous range of variance. Properly understood, the first image should generate theories derived from the distribution of these traits across the population and their impact on international relations.

As soon as one recognizes that personalities vary widely, Waltz’s criticism of the first image becomes unconvincing. Because personalities differ, it is entirely possible that variance in the traits of individuals explains differences in international relations. For instance, although not all wars have been caused by aggressive, risk-tolerant, greedy, or vainglorious leaders, those leaders who did manifest these traits regularly went to war—often for seemingly absurd reasons, and often more than once. Indeed leaders most notorious for these traits, such as Louis XIV, Peter the Great, Frederick the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III, Wilhelm II, Benito Mussolini, and Hitler, have fomented some of the greatest conflicts in modern European history.<sup>10</sup>

OBJECTION 2: THEORIES FOCUSED ON THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUALS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CANNOT BE PARSIMONIOUS

In his book *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz claims that parsimony must be an important criterion for judging the value of a theory.<sup>11</sup> He argues that the

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related to democracies, see Michael Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (December 1986), pp. 1151–1169.

9. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, pp. 27–30. As an example, on page 28, he claims that human nature cannot explain the outbreak of war in 1914 because the same human nature that conceived World War I must have caused peace in, for example, 1910.

10. We recognize a likely selection bias in this claim: It may be that there were leaders who did possess these traits but did not go to war, and therefore the fact that they did possess these traits was not well known beyond their intimates, and perhaps their biographers. We believe that a more rigorous analysis of this claim is warranted.

11. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, especially pp. 19–20. We note that Waltz has retreated from his earlier defense of parsimony in his more recent work. For instance, in 1997 he observed that “the explanatory power of a theory, not its parsimony, is the criterion of a theory’s success.” Kenneth N. Waltz, “International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn 1996), p. 57.

more closely a model approximates reality, the more variables it will include; therefore a realistic theory will be less parsimonious and thus less useful.<sup>12</sup> First, we contend that it is possible to derive elegant theories from the first image—a challenge we answer in the third section of this article. Of greater relevance, however, we dismiss the contention that parsimony is somehow more important than accuracy when deriving political science theory. The field of international relations is an effort to explain the interaction of states and, ultimately, predict their behavior. Consequently, realism (with a small “R”) is the best, and perhaps the only, determinant of the utility of a theory: How well does the theory actually explain behavior and allow us to predict future actions? Creating parsimonious models may be useful for illustrative or heuristic purposes, but this is, at best, several steps removed from the actual goals of the discipline. A massive model with hundreds of variables that took a month to run but predicted international behavior perfectly would be far more useful by any measure than a model with only a single variable that could illustrate only occasional tendencies and only in badly underspecified circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

OBJECTION 3: STATE INTENTIONS ARE NOT GERMANE TO THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Many proponents of the third image acknowledge that individual leaders often have a heavy influence on state goals.<sup>14</sup> Because they believe that state intentions are not necessary to the construction of a theory of international politics, however, any impact that individual personalities may have in this sphere is likewise irrelevant. Instead they claim that all states are functionally equivalent, and therefore their intentions are irrelevant because they all have the same primary or “dominant” goal, namely their own security.<sup>15</sup> Even the most benign state is not certain how other states will act, either now or in the future, and thus must take steps to defend itself.<sup>16</sup>

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12. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 19–20, 61–68.

13. This is not to suggest that parsimony is not desirable. Undoubtedly, a parsimonious theory is better than a complicated theory, all other things being equal. When all other things are not equal, as is usually the case, we prefer an accurate complexity over an inaccurate parsimony.

14. In his defense, Waltz himself recognizes this. See, for example, Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, p. 218.

15. Again, the best statement of these views is Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 91–101; and Kenneth N. Waltz, “Evaluating Theories,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (December 1997), p. 915.

16. The definitive expression of this is Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), p. 168. Joseph M. Grieco argues that cooperation will

The assertion about the essential irrelevance of actor preferences is empirically weak and (again demonstrating the danger of overly parsimonious models) analytically misleading. For example, Stephen Walt's work on alliance formation demonstrates that, by omitting state intentions, Waltz's argument that alliance formation is based purely on the distribution of power poorly predicts actual alliance patterns.<sup>17</sup> Other scholars have established the importance of the distinction between "status quo" states—those nations content with the state of affairs as they are—and "revisionist" states—those unhappy with the current state of affairs and willing to change it. Revisionist states want more territory, influence, prestige, or other objectives that are not always directly related to their security. They may go to war or otherwise disrupt the international system even when they are secure. At times, they may even jeopardize their security to pursue these aims.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, status quo states are able to assure potential rivals of their benign intentions—thus preventing uncertainty and misunderstanding from escalating into war. This allows status quo states to take steps, such as keeping their defense budgets low, even though this would endanger their security in a world that followed structural realist precepts. In short, state intentions are a critical factor in international relations and, to the extent that individual personalities shape those intentions, they too must be considered important.

### *Individuals Matter: Lessons from History*

Individuals play a central role in shaping international relations, including the causes of war, alliance patterns, and other areas that international relations scholars consider important. To demonstrate this claim—and to provide the historical foundation on which we build testable hypotheses in the next section—we draw on five cases: (1) Germany under Hitler; (2) the contrasting impact of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II on European politics; (3) France under Napoleon Bonaparte; (4) a comparison of Iraq under

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fail as a result of these dynamics. See Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 45.

17. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

18. Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72–107; Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. 90–121; and Arnold Wolfers, "The Balance of Power in Theory and Practice," in Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), especially p. 124.

Saddam Hussein and Syria under Hafiz al-Asad; and (5) the behavior of Iran in its war with Iraq under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

We chose these cases according to several criteria. They demonstrate the importance of individuals regardless of political system, period of time, or region of the world. They highlight particular aspects of the impact of individual leaders on international relations. Each case also suggests theories derived from the first image related to some of the most fundamental questions of international relations theory of the last thirty years: the causes of war, the formation of alliances, and the likelihood of cooperation under anarchy, to name only a few.<sup>19</sup>

#### ADOLF HITLER

The personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies of Adolf Hitler led to the deaths of millions and changed the history of the world. Hitler's unique pathologies were the single most important factor in causing both World War II in Europe (at least in the sense of the continent-wide total war that ensued) and Germany's eventual defeat. Hitler defied both domestic opposition and systemic logic in igniting World War II, leading Germany to astonishing victories, visiting unimaginable misery on the world, and then causing the collapse of the empire he had built. Understanding international relations during the 1930s and 1940s is impossible without grasping the impact of Hitler himself.

Germany after World War I was clearly a revisionist state, but Hitler's ambitions far exceeded those of the people he led. The German people detested the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Most believed that Germany should rearm, regain its pre-Versailles territory in the east, and demand integration with Austria and the German-populated Sudetenland.<sup>20</sup> However, though revisionism was the *Zeitgeist* in interwar Germany, European hegemony and global domination were not. The vast majority of Germans had lost any inclination toward military expansion after living through the horrors of World War I. Although

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19. A caveat is in order regarding our case selection. This article does not seek to *test* first-image theories of international relations. Instead it seeks to generate testable hypotheses to demonstrate that the first image is a valid line of inquiry for international relations scholars. Consequently, we have chosen "easy" cases—cases in which the individual's influence is self-evident, even to the point of obviousness—rather than "hard" cases or a random sample.

20. Most Germans had accepted the loss of Alsace-Lorraine because they recognized that these territories could not be recovered without fighting a major war with France. Gordon A. Craig, *Germany: 1866–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 674; Klaus Hildebrand, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich*, trans. Anthony Fothergill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 29–37; and Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 309–310.

many Germans wanted to revise the Treaty of Versailles, few were willing to wage another major war to do so.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, on September 27, 1938, when Hitler mobilized the German army to attack Czechoslovakia, the Berlin crowds turned their backs on the German troops marching through the streets of the capital.<sup>22</sup>

Nor were most German elites sympathetic to Hitler's aspirations. Even most of the mainstream nationalist parties and the army high command—among the most bellicose groups in Germany—wanted only to restore their country to its pre-1914 status. Although they were probably more willing than the average German to use force to achieve these goals, the great majority were equally chary of another major war and had no aspirations to continental mastery.<sup>23</sup> On the uniqueness of Hitler's aspirations, Gordon Craig has written: "Adolf Hitler was *sui generis*, a force without a real historical past . . . dedicated to the acquisition of power for his own gratification and to the destruction of a people whose existence was an offence to him and whose annihilation would be his crowning triumph. Both the grandiose barbarism of his political vision and the moral emptiness of his character make it impossible to compare him in any meaningful way with any other German leader. He stands alone."<sup>24</sup>

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21. Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, pp. 328, 403; Kenneth Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster: The Fatal Flaws of German Generalship from Moltke to Guderian* (London: Greenhill, 1996), pp. 72–75; Ernest R. May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), pp. 15–110; Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp. 9–10, 298–305; Richard Overy with Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Road to War*, rev. and updated ed. (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 41; A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Atheneum, 1983), pp. 58–59; Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938–1939* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), pp. 30, 33, 38–39, 105; and Gordon Wright, *The Ordeal of Total War, 1939–1945* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), p. 7. We have purposely included citations from Taylor not despite, but because of, his apologies for Hitler to demonstrate the strength of our arguments.

22. Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, abridged ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p. 268.

23. Ian Kershaw provides the definitive contemporary assessment of how Hitler's foreign policy diverged from the revisionist aspirations of other German elites in Kershaw, "Nazi Foreign Policy: Hitler's 'Programme' or 'Expansion without Object'?" reprinted in Patrick Finney, ed., *Origins of the Second World War* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 129–135. See also Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, pp. 176, 233–240, 258–259, 268; Craig, *Germany*, pp. 679, 693, 697–699; Hildebrand, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich*, pp. 24–37; Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 339; Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster*; May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 15–110, 215–232; Overy with Wheatcroft, *Road to War*, pp. 40–41, 48–49, 53, 71; Wright, *Ordeal of Total War*, p. 7; Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 104–105; and Corelli Barnett, ed., *Hitler's Generals* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1989).

24. Craig, *Germany*, p. 543. Craig's view is the consensus among contemporary historians. Both the Taylor/Fischer revisionist school (Hitler was no different from other German statesmen) and the functionalist school (Nazi foreign policy stemmed from domestic pressures) have been effectively discredited. See Patrick Finney, "Introduction: History Writing and the Origins of the Second World War," and "Commentary," in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 4–7, 41–42; the response by Richard Overy to Tim Mason, reprinted in "Debate: Germany, 'Domestic Crisis,' and War in 1939," in *ibid.*, pp. 99–109; and especially Kershaw, "Nazi Foreign Policy," pp. 121–144.

For their part, Britain and France did not want war with Germany and were prepared to make considerable sacrifices (in terms of both their own relative security and other people's territory) to appease Berlin. Public opinion in Britain during the interwar years was sympathetic to Germany, believing that the terms of the peace had been overly harsh. Moreover, the possibility of a World War I-like bloodbath terrified Britain, and London was willing to write off considerable portions of Eastern Europe to avert another one.<sup>25</sup> Although the French were less sympathetic to German aspirations, they were equally afraid of another continental war and thus were willing to give in to at least some German demands for revisions to the Versailles treaty, including demands for territory in the east. In addition, to the extent that France contemplated using military force against Germany, it was unwilling to do so without Britain's full participation.<sup>26</sup> For these reasons, the French and British acquiesced to German rearmament after 1933, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the *Anschluss* with Austria, and the occupation of *Sudeten* Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the evidence indicates that Britain and France would not have gone to war to prevent German reoccupation of the Polish corridor.<sup>27</sup> In short, Britain and France were

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25. Sidney Aster, "'Guilty Men': The Case of Neville Chamberlain," in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 62–64, 66–70; Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, pp. 269, 293; David Dilks, "'We Must Hope for the Best and Prepare for the Worst': The Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and Hitler's Germany, 1937–1939," in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 52–53; Finney, "Introduction," pp. 13–16; Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, pp. 290–307, 340–342; May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 169–212; Overy with Wheatcroft, *Road to War*, pp. 52, 73–120; R.A.C. Parker, "Alternatives to Appeasement," in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 211–220; Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. xi–xii, 34, 45–46, 58, 68, 74–77, 94–95, 99–100, 135–136, 160, 165, 189, 227–228; and Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 27–29, 83–84, 168, 385–386.

26. Anthony Adamthwaite, "France and the Coming of War," in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 78–90; Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, pp. 296–298; May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 6, 113–160; Stephen A. Schuker, "France and the Remilitarization of the Rhineland," in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 224–227, 238–239; Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 73–76, 91, 98–100, 155, 188; and Wright, *Ordeal of Total War*, p. 8. Taylor concludes that ultimately "the French were therefore willing to surrender everything [to Germany] except their own security." Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*, p. 188. See also Finney, "Introduction," pp. 17–20.

27. Beginning at Locarno in 1925, British and French statesmen repeatedly made clear that they would not go to war over the Polish corridor *per se*. Right up to the German invasion, they continued to believe that the "question of Danzig" should not be a *casus belli*—and encouraged Polish concessions to Germany on Danzig in hope of forestalling a war. The British and French guarantees to Poland in 1939 had committed the Allies to fight for Polish independence, but neither London nor Paris had guaranteed every inch of Polish territory, specifically meaning Danzig. Their decision to go to war to defend Poland in September 1939 was not based on any change of heart regarding Danzig. Rather it was a reaction to Germany's invasion of all of Poland, demonstrating that Hitler was determined to make Germany the hegemon of Europe under his leadership. See Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, p. 293; Anna M. Cienciala, "Poland in British and French Policy, 1939: Determination to Fight—or Avoid War?" in Finney, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 414–415, 417–426, 428–429; Dilks, "'We Must Hope for the Best and Prepare for the Worst,'" p. 53; Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 311; May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 198–212; Overy with Wheatcroft,

willing to swallow hard and accept virtually any German demands—short of granting Berlin a hegemonic position in Europe or ceding their own territory—as long as they believed that by doing so they could avert a war. Consequently, Germany should have been able to achieve the moderate revisionist goals espoused by most Germans without sparking a general European war. Only Hitler's personal ambitions made such a conflict unavoidable.

Thus World War II, at least in the sense of the global conflagration that eventually ignited, was caused by the unique aspirations of Adolf Hitler, not by the widespread German desire to revise the order established at Versailles in 1918. The outbreak of World War II was prompted by the German invasion of Poland—a country that few Germans were willing to risk war with Britain and France to remove from the map of Europe. Moreover, the British and French did not go to war for Polish sovereignty per se, but only because they saw the German attack on Poland (and the earlier occupation of Bohemia in violation of the 1938 Munich agreement) as incontrovertible proof that Hitler would not be satisfied with modest revisions of the postwar peace, but instead was determined to make himself master of all Europe.<sup>28</sup>

Hitler's personal role in the course of world politics did not end with the start of war between Germany and the Western Allies. Instead he relentlessly pushed Germany down the road to annihilation. Every step of the way, the decision to act was effectively Hitler's alone, taken despite the opposition of whatever independent voices still existed. Indeed the army high command consistently opposed Hitler's foreign adventures until it was ultimately battered into submission. Hitler also made sure that all other opposing voices were stilled or subverted. Thus the opposition parties, the foreign ministry, and ultimately even the army were all brought under his control, leaving German decisionmaking entirely in his hands.<sup>29</sup>

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*Road to War*, pp. 14–17, 113, 119; Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 38, 54, 59–60, 194–199, 207–212, 213–221, 238, 249–252, 264–265, 270–273; and Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 59, 69, 186, 320–321. In Taylor's words, during the August 1939 crisis, "[Britain, France, and Italy] were convinced that Danzig was not worth a war; all three were agreed that it should return to Germany, with safeguards for Polish trade." Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*, p. 252.

28. Adamthwaite, "France and the Coming of War," pp. 84–87; Aster, "Guilty Men," pp. 64–65, 72–73; Cienciala, "Poland in British and French Policy," pp. 418–421; Dilks, "We Must Hope for the Best and Prepare for the Worst," p. 53; Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 410; May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 291–308; Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, p. 9; Overy with Wheatcroft, *Road to War*, pp. 15–17; Taylor, *Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 205–214, 249–252, 264–265, 270–273; and Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 168–169, 186, 385–386, 509–510.

29. Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, pp. 233–240, 258–259, 268, 321–325; Kershaw, "Nazi Foreign Policy," pp. 121–144; and Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 20–21, 24–25, 255, 441. In particular, on the

Hitler's decision to invade France in 1940 propelled Germany and the world further down the road to total war. Given the terror of the British and French of becoming involved in another major war with Germany, it is not clear what they would have done had Germany not attacked France. The stalemate that prevailed along the Rhine from October 1939 to May 1940 suggests that they might ultimately have acceded to Germany's conquest of Poland.<sup>30</sup> Hitler, however, was determined to destroy France to remove it as an obstacle to his plans for expansion in the east.<sup>31</sup> Once again, he was opposed by the senior army leadership, who believed that German troops would be unlikely to achieve the same success against the French army, then considered the most powerful force on the continent.<sup>32</sup> But Hitler insisted on attacking and turning "phony war" into total war.

Hitler's next, and most self-destructive, step was attacking Russia. Once again, this was essentially his idea alone, taken over the opposition of his generals (including even his most pliant lackeys such as Hermann Göring, Wilhelm Keitel, and Alfred Jodl), who unanimously believed that Germany should not attack Russia—and certainly not until Britain had sued for peace.<sup>33</sup> The attack on Russia marked the beginning of the end for Hitler's *Reich*. Although there is still much debate over whether Germany could have defeated Russia had the German generals been given a free hand to fight the war as they

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army's efforts to oppose Hitler's foreign policies and his ultimately successful efforts to subvert the officer corps, see Barnett, *Hitler's Generals*; Matthew Cooper, *The German Army, 1933–1945* (Lanham, Md.: Scarborough House, 1990); Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster*, pp. 65, 79–80, 132–134; and Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, pp. 23–24.

30. Even after declaring war in September 1939, there was no discussion in Paris of an offensive against Germany. Overy with Wheatcroft, *Road to War*, p. 15; May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 271–336; A.J.P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (New York: Vintage, 1967), pp. 264–266; and Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 330–332. The German general staff was also convinced that the French and British would not take the offensive and would eventually accede to the German conquests if Berlin refrained from attacking France. See Cooper, *The German Army*, p. 180.

31. Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, pp. 204, 296, 319; Craig, *Germany*, p. 677; Hildebrand, "The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich," p. 88; Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's World View* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 37–38; Taylor, *Bismarck*, pp. 131–132; Wright, *Ordeal of Total War*, p. 6; and Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 42–43.

32. On German army opposition to the invasion of France, see Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, pp. 233, 321–325; Cooper, *The German Army*, pp. 178–182; Craig, *Germany*, pp. 716–717; Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster*, pp. 79–80; and May, *Strange Victory*, pp. 15–27. Indeed Cooper notes that even Keitel—Hitler's worst lackey among the generals—objected to the attack on France.

33. Cooper, *The German Army*, pp. 246–258, 286; Kenneth Macksey, "Guderian," in Barnett, *Hitler's Generals*, pp. 451–452; Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster*, pp. 132–134; and Bernd Wegner, "The Road to Defeat: The German Campaigns in Russia, 1941–1943," in John Gooch, ed., *Decisive Campaigns of the Second World War* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), pp. 107–108. There were some German generals, including the chief of staff, who were not opposed to the idea of attacking Russia in the abstract, but only after the war with Britain had been won. See Cooper, *The German Army*, pp. 252–256.

wished, there is no dissent that it was the Red Army that eventually destroyed the *Wehrmacht* and sealed Hitler's fate.

Here as well, it is interesting to consider what might have happened had Germany not attacked Russia in 1941, which would likely have been the case (given the unanimous opposition of the general staff) had Hitler not been in charge. Even assuming that the United States had joined the war that December, it is at best unclear whether the Anglo-Saxon powers could have found a way to get ashore and defeat the *Wehrmacht* in Western Europe without the Red Army pinning down two-thirds of the German military.<sup>34</sup> Against a German *Reich* possessing most of the resources of continental Europe, a Cold War between Britain and Germany seems the most likely outcome, leaving Germany the hegemon of Europe.

Just as Hitler was the most important cause of World War II, and the most important factor in the vast, sudden expansion of the German *Reich*, so too was he the most important cause of Germany's defeat.<sup>35</sup> As recent work such as Richard Overy's superb analysis of Allied victory makes clear, German strategic- and operational-level defeats were the decisive factor in the destruction of the *Wehrmacht*. Allied material strength—and the growth in the ability of the Allied armed forces to wield that strength—played an important role, but only the German failures at Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kursk made it possible for the Allies to bring that material strength to bear. In each of these instances, Hitler deserves the lion's share of the blame for defeat.<sup>36</sup> Even after Hitler lost these crucial battles, he insisted on retaining command and greatly hastened Allied victory by leading superb German armies to defeat after defeat. Despite a

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34. Accounts of the Normandy invasion, such as Overy's superb analysis, make clear just how dicey an operation it was, and how much harder it would have been if the *Wehrmacht* had been able to concentrate its forces in France. See Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, pp. 134–179.

35. In October 1941, Stalin put out diplomatic feelers to see what surrender terms he might get from Germany. Hitler brushed these entreaties aside because nothing short of the destruction of the Soviet state and the enslavement of the Russian people would satisfy his objectives. We do not know what concessions Stalin might have been willing to make, but given the military balance at the time and the German advances up to that point, the two sides might have agreed on a settlement similar to the 1917 Brest-Litovsk treaty, in which Lenin conceded the Ukraine, Belarussia, and the Baltic states to Germany. If Germany had accepted such terms from Stalin, it would have "won" the war. Only Hitler could have considered such a victory inadequate. See Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, pp. 14, 19.

36. Cooper, *The German Army*, pp. 260–287, 316–325, 340, 423–428, 437–441, 456–460; Macksey, "Guderian," pp. 452–456; Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster*, pp. 135–136; Martin Middlebrook, "Paulus," in Barnett, *Hitler's Generals*, pp. 366–367; Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, pp. 2–7, 67, 98–100; R.H.S. Stolfi, *Hitler's Panzers East: World War II Reinterpreted* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 82–89; and Wegner, "The Road to Defeat," especially pp. 111–123.

never-ending stream of revisionist work on World War II, the evidence and scholarly analysis remains compelling that Adolf Hitler's "generalship" crippled the German army and so was the principal cause of Nazi defeat and Allied victory.<sup>37</sup>

Summarizing Hitler's importance is difficult given the magnitude of his influence. Hitler determined the intentions of the German state, shaping its decisions to go to war, its choice of enemies, and the extent of its ambitions. Hitler also meddled directly in Germany's strategy for achieving its goals—interference that led to the *Wehrmacht's* defeat and his own undoing. Hitler's aggressiveness and malevolence also inspired a strong anti-German coalition, leading even such anticommunist stalwarts as Winston Churchill to ally with the Soviet Union.

#### OTTO VON BISMARCK AND WILHELM II

Germany's Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, through sheer force of genius, created a diplomatic structure that kept peace in Europe from 1871 to 1890. Kaiser Wilhelm II, who dismissed Bismarck in 1890, brought Bismarck's architecture crashing down through sheer force of idiocy. The nature of the threat to Germany, bureaucratic interests, and other impersonal factors remained roughly constant during the period before and after 1890. Yet Germany veered from being the pillar of Europe's status quo states to the leader of its revisionist camp. Clearly changes in the balance of power played an important role. A comparison of the two periods, however, reveals the key role that individuals play in forging and maintaining alliances, guiding bureaucracies, and paving the road to war.

A brilliant diplomatic tactician, Bismarck forged a complex series of alliances to strengthen Germany's position as a status quo power and preserve the peace in Europe. Bismarck's alliances were designed to prevent Germany from falling victim to a coalition of great powers on both its borders—a German

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37. For recent historical work concurring that Hitler's leadership was the most important of a range of factors leading to the defeat of the German army, see Paul Adair, *Hitler's Greatest Defeat: The Collapse of Army Group Centre, June 1944* (London: Arms and Armour, 1995), especially pp. 23, 66–67, 84, 104, 168; Corelli Barnett, "Introduction," in Barnett, *Hitler's Generals*, pp. 2–7; Cooper, *The German Army*, especially pp. 246, 304, 316–325, 400, 406, 423–428, 437–441, 456–484, 491, 510–511, 518, 528–531; Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, pp. 67, 87–88, 175, 198–207, 274–281; Macksey, *From Triumph to Disaster*, p. 225; Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War, 1941–1945* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1971), especially pp. 113, 404, 459, 529–535; Stolfi, *Hitler's Panzers East*, especially pp. 72–73; Wegner, "The Road to Defeat," pp. 105–127; and Joachim Wieder and Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, *Stalingrad: Memories and Reassessments*, trans. Helmut Bolger (London: Arms and Armour, 1993), pp. 16–22.

nightmare later realized in World War I. To ease other powers' security concerns, Bismarck tried to portray Germany as a sated power.<sup>38</sup> Bismarck also sought to keep his allies from fighting one another, recognizing that Germany could easily become involved if conflict flared. Thus he forged alliances with Austria and Russia that were explicitly defensive.<sup>39</sup> Bismarck also sought to maintain Britain's goodwill and to placate French opinion on every issue except Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>40</sup>

Bismarck defied the systemic logic of balancing in forging his coalitions. He succeeded in crafting alliances despite the growing industrial might of the Ruhr and Germany's evident military prowess, as demonstrated by its decisive victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870–71. Indeed rather than balance against Berlin, other European powers looked to Germany for diplomatic leadership.<sup>41</sup> When Bismarck left office in 1890, France and Britain were competing bitterly for colonies in Africa, while Russia and England were rival players in the Great Game. The idea that these three powers would ally was almost unthinkable.<sup>42</sup>

By championing the status quo and refusing further expansion in Europe after 1871, Bismarck also defied the wishes of the German people and bureaucracies. Bismarck, as A.J.P. Taylor notes, "stood outside party or class, a solitary figure following a line of his own devising."<sup>43</sup> Bismarck alone restrained Germany. As one contemporary noted in 1888, "All the world is really pro-war here. . . . With the almost exclusive exception of His Excellency [Bismarck], who exerts himself to the utmost for the maintenance of peace."<sup>44</sup> Germany's military leadership in particular harbored aggressive goals and repeatedly considered preemptive war against both France and Russia. Bismarck killed

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38. Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 101.

39. For example, in the 1887 Reinsurance treaty, Germany and Russia promised neutrality if the other engaged in a war against a third country unless Germany attacked France or Russia attacked Austria. In other words, as long as the countries had defensive goals they would be allied. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 165. Bismarck also used their alliance to rein in Austria. He repeatedly reminded Vienna of the alliance's defensive character and refused to support it in its Balkan ambitions. In 1882 Bismarck brought Italy into its alliance with Austria. Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 108.

40. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 160. To distract Paris, Bismarck urged the French to engage in colonial adventures. Bismarck also pushed the British and the Austrians to work together to preserve the status quo in the Mediterranean. The result, the "Mediterranean agreement" of 1887, led Britain to become associated with the Triple Alliance and thus deter Russian and French adventurism. Craig, *Germany*, p. 131.

41. Craig, *Germany*, p. 116.

42. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 171.

43. Taylor, *Bismarck*, p. 53.

44. Friedrich von Holstein, as quoted in Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 115. At the time Holstein worked in the German Foreign Office.

these ideas. Even though most Germans disliked allying with Russia and favored Austria's position on the Eastern Question, Bismarck tried to keep close to Moscow and prevent Vienna from expanding in the Balkans. Unlike his successors, he recognized that Germany could not afford problems on both borders and, given France's unrelenting hostility, Germany's eastern border had to be secure.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed critics have faulted Bismarck for devising a strategy so individual dependent that only a diplomatic genius could carry it out. Henry Kissinger, for example, notes that "where Bismarck failed was in having doomed his society to a style of policy which could only have been carried on had a great man emerged in every generation."<sup>46</sup> Yet in truth we will never know whether it was inevitable that Bismarck's successors should have chosen to substitute rigidity for flexibility and bullying for conciliation.<sup>47</sup> His successors did not fail to maintain his intricate system; they simply never tried.

The year 1890 is rightly seen as a turning point in German foreign policy, but this can be explained only by the change in German leadership. Germany's social and bureaucratic structures remained unchanged, as did its trade patterns. No great technological leap radically altered the nature of military might or national wealth. Of course, German power did rise steadily following German unification. But this gradual rise cannot explain the radical disjuncture between the Bismarckian and Wilhelmine foreign policies. Although Germany's power rose gradually, in the few short years after Bismarck's demise Germany went from a champion of the status quo to its greatest challenger. Only the change in leadership can explain this sudden transformation.

Once settled on his throne, Kaiser Wilhelm II ousted the aging chancellor, and Germany quickly shed Bismarck's policies. Bismarck's successors abandoned his alliance strategy of restraint, abruptly ended their alliance with Russia (much to St. Petersburg's dismay), and blindly lashed themselves to Austrian policy in the Balkans, disregarding its potential to provoke a war with Russia.<sup>48</sup> Understanding Wilhelmine Germany is difficult without focus-

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45. Taylor, *Bismarck*, p. 210. During the Congress of Berlin, the German parliament urged Bismarck to take a stronger stand vis-à-vis the Eastern question. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 156. Moreover, in 1887 some leading German military figures urged a preemptive war on Russia—an idea Bismarck rejected out of hand.

46. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 138.

47. Kissinger notes that the removal of Bismarck's genius did not by necessity usher in a policy of idiocy. *Ibid.*, p. 169. Similarly, Craig notes that even when the Germans had solid grounds for their actions, their interventions were often menacing, insulting, and violent. Craig, *Germany*, p. 243.

48. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 179; and Paul M. Kennedy, "The Kaiser and German *Weltpolitik*: Reflections on Wilhelm II's Place in the Making of German Foreign Policy," in John C.G. Rohl and Nicolaus Sombart, eds., *Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

ing on the role of Wilhelm II himself. As Paul Kennedy has argued, a structuralist approach “tells us why Wilhelmine Germany was expansionist at a certain time, but it has much less explanatory power when we move on to the equally important questions of what sort of expansionist policies were chosen, and why, and with what effects.”<sup>49</sup>

As if alienating St. Petersburg was not enough of a blunder, the kaiser’s pursuit of a fleet in the face of British opposition drove London into anti-German alliances and bought Germany little in return. The naval program indicates how individuals shape bureaucratic politics and even domestic economic interests. Without Kaiser Wilhelm II, there would have been no naval program. As Kennedy further observes, “From the beginning to the end of the *Flottenpolitik*, the kaiser played a critical and fatal role.”<sup>50</sup> Only after the naval program got into high gear did the kaiser find a domestic base for it.<sup>51</sup>

Not surprisingly, after 1890 the kaiser’s misguided policies and alarming behavior destroyed the protective web of alliances that Bismarck had created and drove the three former adversaries—Britain, France, and Russia—into a Triple Entente opposing Berlin. Most foreign governments and populaces saw Wilhelm’s rhetoric as German policy.<sup>52</sup> Where Bismarck had tried to downplay the image of German power, the kaiser swaggered. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Germany under Bismarck had sought to promote peace among the European powers and demonstrate that Germany was a satiated power. Wilhelm II, on the other hand, was an incorrigible jingoist who, rather than reassure other capitals, regularly frightened them by rattling Germany’s saber and demanding more “respect” for Berlin. True, Wilhelm’s *Weltanschauung* was shared by many of his countrymen. However, though the kaiser may have been closer to the norm than Bismarck, he was hardly normal. Wilhelm showed an uncanny knack for stampeding Germany’s erstwhile allies into anti-German coalitions

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Press, 1982), p. 164. Bismarck’s successor as chancellor, Leopold von Caprivi, confessed that he wanted to simplify foreign policy because he lacked Bismarck’s ability to keep eight balls in the air at once. Russia, to preserve the alliance, offered several concessions with regard to Germany’s position with Austria, but Caprivi still refused to renew the alliance. Kagan, *On the Origins of War*, p. 122.

49. Kennedy, “The Kaiser and German *Weltpolitik*,” p. 151. See also Robert G.L. Waite, “Leadership Pathologies: The Kaiser and the Führer and the Decision for War in 1914 and 1939,” in Betty Glad, ed., *Psychological Dimensions of War* (Newbury Park, N.J.: Sage, 1990), pp. 143–168.

50. Kennedy, “The Kaiser and German *Weltpolitik*,” p. 162.

51. Blaming German industry, as some scholars do, does not explain the German decision to build a large fleet. As Kennedy notes, it cannot have mattered to Krupp whether the government spent millions on infantry divisions or on battleships, as the giant arms manufacturer would have supplied the guns for either. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

while cajoling his ministers into policies that they knew were foolish. Just before World War I, Chancellor Theobald Bethmann-Hollweg lamented this turn of events: "A Turkish policy against Russia, Morocco against France, fleet against England, all at the same time—challenge everybody, get in everyone's way, and actually, in the course of all this, weaken nobody."<sup>53</sup> Given the growth in German power by the turn of the century, even Bismarck might have been hard-pressed to avoid an anti-German *entente*, but his successors worsened rather than helped the problem.

The comparison between Bismarck and Wilhelm II reveals several points about the importance of individuals. With the shift from Bismarck to Wilhelm II came a change in Germany's alliances and foreign policy posture. This shift did not reflect a new strategic environment or domestic pressures, but rather the different visions of the individuals at the helm of the state. Bismarckian Germany sought to preserve the status quo; Wilhelmine Germany sought to become Europe's hegemon. Not only did the choice of alliance partners change, but so too did the nature of the alliances: Under Bismarck, Germany's alliances were defensive and intended to restrain its allies; under Wilhelm II, they encouraged Austria and others toward aggression. Similarly, the face that Germany presented to the world went from the reassuring peacemaker of the Berlin Congress to the bellicose expansionist of the two Moroccan crises (and numerous others) provoked by Wilhelm II. As a result, the nations of Europe banded together to oppose German expansionism. The comparison of Bismarck with Wilhelm II also demonstrates the role that individuals play in the success or failure of diplomacy. Balances of power are created by individuals, not fostered solely by power politics.

#### NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE

Napoleon Bonaparte's impact on nineteenth-century European affairs demonstrates that an individual leader can determine not only the intentions of his state but also its capabilities and the reactions of other states. Like the personalities of Hitler and Wilhelm II, Napoleon's was a major impetus to war. Napoleon's unique role in shaping European politics in the early nineteenth century encompassed more than just his megalomaniacal pursuit of glory, however. Napoleon not only profoundly shaped French intentions; he was also a crucial component of French power. Napoleon's military skills were so great that, as an individual, he affected the balance of continental power and so helped force

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53. Kurt Riezler, *Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Dokumente*, ed. Karl Dietrich Erdman (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972), p. 188, as quoted in Craig, *Germany*, p. 337.

the other states of Europe to move against him as much as to move against France.

One cannot blame Napoleon entirely for the wars that bear his name. Even if Bonaparte had never taken power, there is an argument to be made that revolutionary France might still have launched a crusade to liberate the world from the chains of absolute monarchy even after the cannonade of Valmy ended the threat to the new republic in 1792.<sup>54</sup> The philosophy of the revolution demanded that its blessings of “*Liberté, Égalité, et Fraternité*” be spread to the benighted peoples of the rest of Europe.<sup>55</sup>

But the French Revolution explains only part of the story. The War of the First Coalition (1792) was the only conflict France fought in the age of Napoleon that was unequivocally defensive. Thereafter French motives were increasingly aggressive. Defending, or even spreading, the revolution became less and less relevant and, especially after 1807, France’s wars were fought largely to sate the personal demons of the emperor. As early as the War of the Third Coalition (1805), Austria and Russia sought only to compel France to disgorge its conquests since 1791, whereas Napoleon fought this campaign as much to establish his control over central Germany as to end any threat from the Third Coalition.<sup>56</sup> Reflecting on Napoleon’s aggressive nature, David Chandler has conceded that “there can be no denying that many of these attacks were, in the last analysis, provoked by the Emperor.”<sup>57</sup>

Following the Battle of Friedland in 1807, Czar Alexander I and the king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III, signed the Peace of Tilsit, leaving Napoleon the hegemon of Europe. After Tilsit, the tatters of the argument that his wars were defensive or the result of the unstoppable tide of revolution disintegrate. The French people were satisfied by the glories they had won and grew increasingly disenchanted with the costs of Napoleon’s constant war making.<sup>58</sup> Prince Metternich (then Austria’s ambassador to Paris) wrote in December 1808 that “it is no longer the French people who are waging war, it is Napoleon alone who is set on it. . . . Even his army no longer wants this conflict.”<sup>59</sup> Despite the vast conquests he had achieved at Tilsit, however, Napoleon was not content. In

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54. David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Scribner, 1966), pp. xxix–xxx.

55. Such expansionary behavior is typical of revolutionary states. Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

56. Alistair Horne, *How Far from Austerlitz? Napoleon, 1805–1815* (Armonk, N.Y.: St. Martin’s, 1996), p. 69; and Alan Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 400.

57. Chandler, *Campaigns of Napoleon*, p. xxix.

58. Horne, *How Far from Austerlitz?* pp. 296–297; and Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, pp. 305, 434, 478, 482–495.

59. Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, p. 400.

the words of Alistair Horne, "The trouble was that, for all his new, consolidated power, Napoleon had to go on. . . . As he himself had written as a youth, 'Ambition is never content, even on the summit of greatness.'"<sup>60</sup> Thus Napoleon, because of his overweening ambition and ego, was as much the cause of the wars of 1796–1815 as were the forces unleashed by the French Revolution. Indeed Napoleon's ego may have been the most important of the forces unleashed by the revolution.<sup>61</sup>

One telling commentary on the increasingly idiosyncratic nature of French war making was the reaction of Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Napoleon's brilliant but despicable foreign minister. As the years passed, Talleyrand steadily distanced himself from the emperor because he concluded that Napoleon's ambitions could lead only to disaster. After Austerlitz, Talleyrand urged Napoleon to offer Austria generous terms to win it over as an ally (precisely the course Bismarck would pursue so successfully sixty-one years later), but Napoleon's ego demanded that Austria be humiliated. The peace he inflicted on Vienna ensured the undying enmity of the Hapsburgs. Talleyrand ardently opposed Napoleon's subsequent invasions of Portugal (1807), Spain (1808), and Russia (1812) as dangerous and unnecessary adventures. By 1812, Talleyrand had effectively abandoned Napoleon and was working for the czar because he recognized that Napoleon's unquenchable ambition would condemn everyone around him to certain doom.<sup>62</sup>

Napoleon's personal ambition was not the only facet of his personality that made him a crucial factor in the international relations of his time. Napoleon was also a military genius, one of the greatest generals in history. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, France was the wealthiest and the second most populous nation in Europe. In addition, the manpower furnished by the *levée en masse* combined with the military reforms of the late eighteenth century gave France formidable military power. These factors alone suggest that revolutionary France would have been a tougher foe for the other European powers to contain than Louis XIV's France. Nevertheless, Napoleon himself was a "force multiplier" of tremendous value.<sup>63</sup> The Duke of Wellington remarked

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60. Horne, *How Far from Austerlitz?* p. 235.

61. See also Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (New York: Signet New American Library, 1963), pp. 55–56.

62. Horne, *How Far from Austerlitz?* pp. 237–240; and Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, pp. 248–250, 417–418, 478. Schom also notes that Napoleon's secret police chief, Joseph Fouché, perhaps the third most powerful man in the empire, also constantly sought peace despite the emperor's compulsive war making. See Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, pp. 271–272.

63. Perhaps the best examples were the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. By then, Napoleon had lost the advantage of superior military effectiveness because most of his best-trained combat veterans had been slaughtered in Spain and Russia, while his enemies had reformed their own militaries

that Bonaparte's presence on the field of battle was worth 40,000 men.<sup>64</sup> His skills as a general were repeatedly showcased in virtuoso performances such as the Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena/Auerstadt, Friedland, and Wagram campaigns—where he scored colossal successes although regularly outnumbered by his adversaries. When Napoleon was at his best, he could achieve almost anything as a general, regardless of the forces arrayed against him. At his worst, he still inspired his troops to superhuman efforts and terrified even his most able opponents. Ultimately, Napoleon proved so uniquely important to French aggressiveness and power that the other European powers broke with centuries of tradition and made his removal a principal war aim.<sup>65</sup>

#### SADDAM HUSSEIN AND HAFIZ AL-ASAD

Although Saddam Hussein and Hafiz al-Asad faced many similar problems as leaders, their preferred solutions were very different. They were both Arab dictators ruling illegitimate regimes who feared they would be overthrown. They both ruled in countries where domestic institutions were feeble and therefore did not significantly constrain policymaking. They both ruled fairly weak Arab states bordering considerably stronger neighbors (Israel, Turkey, and Iran) as well as weaker ones (Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia). They were both members of minority groups in the countries they ruled and were both challenged by the majority communal groups, whom they suppressed in bloodthirsty fashion. For both, their own continued rule was their preeminent concern. To stay in power, they centralized decisionmaking in their own hands, created divided and competing bureaucracies, and ruthlessly quashed any individual or group that appeared to be gaining independent power for fear that it could become a rival.

Despite these similarities, the two leaders—and as a result the two states they led—had very different intentions and strategies. Although both sought to aggrandize the power of their respective states (and so their own power), Asad's ambitions were more limited than Saddam's. Whatever Asad's early aspirations to a "greater Syria" comprising the entirety of the Levantine littoral,

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along French lines. Likewise his adversaries had adopted their own versions of the *levée en masse*, and so the French were badly outnumbered as well. Nevertheless Napoleon nearly won each of these campaigns, and his conduct of the 1814 campaign in defense of France was nothing short of astonishing. See Chandler, *Campaigns of Napoleon*, pp. 865–1004.

64. Markham, *Napoleon*, p. 141. This in an era when 100,000 men was considered a large field army.

65. Chandler, *Campaigns of Napoleon*, pp. 899, 947, 994, 1001; and Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, p. 414. Schom contends that the allies recognized that Napoleon had to be removed because of his belligerence and martial skills as early as 1805 after the Battle of Austerlitz. Chandler argues that the Austrians were convinced of the necessity of this course only after the Battle of Leipzig in 1813.

for the last eighteen years of his life his primary foreign policy goals were regaining the Golan Heights from Israel, institutionalizing Syrian suzerainty over Lebanon, and perhaps regaining the Hatay/Alexandretta province from Turkey. On the other hand, Saddam has repeatedly sought to don Gamal Abdel Nasser's mantle of "leader of the Arab world." Saddam's invasions of Iran and Kuwait, his pursuit of all manner of ballistic missiles and non-conventional weapons, his efforts to build a massive Iraqi military, and his various diplomatic gambits have all been explicitly pursued—at least in part—in the name of making himself and Iraq the voice of the Arabs in regional and global affairs.<sup>66</sup> Even when such goals were clearly secondary to more immediate concerns (such as the threat from revolutionary Iran in prompting his decision to attack in September 1980), Saddam has never failed to remind his people of the larger stakes he always believes are involved.<sup>67</sup>

An even greater difference between these two despots lay in how they pursued their goals. To say that Saddam is risk tolerant would be a gross understatement.<sup>68</sup> Even when his motives are defensive, his course of action is usually offensive. Whenever he has confronted a difficult situation, Saddam has frequently chosen the most reckless of all available options. When faced with the threat from Syrian Ba'thism and Syria's damming of the Euphrates River in the mid-1970s, Saddam was ready to attack Syria had Asad not moved to defuse the situation.<sup>69</sup> Fearing the threat from Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s, Saddam attacked Iran.<sup>70</sup> To avoid economic hardship, Saddam attacked Kuwait in 1990.<sup>71</sup> Confronted by a thirty-

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66. See, for example, Ofra Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis: A Collection of Documents* (Tel Aviv: Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1992), pp. 14–17.

67. F. Gregory Gause III, "Gulf Regional Politics: Revolution, War, and Rivalry," in W. Howard Wriggins, ed., *Dynamics of Regional Politics: Four Systems on the Indian Ocean Rim* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 52; and Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1985), p. 245.

68. For an interesting analysis of Saddam's decisionmaking, see Jerrold M. Post, "The Defining Moment of Saddam's Life: A Political Psychology Perspective on the Leadership and Decision-Making of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf Crisis," in Stanley A. Renshon, ed., *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), pp. 49–66.

69. Christine Moss Helms, *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1984), pp. 45–46, 149–150; Majid Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1968* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, 1978), pp. 68, 161–164; and Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, pp. 230–231.

70. Helms, *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World*, pp. 151–162; Dilip Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), pp. 25–39; and Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, pp. 292–294.

71. Amatzia Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Decision-Making in Baghdad," in Baram and Barry Rubin, eds., *Iraq's Road to War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), pp. 6–9; Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990–1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 38–41, 45–47; and F. Gregory Gause III, "Prospect

nation coalition led by the world's only superpower, Saddam gambled that he could ignore the coalition's air forces, stalemate its armies, and force the rest of the world to accept his annexation of Kuwait.<sup>72</sup> Three years later, while Iraqi society slowly suffocated under international sanctions, Saddam refused to give up the remnants of his nonconventional weapons programs and instead tried to attack Kuwait once again. Nor have the recurrent crises with Baghdad since then given any indication that Saddam has learned his lesson: He continues to bully, threaten, and provoke. Indeed even the decline of Iraqi power appears not to have affected the aggressiveness of Baghdad's foreign policy. Undeterred by the loss of three-quarters of his military power to the U.S.-led coalition in 1991, Saddam has continued to provoke Washington as if Desert Storm meant no more to him than a weather forecast.

Asad, on the other hand, was one of the most cautious leaders in the Middle East. Asad agonized over difficult decisions, only choosing a course of action long after it had become imperative for him to do so. He alone among the Syrian leadership opposed Syria's invasion of Jordan in September 1970 for fear that it was too risky.<sup>73</sup> Asad agonized over his own coup, delaying it until long after it could not possibly fail.<sup>74</sup> He did not invade Lebanon until 1976, after every other course of action had failed him and he realized that further hesitation could undermine the stability of Syria.<sup>75</sup> He threatened to attack

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Theory and Iraqi War Decisions," paper presented at the 1997 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28–31, 1997.

72. On Saddam's aggressive grand strategy beginning in early 1990, see Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," pp. 5–28; and Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis*, pp. 11–34.

73. Neville Brown, "Jordanian Civil War," *Military Review*, September 1971, p. 45; Alasdair Drysdale, "The Syrian Armed Forces in National Politics: The Role of the Geographic and Ethnic Periphery," in Roman Kolkowicz and Andrej Korbonski, eds., *Soldiers, Peasants, and Bureaucrats: Civil-Military Relations in Communist and Modernizing Societies* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 68–69; Derek Hopwood, *Syria, 1945–1986: Politics and Society* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 51–52; Fred H. Lawson, *Why Syria Goes to War: Thirty Years of Confrontation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 68; Moshe Ma'oz, "The Emergence of Modern Syria," in Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv, eds., *Syria under Assad* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), p. 26; and Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Sectarianism, Regionalism, and Tribalism in Politics, 1961–1978* (New York: St. Martin's, 1979), pp. 84–88.

74. Ma'oz, "The Emergence of Modern Syria," p. 28; Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), p. 171; and Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, pp. 87–92.

75. Reuven Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon since 1975* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991), pp. 3–22; Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), pp. 80–91; Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers*, pp. 33–44; Hopwood, *Syria*, pp. 60–62; Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 160–165; Itamar Rabinovich, "The Changing Prism: Syrian Policy in Lebanon as a Mirror, an Issue, and an Instrument," in Ma'oz and Yaniv, *Syria under Assad*, pp. 179–184; Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon, 1970–1985* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 36–37, 47–56, 85–88, 201–236; Seale, *Asad of Syria*, pp. 267–289; and Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 95–213.

Jordan several times in the early 1980s but drew back every time.<sup>76</sup> He tried hard to avoid a war with Israel in 1982 and fought back only when the Israelis attacked him despite his efforts.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, he moved against his brother Rif'at only after Rif'at tried to seize control of the government in 1984, even though the rest of Syria's top leadership had been urging him to defang Rif'at for years.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps the best indication of the differing approaches of these two Arab dictators to foreign policy was their divergent responses to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Asad adopted a policy of appeasement, while Saddam assumed a policy of aggressive expansion. Both concluded that the loss of the Soviet Union as a counterweight to the United States would allow Washington and Israel to bring greater pressure to bear on them. Saddam's response was offensive: Seize Kuwait to secure its economic resources, overawe the other Arab states, and demonstrate Iraqi military might.<sup>79</sup> Indeed many experts suspect that Saddam consciously sought to challenge the United States to demonstrate its (relative) weakness and Iraq's strength.<sup>80</sup> The fact that this action threatened to provoke war with the United States (something that considerable evidence indicates Saddam fully understood) was an acceptable risk to him.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, Asad reacted to the Cold War's end by moderating many of his more aggressive policies. He curbed Syria's involvement in international terrorism, joined the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq, and, in his own

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76. Joseph Nevo, "Syria and Jordan: The Politics of Subversion," in Ma'oz and Yaniv, *Syria under Assad*, p. 145.

77. Avi-Ran, *Syrian Involvement in Lebanon*, pp. 132–136; Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War*, Vol. 1, *The Arab-Israeli Conflicts, 1973–1989* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1990), p. 83; Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, pp. 174–175; Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, ed. and trans. Ina Friedman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 117–118, 155–156; and Seale, *Asad of Syria*, p. 380.

78. The best account of Rif'at al-Asad's fall is Michael Eisenstadt, "Syria's Defense Companies: Profile of a Praetorian Unit," unpublished manuscript, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989, pp. 8–12.

79. For Saddam's analysis of the new world order and aggressive prescriptions for Iraq and the other Arab states, see his address to the Fourth Summit of the Arab Cooperation Council, Amman, February 24, 1990, reprinted in Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis*, pp. 37–49.

80. Baram, "Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," pp. 10–11; Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis*, p. 15; and Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990–1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 31.

81. The best known of Saddam's statements implying that he understood the risk that the United States might intervene if Iraq attacked Kuwait was his warning to U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie that American society "cannot accept 10,000 fatalities in one battle," in their infamous meeting on July 25, 1990. See Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, eds., *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 125. However, Iraqi officials restated this after the war. See, for example, "Aziz Interviewed on Outbreak of Gulf War," *Milliyet*, May 30, 1991, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service–Near East–South Asia-91-107, June 4, 1991, pp. 13–14; and Milton Vorst, "Report from Baghdad," *New Yorker*, June 24, 1991, pp. 66–67.

dysfunctional and dithering manner, showed a surprising—albeit painfully cautious and unrealistic—willingness to actually consider a peace treaty with Israel.

Comparing Saddam Hussein and Hafiz al-Asad, two of the most brutal tyrants of the Arab world, demonstrates that the course of despotic regimes can, to a considerable extent, be predicted by the personality of their leaders. Despite all of their similarities, Saddam and Asad shared a crucial difference: Where Saddam is aggressive, reckless, and extremely expansionist, Asad was defensive, cautious, and only modestly expansionist.

#### AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI AND THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

Hitler and Napoleon are hardly history's only leaders who extended wars beyond what systemic, domestic, and bureaucratic pressures might dictate. Although Saddam Hussein may have started the Iran-Iraq War, its duration beyond 1982 can largely be blamed on the determination of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the charismatic Iranian leader. In 1982 Iranian forces had recovered the territory lost in the initial Iraqi invasion of 1980, but Khomeini kept the war going for six more years in the hope of removing Saddam from power. Khomeini insisted on conducting fruitless offensives to try to break the Iraqis. During this time powerful allies cast their lot against Iran, leading elites began to oppose the war, and the Iranian people became increasingly disgruntled. Yet the fighting dragged on. To the Imam, the dictates of his revolutionary Islamic credo mattered more than military and economic realities.<sup>82</sup> Only the complete collapse of Iran's armies along the front in 1988 led the Imam to "drink the bitter cup of peace," in his own words. As William Quandt laments, hundreds of thousands of Iranians and Iraqis died as a result of "this old man's intransigence."<sup>83</sup>

Khomeini, like Napoleon, was himself a source of fear. This fear affected the reactions of other states, particularly within the Middle East. State borders did not limit the draw of his charisma, which amplified the strength of his revolutionary credo. In Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, and elsewhere in the Muslim world, Shi'a radicals and Islamist militants of all sects were drawn by the command-

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82. See Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam, and the Soul of a Nation* (New York: Penguin, 1996), pp. 322–328, for statements on Khomeini's ideology as it relates to the war's continuation. A good overview of Khomeini's theology can be found in Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 409–484.

83. William Quandt, "The Middle East on the Brink: Prospects for Change," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Winter 1996), p. 13. See also R.K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), p. 74.

ing image that Khomeini presented. It was in part this threat that led the traditional monarchies of the Persian Gulf to form the Gulf Cooperation Council and work with Iraq against Iran.<sup>84</sup>

### *Hypotheses on the Role of Individuals in International Relations*

The final charge we have left to fulfill is to demonstrate that the first image can produce plausible, and testable, hypotheses about international relations. Ideally, future research would test and elaborate on these hypotheses to develop a more comprehensive set of theories regarding the role of individuals in international relations. The very existence of these credible hypotheses, however, demonstrates the value of the first image: It can be used to derive important theories that scholars can test and refine.

Below we present thirteen hypotheses on the role of individuals in international relations. The first set of hypotheses describes the most general ways in which individuals shape the behavior of nations. The next set delves down to a deeper level of analysis, presenting hypotheses that detail how specific personality traits of leaders may cause certain patterns of outcomes in international affairs. The third set of hypotheses examines the conditions under which leaders have the most influence. The fourth and final group suggests how the first image interacts with the other two—simultaneously shaping them and being shaped by them in turn.

#### THE BASICS: FOUNDATIONAL HYPOTHESES ON THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUALS

The first four hypotheses presented below address how individuals can shape the broadest contours of international relations. At the most basic level, the core question of this article is, Do individual personalities matter to the affairs of nations? Our conclusion is a resounding “yes.” These four hypotheses are intuitive, obvious (we hope), and perhaps even commonsensical. Their obviousness should not detract from their value, however—quite the opposite. In Aristotelian fashion, sometimes it is important to catalogue knowledge—even that which after having been articulated seems obvious—in search of new insights.

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84. Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 259–260. On the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, see David Priess, “Balance-of-Threat Theory and the Genesis of the GCC,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Summer 1996), pp. 143–171; Lenore G. Martin, *The Unstable Gulf: Threats from Within* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1984), pp. 24–27; and Emile A. Nakleh, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems, and Prospects* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

**HYPOTHESIS 1: INDIVIDUALS SET THE ULTIMATE AND SECONDARY INTENTIONS OF A STATE.** One of the most important roles of individuals is to shape, if not determine, a state's intentions. At times, the influence of individuals can be so great as to transform a defender of the status quo into its greatest nemesis. Bismarck fought for the status quo in Europe, whereas Wilhelm II fought to overturn it. Even when a country's people and leaders already oppose the existing order, a leader can greatly magnify the extent of the state's revisionist ambitions. The German people and their generals sought only a greater Germany, but Hitler would be satisfied with nothing less than the enslavement of Europe. Similarly, Napoleon's ego, not the aspirations of the French people, drove *la grande armée* to destruction on the steppes of Russia and the mountains of Spain. A prescient leader also can direct foreign policy toward important long-term goals that are often ignored by demagogues, bureaucrats, and the general populace. Bismarck recognized the danger of alienating Russia even though most German officials were hostile to the czar.

Of course, a country's strategic position, domestic politics, culture, and other factors—both systemic and domestic—also shape a state's intentions. The cases presented above, however, suggest that individuals can often transcend these factors, play them off against one another, or otherwise exercise a direct and decisive influence on a state's behavior.

**HYPOTHESIS 2: INDIVIDUALS CAN BE AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF A STATE'S DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE AND MILITARY POWER.** Just as individuals can determine a state's intentions, so too are they often an important aspect of a state's capabilities. Sterile, quantifiable measures such as industrial output and orders of battle are only part of a country's military power: The competence or ineptitude of its leaders also weighs heavily in the balance. By itself, France was a formidable military power, capable of matching, or even besting, any of its rivals. With Napoleon leading its armies, France could be defeated only by the combined forces of all of Europe. Hitler, in contrast, diminished Germany's military power: His foolish strategies and amateurish orders destroyed Germany's superbly led and trained armies. Great leaders also can strengthen a country's diplomatic power. It is individuals who build the alliances, and create the threats, that maintain or destroy balances of power. Bismarck forged alliances where others would have failed: Absent the Iron Chancellor, it is hard to imagine a defeated Austria aligning with Prussia after the humiliations of Sadowa and Königgrätz. Similarly, it is equally hard to imagine a leader other than Wilhelm II repeatedly antagonizing Britain for so little purpose. This emphasis on the impact of individuals on state power is not to belittle geography, resources, state capacity, or other vital factors. But political scientists must rec-

ognize that these factors alone often fail to account for a state's overall military might or political influence.

**HYPOTHESIS 3: INDIVIDUAL LEADERS SHAPE THEIR STATE'S STRATEGIES.** Leaders shape not only a state's goals and capabilities but also the manner in which the state employs its resources in pursuit of its goals. Napoleon was a soldier first and last. All too often, the emperor ignored Talleyrand's sage advice to solve his foreign policy problems at the bargaining table, preferring to solve them instead on the battlefield. Whereas Asad dithered in response to challenges, Saddam invariably reached for the sword.

One particular manifestation of this role is the influence that individuals have in making and breaking alliances. The idiosyncratic preferences of leaders often cause them to ally with one state over another even in the face of strong systemic or domestic pressures. Because of his animus against the House of Windsor, Wilhelm II would consider allying with Britain only if London would grovel before him. Moreover, Wilhelm II demanded simplicity in Germany's alliances and thus let relations with Russia and Britain deteriorate. Bismarck could juggle many balls, Wilhelm II one on a good day. As scholars often forget, balances of power are not inevitable: They rest on the shoulders of individuals.<sup>85</sup>

**HYPOTHESIS 4: INDIVIDUAL LEADERS AFFECT THE BEHAVIOR OF OPPOSING STATES THAT MUST REACT TO LEADERS' IDIOSYNCRATIC INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES.** Leaders not only influence the actions of their states; they also shape the reactions of other states. At times the mere presence of charismatic, morose, bellicose, or puissant figures alters how other international actors behave toward the state. Napoleon's overweening ambition coupled with his overwhelming military prowess convinced the rest of Europe that the emperor himself had to be deposed. The Gulf oil monarchies, fearing both revolution and invasion, banded together to oppose the threat from Islamic Iran led by the charismatic Khomeini. Incompetence, as well as ability, can force other states to react. Wilhelm II's erratic diplomacy and provocative swaggering led other European leaders to see him—and thus Germany—as untrustworthy and dangerous. And we will not even mention Hitler.

**BUILDING ON THE OBVIOUS: FOUNDATIONAL HYPOTHESES AND THE FUTURE OF CHINA.** The above four hypotheses can be faulted as obvious, but if true, international relations scholars must change their analytic approach. Consider any assessment of the future of China—a vital question for the coming years.

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85. Indeed Henry Kissinger—one of the premier realists—devotes much of his early work to examining how such a balance was created in nineteenth-century Europe. See Kissinger, *A World Re-*

Neorealists might stress China's ability to generate power and the relative power of its rivals. Second-image theorists would add a discussion of how the communist legacy shapes Beijing's behavior and the relative power and agendas of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) party apparatchiks, and other institutions. Still other scholars might weigh China's strategic culture, the existing offense-defense balance, or the presence of important domestic interest groups, such as farmers and factory workers.

If our hypotheses above are true, however—even to the point of being obvious—then scholars cannot understand the future impact of China on international relations without also understanding the mix of skills and abilities of China's leaders, such as Jiang Zemin. Does Jiang, like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping before him, exert tremendous influence over China's overall policies? How will he pursue China's foreign policy objectives? Is Jiang a skilled diplomat, or will he transform China's potential friends into real enemies? If Beijing goes to war, will he shape the PLA's strategy, or, like so many leaders, tragically overreach? How do China's neighbors and other key states view Jiang: as a dangerous warlord, a man of peace, or some uneasy mix? The answers to these questions do not, by themselves, provide a perfect guide to China's future behavior. But ignoring the particular qualities of Jiang's personality risks courting disaster.

#### HOW INDIVIDUALS MATTER: HYPOTHESES ON PERSONALITY TRAITS

Of course, it is not enough to speculate merely on whether individuals "matter" to the course of international relations. What is necessary to demonstrate the utility of the first image is to show that it can generate specific, testable hypotheses regarding how individuals affect international relations. As we argued earlier, the first image should be able to generate testable hypotheses in which the variance in the distribution of personality traits among leaders is said to cause states to act in particular ways. The hypotheses listed below are hardly exhaustive, but drawing on the case studies presented above, they demonstrate the kind of hypotheses that can be inferred regarding the correlation between the distribution of leaders' personality traits and international relations outcomes.<sup>86</sup>

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stored: *Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812–1822* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), for a superb example.

86. We recognize that there is a selection bias in the cases from which we generated several of these hypotheses. For example, we note the correlation between risk tolerance and war, but our cases focus largely on instances of war. Additional testing of these hypotheses using cases of peace is necessary, as are tests using leaders who are not risk tolerant, egotistical, and so on.

**HYPOTHESIS 5: STATES LED BY RISK-TOLERANT LEADERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO CAUSE WARS.** Some leaders are more willing than others to tolerate high levels of risk, and this willingness to accept risk often determines how aggressive a state is. Hitler and Napoleon stand out as leaders willing to take risks to gain resources, glory, or other objectives. Hitler's invasion of France was a daring venture, to say nothing of his foray into Russia. Napoleon repeatedly rolled the dice, risking his empire in the pursuit of further conquests. A more cautious man might have opted to consolidate his power rather than trust in his star so absolutely. The contrast between Saddam Hussein and Hafiz al-Asad highlights the importance of risk tolerance. Saddam's willingness to accept high risks led him to attack Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Israel—and to repeatedly provoke the United States. Asad, on the other hand, generally sought to avoid risky undertakings: He intervened reluctantly in Lebanon only after exhausting all other options; he backed down from confrontations with Jordan and Iraq in the 1970s and 1980s; and after 1982 he challenged Israel only indirectly, preferring to work through proxies rather than risk a direct confrontation. Faced with similar circumstances, Saddam saw opportunities where Asad saw dangers. This different perspective has often meant the difference between war and peace in the Middle East.

**HYPOTHESIS 6: STATES LED BY DELUSIONAL LEADERS START WARS AND PROLONG THEM UNNECESSARILY.** Some leaders view the world through cracked lenses. Their ideology or their pathology clouds their vision, leading them to ignore reality and to overestimate their chances of success. A variety of work on decisionmaking shows that individuals interpret information in different ways, with certain fallacies being common but present to different degrees. Delusional individuals are particularly likely to ignore or misinterpret systemic imperatives, and domestic constraints, causing them to overestimate their chances of victory in war or to underestimate the value of an alliance. Delusional leaders see threats that do not exist. They miscalculate balances of power. And they imagine alliances where none are possible.

Needless to say, words such as “crazy” and “delusional” are overused. Saddam Hussein, although certainly evil and often foolish, is not insane. Rationality is a spectrum: Some leaders follow a hyperrational course, whereas others are more prone to wishful thinking. But leaders such as Hitler and Khomeini have clearly slipped over the edge. Hitler believed that his German *Übermenschen* could defy the entire world, and continued to believe this even as armies of Russian *Untermenschen* approached Berlin. Khomeini refused to countenance any peace with Iraq's government of heretics, even after the impossibility of military victory became obvious to everyone around him.

Delusional leaders and the security dilemma interact in particularly pernicious ways. In its classic depiction, Robert Jervis explains that in an anarchic world system, a state's actions to defend itself often cause a counterreaction by its rivals, which in turn leaves all states less secure. It is not always the anarchic system that imposes the security dilemma. A delusional or foolish leader can create one through his or her own actions. Wilhelm II saw Germany as surrounded by hostile powers (including several that had been Germany's diplomatic partners until the kaiser dismissed Bismarck) and believed that their militaries and alliances threatened German ambitions, indeed Germany's very survival. In turn, Wilhelm's own actions, most notably his development of a fleet, spurred the British and French to see him as a threat. Delusional leaders can create security dilemmas where none previously existed, or cause precarious situations to spiral into calamity.

**HYPOTHESIS 7: STATES LED BY LEADERS WITH GRANDIOSE VISIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DESTABILIZE THE SYSTEM.** It is difficult for the international system to accommodate the outsized dreams of leaders. The status quo has great difficulty with leaders who cannot be sated with minor concessions and modest territorial transfers. These leaders often overreach in a desperate attempt to realize their ambitions. Triumphs that would have been the crown jewels for Louis XVI were disdained as cut-glass baubles by Napoleon. Similarly, Hitler's ambitions soared beyond those of other German leaders. In both cases, their ambitions exceeded not only the capabilities of their states, but also the ability of the international system to contain them without massive dislocation. The determination of Napoleon and Hitler to rule all of Europe (and dominate the world) sparked wars and upheaval that changed the face of the continent. Nor is vast military power a necessity: Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini had dreams of similar proportion, and even without commensurate military power, both managed to radically shake the international affairs of the Persian Gulf, and to some extent, the world. Had their dreams been less ambitious, history books and atlases would look very different.<sup>87</sup>

Vast dreams also produce numerous enemies. By attacking all of Europe, Hitler and Napoleon turned all of Europe against them. Iran's modest power made it little threat to any state beyond its neighbors. Yet by seeking to export Iran's revolution throughout the Islamic world, Khomeini even made enemies of distant Indonesia and Morocco. Seeking to lead the Arab world, Saddam in-

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87. See Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, pp. 192–198.

stead alienated it by attacking five Middle Eastern states and threatening a half dozen others.

HYPOTHESIS 8: STATES LED BY PREDICTABLE LEADERS WILL HAVE STRONGER AND MORE ENDURING ALLIANCES. A state whose behavior can consistently be predicted is one that can be trusted—trusted to do good or trusted to do evil, but trusted nonetheless. States may forge alliances with states whose behavior they do not trust, but they are unlikely to adhere to these ties for long or place much weight on them for the achievement of their goals. Furthermore, such alliances are unlikely to realize their full potential because their cohesion will be weak and their actions disjointed. In many of these cases, it is the predictability of leaders that is at issue. For example, although Hitler and Mussolini had many goals that were either shared or complementary, each repeatedly surprised the other, destroying any trust between them with the result that their actions often ran at cross purposes, and their alliance was as often a source of weakness as of strength.

Indeed the personal relationships among leaders often overcome systemic dynamics or other factors. As Hans Morgenthau notes, “The smooth and effective operation of an alliance, then, depends in good measure upon the relations of trust and respect among its military statesmen.”<sup>88</sup> Churchill deliberately cultivated a “special relationship” with Roosevelt, which paid off with unswervingly close cooperation, even when the United States and Britain had diametrically opposed ideas about the conduct of World War II. Observers of the Middle East have often remarked that Iraq and Syria should have been natural allies—they shared an ideology, common internal problems, common external enemies, and generally compatible aspirations—yet they detested each other. As a result, Syria, the self-proclaimed champion of Arab nationalism, was the only Arab state to back Persian Iran against Iraq.

It may be that one contributing factor to the democratic peace is that democracies are more likely to produce leaders whose behavior can be predicted and thus trusted, especially by other democratic leaders. Trustworthiness and consistency are qualities rewarded by voters in democratic systems. In addition, modern democracies tend to have a range of institutional checks on leaders, which makes it difficult for them to push their countries too far from their preexisting course. Consequently, it may be that the success of democratic alliances and the easier ability of democratic leaders to avoid wars

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88. Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 201.

when their interests clash come in part from the fact that democratic systems select for the kind of behavior that foreign leaders find predictable and trustworthy.

Critics may contend that characteristics such as risk tolerance and a proneness toward delusions are impossible to operationalize. Such criticisms, however, were once also applied to culture, ideology, ideas, and norms, but scholars over time developed methods to measure and weigh these concepts, greatly enriching the study of international relations. Psychologists have a wide range of measures for determining degrees of rationality. Scholars of decisionmaking have identified situations such as a desire to preserve one's political position or make good on sunk costs that steer individuals toward risky behavior.<sup>89</sup> International relations scholars must draw on these studies in their own work. Just because we lack analytic measures today does not mean we should assume we always will.

#### WHEN INDIVIDUALS MATTER: ENABLING FACTORS

Leaders do not have the same impact on foreign policy in all situations. No matter how delusional, egocentric, or risk acceptant, some leaders are unable to gain popular support, whereas others are overwhelmed by bureaucratic, systemic, cultural, or other factors. Below we present three hypotheses that suggest when individuals have a greater impact on international relations, and consequently under what conditions theories derived from the first image should most likely have the greatest explanatory power.

**HYPOTHESIS 9: THE MORE POWER IS CONCENTRATED IN THE HANDS OF AN INDIVIDUAL LEADER, THE GREATER THE INFLUENCE OF THAT LEADER'S PERSONALITY AND PREFERENCES.** Individuals are only one of many factors that determine a state's actions. In vying to set policy, leaders often must contend with a bewildering array of institutions and actors, such as a nation's military, parliament, bureaucracy, political opposition, elites, and people. When other institutions are strong, the ability of any individual leader to shape policy is correspondingly diminished. If a soldier of Napoleon's ability entered the French army today, it is unlikely that he would shake the foundations of Europe. On the other hand, when institutions are weak or unformed, the impact of leaders increases. Consequently, individuals generally matter most in authoritarian regimes with

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89. Jack Levy, "Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (March 1997), p. 93; and Jack S. Levy, "Loss Aversion, Framing, and Bargaining: The Implications of Prospect Theory for International Conflict," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (April 1996), p. 189. A leader's proneness toward risk could be measured by examining how he or she responded to similar circumstances before assuming power.

weak institutions. As Bismarck's adviser Friedrich von Gentz described the czar's position, "None of the obstacles that restrain and thwart the other sovereigns—divided authority, constitutional forms, public opinion, etc.—exists for the Emperor of Russia. What he dreams of at night he can carry out in the morning."<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, an exceptionally charismatic leader can overcome even strong institutions. Figures such as Hitler and Napoleon—and other modern giants such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Mao, Simon Bolívar, Nasser, and Gandhi—are able to defy the wishes of pragmatic elements around them and succeed in having their followers follow. Ayatollah Khomeini, of course, represented almost an ideal-type of the Weberian charismatic leader. As Max Weber noted, the charismatic authority can defy convention and standard arguments: Such a leader is able to note, "It is written . . . but I say unto you."<sup>91</sup> Thus Khomeini's grip on the Iranian people allowed him to ignore the opposition of other leading figures to the war with Iraq. The hundreds of thousands of Iranians slaughtered on the battlefields of al-Basrah, al-Faw, and Kurdistan testify to the force of his charisma.

Individuals, however, still matter even when strong institutions shape their behavior and limit the impact of their personal idiosyncrasies. As former presidential adviser Clark Clifford once noted, "The executive branch of our government is like a chameleon. To a startling degree it reflects the character and personality of the President."<sup>92</sup> Even in a democracy with well-established checks and balances, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the leader is essential.

HYPOTHESIS 10: INDIVIDUALS ARE MORE IMPORTANT WHEN SYSTEMIC, DOMESTIC, AND BUREAUCRATIC FORCES CONFLICT OR ARE AMBIGUOUS. At times institutional, systemic, and domestic factors may be strong, but their interaction leads to vague or conflicting pressures on policymaking. In these circumstances, the preferences of individuals assume greater importance. Although not one of the historical cases we examined, an excellent example of how individuals can choose among equally viable options is British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's decision to confront Argentina over the Falkland Islands. Today many analysts chalk up Thatcher's attack on the Falklands as a (success-

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90. Friedrich von Gentz, "Considerations on the Political System in Europe" (1818), in Mack Walker, ed., *Metternich's Europe* (New York: Walker and Co., 1968), p. 80. Quoted in Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 140.

91. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 243 (ellipsis in the original).

92. Quoted in Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, p. 189.

ful) attempt to restore her government's flagging popularity. At the time, however, what path Britain would choose was not so clear. The Foreign Office counseled against any provocation and urged Thatcher not to send a task force.<sup>93</sup> Defense officials doubted that Britain could retake the Falklands, and the treasury feared the impact of the cost of war on Britain's struggling economy.<sup>94</sup> A narrow majority of public opinion polls taken before the fighting began indicated that the British public felt that the Falklands were not worth British casualties. The United States also pushed for a diplomatic solution.

Thatcher, however, played down voices urging restraint and led her nation to war. As Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins note: "The figure of Margaret Thatcher towers over the Falklands drama from its inception to the euphoria of the final triumph. . . . Each of the participants interviewed for the war made similar remarks: 'It was Mrs. Thatcher's war. She held us to it. She never seemed to flinch from her conviction about its course. She took the risks on her shoulders and she won. She emerged as a remarkable war leader.'"<sup>95</sup> Without the Iron Lady, Britain might well have chosen negotiation over confrontation, and the Falklands War—for better or for worse—would never have occurred.

**HYPOTHESIS 11: INDIVIDUALS ARE MORE IMPORTANT WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES ARE FLUID.** In times of tremendous change, individuals often assume greater importance. Individuals, in contrast to large bureaucracies or unwieldy parliaments, can act decisively and purposefully. There was a good reason why the Roman Republic transferred the powers of the Senate to a dictator in times of crisis: A single person can react quickly to rapidly unfolding events, seizing opportunities and fending off calamities. In the 1930s, Europe was in chaos. The dramatic political changes resulting from World War I, the emergence of communism and fascism, and the dislocation caused by the worldwide depression threw the power structure of Europe into disarray. Hitler skillfully exploited this disorder. He played Britain, Italy, France, and Russia off one another, effectively paralyzing them as he remilitarized the Rhineland and

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93. Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), p. 66. Throughout the conflict, key cabinet officials, such as Foreign Secretary Francis Pym and Home Secretary William Whitelaw, urged compromise over confrontation. The Sunday Times of London Insight Team, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 177–178.

94. The military contingency file for an invasion of the Falklands stressed the logistical problems of operations so far from British shores. It also noted that Britain might not be able to meet its NATO commitments if it were engaged in a conflict in the Falklands. Most ominously, it argued that not even the largest task force could retake the islands after an Argentine invasion. Hastings and Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p. 56.

95. *Ibid.*, pp. 335–336.

gobbled up Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Hafiz al-Asad also took advantage of the fluid circumstances created by the end of the Cold War and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait to secure Syria's suzerainty over Lebanon even while moving closer to the United States.

#### THE INTERACTING IMAGES

It is ultimately impossible to explain all of international relations by resort to only one of the three images. None can effectively explain all of the variance in the world. Furthermore, none of the images is entirely discrete—each shapes the others. Thus their impact is felt both directly on events and indirectly through the influence they exert on the other images.<sup>96</sup> The first image is no exception. At least some of its utility as a predictor of international relations lies in the indirect influence it exerts through the other two images.

HYPOTHESIS 12: INDIVIDUALS CAN SHAPE THE SECOND IMAGE. Domestic opinion, bureaucratic politics, and other second-image factors are not independent of individuals. In bureaucratic politics, it is *not* inevitable that where you stand depends on where you sit, especially if where you sit is determined by the leader. The German military was a hindrance to Hitler's machinations only until he was able to oust the strong, independent generals running the army and replace them with pliant lackeys who owed their positions to his beneficence. Likewise the public opinion that guides states is often created by the deliberate actions of leaders who can employ charisma, propaganda, or other means to twist public opinion into an enabling factor. Hitler, Stalin, Saddam, and other dictators have adeptly incited nationalist fervor, created specious *casus belli*, and otherwise played their publics like violins to support their policies. Khomeini's messianic appeal created a mass following for whatever policies he enunciated. If the Imam wished it so, then his followers wanted it too.

Nor are interest group politics independent of individuals. In the early 1900s, an aggressive coalition of German industrialists and naval officers championed Germany's "risk fleet," making it difficult for Berlin to back away from the hostile spiral it was fostering with London. This coalition, however, came into being only after the kaiser had decided to begin the *Flottenpolitik*. Without his ill-conceived first effort, the interest group never would have become so strong.

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96. For a similar study of interacting images, see Philip Gourevitch, "Second Image Reversed: International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Autumn 1978), pp. 881–911.

Leaders also build institutions.<sup>97</sup> Khomeini, for example, created a bizarre system of overlapping administrative bodies—governmental, religious, and parastatal—that functioned adequately during the Imam’s life because he had the requisite blend of political power, charisma, and religious learning to control the system. Khomeini’s legacy lives on in the institutions he created to suit his rule. Today, without the Imam, the system he created is fractious and chaotic, with power diffused among a multitude of competing organizations—a direct legacy of a system created for a unique man.

Nor do all leaders lead equally well. Some inspire their subordinates, getting the most out of their governing teams, military staffs, and diplomatic corps. Napoleon’s officers were fiercely devoted to him, making superhuman efforts to carry out his grandiose vision. Similarly, as Fred Greenstein notes, some leaders create a climate of tolerance that allows dissent and creativity to flourish.<sup>98</sup> Other leaders, however, are bad at receiving advice from their subordinates. Saddam has created a system where fear and sycophancy are necessary for survival. Not surprisingly, he seldom receives objective or useful advice.

**HYPOTHESIS 13: INDIVIDUALS CAN SHAPE THE THIRD IMAGE.** To the extent that third-image theories rest on the assumption that the distribution of power is a key moving force in international relations, then individuals must be counted when measuring the distribution. As noted in hypothesis 2, the skills of individual leaders are often key components of national power. When judging the balance of power between France and its rivals in the early nineteenth century, scholars must recognize that Napoleon’s military genius multiplied the value of sterile production figures and orders of battle.

Hypothesis 8, the impact of a leader’s trustworthiness and reliability, posits another influence of the first image on third-image considerations. A key component of cooperation under anarchy appears to be the willingness of leaders to trust one another. In the absence of a common threat, cooperation becomes quite difficult. For cooperation to survive, leaders must feel able to predict one another’s behavior and trust them to act in a mutually beneficial manner.

The role of individuals extends beyond merely serving as an input into a third-image model. For instance, a key aspect of some third-image theories is that the uncertainty and imperfect information inherent in the anarchic international system fosters certain patterns of behavior in states. As we noted

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97. Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, for example, created a national security structure that has lasted for decades after their terms ended. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, p. 195.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 195–196.

above, this geopolitical fog is frequently the creation of individual leaders. Often it is not a lack of information that leads to miscalculation, but self-deception on the part of leaders. Few human beings are perfectly objective processors of information, and many of the world's most important figures have lived in deep denial, even psychosis. For this reason, proponents of the third image are adamant that even if the future brings perfect information, it will not eliminate these long-standing systemic pressures because the problem is not necessarily in the quality or quantity of information, but in its interpretation. In other words, the fault lies not in our stars but in ourselves.

### *Conclusions*

Giants still walk the earth. International relations cannot be understood if the role of the individual is ignored. Critics may still contend that we have focused on exceptions. And indeed we have. Yet such exceptional individuals knit the tapestry of history: Explaining international relations while ignoring Hitler, Bismarck, Napoleon, and other monumental figures is like trying to understand art or music without Michaelangelo or Mozart. Thus policymakers and politicians are right to pay attention to the goals, abilities, and idiosyncrasies of the world's leaders. It is time for scholars to play their part, helping us better understand when and how individuals can make a difference.

Recognizing the importance of individuals is necessary to explode one of the most pernicious and dangerous myths in the study of international relations: the cult of inevitability. Just because a particular event occurred does not mean it was fated to do so. Scholars often fail to acknowledge that common international behavior—balancing against a threat, choosing a grand strategy, or marching off to war—results from decisions made by individuals. It was not inevitable that Germany became bellicose in the late nineteenth century: Without Bismarck, it might have happened earlier, and without Wilhelm II it might not have happened at all. Scholars are too quick to dismiss individuals' behavior with reference to "Cleopatra's nose," but—as the hypotheses we present above suggest—scholars can deduce useful generalizations about the role of individuals.

We hope that our work spurs a renewal in the study of the first image. Although the range of issues to explore is vast, several suggest themselves immediately. First, although we argue that the first image has an impact on military and diplomatic power, clearly individuals do not shape all elements of power equally. For example, leaders can affect important factors such as strategy and training, but have less of an impact on the tactical level during the conduct of

operations. A more complete assessment of how individuals influence the factors that make up military and diplomatic power would be highly useful. Second, we barely scratch the surface of when individuals matter. The autocratic political systems that allowed individuals far more freedom are (fortunately) becoming fewer in number. Institutions in all their variety should be assessed for the latitude they allow individuals and the particular policy areas that are most and least affected. Third, scholars should explore the role of individuals on issues other than war and alliances, which has been the focus of this initial foray. Individuals may be important to such tragedies as ethnic conflict, mass killing, the perpetuation of tyranny, and other wrongs (and of course rights) whose understanding is basic to the study of politics. Fourth, work on the impact of individuals outside the role of state leader is essential. The personalities of generals, diplomats, religious authorities, and other shapers and implementers of policy cannot be ignored. Fifth, scholars should examine whether different political systems routinely produce certain types of leaders.

Like other approaches to international relations, the first image does not provide all the answers. Within the discipline of international relations, the study of individuals can be only one part of a larger whole. Ignoring their role is foolish, but so too is ignoring the influence of other forces such as systemic factors, domestic politics, and bureaucratic pressures.<sup>99</sup> International relations are complex and cannot be understood by focusing on any one aspect of politics alone: A foolish parsimony is the hobgoblin of small minds. Of course, recognizing the role of individuals will make the job of scholars and analysts more difficult. Political scientists will have to employ biography and psychology in addition to traditional tools such as economics and history. Such additions, however, will result in a far richer product that is better able to explain our world and anticipate coming challenges.

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99. Favoring one level of analysis at the expense of the others is perhaps the most pernicious form of "reductionism." See Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 7. Likewise, we echo Fareed Zakaria's plea for scholars to "develop a tolerance for more limited—but more accurate—generalizations," by developing theories of international affairs that draw on both internal and external factors to explain state behavior. See Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 178–179.