ALEXANDRA T. EVANS

Alternative Futures Following a Great Power War

Volume 2, Supporting Material on Historical Great Power Wars

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Preface

The United States has been increasingly focused on the possibility of a great power war with Russia or China. To inform thinking about such a conflict, the U.S. Air Force asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to generate alternative futures following a near-term great power war. The research is discussed in this volume and a first one:

- *Alternative Futures Following a Great Power War*: Vol. 1, *Scenarios, Findings, and Recommendations*, RR-A591-1, 2023. This volume presents five hypothetical war scenarios and assesses the strategic outcomes after each war.

This supplemental volume provides brief summaries of selected historical great power wars that informed the design and analysis of the scenarios evaluated in Volume 1. The research reported here was commissioned by Headquarters Air Force, Directorate of Strategy, Posture, and Assessments and was conducted within the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE as part of a fiscal year 2020 project "Alternative Futures: Aftermath of Conflict with a Near-Peer." The research was completed in September 2020, before the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has not been subsequently revised.

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1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the risk of a great power war has gained newfound attention. Long-building changes in the international economy, developments in military technology and associated doctrine, and a deterioration of relations among the United States, Russia, and China (among other factors) have contributed to a perceived shift in the international balance of power and an attending interest in the likelihood for an armed confrontation. In Volume 1 of this study, we developed a series of hypothetical scenarios for conflict and evaluated the consequences for the international system in the aftermath. This supplemental volume describes the historical great power wars that informed this analysis. Our review of this history provided insights into common flaws in prewar forecasts and illustrated the variety of ways that wars between great powers—whether brief and limited or protracted and devastating—can reshape the international environment.

What is a great power? Since the Napoleonic Wars, when the term first entered diplomatic parlance, scholars have sought to develop formal criteria to define the class of states that exercise distinct influence on the international system.[1] Initial attempts focused on military might, but scholars have since refined the definition of *power* to also account for human, economic, and political capacity.[2] Though definitional consensus remains elusive, two additional criteria are common to the theoretical literature. A *great power* conceives of its interests in continental or global terms and has the capacity to project power beyond its borders.[3] To be a great power, a state must also be recognized as such by other states in the system.[4]

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[1] Leopold von Ranke, *The Great Powers: Die Grossen Mächte,* trans. Hildegarde Hunt Von Laue, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950.

[2] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe: 1848–1918*, Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1954; George Modelski, *Principles of World Politics*, New York: Free Press, 1972; A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958.

[3] Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System: 1495–1975*: Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1983a.

[4] Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes Are High: Deterrence and Conflict Among Major Powers*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2002; Levy, 1983a. Some scholars have proposed narrow definitions. Organski and Kugler, for instance, look solely at gross national product, and Geller and Singer narrow the list of great powers to states that possess 10 percent or more of the capabilities possessed by all major powers. A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; Daniel S. Geller and J. David Singer, *Nations at War: A Scientific Study of International Conflict*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Other definitions are driven by data concerns rather than by theory. For example, Gowa and Mansfield examine the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan during the period from 1905 to 1985, but they explicitly link this choice to data limitations. Joanne Gowa and Edward D. Mansfield, "Power Politics and International Trade," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 2, 1993.

To identify states that met these standards, we compiled a composite list of great powers since 1815 drawn from three major studies in the field (Table 1.1).[5] The settlement of the Napoleonic Wars at the Congress of Vienna, which contributed to the articulation of new concepts of state sovereignty and international politics, provided a marker often used in the literature to differentiate the modern era while allowing for a significant number of diverse cases. Despite their similarities, the existing lists contained differences that required adjudication.

Table 1.1. Great Powers Since 1815

Great Power	Composite (1556–Present)	Levy (1495–1975)	COW (1816–2016)	Danilovic (1895–1985)
United Kingdom	1815–present	1495–1975	1816–2016	1895–1985
France	1815–present	1495–1975	1816–1940, 1945–2016	1895–1985
Austria-Hungary	1815–1918	1556–1918	1816–1918	1895–1918
Spain	1556–1808	1556–1808		
Prussia/Germany	1815–1945, 1991–present	1740–1975	1816–1918, 1925–1945, 1991–2016	1895–1918, 1925–1945
Russia	1815–present	1803–1975	1816–1917, 1922–2016	1895–1918, 1922–1985
Italy	1861–1943	1861–1943	1861–1943	1895–1943
Japan	1895–1945, 1991–present	1905–1945	1895–1945, 1991–2016	1895–1945
United States	1898–present	1898–1975	1898–2016	1898–1985
China	1950–present	1949–1975	1950–2016	1950–1985

First, some scholars remove states during temporary deviations from power, such as occupation, civil conflict, or defeat in war. However, we consider these deviations to be so short-lived that they do not warrant exclusion for our purposes.[6] Second, social scientists disagree about how to characterize Japanese power prior to 1904. Levy argues that Japan did not qualify as a great power during that period because other European powers did not assign it that status until after

[5] We focus on great power wars since the creation of the Vienna system in 1814–1815, which promoted the concept of a community of great powers granted special interest and influence over the international order. The Correlates of War (COW) Project uses a survey of subject matter experts and emphasizes military-industrial capabilities and states' global interests; see J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965," in Bruce Russett, ed., *Peace, War, and Numbers*, Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1972; Correlates of War Project, "State System Membership List, v2016," 2017. Political scientist Levy (1983a) performs a deep historical analysis to identify states using relative levels of military capabilities, claims to systematic interests, behavior in defending those interests, and foreign or institutional recognition. Finally, Danilovic (2002) conducts a historical analysis based on a narrower criterion that emphasizes power potential, extraregional influence and interests, and international status.

[6] Thomas J. Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith A Grant, and Ryan G Baird, "Major Power Status in International Politics," in Thomas J. Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith A Grant, and Ryan G Baird, eds., *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics*, Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2011.

the 1904–1905 war with Russia.[7] Two other prominent studies, however, argue that Japan gained great power status after its 1894 war with China, when its military prowess surprised the European community.[8] Because the Russo-Japanese War would soon confirm both Japan's strength and desire for influence outside its borders, we categorize Japan as a great power beginning in 1895.

To identify great power wars, we compiled a list of interstate wars in which at least two great powers fought on opposing sides (Table 1.2). These ten wars will be the focus of the rest of this volume. The COW data set is the one that is most widely used in the study of war, capturing all cases of sustained combat involving organized armed forces that resulted in a minimum of 1,000 battle-related fatalities within a 12-month period.[9] We follow the COW in excluding intrastate wars (such as the Russian civil war), even when they have an international component. One exception to our requirement that a conflict involve two or more great powers on opposing sides was our inclusion of the 1894 Sino-Japanese War. Scholars have noted the Eurocentrism that skews much of the scholarship on great power relations.[10] Since the primary concern of the Department of Defense is competition with a rising China, we felt it was important to draw from the history of wars in Asia in our review.

To allow for consideration of differences in prewar assumptions, crisis escalation dynamics, and war termination between the two theaters, we have separated World War II into two case studies, one concentrated on the fighting in Europe and North Africa and the other on events in Asia. Differing from the COW data set but in keeping with the international historiography, we treat the Changkufeng Incident as an early phase of World War II in Asia, which we date as beginning in 1931 with the Sino-Japanese dispute in Manchuria/Manchukuo and ending with Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945.[11]

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[7] Levy, 1983a.

[8] Danilovic, 2002; Correlates of War Project, "State System Membership List, v2016," 2017.

[9] Meredith Reid Sarkees and Phil Schafer, "The Correlates of War Data on War: An Update to 1997," Vol. 18, No. 1, 2000.

[10] Both Gleditsch and Michael Ward have highlighted flaws in the criteria of COW and similar project's, which use the existence of formal diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom and France as a proxy to evaluate a state's independence and participation in the interstate system. Gleditsch argues this approach excludes relevant non-European states and could understate the total amount of conflict between and within the independent states. Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "A Revised List of Wars Between and Within Independent States, 1816–2002," *International Interactions*, Vol. 30, 2004; Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "Interstate System Membership: A Revised List of the Independent States since 1816," *International Interactions*, Vol. 25, 1999.

[11] Many U.S. and European historians use the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge incident to mark the war's start, but the notion of a 14-year war beginning in Manchuria and spreading through Asia is more common in the Chinese and Japanese scholarship of the war. Rana Mitter and Aaron William Moore, "China in World War II, 1937–1945," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (China in World War II, 1937–1945: Experience, Memory, and Legacy), March 2011, p. 226.

Table 1.2. Selected Great Power Wars, 1815–1950

War	Start Year
Crimean[a]	1853
Austro-Prussian	1866
Franco-Prussian	1870
Russo-Turkish	1878
Sino-Japanese	1894
Russo-Japanese	1904
World War I	1914
World War II in Asia	1931
World War II in Europe	1939
Korean War	1950

[a] Although some historians mark the beginning of the war in 1854, when France and the United Kingdom entered the conflict, we have set the start date as October 1853, when the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia. Others have suggested Russia's occupation of the Danubian principalities in July 1853 as an alternate beginning.

For each of our ten selected case studies, we divided our discussion into five sections. The first section of each case study describes the prewar regional or international environment and identifies common assumptions about the risk, nature, and outcome of any potential future major war. Second, we examine the initiation of a conflict to identify the primary trigger, explain combatants' stakes or motives, and explore how a crisis escalated or was internationalized. Third, each case study provides a general summary of the course of the war, establishing the contours of the major campaigns, highlighting decisive technologies, describing the intensity of the fighting and costs for major combatants, and explaining how the war ended. Fourth, we evaluate the near-term and midterm consequences for the regional and international system. Finally, we conclude by assessing the accuracy of prewar predictions of the initiation, character, and consequences of great power conflict.

2. Crimean War, 1853–1856

The first major European war of the post-Napoleonic Era, the Crimean War pitted Russia against an alliance composed of France, the Ottoman Empire, Sardinia, and the United Kingdom. Although the crisis began as a limited dispute about the status of Christian minorities within the Ottoman Empire, it escalated into a competition for influence in the Middle East, particularly the valuable Bosporus Straits. Russian miscalculations of British interests contributed to the internationalization of the conflict, but poor leadership and strategic missteps by all the major combatants made the war costlier, longer, and less decisive than any had anticipated. The Crimean War, therefore, revealed shortfalls in British, Russian, French, and Ottoman planning and spurred significant military reforms in each country.

The Prewar System

After nearly two decades of war, Europe emerged from the Napoleonic Wars with a new and more durable political order. The postwar settlement negotiated at the 1814–1815 Congress of Vienna had reduced France's borders, strengthened its neighbors, and drawn new political boundaries, clarifying the status of disputed territories in Poland, Saxony, Westphalia, Netherlands, Lombardy, Venice, Tuscany, Genoa, Piedmont, Bavaria, and Naples. The new map settled long-standing disputes among Denmark, Prussia, Russia, and Sweden. It also established a German Confederation of 39 states in a step toward stabilizing the Austro-Prussian rivalry. Beyond these territorial revisions, the Congress of Vienna also confirmed the primacy of the five major European powers—Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom—and relegated Spain, Sweden, and Portugal to a secondary tier. All eight were bound to the Congress of Vienna's Final Act as guarantors of the new order; notably, the Ottoman Empire was excluded from the framework. In contrast to past European conferences, the parties agreed to establish a framework to avert and resolve future conflicts, institutionalizing the principle of common responsibility for maintaining a general peace and stability on the continent. The resulting system established the basis for a series of additional conferences to forge an international order based on consensus rather than conflict. The Vienna system, as it came to be known, upheld diplomacy as the primary instrument of conflict resolution and sought to promote multilateralism and build legitimacy through international cooperation.[12]

[12] Louise Richardson, "Strategic and Military Planning, 1815–56," in Talbot C. Imlay and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning Under Uncertainty*, New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 11–13. The Vienna agreement negated the vast territorial changes wrought during the course of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. From 1803 to 1812, the French empire expanded rapidly across Europe, encompassing 44 million inhabitants from the Atlantic Ocean to the Russian border. France's expansion into the

Although the Congress of Vienna established an equilibrium between the major Western and Central European powers, it did little to resolve the problem of the Ottoman Empire, which would undermine this equilibrium in years to come. Unable to keep pace with the administrative reforms and industrialization sweeping across Europe, the once-powerful empire had entered a steep military, political, and economic decline. Beginning in 1830, the Sublime Porte, the government of the Ottoman Empire, instituted a wide-ranging series of reforms, known as the *Tanzimat*, to centralize power, modernize its military, secularize its educational system, and promote the technological and industrial development necessary to reversing its decline. These initiatives brought real improvements, but multiple factors continued to weaken the multiethnic Ottoman army, including sectarian tensions between Muslim soldiers and Orthodox Christian officers, the lack of a universal language, a promotion system based on patronage rather than expertise, limited training, lack of basic supplies, and underdeveloped doctrine.[13] The resulting uncertainty regarding the Ottoman Empire's ability to manage opposition to the changes caused tensions among the European powers, each of which feared the other would most benefit from a vacuum of authority in the east.

The "Eastern Question," as the problem of Ottoman decline came to be known, was both a threat to and an opportunity for Russia. The neighboring empires had tussled over the Balkans, Caucasus, and other border domains since the late 16th century, when a war erupted in 1568 over the Tatar state of Astrakhan Khanate. Eight subsequent wars followed between 1676 and 1829, even as trade between the countries increased and their economies became intertwined.[14] With the decline in Ottoman power, St. Petersburg seized a long-awaited opportunity to annex additional territory, gain a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean, and establish the trade routes essential to its growth as an industrial power.[15] In an effort to accelerate the process, Russia extended support to Greek separatists and agitated for special protections of Orthodox populations in Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Romania, going so far as to deploy troops to the Danubian principalities in 1849 under the pretext of enforcing its rights to protect minority communities in the Balkans. Tsar Nicholas I's belief that Russia bore a religious obligation to

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weak states of western and southern Germany spurred the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1804 and multiple revisions to the political map of Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to the territories annexed into France, Napoleon deposed the Bourbons in Spain, merged Hanover with the Electorate of Hesse-Kassel to form the new Kingdom of Westphalia, renamed the Batavian republic the Kingdom of Holland, merged portions of Prussian and Russian Poland to form the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and merged Balkan possessions into the Illyrian Provinces. These reorganizations were reversed at the war's end, when France was reduced to its 1791 borders and stripped of territories along the Rhine and Alps.

[13] Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2012, pp. 120–122.

[14] Luminita Gatejel, "Imperial Cooperation at the Margins of Europe: The European Commission of the Danube, 1856–65," *European Review of History*, Vol. 24, No. 5, 2017.

[15] Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 354–356.

minority populations in the region lent additional urgency to the country's push westward and southward.[16]

Yet Russian strategists also recognized that prolonged instability introduced the danger that France or even the United Kingdom might seize the Turkish Straits first, cutting off Russian access and undermining its economic expansion.[17] Working through the Vienna system, France, the United Kingdom, and other European powers were already attempting to curtail Russian ambitions in the Near East. The United Kingdom, which had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as the preeminent naval and trade power in the world, was engaged in a competition with Russia in Central Asia. From London's perspective, Russian gains along the Bosporus and Dardanelles appeared as parts of a grand scheme to seize the warm-water ports needed to challenge British naval supremacy and upend the continental balance in Europe. The United Kingdom could protect its interests in Asia and the Near East only by preserving the Ottoman Empire as a barrier to Russia's westward and southern expansion.[18] In June 1841, therefore, Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom signed the London Straits Convention, which closed the Bosporus and the Dardanelles to international warships. For Russia, the agreement protected its position in the Black Sea so long as it did not itself go to war with Turkey; for the European powers, the arrangement promised to avert a potentially destabilizing Russian intervention into Ottoman affairs by blocking its navy's access to the Mediterranean.[19] The United Kingdom also sought to divert Russian attention by supplying arms to Chechen and Caucasian rebels and invading Afghanistan in 1839.[20] Determined to avoid a wider war, Russian strategists designed their plans for a Russo-Turkish war to minimize the likelihood of precipitating British or French intervention.[21]

Even as observers predicted the Ottoman Empire's imminent collapse and fretted about the resulting power vacuum, the West European powers' desire to maintain the continental balance and Russia's belief that it could not defeat a unified opposition ensured that repeated crises were defused. Russia continued to chip away at the Ottoman periphery but sought to avoid a war with the United Kingdom because Moscow leaders believed that the powerful Royal Navy would decide any war's outcome.[22] The Russian military maintained the largest standing force in the

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[16] David Wedgewood Benn, "The Crimean War and Its Lessons for Today," *International Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 2012, p. 388.

[17] On Russian fears of British and French intervention, see Frederick W. Kagan, "Russian War Planning, 1815–56," in Talbot C. Imlay and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning Under Uncertainty*, New York: Routledge, pp. 28–29, 30–31.

[18] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. xxi, 44–50.

[19] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East*, London: Hurst & Company, 2014, p. 54.

[20] Benn, 2012, p. 388.

[21] Kagan, 2006, pp. 38, 40–41.

[22] Figes, 2012, pp. 104–107.

world at the time, with more than a million infantry, 250,000 irregulars and cavalry, and 750,000 reservists in the army, but it was overstretched along Russia's long border and hindered by endemic supply shortages of small arms, artillery, ships, and other armaments.[23] Despite overtures at professionalization, only 0.2 percent of the members of the officer corps were literate, and army manuals concentrated more on parade rules than on actual warfighting doctrine. Leaders worried about the economic and political cost of mobilization, which might trigger peasant uprisings should a crisis occur, and recognized that the country's poor railroad infrastructure would limit the army's ability to respond effectively to a challenge.[24] Russia's first preference, therefore, was to weaken the Turkish Empire while avoiding a complete collapse that might trigger an intra-European scramble for territory.[25]

Although concerned by the Ottoman Empire's decline and Russian activities in the region, British leaders did not anticipate the possibility of a major war in the region. Quite the contrary: The United Kingdom was committed to a strategy of retrenchment in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and did not conduct significant planning for a deployment of a British army anywhere in Europe. The army budget declined by 81 percent between 1815 and 1836, before fears of a French invasion compelled a slight increase in the 1840s. British planners did not foresee the need to fight on the continent and envisioned the army's primary tasks as protecting overseas possessions, maintaining domestic order, and deterring or defending against the feared French invasion. Despite these occasional war scares, British planners trusted that the methods established at Vienna would prevent conflict.[26] If Russia feared a British or French intervention in Eurasia, statesmen in London were impervious to the evidence because they assumed, just as their counterparts in Vienna and Paris did, that the tsar and his advisers shared their fundamental confidence that no major power would risk upsetting the Concert. Recent history bolstered this belief—despite periodic crises over Greece, Italy, Poland, and elsewhere, the major powers had each chosen the stability of the Concert system over the potential for territorial gains through war.[27] In short, "[t]he type of conflict that occurred in the Crimea, or any other major European commitment, was never anticipated."[28]

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[23] Valerii L. Stepanov, "The Crimean War and the Russian Economy," *Russian Studies in History*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2012, pp. 25–27.

[24] Figes, 2012, pp. 116–119.

[25] Copeland, 2015, p. 330.

[26] Richardson, 2006, pp. 13–19.

[27] Richardson, 2006, pp. 12–13.

[28] Richardson, 2006, p. 18.

War Initiation

The great powers' commitment to avoiding war was tested in May 1850, when the French demanded guardianship over Christian sites in Ottoman Palestine. Access to the Holy Land was a regular source of tension among the Ottomans, French, and Russians, but the French request was all the more provocative because it included a demand that the Sublime Porte revoke past privileges granted to the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic churches.[29] The crisis was momentarily defused when the French Republic was overthrown, but the incoming government revived the demand in 1852. The Turks, attuned to the fact that French troops in Algeria could threaten its holdings in Libya and elsewhere, soon bowed to the pressure. Over Russian protests, the Ottomans agreed to an arrangement that favored the Catholic church of France and disadvantaged the Orthodox and Apostolic communities.[30]

Tensions climbed higher a few months later, when the Ottoman governor of Bosnia revoked Montenegro's autonomous status. The decision was reversed after Russian and Austrian protests, but the incident encouraged St. Petersburg to redouble its effort to secure concessions from the Sublime Porte. In March 1853, Russia requested a new treaty legalizing St. Petersburg's claim to serve as protector of all Orthodox Christian subjects within the empire, appointing independent patriarchs in Istanbul, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem and codifying a host of related concessions. If implemented, the proposal would have granted Russia the right to intervene throughout the empire and reduced Ottoman control over a territory that encompassed one-third of its population. Unwilling to accept the demand but unable to oppose the Russians alone, the Ottomans looked to France and the United Kingdom for support.[31]

Russia's decision to escalate the crisis rested on three fatal miscalculations that led it to underestimate the willingness of the United Kingdom and other powers to join the conflict. First, Russia misjudged British motivations and misestimated the likelihood that London would acquiesce to the Ottoman Empire's partition in exchange for concessions in Crete and elsewhere. Second, Russian strategists underestimated the United Kingdom's stake in denying its rival control of the Dardanelles, on which British trade to India relied, and presumed that London would rather abandon France (for whom the 1814 Russian occupation of Paris remained a

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[29] Since 1536, when it became the first European power to sign capitulations with the Sublime Porte, France had claimed a protectorate over the Catholic community in Palestine, a role that its leaders viewed as both a religious obligation and a symbol of the country's status. The religious revival in France, the deterioration of the Ottoman empire, and the increase in foreign competition in the area during the 19th century lent new importance to France's self-appointed guardianship. Louis Napoleon III's decision to revive the cause of Roman Catholic preeminence over the Holy Places was partly a domestic maneuver designed to consolidate his position and establish his reputation as a pious leader. His seizure of power had a secondary effect worth noting: Fearing that Napoleon would attempt to revive his grandfather's wars of expansion, British, Austrian, and Prussian military planners prioritized French threats, not Russian ones, in 1852 and 1853. Figes, 2012, pp. 100–103; Dominique Trimbur, "Our Country's Prestige': The Status of France's Representation in Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, Vol. 71, 2017, pp. 43–44.

[30] Hanioğlu, 2012, pp. 77–79.

[31] Hanioğlu, 2012, pp. 79–80.

persistent source of resentment) than become embroiled in a continental war. Finally, Russia failed to recognize the insecurity of other powers and misestimated their stake in sustaining the status quo, underestimating Austria's desire to prevent Russia from dominating the Balkans and misjudging its willingness to bolster the Ottoman-based status quo by force. Therefore, St. Petersburg was caught off guard when Austria, France, Prussia, and the United Kingdom banded together to demand that Russia drop its demands.[32]

Diplomatic efforts continued through the summer of 1853, but the prospect of a peaceful resolution that satisfied Russia's minimal demands in the Danubian provinces while preserving a degree of Ottoman autonomy dimmed with each passing month. The Sublime Porte's decision to decline its initial request on May 10 and to refuse subsequent ultimatums convinced Russia that the status quo could not be restored and that other European powers were maneuvering to exploit the crisis for their own interests. On July 3, a month after its latest demand was rebuffed, Russia used riots in Bethlehem as a pretext to occupy the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. After prolonged but inconclusive negotiations, the Ottomans declared war on Russia on October 4, 1853.[33]

Hoping to avoid a wider war, the United Kingdom and France held off from intervening until the destruction of the Ottoman fleet in November 1853, an event that portended an intolerable expansion of Russian power. On January 3, 1854, the French and British fleets entered the Black Sea to protect Ottoman vessels. Six weeks later, the allied powers issued an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Wallachia and Moldavia. St. Petersburg, believing it had seized the advantage, rejected the ultimatum, and the United Kingdom and France entered the war on May 28. For Paris, the war offered an opportunity to reassert French influence, revenge the humiliation of 1812, unify the country after the 1849 coup d'etat, and secure papal support for the new regime. London's aims were narrower: to check Russian expansion and strengthen the Ottoman Empire so it could serve as a bulwark against future revanchism.[34] Bound by alliance obligations to France and the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of Sardinia (five years before it renamed itself the Kingdom of Italy) sent 15,000 supporting troops in January 26, 1855, but played only a minor role in the resulting battles.[35]

Course of the War

The ensuing war, which pitted three of the largest and most powerful militaries in Europe against one another, lasted more than a year. Harnessing the latest industrial technologies, the combatants fought with modern rifles; transported men in steamships and by rail; and applied

[32] Figes, 2012, pp. 102–126.

[33] Hanioğlu, 2012, pp. 79–81.

[34] Figes, 2012, pp. 102–103.

[35] Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War: 1853–1856*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020, pp. 98–99.

advances in communications, logistics, and military medicine. Yet even as the resulting campaigns offered "the earliest example of a truly modern war," it was characterized by "the old codes of chivalry, with 'parliamentaries' and truces in the fighting to clear the dead and wounded from the killing fields," historian Orlando Figes writes.[36] Participants struggled to interpret the scale of the losses and the consequences of new defensive technologies, which strained existing theories of conflict but did not yet crystallize into a new strategy of warfare. "For our ancestors before the First World War, the Crimea was the major conflict of the nineteenth century, the most important war of their lifetimes, just as the world wars of the twentieth century are the dominant historical landmarks of our lives," Figes concludes.[37]

The first phase of the war, which stretched from September 1853 through September 1854, was fought across the Danubian principalities (Figure 2.1). Despite having planned for the general possibility of a British or French intervention to defend Turkey in the 1820s and 1830s, Russia began the war with "no coherent plan . . . that would have allowed Russia to strike at her enemies," leading one historian to conclude that Nicholas II had "entered this conflict without even knowing exactly what his objectives were."[38] Neither the Russians nor the Turks were able to score a decisive victory, and efforts by both sides to mobilize the local population failed. Ultimately, Austria's decision to mass forces along its border with the principalities and Vienna's attending threat to cut off supply lines forced Russia to evacuate its forces from the area in July 1854. The war could have ended with the withdrawal, which restored the prewar status quo in the region, but France and the United Kingdom, urged on by their publics, perceived an opportunity to weaken their opponent further and discourage future destabilizing forays in the region. Therefore, the Western powers issued four demands—a guarantee in the Danubian principalities, freedom of navigation through the Danube, revision of the international laws governing the Dardanelles, and joint protection of religious minorities—but the Russians, realizing the terms would amount to a weakening of its influence in the Balkans, refused the overture and the war continued.

[36] Figes, 2012, p. xix.

[37] This tension is perhaps best illustrated in the Russian emphasis on tight columns and bayonets, which was required to maintain conscripts' discipline and to compensate for the inefficiencies of their muskets but was a poor match against British and French rifles and artillery. Figes, 2012, pp. xix, 118.

[38] Kagan, 2006, p. 45.

Figure 2.1. The Danubian Principalities, Crimea and the Black Sea in 1854

SOURCE: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

Attention thereafter shifted to the Crimean peninsula, although secondary fronts were opened in the Caucasus and the Baltic Sea and minor skirmishes were fought in the Pacific and in Greece. Shortly after landing along the Black Sea's northern shore in September 1854, British and French troops attacked the fortress of Sevastopol (Figure 2.2), which was the foundation of Russian power in the region and a persistent threat to Constantinople. Exceeding all expectations, the resulting siege extended for nearly a year, during which 120 kilometers of trenches were dug and more than 150 million gunshots fired in a grueling campaign that foreshadowed the trench warfare of World War I. Major naval and land engagements at Balaklava (October 1854), Inkerman (November 1854), Kerch (June 1855), and Chechnya (August 1855) exhausted both sides but failed to break the impasse. On September 11, 1855, the Russians finally abandoned the fortress, destroying the structure and sinking their ships in the process. For the remainder of the war, allied fleets controlled the Black Sea, which served as a primary supply route to the secondary theaters.[39]

[39] Figes, 2012, Chs. 6–11.

Figure 2.2. The Siege of Sevastopol, 1855

SOURCE: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

Influenced by the experience of the Napoleonic Wars, when the Continental Blockade had galvanized Russian landowners and forced the tsar to ally against France, the United Kingdom imposed a blockade to harm Russian trade, weaken St. Petersburg's resolve, and intensify the country's financial crisis. The campaign to drain Russian coffers was all the more important once it became clear that Sevastopol would not fall quickly, but it was a source of tension with France, which disagreed about the scope of the blockade and its application to neutral states, and among the British public, causing particular upset among shipping, trade, and agriculture interests. Although it caused substantial disruptions within Russia and accelerated the preexisting decline in Anglo-Russian trade, the blockade did not shorten the war as British strategists had expected.[40]

[40] Olive Anderson, "Economic Warfare in the Crimean War," *Economic History Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1961, pp. 34–47.

Austria's threat to enter the war on the allies' behalf forced Russia to accept preliminary peace terms on February 1, 1856.[41] From February 25 to March 30, the parties assembled at the Congress of Paris to work out a final settlement. The resulting Treaty of Paris, signed on March 30, guaranteed the Ottoman Empire's integrity and dictated that Russia return southern Bessarabia and portions of the Danube to Turkey. Moldavia, Wallachia, and Serbia were placed under an international guarantee, and Russia was forbidden to maintain a Black Sea navy or to rebuild Bomarsund, a previously critical fortress along the Finnish coast. Although not the primary motive behind the British, French, or Russian intervention, the European powers seized the opportunity to force the sultan to comply with protections for the rights of Christian Ottoman subjects within the empire.

The human losses of the yearlong war were immense: 20,000 British (out of 98,000), 100,000 French (out of 310,000), and upward of 500,000 Russians are estimated to have died, many from disease, malnutrition, exposure, or other neglect.[42] British planners failed to account for the winter weather conditions in Crimea, and soldiers were outfitted in summer uniforms that provided few protections against the harsh climate.[43] The French were better prepared, but commanders' competition with their British counterparts over the wartime strategy and tactics hampered the allies' ability to leverage their advantages against Russia. Together with the introduction of new and more-lethal technologies and the disastrous lack of medical preparations, the incompetence of military leaders magnified the suffering on all sides of the conflict and resulted in thousands of preventable deaths from exposure, disease, and malnutrition.[44]

Regional and International Consequences

The resulting Paris settlement of 1856 brought the Ottoman Empire, which had been excluded from the Congress of Vienna, into the European system but proved an insufficient tool to contain the destabilizing forces released during the course of the fighting. The arrangement guaranteed the Ottoman Empire's territorial integrity on paper but did little to dampen mounting

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[41] Sondhaus's study of Austro-Prussian military planning finds that the possibility of a Russo-German conflict did not receive significant attention in the period between the Napoleonic and Crimean wars. Instead, Austrian and French planning focused on the threat from France. Lawrence Sondhaus, "Austria, Prussia, and the German Confederation: The Defense of Central Europe, 1815–54," in Talbot C. Imlay and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning Under Uncertainty*, New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 66–71.

[42] Figes, 2012, p. xix. Within the United Kingdom, the effects of these losses were compounded by their concentration within specific communities; in Whitegate, Aghada, and Farside in Ireland, where the British army concentrated recruitment, almost one-third of the male population died in the war.

[43] Benn, 2012, p. 390.

[44] David Gates, "Coalition Warfare and Multi-National Operations in the Crimean War," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 139, No. 4, 1994.

nationalist movements that were awakened during the war and would agitate for greater autonomy during the decades that followed. Having failed to achieve the protectorate it sought in the Balkans, Russia now confronted a festering secessionist movement in Chechnya, where the British and Turks had helped organize an insurgency during the war, and a moribund economy drowning in war debt. Austria's decision to side with France and the United Kingdom came at the expense of its friendship with Russia, which had helped to resolve past disputes in Central Europe, and left Austria dependent on its unreliable Western European partners at the very moment that the Prussian rivalry for control of the German Confederation reared its head. The United Kingdom was now committed to the Ottoman Empire's survival but proved unable to reverse the Eastern power's decline. France enjoyed the minor benefit of defeating a historic rival, but the achievement was soon eclipsed by the war with Austria in Italy 1859 and an expedition to Mexico in 1862.

The contrast between the war's unsatisfying resolution and its high cost encouraged a period of self-reflection and reform across Europe. The consequences were felt most deeply in Russia, where Alexander II, who inherited the throne in 1855, belatedly confronted the reality of the country's diminished military and economic position. The Anglo-French blockade had struck a heavy blow against the Russian economy, which previously had relied on the United Kingdom to receive 40 percent of Russia's exports and to provide 30 percent of its imports, and the empire teetered on bankruptcy. Having lost its Mediterranean fleet and now deprived of access to warm-water ports, the Russian leadership recognized that internal reforms—such as the construction of a rail network, the modernization of its administrative and economic institutions, and rapid industrialization—were vital to restoring the empire's status.[45] Occupied with internal reform, Russia ceased to play a decisive role in European policy until the 1870s, when a crisis in the Balkans would provide St. Petersburg with a new opportunity to pursue its ambitions in the region.[46]

The United Kingdom exploited both Russia's losses and its own strengthened relationship with Sardinia to expand its Mediterranean trade and consolidate its foreign territorial holdings. Rankled by reports of military commanders' mismanagement of the war, the British public and parliament set a high threshold for future interventions on the continent, deeming that British interests were best served through maintenance of the existing balance of power. For the remainder of the 19th century, British foreign and military policy were directed toward maintenance of the overseas colonies and related naval questions, and London sought to limit its engagement in continental disputes.[47]

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[45] Stepanov, 2012, p. 29.

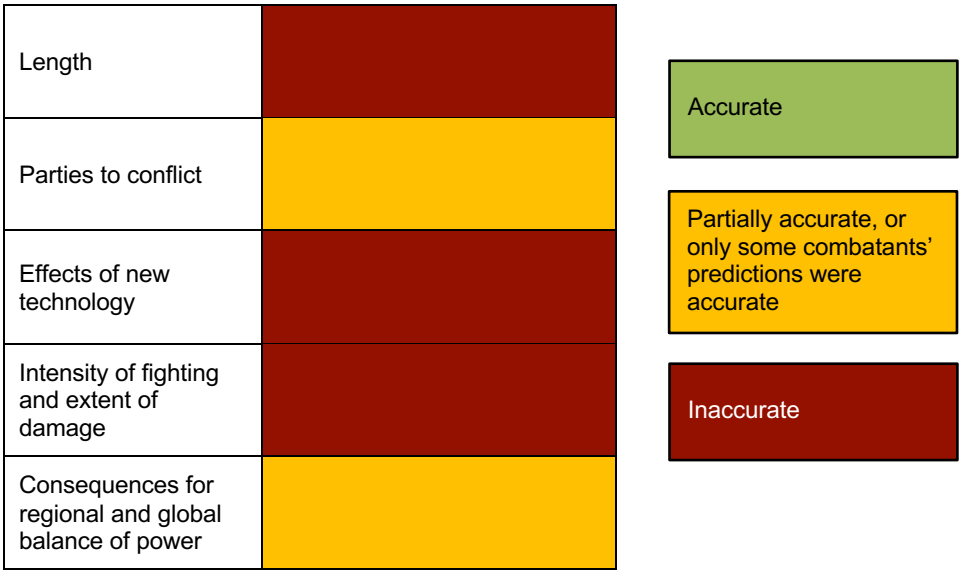
[46] Igor' A. Khristoforov, "The Russian Empire and the Crimean War: Conceptualizing Experience and Exploring New Approaches," *Russian Studies in History*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2012, pp. 3–4.

[47] Richardson, 2006, pp. 19–20.

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

Several faulty prewar assumptions shaped the course of the conflict and its aftermath (Table 2.1). Even as the crisis over Ottoman territories escalated, British, French, and Russian statesmen continued to profess confidence that the territorial dispute, like many others in the years prior, would be resolved peacefully. In turn, each side overestimated the others' commitment to finding a diplomatic solution and underestimated their willingness to initiate a conflict over the dispute. However, Russian calculations were not entirely mistaken; St. Petersburg accurately predicted that the West European powers would not intervene to stop its occupation of the Danubian principalities but did not correctly predict Anglo-French intervention after Russia destroyed the Ottoman fleet in 1853.

Table 2.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Crimean War



Despite the recent experience of the Napoleonic Wars, none of the three powers was adequately prepared for what turned into a long and costly conflict. Foreshadowing challenges that would plague planners for the remainder of the 19th century, all three militaries struggled to anticipate the consequences of emerging industrial technologies for the character, pace, and lethality of warfare. The conflict's battles combined elements of both the old Napoleonic order and the grueling attrition warfare that would later define World War I, with the result that each of the major combatants proved unable to secure the decisive results they had anticipated. Because the duration of the conflict exceeded expectations, the human, materiel, economic, and political costs of the war were also higher than anticipated.

Predictions of how the conflict would end and its ramifications for the regional and international balance of power were mixed. For instance, Russia accurately forecast that it could not defeat the United Kingdom if it committed its navy, but none of the European powers

anticipated that conflict would end without a decisive victor. Similarly, Russia, France, and Britain foresaw the Ottoman Empire's continued decline over the 19th century but were taken aback by the extent of the Russian decline illuminated by the war and during its aftermath. The conflict forced Russian leaders to recognize a reality long ignored: Russian power was diminished and would continue to decline until economic, military, and political reforms were implemented.

3. Austro-Prussian War, 1866

The Austro-Prussian War (also known as the Seven Weeks' War, Schleswig War, Unification War, Fraternal War, or the German Civil War) marked the climax of the long Austro-Prussian rivalry. The second of three wars of German unification, it settled the outstanding debate over whether to pursue a "smaller" or a "greater" Germany in Prussia's favor, resulting in Austria's expulsion and the formation of the North German Confederation, a template for the later German Empire. Despite its brevity, the war weakened the system established at the Congress of Vienna, spurred the consolidation of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, and sowed the seeds of the Franco-Prussian, Russo-Turkish, and several Balkan wars.

The Prewar System

With the end of the Crimean War, the great powers of Europe sought to build a new and more durable continental balance premised on British dominance at sea and Russian and French dominance on land.[48] The problem of Germany, however, remained unresolved. Since the mid-18th century, the two largest Germanic states, Austria and Prussia, had competed for influence in a rivalry that worsened after the Holy Roman Empire's dissolution in 1806 and the subsequent decision by the European powers to establish a German Confederation of 39 states (Figure 3.1). Intended to foster stability, the arrangement instead spurred a debate between Prussia and Austria and their respective supporters, with the former advocating a "smaller" Germany that Prussia could dominate and the latter advocating a "greater" Germany within a unified state.[49]

Initially the clearly weaker of the two, Prussia gained ground on Austria during the mid-19th century. Prussia's growing economic and military power, combined with the fervid nationalism sweeping across Europe at the time, encouraged statesmen to envision a greater role within the German Confederation and in continental affairs more broadly. To safeguard against Russia and

[48] The United Kingdom, Russia, and France's reluctance to engage in another continental war was apparent in 1864, when the three powers acceded to Prussia's request not to intervene in its war against Denmark despite, as Goddard has demonstrated, a widespread recognition that the conflict threatened the Congress of Vienna treaties and would encourage German unification under Prussian auspices, with "monumental consequences" for the continental balance. Preoccupied with internal reforms and still recovering from the Crimean war, the powers agreed not to lend support to Denmark in exchange for general assurances that Prussia would restore equilibrium in Central Europe. Stacie E. Goddard, "When Right Makes Might: How Prussia Overturned the European Balance of Power," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Winter 2008–2009, pp. 110, 127–128. On British, French, and Russian calculations throughout the course of the war, see Taylor, 1954, pp. 145–154.

[49] On the Austro-Prussian competition, see Roy A. Austensen, "Austria and the 'Struggle for Supremacy in Germany,' 1848–1864," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 2, June 1980. On the creation of the German Confederation, see Sondhaus, 2006, pp. 50–51.

France and improve its position relative to Austria, Prussia would need to revise the borders established by the Congress of Vienna, which excluded large swaths of historic Prussia from the German Confederation, and to encourage the entity's dissolution and replacement with a unified state under Prussian auspices. Ultimately, this would require defeating Austria and expelling it from the German Confederation.[50]

Figure 3.1. Prussia and the German States, 1860

SOURCE: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

Aware that it was not yet strong enough to challenge its competitor, Prussia sought in the meantime to avoid a premature war by drawing Vienna into an alliance.[51] The opportunity arose in 1864, when a crisis over Schleswig-Holstein—a long-disputed territory shared among Austria, Denmark, and Prussia—spurred the creation of a temporary alliance to evict Denmark and expand the German Confederation. Although it did not substantially alter the regional or international balance, the brief war showcased Prussian technological advances, such as new breech-loaded cannons and other innovations that would define warfare for the next several

[50] William Carr, *The Origins of the German Wars of Unification*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 57.

[51] Taylor, 1954, pp. 132–139.

decades.[52] The experience taught the Prussian High Command the importance of integrating railways into its military planning and encouraged the development of new strategies that emphasized mobility, speed, and maneuvering around fortifications instead of besieging them. These innovations—combined with an attending reorganization of the Prussian army, particularly the decentralization of command from headquarters to frontiers—furthered Prussia's professionalization and spurred additional innovations that would contribute to its victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870.[53]

Ultimately, Denmark renounced all claim to the duchies and granted Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia and Austria under the 1864 Treaty of Vienna.[54] Having dispensed with the shared threat, Austria and Prussia resumed their competition for control of the German Confederation. For Austria, Prussia's growing strength presented an uncomfortable dilemma. On the one hand, Vienna was unwilling to cede its dominant position and could not tolerate Prussia's proposal for a "little Germany." On the other hand, Austrian statesmen recognized that a strong Prussia was an important bulwark against other European powers and vital to Austria's own status as a major player in continental affairs. The problem facing Vienna, as one scholar has written, "was one of devising policies consistent with the fact that Prussia was at the same time Austria's most dangerous rival and her most important ally."[55]

Resentment stemming from an 1865 compromise granting Prussia administrative control over Schleswig-Holstein heightened Austria's determination to contain its rival's power.[56] As tensions between the rivals worsened, Austria continued to view Prussia as the weaker state, as did Austrian ally France. Of the two Germanic states, it was assumed that Austria maintained a

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[52] The duchies, located in the flatlands between the Eider and Kongeå rivers, were neither economically nor strategically vital to either state, but held symbolic importance for German and Danish nationalists and were a continual source of tension over the centuries. On March 30, 1863, Denmark's King Frederick VII issued a royal ordinance curtailing German "interference" in the duchies, prompting Prussia to accuse Denmark of violating an existing protocol on the territory. The crisis worsened after Frederick died the following November, opening a new dispute over succession in the duchies. German nationalists demanded both immediate recognition of their favored royal aspirant, Duke Christian August of Augustenburg, and the duchies' separation from Denmark and entry into the Confederation. The resulting war lasted seven months and was characterized by fierce but sporadic fighting on Danish territory. Outnumbered six to one, the Danes had neither the men nor the defenses required to withstand the Prussian artillery bombardment. For a brief summary of the long history of the Schleswig-Holstein dispute, see Carr, 1995, pp. 34–48, 84–85. For the 1863 crisis, see Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 40–41.

[53] Wawro, 1997, pp. 17–19.

[54] Dennis Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 2nd ed., London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. Ch. 4.

[55] Roy A. Austensen, "The Making of Austria's Prussian Policy, 1848–1852," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1984, p. 861.

[56] Copeland, 2015, p. 379. The October 1864 settlement had provided for joint control of Schlewsig and Holstein until a lasting resolution to the territorial dispute could be devised. During a second conference in August 1865, Prussia and Austria agreed to revise the power-sharing agreement, although "[Chancellor Otto von] Bismarck wrung so many concessions from the Austrians that the deal was far from balanced." Wawro, 1997, p. 42.

numeric advantage and technological superiority, particularly on the defensive.[57] Expert opinion in most European capitals confirmed Vienna's assessment of the military balance, predicting that Austria would either defeat Prussia in a short war or become entrapped in a campaign of mutual exhaustion.[58] Confident in its ability to defeat Prussia, Austria did not solicit guarantees of French intervention on its behalf and dismissed proposals to cede Venetia, if captured in an intra-German war, to France in exchange for a binding alliance. (Vienna's later panicked reversal after a French bluff to intervene on Prussia's behalf suggests that planners did not foresee the later possibility.)[59]

But Prussia, determined to claim leadership of Germany and emboldened by recent organization and tactical improvements, calculated that it could defeat Austria if the French did not intervene. Since the 1850s, Prussian military thinking had emphasized the integration of new technologies (including the needle gun and rifled artillery) and the availability of expanded railways. Together, these factors promised transformative improvements in mobilization, transportation, and firepower. The more-conservative Austrians had disregarded these technological changes, granting Prussia what its military leaders claimed could be a decisive advantage.[60] Still, there was reason to fear that France, whose dominance of Western Europe was secure only as long as Germany was divided, would intervene to play the Austrians against Prussia, bleeding both potential competitors at once. Yet the Prussian leadership, particularly Bismarck, predicted that Paris would not meddle in an intra-German conflict between Austria and Prussia that involved treaty rights to disputed territories.[61] Prussia's assumption that a war with Austria would be provoked over a dispute within the German Confederation was confirmed in 1866, when tensions over Schleswig and Holstein erupted once again.

War Initiation

In June 1866, a dispute over Schleswig and Holstein (Figure 3.2) provided Prussia with the pretext to challenge Austria for leadership of the German Confederation and accelerate the unification of Germany. Overestimating its military advantage, Austria called on June 1 for the federal assembly to settle the fate of the duchies. By drawing the German Confederation into a

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[57] Thomas J. Christensen, "Perceptions and Alliances in Europe, 1865–1940," *International Organizations*, Vol. 51, No. 1, Winter 1997, p. 74.

[58] Christensen, 1997, p. 73.

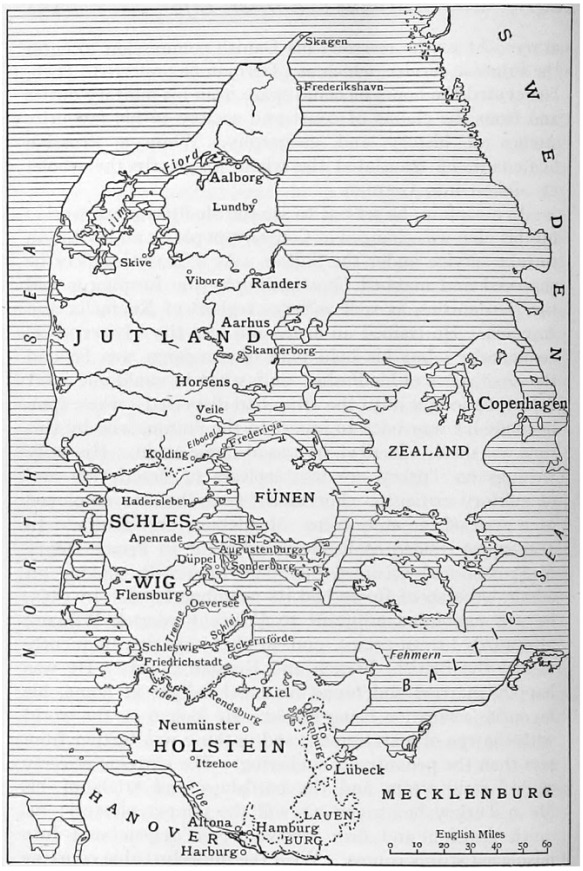
[59] Christensen, 1997, p. 75.

[60] On Prussia's adaption of new technologies, Austria's failure to innovate, and the consequences in 1866 see Dennis E. Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology and the Unification of Germany*, Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975. On the importance to Prussian strategic calculations, see Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992, pp. 229–234.

[61] On Prussian efforts to ensure French neutrality, see Goddard, 2008–2009, pp. 110–142.

decisive war against Prussia, Vienna hoped to both force a resolution of the Schleswig-Holstein dispute and consolidate its own hegemony over the German Confederation. Instead, the move handed Prussia the opening it had been waiting for: an opportunity to dismantle the German Confederation and demonstrate Prussian military dominance while portraying its rival as the obvious aggressor.

Figure 3.2. Map of Jutland, Schleswig, and Holstein Circa 1866



SOURCE: Adolphus William Ward, *Germany, 1815–1890*, Vol. 2, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1918, p. 152.

What followed were weeks of careful maneuvering intended to bait Austria into declaring war first. Prussia accused Vienna of violating the 1865 agreement formalizing the duchies' division and ordered its forces to enter Holstein, hoping to provoke a confrontation that it could cite as evidence of Austrian aggression. Instead, Austria broke off diplomatic relations on June 12 and withdrew its forces from the duchy. Prussia then declared the dissolution of the German Confederation and invaded Saxony, but even this failed to prompt Vienna to file a formal declaration of war. Only when Prussian troops reached the Austrian border on June 21 did the Austrian counter-invasion begin. Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover, and other minor German states

followed suit, siding with Austria because they believed Vienna would defend their independence against Prussian domination.[62]

As in 1866, the great powers largely abstained from interfering in the intra-Germanic conflict. Bound by an alliance with Prussia, hoping to seize Venetia, and concerned that the war could not be justified under international law, Italy entered the war only reluctantly in late June.[63] France had previously fanned tensions between Austria and Prussia but decided against direct intervention, aware that its forces were not ready for war. France did not oppose Italy's entry, which Paris assumed would prolong the conflict and increase the damage to both Germanic states, but France otherwise agreed to remain neutral if Prussia pledged to grant France territories along the Rhine after the war. The United Kingdom, already disengaged from continental affairs, expressed middling interest; Russia, recalling the experience of the Crimean War, also shied from involvement.[64]

Course of the War

The war was over nearly as soon as it had begun. Austria's calculation that it could defeat the combined Italian and Prussian forces as long as the other Germanic states contributed was based on too high an estimate of its own strength and too low an assessment of its rival.[65] Applying lessons learned during the previous war, the Prussian offensive exploited new and previously underused railroad technologies to advance with a speed that overwhelmed Austria and its allies and stunned the rest of Europe.[66] Prewar estimates had concentrated on Prussia's numerical disadvantage, but Italy's entry diverted part of the Austrian force south. Aided by superior commanders and the breech-loaded needle gun (a closely guarded innovation that allowed its riflemen to fire faster than their musket-armed adversaries), Prussia swiftly defeated Austria and its allies in a series of decisive battles at Gitschin (June 29), Königgrätz (July 3), Kissingen (July 10), Bezzecca (July 21), Lamacs (July 22), and Tauberbischofsheim (July 24). Prussia then

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[62] Taylor, 1954, p. 166.

[63] Taylor, 1954, pp. 166–167.

[64] Christensen, 1997, p. 72; Taylor, 1954, pp. 166–167.

[65] Austria presumed that Prussia would not be able to overcome its internal divisions and misestimated the effect of Prussian modernization and professionalization, predicting that the Prussian military "could not place her normal army on a complete war-footing, because trained men would be wanting" (Henry Montague Hozier, *The Seven Weeks' War: Its Antecedents and Its Incidents Based upon Letters Reprinted from "*The Times*,"* London and New York: Macmillan, 1871, p. 20. Hozier has traced this "defective information" (p. 20) to the Austrian War Office's failure to maintain military statistics of other European powers.

[66] For the role of railroads in Prussian war planning, see Dennis Showalter, "Mass Multiplied by Impulsion: The Influence of Railroads on Prussian Planning for the Seven Weeks' War," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1974.

ordered a halt, fearing that advancing further might destabilize the Austrian state and provoke a Russian or French intervention.[67]

French-mediated negotiations had begun in late June, although both Prussia and Italy insisted on continuing fighting until the terms of an agreement were set. In an attempt to avoid permanently isolating Austria, Bismarck put forward moderate terms that the Austrians readily accepted. Under the Treaty of Prague, signed on August 23, Prussia annexed the disputed territory of Schleswig-Holstein along with Hanover, Hesse-Kassel, Nassau, and Frankfurt. The German Confederation was dissolved and a new organization, the Northern German Confederation, was established under Prussian hegemony. Austria was excluded from the new organization, but it was not occupied and the future status of the German states in the south was left unresolved. Notably, France did not receive the portions of the Rhine promised in exchange for nonintervention. Two months later, the Peace of Vienna transferred Venetia from Austria to Italy.[68]

Regional and International Consequences

Austria's defeat set in motion a chain of events that would hasten the collapse of the existing European order and contribute to the emergence of a unified Germany. By waging a short war over a minor matter, Prussia demonstrated its military power, tipped the continental balance in its favor, and—in a chain of events it had not forecast—contributed to the formation of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. The outcome of the war also encouraged nationalist movements across Eastern Europe and accelerated the unraveling of the system established at the Congress of Vienna.[69] Although the Austro-Prussian war was the last intra-Germanic war, it planted the seeds for later conflicts: the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, and the ultimate outbreak of World War I in 1914.

That such a brief war could have such far-ranging consequences is all the more surprising because neither Austria nor Prussia sought to revise the continental balance so dramatically. Prussia recognized that German unification would be a significant event but had sought to limit the war and contain the potential reverberations to avoid provoking a British or French intervention. As Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman have noted, the disagreement between Austria and Prussia was over leadership of the German Confederation, not the wider European or international order.[70] Prussia had sought to avoid Austria's destruction and pursued

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[67] For a comprehensive military history of the conflict, see Wawro, 1997. The Austrian military fared better against the Italians, which it defeated on land at the Battle of Custozo on June 24 and at sea in the Battle of Lissa on July 20. Its army never defeated the Prussian at battle, although it forced an indecisive resolution at Trautenau on June 27.

[68] Taylor, 1954, pp. 167–169.

[69] The Prussian military's performance was noted internationally and informed modernization efforts in the United States, Japan, Latin America, and elsewhere.

[70] Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992, Ch. 7.

a moderate settlement partly to avoid destabilizing the region further. Beyond France's mediating role, the other powers had followed a policy of strict nonintervention, avoiding the possibility of provoking a wider conflict that might disrupt the order that had maintained peace since the Crimean War. Because the war was limited both geographically and in its number of combatants, the outcome left the British and French trade and colonial systems intact and did not impose significant economic damage to any of the parties. As a result, few observers expected Prussia's victory to fundamentally alter the map of Europe.[71]

But by settling the decades-long struggle for control of the German states, the war freed Prussia to accelerate its plans for German unification and hedge against the French threat. The decision not to destroy the Austrian state, either on the battlefield or through postwar indemnities, allowed Prussia to pursue friendly relations with its former rival in the years after the war, stabilizing its eastern border and gaining a valuable diplomatic and military ally. Prussia also moved to make peace with the other Germanic states that had fought on Austria's behalf. Unlike its predecessor, the German Confederation, the new North German Confederation was governed by a parliament elected by universal male suffrage, an arrangement that bolstered the union's popular legitimacy and strengthened the bonds among the 22 member states. By taking this approach, Prussia established the foundation for a unified nation and secured its former opponents' allegiance—and their support was now all the more important because France, awakened late to the threat of a growing power on its eastern border, began to search for ways to weaken its neighbor. Prussia anticipated this threat and, through careful diplomatic maneuvering, strengthened ties with Russia and isolated Paris.[72]

Excluded from the new North German Confederation, Austria in 1867 forged a new governing arrangement with the Kingdom of Hungary, reestablishing the latter's sovereignty after an occupation of nearly two decades and establishing a dual monarchy. The concept of a partnership had been raised and rejected before Hungary's occupation, but now that Vienna needed protection against Prussia, it was willing to accept Hungarian demands for economic unification, a "common monarchy," and other governing arrangements that previously had seemed unpalatable. The compromise preserved Austria-Hungary's status as a great power, but it remained a fragile one, torn at times between the conflicting interests of its German-Austrian and Magyar states.[73]

The emergence of more-active—and, at times, violent—nationalist movements would also become a central threat to the Austro-Hungarian Empire's integrity. Prussia's advocacy of German unification was both a product of and an engine in the spread of new notions of

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[71] Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992, p. 219; Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, "Pride of Place: The Origins of German Hegemony," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 1990.

[72] Taylor, 1954, pp. 175, 202.

[73] Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992, pp. 238–239; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809–1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976, Ch. 11.

nationalism, self-determination, and ethnic identity that were sweeping across Europe during the 19th century. Prussia's vision of a unified German state founded on the notion of its people's shared but distinct cultural, linguistic, and historical experience galvanized separatist movements across eastern and southern Europe, where minority communities also demanded autonomy from such multiethnic behemoths as the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.[74] Such movements in the Balkans were particularly destabilizing; they opened opportunities for Russian encroachment, deepened societal cleavages, and fanned local conflicts that would attract the great powers' intervention in 1898, 1912, 1913, and 1914.

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

European strategists anticipated some elements of the 1866 conflict. For instance, both states accurately predicted that the other great powers would not intervene in a conflict between the two German states (Table 3.1). But a general misreading of the military balance between Austria and Prussia prevented Austrian leaders from correctly forecasting the length, intensity, or consequences of the conflict. Austrian and Prussian prewar estimates diverged on the question of military technology, for example. Focused on the numerical balance of forces, Austrian planners neglected the technological transformation of warfare that was underway by the mid-19th century. Prussian strategists, however, recognized the importance of innovations in transportation and small arms and exploited both to great effect.

Table 3.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Austro-Prussian War

Length	
Parties to conflict	
Effects of new technology	
Intensity of fighting and extent of damage	
Consequences for regional and global balance of power	

Accurate

Partially accurate, or only some combatants' predictions were accurate

Inaccurate

[74] Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992, pp. 238–239.

This disagreement contributed to the great powers' divergent predictions of duration, costs, and outcomes of a conflict between the countries. Misinterpreting the balance of power, Austria predicted that it would either defeat its rival quickly or be forced into a long and costly war that ended after the mutual exhaustion of both states. Instead, the fighting validated the Prussian theory of victory—specifically, that its new capabilities would allow it to defeat the Austrian armies quickly while leaving the Austrian state intact.

Predictions of the consequences of the fighting similarly were mixed. Prussia did succeed—as it had anticipated correctly, and Austria had not—in tipping the balance within the German Confederation in its favor and accelerating the movement toward unification. But the fighting also set other unanticipated changes into motion. Prussia did not intend to contribute to the formation of an Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, and it did not anticipate fully how the success of the German unification movement would inspire separatist movements across eastern and southern Europe that would, over the following decades, spark a series of diplomatic crises, civil wars, and even multistate conflicts. The conflict, therefore, demonstrates how even a short and limited conflict can, intentionally or otherwise, change the strategic environment in substantial and unexpected ways.

4. Franco-Prussian War, 1870–1871

The Franco-Prussian rivalry came to a head in 1870, when a dispute over the Spanish throne escalated into a brief but costly war. Eager to reassert its domination of Western Europe and force Prussia to accept a subordinate status, France was humiliated when a superior coalition of German forces instead swiftly destroyed the bulk of its army at Sedan, captured French Emperor Napoleon III, occupied the country, and besieged Paris. France's ensuing surrender confirmed Prussia's military dominance on the continent. The victory enabled Prussia to complete the process of German unification and to assume a more influential role on the European political stage.

The Prewar System

The 1866 war awakened France to the dangers of a powerful unified Germany under Prussian leadership. The ease with which the Prussian army defeated Austria and the speed of the Germanic states' consolidation seemed to prefigure Prussia's rise as a dominant force in Europe and a corresponding decline in French power. As one counselor to Napoleon III, France's embattled emperor, warned in July 1866: "Grandeur is relative. A country's power can be diminished by the mere fact of new forces accumulating around it."[75] In an effort to assuage its new sense of insecurity, France demanded additional territory along the Rhine and in Belgium, but the Prussians refused. In 1867, a war scare triggered by a disagreement over Luxembourg discredited any remaining French hopes for peaceful coexistence with a united Germany. As historian A. J. P. Taylor writes, "Jealousy on the one side, suspicion on the other; these became the fixed rule on the frontier of the Rhine."[76]

From 1866 to 1870, France embarked on a military buildup and a diplomatic campaign to force Prussian concessions and stabilize its position in Europe.[77] But these efforts to mitigate the threat to France and heighten awareness of the Prussian danger backfired. Napoleon III's demands for territorial concessions in Belgium and the Rhineland, and his provocation of a series of war scares, played into Prussian hands. France's aggressive tone irritated the Italians, who expressed annoyance at French support for the Papal States in and around Rome; worried the Austro-Hungarians, who feared a new conflict with Prussia; and alienated the British, who

[75] Copeland, 2015, p. 380.

[76] Taylor, 1954, p. 183; Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France 1870–1871*, New York: Macmillan, 1961, p. 40.

[77] Howard, 1961, pp. 29–39; John G. Lorimer, "Why Would Modern Military Commanders Study the Franco-Prussian War," *Defence Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2005, pp. 110–111.

wondered whether Paris was becoming the greatest threat to European stability.[78] Although Prussia had a larger army, France was still seen as the more powerful state and most Europeans believed that France retained the ability to defeat Prussia quickly, particularly if Paris mobilized and attacked first. In this context, France's pervasive fears of decline and complaints about Prussia's rise were easily dismissed. Even the concerned French, however, underestimated the extent of their own military decline and misjudged Prussia's relative gains during the same period.[79]

France's military buildup was cause for concern in Prussia. France was already a formidable power, but the increased expenditures and reforms were expected to expand these existing advantages. Paris was isolated diplomatically, but its augmented strength might entice new allies and increase its leverage against Prussia. The French might even undermine Prussian efforts to unify the South German states, where signs of opposition to Prussian domination were already evident.

Assuming that a war between France and Prussia was inevitable, Prussian leaders—particularly Bismarck—preferred to fight sooner, when their numerical and technological advantages were strongest, rather than later. The 1866 war had secured Prussia's leadership of the northern Germanic states, empowered advocates of total unification, and allowed for the transformation of the confederated states' armies following a Prussian model. Fueled by the German states' industrialization, large population, and internal reforms, Prussian power was expected to grow in the decades ahead—both in overall terms and in relation to France, whose recent history of aggression and destabilization was still remembered across Europe and which appeared to have entered a general decline. Yet Napoleon III's calls for reforms introduced the possibility that France might slow or even reverse its deterioration—or, at least, develop ways to mitigate Prussia's advantages in firepower, transportation, and logistics. If a war were fought before France modernized and reclaimed its strength, Prussia might maintain its advantage, neutralize the threat from its neighbor, reclaim territory in the Rhine lost during previous wars, rally nationalist sentiments, and complete the unification of the south and north German states into an empire.[80]

War Initiation

French fears reached a fever pitch in June 1870, when Prussian King Wilhelm I supported the candidacy of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen for the Spanish throne, which had been vacated two years earlier. The move was clearly provocative: France considered Spain part of its sphere of influence and had worried since 1866 that the Prussians would pursue an alliance

[78] Taylor, 1954, pp. 176–200.

[79] Howard, 1961, Ch. 1; Christensen, 1997, pp. 77–78, 80–81.

[80] Howard, 1961, pp. 21, 44–45.

to leave it encircled. Whether Bismarck manufactured the succession crisis to provoke a war with France or merely sought to redirect French anxieties westward, minimizing the risk of a war along the Rhine, remains a matter of historical debate.[81] In either event, the French interpreted Prussia's interference into Spanish affairs as evidence of its aggressive intent and demanded the withdrawal of Prince Leopold's candidacy.

At first, it appeared as if the crisis would be defused quickly. Wilhelm withdrew his support for Leopold and the French signaled a willingness to put the matter to rest. Soon after, however, Bismarck, who had orchestrated the decision to back Leopold's candidacy, released an edited summary of a meeting between Wilhelm and the French ambassador to Prussia that implied the men had insulted each other. The scandal provoked an uproar in Paris, where Napoleon III's military advisers persuaded the emperor that the French army could win a quick victory and restore his declining popularity. On July 19, 1870, France formally declared war.[82]

The French decision was made hastily and without sufficient preparation. Misinterpreting recent diplomatic negotiations, France expected that Austria and Italy would pledge support and was stunned when they refused.[83] Other European states viewed the French response as an overreaction to a minor provocation and were unwilling to support Paris's seemingly revisionist aims.[84] Already disinclined to intervene, Russia's nonintervention had been secured with a Prussian promise to support the tsar's petition to suspend the 1856 Treaty of Paris's Black Sea provisions and rebuild the Russian fleet.[85] France had also expected the southern German states to defect from Prussia once its offensive advantage was made clear, but the circumstances of the war's start instead united the Germanic states against the foreign aggressor.[86] Although France had been the one to declare war, Prussia, which had begun mobilization on the evening of July 14–15, seized the initiative, moving its men to the front within three weeks.[87]

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[81] For a summation of the debate, see David Wetzel, book review of Josef Becker, ed., *Bismarcks spanische "Diversion" 1870 und der preußisch- deutsche Reichsgründungskrieg. Quellen zur Vorund Nachgeschichte der Hohenzollern-Kandidatur für den Thron in Madrid 1866–1932*, Vols. 1 and 2, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003, in *Central European History*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2004; Josef Becker, "The Franco-Prussian Conflict of 1870 and Bismarck's Concept of a 'Provoked Defensive War': A Response to David Wetzel," *Central European History*, Vol. 41, 2008; and David Wetzel, "A Reply to Josef Becker's Response," *Central European History*, Vol. 41, 2008.

[82] Taylor, 1954, pp. 203–206.

[83] Austria had quietly signaled to Prussia a willingness not to enforce neutralization and Italy was preoccupied with internal matters. W. E. Mosse, "The End of the Crimean System: England, Russia and the Neutrality of the Black Sea, 1870–1," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1961, pp. 166–167.

[84] Todd H. Hall, "On Provocation: Outrage, International Relations, and the Franco–Prussian War," *Security Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1–29.

[85] Mosse, 1961.

[86] Christensen, 1997, p. 79.

[87] On the relative strength of the Prussian mobilization process, see Arthur T. Coumbe, "Operational Command in the Franco-Prussian War," *Parameters*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1991.

Course of the War

The war lasted approximately ten months, although an armistice was reached within five. Both the Prussians and the French raised large armies, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of reservists and showcasing new methods of transportation, command, control, and communications. As happened in the 1866 war, railroads allowed both armies to concentrate their forces, move troops quickly and without the weariness of long marches, and maintain field supplies, although supplying the French and Prussian armies—the largest that Europe had witnessed in more than a century—remained a constant challenge.[88] In the process, as historian Michael Howard notes, "the distinction between army and nation was dissolved," as news correspondents, foreign observers, and the wounded moved easily in and out of theater, intensifying leaders' simultaneous efforts to mobilize national opinion and engage civilian populations in the cause.[89] Melding elements of early 19th-century warfare with Industrial Age technologies and new military science techniques, the conflict introduced "an age of absolute war" and presaged the violence of the later world wars.[90]

From the very start, the French prediction of a swift and easy victory proved inaccurate. "The Second Empire had always lived on illusion; and it now committed suicide in the illusion that it could somehow destroy Prussia without serious effort," wrote Taylor. "There was no policy in the drive to war, no vision of a reconstruction of Europe on lines more favorable to France, not even a clear plan for acquiring territory on the Rhine."[91] The French mobilization in July was slow and disorganized, granting the efficient Prussians time to mobilize a million men from the North German Confederation and to equip and transport nearly half of them to the French border by July 18. In their push for war, the French High Command had assured Napoleon III that recent organizational reforms and technological innovations, such as the breech-loading *chassepot* rifle and *mitrailleuse* machine gun, would allow the army to overwhelm the German forces despite the numerical imbalance.[92] Once the forces met at the Battle of Wörth on August 6, however, it soon became clear that the Prussian arms could fire further, faster, and with greater accuracy thanks to improvements in metallurgy, ballistics, and precision engineering.[93] Rather

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[88] Napoleon I's *La Grande Armée* boasted roughly 600,000 men at its height in 1811–1812. By mid-July 1870, the North German Confederation and its southern allies had mobilized approximately 1,183,000 men and concentrated 462,000 on the frontier. Lorimer, 2005, p. 113.

[89] Howard, 1961, p. 3.

[90] Howard, 1961, pp. 2–3; Lorimer, 2005, p. 108.

[91] Taylor, 1954, p. 204.

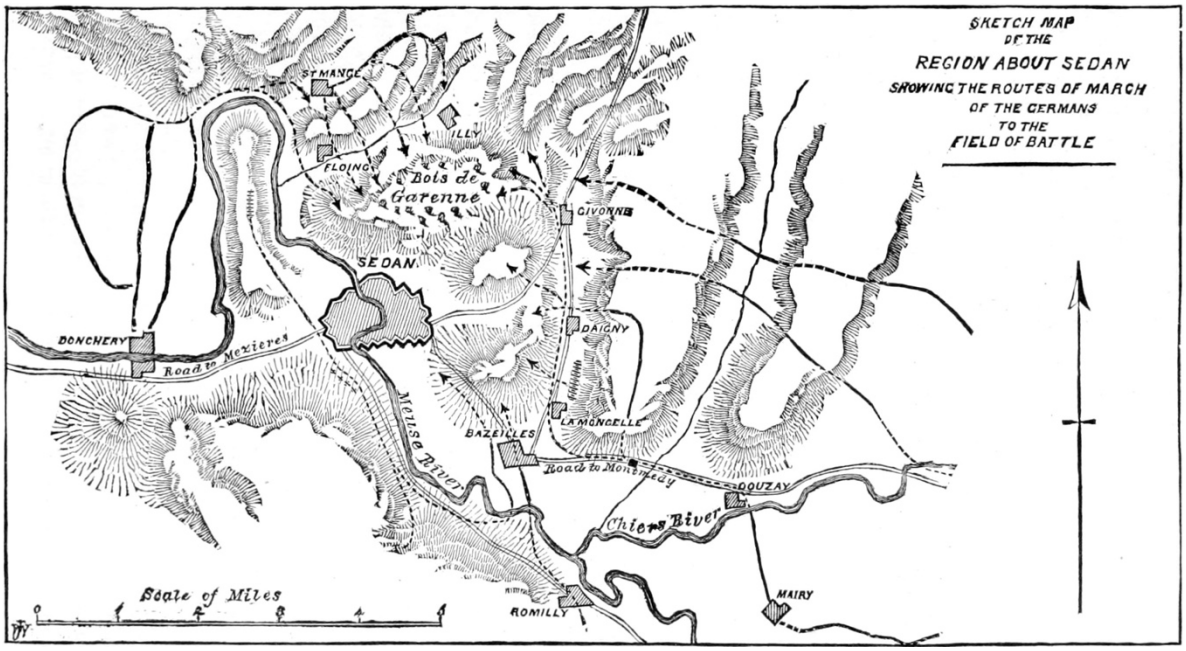
[92] The French attributed the Prussian victory over Austria to the needle gun; because the French army also carried a breech-loading rifle, strategists presumed parity. Howard, 1961, p. 29; Taylor, 1954, pp. 204–205.

[93] France's underestimation of Prussian artillery was a reasonable error; Prussian field batteries had underperformed during the 1866 war. France did not adequately take into account improvements during the interwar years, which included re-equipping batteries with steel field-pieces and innovations at the School of Gunnery. Howard, 1961. Ch. 1.

than reassert French dominance, the outnumbered and inadequately armed French forces were defeated in a series of battles at Saarbrücken (August 2), Wissembourg (August 4), Spicheren/Forbach (August 6), Wörth (August 6), Mars-la-Tour (August 16), and Gravelotte (August 18).[94]

Within six weeks of the war's start, the retreating French armies were forced to shelter in their northeastern citadel at Metz, along the Moselle and Seille rivers. The French right wing, accompanied by Napoleon, attempted to relieve the fortress but was instead encircled by the Germans at Sedan on August 31 (Figure 4.1). The Germans exploited the high ground to handily defeat the trapped French forces and force their surrender; 17,000 French soldiers were killed (compared with just shy of 9,000 Germans), and approximately another 100,000 taken prisoner, along with the emperor himself.[95]

Figure 4.1. The German Approach to Sedan, 1870



SOURCE: Thomas W. Knox, *Decisive Battles Since Waterloo: The Most Important Military Events from 1815 to 1887*, New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902, p. 347.

The war could have ended with the Battle of Sedan and the French Army's surrender at Metz, but instead a spontaneous guerrilla war against the German army erupted across France. Neither the French (who had planned to limit the conflict to German soil) nor the Prussians (who hoped to reach a quick armistice and avoid British or Russian intervention) anticipated the

[94] Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870–1871*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, Chs. 4–7.

[95] Wawro, 2004, Chs. 8–9.

resistance campaign. During the next four months, the war devolved into an insurgency across the French countryside and a four-month German siege of Paris, where a new government of national defense had claimed power on September 4 and deposed the emperor.[96] After escaping from Paris by hot air balloon, Minister of the Interior Léon Gambetta organized an army of 500,000 to relieve Paris and expel the German forces, which occupied a larger portion of France.[97]

Nonetheless, the French could not hold off the German forces for long. The last organized army surrendered its remaining 140,000 men at Metz on October 27, leaving the disorganized and poorly led insurgents to continue the fight. Their attacks extracted significant Prussian losses, but the Germans only tightened their siege of Paris. The new government's efforts to negotiate a resolution were broken off over a German demand for control of Alsace and Lorraine. Paris, starving after months under siege, finally surrendered on January 28, 1871. Altogether, the French suffered approximately 300,000 casualties and the Germans another 135,000, the largest losses in Europe since the Napoleonic Wars.[98]

It would take another three months to reach a final settlement. The January armistice allowed for the election of a French National Assembly with the power to ratify a settlement. But no sooner had the republican government formed than a second rebellion arose, resulting in the creation of the revolutionary Paris Commune. Two months later, this, too, was overthrown, and a new conservative government established the Third Republic. Without a French government able and willing to negotiate an agreement, the Germans forced through the Treaty of Frankfurt, signed on May 10, 1871.[99] Under its terms, Germany annexed Metz, Alsace, and half of Lorraine, and France was forced to pay an indemnity of 5 billion francs in addition to the costs of German occupation until the indemnity was paid.[100]

The status of Alsace-Lorraine would remain a major source of tension between Germany and France until 1945, but it was not the only territorial change wrought by the war. Although a minor player in the conflict, Italy benefited from the chaos of the period. In exchange for the Papal States' allegiance, France had deployed forces to the region in 1867 to deter the Kingdom of Italy's efforts at annexation. When these were withdrawn for the fight against Prussia in 1870,

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[96] Lawrence Freedman, *The Future of War: A History*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2017, pp. 7–8.

[97] Howard, 1961, p. x.

[98] Peter M. R. Stirk, *A History of Military Occupation from 1792 to 1914*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp. 188–192.

[99] On the French rebellions, coups, and ensuring governments, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, "War and the Republic," in Edward Berenson, Vincent Duclert, and Christophe Prochasson, eds., *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011.

[100] Four subsequent conventions signed on March 9, 10, 11, and 16, 1871, set the parameters of the German occupation.

the Italians marched through the Papal States and captured Rome. A plebiscite in October of that year formalized the states' annexation, completing a 22-year process of national unification.[101]

Regional and International Consequences

As Howard writes in his seminal history of the war, "the completeness of the Prussian success in 1870 . . . astounded the world."[102] After nearly 80 years as Western Europe's most powerful land power, France had been defeated by an ambitious but lesser power leading a fractious coalition of minor states and kingdoms. In the span of a mere ten months, Prussia had asserted its military preeminence, altered the map of the region, unified Germany under its leadership, and dispensed with the remnants of the order established at the Congress of Vienna. The implications of 1870 were undeniable: Germany had wrested dominance of Western Europe from France and was positioned to claim a greater international stature. Although not apparent at the time, its victory coincided with the start of 44 years of relative stability in the region, broken only by the outbreak of World War I in 1914—a catastrophe fought, in part, over outstanding grievances from the 1870 war.

The irony was that France's desire to punish a potential competitor had instead accelerated its own decline. In the years after the war, the French High Command sought belatedly to apply the advances of the Industrial Revolution to its own social, economic, and military development, undergoing a "military renaissance" that featured the passage of universal conscription; an expansion in the military; and improvements in organization, logistics, military training and professionalization, mobilization, and command and control systems.[103] (In responding to new Prussian doctrine, France, like other European observers, overcorrected, contributing to a "cult of the offensive" that would dominate military thinking, with disastrous effects, through the early stages of World War I.[104]) Its economic recovery, however, was less successful. In ceding Alsace and portions of Lorraine, France lost approximately 5.5 percent of its industrial workforce and 20 percent of its total iron ore, metallurgy, and cotton production. Moreover, the volume of trade between France and Germany continued to decline throughout the 1880s and 1890s, hindering efforts to revitalize the national economy.[105]

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[101] Raphael Zariski, "The Establishment of the Kingdom of Italy as a Unitary State: A Case Study in Regime Formation," *Publius*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Autumn 1983.

[102] Howard, 1961, p. 1.

[103] Howard, 1961, p. 1. In 1870, the French armed forces consisted of 404,000 regulars and 354,000 reservists. By 1885, the standing force had reached 525,000 men supported by nearly 2 million reservists. Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "The Road to Recovery: How Once Great Powers Became Great Again," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2016, p. 26.

[104] On the so-called cult of the offensive and its consequences, see Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Summer 1984.

[105] Béatrice Dedinger, "The Franco-German Trade Puzzle: An Analysis of the Economic Consequences of the Franco-Prussian War," *Economic History Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, 2012.

Meanwhile, German power expanded during the final quarter of the 19th century. The war drew the south German states to the North German Confederation, and King Wilhelm I proclaimed the new unified German Empire under Prussian domination on January 18, 1871 (Figure 4.2). In a final humiliation for France, the ceremony was held at Versailles, the historic palace of French kings. Over the next two decades, Germany was preoccupied with internal reforms and nation-building, deferring overseas expansion that might strain the new system or provoke the other great powers. Therefore, it did not begin to seek expanded global influence until the late 1890s, by which time French and British imperial claims limited its options.

Figure 4.2. The German Empire in Europe, 1871–1914

SOURCE: J. A. R. Marriott and C. Grant Robertson, *The Evolution of Prussia: The Making of an Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915, p. 380.

The implications of Germany's rise were felt belatedly in the United Kingdom, which had not intervened in 1870 beyond negotiations to ensure that Prussia respected Belgium's integrity. Historic, cultural, and dynastic bonds had united the United Kingdom and Prussia for more than a century. London had opposed French expansion into the lowlands on the grounds that it endangered the Germanic states, and Prussia had proved a valuable ally during the Spanish wars of succession, the American Revolutionary War, and anti-Napoleonic campaigns. A united Germany under Prussian dominance, however, awakened London to the prospect that its former

partner, with its large population and powerful industrial sector, might become an economic and military competitor. The war had not affected the two pillars of British power—its system of international trade and its command of the seas—but Germany's imperial expansion and its construction of a large navy suggested a future threat. That the wars of German unification had overturned the rule of the old system made the future all the more ominous. As Leader of the Opposition Benjamin Disraeli warned the House of Commons in February 1871, in a somewhat exaggerated tone:

> Not a single principle in the management of our foreign affairs, accepted by all statesmen for guidance up to six months ago, any longer exists. There is not a diplomatic tradition which has not been swept away. You have a new world, new influences at work, new and unknown objects and dangers with which to cope, at present involved in that obscurity incident to novelty in such affairs. . . . The balance of power has been entirely destroyed, and the country which suffers most, and feels the effects of this great change most, is England.[106]

(Paris, of course, likely disagreed.)

Therefore, the four decades of relative stability that followed the war concealed the conflict's destabilizing consequences in the long term. Smarting from its humiliation, France was eager to recover Alsace-Lorraine and restore the prestige lost at Sedan, feeding a mutual animosity within the Prussian ruling class and encouraging a unified Germany's pursuit of a more aggressive foreign policy.[107] Realizing that its imperial ambitions in Africa and the Pacific were constrained by prior European claims, Germany embarked on a naval expansion after 1870 that alarmed the United Kingdom, heightened the emerging competition, and triggered a naval arms race.[108] To guard against being left isolated in a future European war, France, Germany, and the other major powers pursued a web of alliances that would entrap the major powers and contribute to the rapid internationalization of the Balkan crisis in 1914.[109]

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

Several faulty prewar assumptions contributed to the outbreak and course of the Franco-Prussian conflict (Table 4.1). Most notably, the French decision to initiate conflict was premised on a misreading of the military balance and the importance of recent technological and doctrinal

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[106] J. G. C. Hamilton, "Address to Her Majesty on Her Most Gracious Speech," *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, Vol. CCIV, London: Cornelius Buck, 1871.

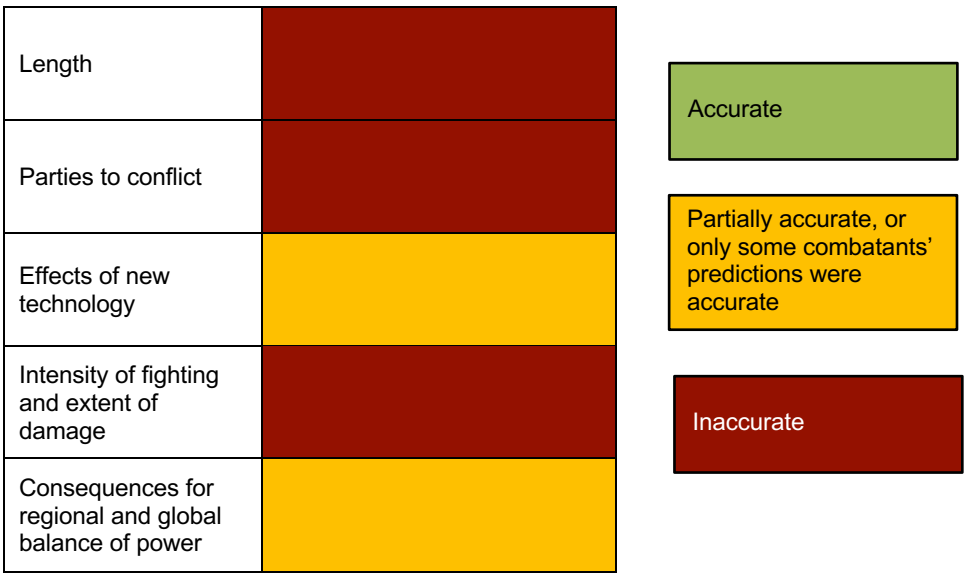
[107] Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991, p. 132.

[108] Michael Epkenhans, "Germany, 1870–1914: A Military Empire Turns to the Sea," in N. A. M. Rodger and Christian Buchet, eds., *The Sea in History—The Modern World*, Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer Press, 2017. Preoccupied with the German presence in Alsace-Lorraine, France neglected its border with Belgium, opening a vulnerability that the Germans would exploit in 1914. Mario Draper, "'Are We Ready?' Belgium and the Entente's Military Planning for a War Against Germany, 1906–1914," *International History Review*, Vol. 41, No. 6, p. 1038.

[109] Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, New York: Harper Collins, 2013, pp. 121–167, 293–300.

improvements. By 1870, French military intellectuals recognized that military science was undergoing a revolution, but they placed their faith in a comparatively narrow set of new technologies. France therefore did not anticipate the Prussian ability to translate cross-cutting innovations in transportation, communication, metallurgy, and precision engineering into new battlefield effects; furthermore, France did not perceive the weaknesses in its own armed forces. The result was an outsized French confidence in its advantage that contributed to an underestimation of the duration of conflict, the intensity of fighting, and the consequences for French power or the continental balance of power.

Table 4.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Franco-Prussian War



French predictions of the alignment of forces during the war proved faulty because they were premised on the false assumption that other powers shared its concerns about Prussia's relative rise. Having overlooked lingering resentments over French abuses during the Napoleonic Wars and continued aggressive behavior, French statesmen were therefore caught off guard when no other country proved willing to intervene on its behalf (an outcome that Prussia both anticipated and sought to ensure through its own adroit diplomacy). Similarly, France underestimated intra-German bonds and overstated the southern Germanic states' discontent with Prussian dominance. As a result of these misconceptions, France inadvertently strengthened its adversary's position and contributed to the very establishment of a Prussian-led unified Germany that it had sought to preempt.

Because the Prussians had invested significant resources in studying and adapting industrial technologies for warfare, they were better able to predict the effects of new technology on the conflict. Nonetheless, prewar Prussian predictions still underestimated the intensity of the fighting and extent of the war's damage because they did not account adequately for the French

population's reaction to the invasion. Just as France was surprised to discover that the southern German states still preferred Prussian domination to foreign occupation, the Prussians did not anticipate that their victory over Napoleon III's armies would spark a bloody insurgency that stretched the war beyond prewar estimates and increased the extent of damage for both sides. At various points of the conflict, the insurgents functioned as a third party to the conflict, defying the new French government's control and complicating negotiations.

Ultimately, neither power accurately forecast the war's consequences for the regional or global balance of power. Prussia correctly anticipated that the war would strengthen its status as the predominant German power and ease unification under its domination, but the completeness of France's collapse stunned both powers along with the wider European community. As a result, neither country had fully accounted for the political realignments that followed the end of the fighting, particularly the possibility that groundwork would be laid for a new Anglo-German competition. The war did bring a period of relative stability to Western Europe as Prussia had hoped, but it also left a legacy of competition and resentment that would fuel later conflicts and ultimately contribute to the rapid escalation of tensions in 1914.

5. Russo-Turkish War, 1877–1878

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 was the last and bloodiest of three conflicts between the neighboring empires during the 19th century. Precipitated by Slavic rebellions in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria, the war offered St. Petersburg a chance to settle the long-standing Eastern Question and to strengthen its influence in southeastern Europe. Although the Russian Army managed to drive Ottoman forces back to Constantinople, the conflict's costs highlighted political, economic, and military weaknesses within both empires. A weakened Russia was unable to maintain control of territorial gains earned through the war, which were reversed during a conference of the European powers mere months after the war's end.

The Prewar System

By the 1870s, the Ottoman Empire was widely recognized as a power in decline. The midcentury *Tanzimat* reforms to reorganize and centralize Ottoman control and modernize its military, communication, and critical transportation infrastructure were lagging, and the Sublime Porte appeared helpless to assert control over its fractious territories in the Balkans. Rather than bind the periphery to the center, the administrative reforms had upset the fragile balance within the multiethnic empire, and nationalist sentiments flared within non-Muslim communities. Unable to stave off external interference in its internal affairs, the Ottomans granted France, Russia, and the United Kingdom extensive concessions, such as protectorates on behalf of minority religious communities across the empire.[110]

Recognizing an opportunity, Russia probed the borders of the Ottoman Empire, looking for a chance to regain territories lost during the Crimean War and to reestablish its stature in the Black and Aegean Seas. In 1870, Prussia made a demonstration of goodwill toward Russia (which it hoped might help to counterbalance France) by renouncing the Black Sea clauses of the 1856 Treaty of Paris that prohibited a Russian naval presence, thus allowing St. Petersburg to reestablish its fleet and revive its search for warm-water ports.[111] St. Petersburg was determined to gain control of the major straits, including the Bosporus chokepoint, which would allow Russia to maintain the year-round trade needed to fuel the country's lagging industrialization and compete commercially with the other great powers.[112] Russia's strategic and economic interests in the area were compounded by its sense of religious commitment to the defense of other Orthodox communities, and the country assumed a significant role in the protection and defense

[110] Ulrichsen, 2014, p. 55.

[111] Mosse, 1961, pp. 164–190.

[112] Russian ports on the Baltic and Barents Seas froze in the winter.

of Slavic nationalists and Balkan Christians, which increasingly looked to St. Petersburg for protection against the abuses of the Ottoman Empire.

Financial and political pressures within Russia also encouraged restraint. The hope that accompanied the 1869–1873 economic upswing—which had brought new railroad construction, industrial expansion, and a sharp rise in state budgets—came crashing down in 1875, when a combination of factors (including a poor harvest and a British-led campaign to discredit the Russian financial sector) caused the country's balance of trade to turn negative.[113] The deteriorating economic situation coincided with a spree of revolutionary terrorism and the spontaneous "going to the people" populist movement of 1873–1874. Both alarmed the autocratic regime, which feared its grasp on power was weakening.[114]

The Russian government therefore sought to balance its desire to support nationalist movements in Balkans with the need to halt the spread of republican and revolutionary ideologies within its own empire. In 1873, Russia joined Germany and Austria-Hungary in the Three Emperors' League, which sought to suppress armed rebellions against the Sublime Porte. Self-interest, rather than friendship, motivated the maneuver: St. Petersburg and Vienna worried more about the consequences for their own established monarchies than the fate of the Ottomans.[115] The effectiveness of the arrangement was tested in the Balkans two years later.

War Initiation

After roughly 20 years of relative quiet, Russia and its Ottoman rival were brought to war again in 1877. The proximate cause was a series of rebellions in the Balkans, beginning with the Serbian uprising in Herzegovina and Bosnia in July 1875 and a Bulgarian insurrection in 1876, which both provoked brutal suppression measures from the Ottoman military. The accompanying massacres and reprisals captured political attention across Europe, turning political attitudes against the Turks and contributing to the United Kingdom's ultimate decision not to aid the Sublime Porte in the resulting war. Triggered by a combustible combination of religious and ethnic tension, anger over Ottoman corruption and high taxation, widespread economic disparities, and Slavic nationalist sentiments, the uprisings incited Serbia and Montenegro to declare war in the summer of 1876 on the gamble that it was an opportune moment to safeguard Serbian independence and claim autonomy for Bosnia and Herzegovina while the Ottoman Empire was still weak (Figure 5.1).[116]

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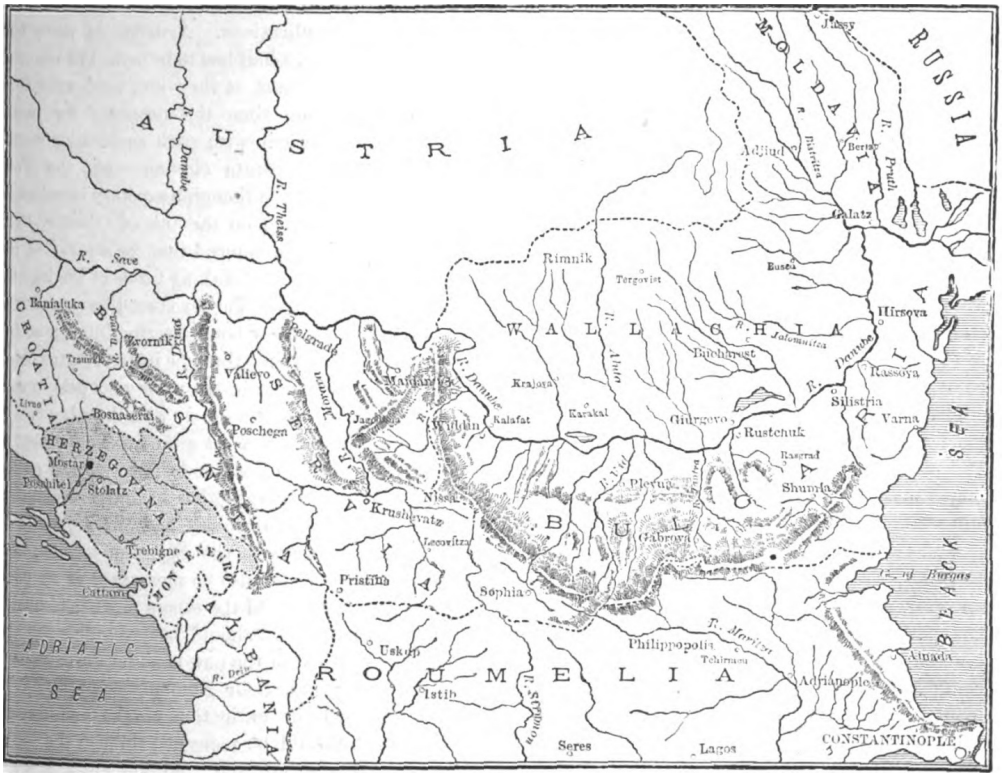
[113] Valerii L. Stepanov, "The Price of Victory: The Russo–Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Russian Economy," *Russian Studies in History*, Vol. 57, Nos. 3–4, 2018, pp. 246–247.

[114] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, revised ed., Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 25–27.

[115] David Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011, pp. 142–144.

[116] Ulrichsen, 2014, p. 144.

Figure 5.1. Map of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Neighboring Countries in 1875



SOURCE: Edmund Ollier, *Cassell's Illustrated History of the Russo-Turkish War*, Vol. 1, London, Paris, and New York: Cassell, Peter, & Galpin, 1877, p. 3.

The crisis might have remained an internal Ottoman affair had not Austria-Hungary, seeking to address the root cause of the rebellion, proposed a note requesting that the Sublime Porte grant concessions, including tax reforms and religious autonomy, benefiting Christian minorities in the affected provinces. France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom voiced their support for this approach, although London maintained that the uprising was an internal problem that should be addressed by the Ottomans alone. Despite the fact that the note held no explicit threat of intervention, Austria-Hungary and Russia signed a secret agreement to divide the cost of supporting rebels and refugees from the territories and, should the Ottoman Empire collapse, the administration of Bosnia and Bessarabia, respectively. In a subsequent agreement, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia also agreed to take further unspecified steps in the "interest of a general peace."[117]

Negotiations stretched on through 1876. Recalling the financial and political costs of the Crimean War, Russian leaders were hesitant to commit the country to war but eager to exploit

[117] Rodogno, 2011, p. 144; also see Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, Vol. II, *The Period of Consolidation, 1871–1880*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

the opportunity to resolve the Eastern Question at last.[118] The other European powers also sought to avoid war. Reports of mass atrocities aroused public outrage in the United Kingdom and prompted calls for a humanitarian intervention, but London held off, maintaining that it was bound by treaty obligations to guarantee Ottoman territorial integrity. Aware that whoever controlled Constantinople could challenge its position in Egypt and India, the United Kingdom was determined to keep that city in Ottoman hands but had no essential interests at stake on the continent beyond maintenance of the existing balance of power. France was still recovering from its recent defeat, a unified Germany was strengthened by its new alliance with Austria-Hungary, and the United Kingdom's Asian colonies were demanding greater attention, so London was not eager to become involved in another war and instead hoped to contain and defuse the crisis. The Germans, who initially had welcomed the Balkan uprising as a diversion of attention away from its lingering tensions with France, also maintained that they had no significant interests in the Balkans and were best served by maintaining the status quo. An Austro-Russian war would require Germany to choose sides, creating an opportunity for France to choose the other and a British-Russian war over Turkey risked repeating the Crimean War, which had proven costly, long, politically fractious, and unnecessary.[119]

A series of events over the following two years nudged Russia toward war, however. Ottoman atrocities during a Bulgarian uprising in 1876 triggered an uproar across Europe, fanning anti-Turkish sentiments in France, Russia, and the United Kingdom. Then, in August of that year, the Ottomans defeated Serbia, which petitioned St. Petersburg for support. Together, these events aroused a pan-Slavic popular movement that engulfed all levels of Russian society. Under mounting pressure, Alexander II held off on the condition that a negotiated agreement be reached soon, although he issued an ultimatum threatening to withdraw the Russian ambassador if an armistice were not agreed to at once.[120] A British-organized conference in Constantinople from November 1876 to January 1877 brought temporary relief, but a resolution was not reached. On April 24, 1877, shortly after the Sublime Porte rejected the March protocol, the tsar declared war, despite his finance minister's objections. St. Petersburg assumed leadership of the Eastern Orthodox Coalition, composed of Serbia, Romania, the Bulgarian Legion, and Montenegro. Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom remained neutral, although the British Prime Minister issued a secret warning that the United Kingdom would go to war against Russia if it advanced too close to Constantinople.[121]

Predicting that the ailing Ottomans would be unable to mount a sustained defense in the Balkans, the Russians planned for a quick and low-cost war, gambling that a swift two-pronged

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[118] Stepanov, 2018, pp. 246–248.

[119] For British, French, and German maneuvering in the run-up to the war, see Pflanze, 1990, pp. 417–418; and Rodogno, 2011, pp. 142–151.

[120] Stepanov, 2018, p. 248.

[121] Pflanze, 1990, p. 433.

invasion through the Danube in Europe and the Caucasus in Asia would overwhelm the Ottoman forces and allow the Russian army to seize Constantinople. St. Petersburg hoped to avoid a confrontation with the United Kingdom, but it planned to seize the Bosporus if it became necessary to ensure trade and naval access and block the British from sending ships into the Black Sea. Only by capturing the Straits before the other European powers intervened could Russia force a lasting resolution to the Eastern Question.[122]

Course of the War

Unfortunately for Russia, poor planning and a weak logistical system meant that the Russian Army had neither the manpower nor the resources to sustain their ambitious campaigns, and the war dragged on for nearly a year before France, Germany, and the United Kingdom forced a settlement. Foreshadowing the trench warfare of the 20th century, the Russian and Turkish armies, which together mustered half a million men, made extensive use of breech-loading artillery and infantry weapons, rudimentary machine guns, and extensive field fortifications.[123] By Russia's declaration of victory a year later, the resulting casualty numbers would make it the costliest war that the Ottomans had fought to date, with numbers that would not be exceeded until World War I two decades later.[124]

The Russian army's successful crossing of the Danube on June 27, 1877, initially appeared to validate the General Headquarters' plans (Figure 5.2). Within the week, Russian troops had dislodged the Turkish defenders and constructed a pontoon bridge before setting off toward the Skipka pass through the Balkan mountains in mid-July. Having seized the pass, however, Russian forces soon found themselves under attack from an Ottoman counteroffensive, which exploited the mountainous terrain to deadly effect. Ultimately, Ottoman tactical errors and the arrival of Romanian reinforcements enabled the Russians to repel the assault, but the delay allowed the Turks time to fortify their position at Plevna, a Bulgarian city strategically located along the road between Sofia and the fortress city of Rustchuk.[125] The Russian siege of the city,

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[122] Ronald Bobruff, "Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy Toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912–13," *Russian Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2000; Alexander Statiev, "The Thorns of the Wild Rose: Russian Ordeals at the Shipka Pass During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2019.

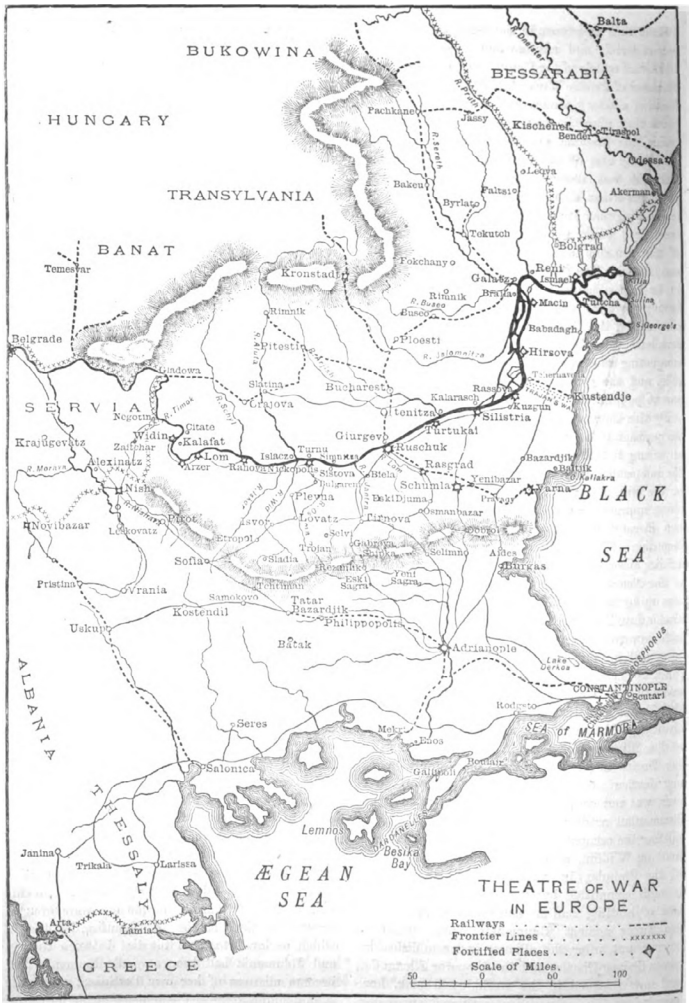
[123] Nicholas Murray, *The Rocky Road to the Great War: The Evolution of Trench Warfare to 1914*, Omaha, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, Potomac Books, 2013, pp. 45–51.

[124] Syed Tanvir Wasti, "Three Ottoman Pashas at the Congress of Berlin, 1878," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2016.

[125] Because the Russians assumed that the Ottoman attack would be repelled quickly, they failed to make basic preparations, such as ensuring a consistent water supply, building dugouts and shelters for the wounded, distributing winter uniforms and boots, gathering firewood, or amassing basic supplies. Perhaps because of its victory, the Russian military did not learn from its mistakes and did not institute reforms or devise new strategies to adjust to new technologies of battle. Despite the demonstrated lethality of new machine guns and rapid-fire rifles, the infantry tactical regulations published in the years after the war continued to advise the use of dense formations. Statiev, 2019, pp. 367–386; Murray, 2013, p. 124.

which Bulgarian and Romanian forces supported, stretched from July to December 1877 and illustrated the "human cost of attacking entrenchments defended by men armed with breech-loading rifles," foreshadowing the dynamics that would prolong World War I.[126]

Figure 5.2. The European Theater of the Russo-Turkish War in 1877



SOURCE: Ollier, 1877, p. 150.

Meanwhile, the Russian campaign through the Caucasus advanced in fits and starts. After quickly seizing the Ottoman fortress of Bayezid, the outnumbered and underequipped Russian forces found themselves under siege by a combined Ottoman and Kurdish force of more than 30,000 men, which would have defeated the defenders had Russian reinforcements not arrived. The Russians next advanced toward the eastern Anatolian city of Kars, but a shortage of men and poor planning forced a halt in Armenia. The arrival of reinforcements in July brought temporary

[126] Murray, 2013, pp. 45–56.

relief, but persistent shortages drained momentum, and the offensive deteriorated into a series of skirmishes that stretched through the autumn. Only after Ottoman morale collapsed did the Russian army end the siege of Kars, on November 18.[127]

Ultimately, Russian forces managed to defeat the Ottoman armies in the Balkans and the Caucasus, but success came at great expense. Romania insisted on a subsidy of 5 million rubles in exchange for allowing Russian forces in its territory; Serbia extracted another million rubles in 1877 to support reorganization of its armed forces. Russia continued to distribute extensive loans, materiel assistance, food aid, and other support to its partners throughout the remainder of the war, worsening its own economic burden. Logistical challenges, including poor rail transportation infrastructure, further increased overall costs as food and other critical supplies were waylaid and/or spoiled in transit. As a result, Russia's national debt grew 26.2 percent, from approximately 4.5 billion rubles in 1877 to more than 6 billion rubles in 1880.[128]

Having endeavored to prevent the war's outbreak, the other European powers intervened in February 1878 to bring a halt to the fighting. Panicked by the Russian Army's advance toward Constantinople, which continued even after the Sublime Porte agreed to an armistice on February 1, the United Kingdom ordered its fleet to sail to the Ottoman capital to protect the path to Egypt.[129] For several weeks, Europe braced for a wider war, but all parties ultimately agreed to a negotiated settlement.[130] Under the resulting Treaty of San Stefano, signed on March 3, 1878, the Ottomans recognized the independence of Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro (the border of which was also expanded), and they established an Austrian protectorate over Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were granted greater autonomy. The treaty also reestablished an independent Bulgarian principality, known as Greater Bulgaria, which encompassed most of Macedonia and stretched from the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea.[131]

Regional and International Consequences

Having exhausted its financial and military reserves, Russia was unable to retain its wartime gains once the other European powers decided to revise them. The Treaty of Stefano alarmed the United Kingdom, Austria-Hungary, and Germany, who all feared the arrangement would upset the continental equilibrium. Further encouragement of Slavic nationalism risked undermining the

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[127] Murray, 2013, pp. 54–57. For a detailed history of the military campaigns, see Quintin Barry, *War in the East: A Military History of the Russo-Turkish War 1877–78*, London: Helion and Company, 2012.

[128] Stepanov, 2012, pp. 255–258, 260.

[129] Arthur J. Marder, "British Naval Policy in 1878," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1940, pp. 367–368; Pflanze, 1990, pp. 433–434.

[130] For a discussion of the Anglo-Russian war scare, see Dwight E. Lee, "The Proposed Mediterranean League of 1878," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 1931, pp. 33–40.

[131] Ronald Grigor Suny, "*They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 94–95.

integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which viewed the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against nationalist movements, while the creation of an independent Bulgaria opened opportunities for further Russian economic and political penetration in the region. From a Bulgarian satellite, St. Petersburg could continue to chip away at the Ottoman Empire, whose survival London increasingly viewed as vital to its own influence in the eastern Mediterranean. British strategists feared that Russia might even cut off access to the newly completed Suez Canal, severing the shortest route to India.[132]

The great powers, therefore, supported German Chancellor Bismarck's decision to convene a congress in Berlin in June and July 1878 to adjudicate a new arrangement. (As historian Otto Pflanze notes, the fact that the event was not convened in Paris, as the last European congress in 1856 had been, was symbolic of Germany's newfound influence.[133]) The resulting 1878 Treaty of Berlin (which Russia was forced to sign under heavy diplomatic pressure) rolled back St. Petersburg's gains—returning Macedonia to the Ottomans, defining Bulgaria as an autonomous and tributary principality under the Ottoman Sultanate, recognizing Montenegrin and Romanian independence, and granting the Austro-Hungarian Empire administrative and occupation rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina despite the fact that the latter two provinces remained ostensibly part of the Ottoman Empire.[134] In recognition of the events that had triggered the war, the great powers also mandated the right to religious freedom and a host of civil and political rights for all citizens of the newly formed multiethnic Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire.[135]

The settlement reached in the Congress of Berlin was intended to stabilize the Balkans, reduce Russian gains, and buttress the Ottoman Empire's influence. Instead, the arrangement bred discontent and resentment throughout the region. Austria-Hungary's tightening grip on Bosnia and Herzegovina—ultimately resulting in its unilateral annexation of the territory—caused tensions with both the Ottomans and local nationalist movements.[136] In 1885, Bulgaria's annexation of Eastern Rumelia, a move made despite Russia's opposition, triggered a Serbian invasion that escalated into an Austro-Russian war. A German-mediated secret agreement, the 1887 Reinsurance Treaty, failed to provide a lasting solution to the Balkans question. The area remained a fractious source of tension among the great powers through 1914, when the

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[132] Pflanze, 1990, pp. 416–417.

[133] Pflanze, 1990, p. 434.

[134] R. B. Mowat, ed., *Select Treaties and Documents to Illustrate the Development of the Modern European States-System*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915, pp. 79–83.

[135] Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 5, December 2008, pp. 1319–1321.

[136] Ulrichsen, 2014, p. 56.

assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist would trigger World War I.[137]

Moreover, neither Russia's victory nor the Congress of Berlin settled the problem of the ailing Ottoman Empire. The Porte struggled to recover from its military and financial losses during the war, which were compounded by the imposition of European economic controls after the war.[138] The following decades were marked by a series of internal political crises, including mass pogroms of Armenians in 1894–1895, an anti-Turkish rebellion and attending massacres on Crete in 1895–1897, and the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913. Each disturbance opened an opportunity for further external interference in the empire's internal affairs, allowing the European powers to gradually erode the peripheral Ottoman territories. Ultimately, World War I ended the process by dissolving the Ottoman Empire entirely and drawing new nation-states and mandates in its stead.

The eastern crises reinforced the emerging division of Europe into two alliance networks. The 1878 war did not affect British dominion over the international system but did strain its alliance with the Ottomans, who now looked to Germany to restrain Austria-Hungary and serve as a counterweight to Russia.[139] Meanwhile, St. Petersburg viewed the failure of Germany, which it had supported in 1870, to defend its interest during either the Constantinople or Berlin conferences as a major betrayal, and began to explore closer relations with France, even while expanding the alliance with Germany through the secret Reinsurance Treaty of 1887–1890.[140] Russia's resentment of Germany's perceived perfidy and growing tensions with Austria both complicated German efforts to salvage the alliance. Franco-Russian cooperation during the later Crete crisis strengthened that relationship, and a formal alliance was formed in 1894.[141] Aware of impending encirclement, Berlin had already organized the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy in 1882 as an effort to moderate competition in the region and avoid another Balkan crisis that could endanger its position in Western Europe.[142] These basic alignments would continue through 1914, contributing to a series of war scares between 1903 and 1913 and to the rapid internationalization of the third Balkan crisis in 1914.

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[137] Richard C. Hall, *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2010, pp. 2–3.

[138] Ulrichsen, 2014, p. 56.

[139] Worried about committing to wars it could not afford to fight, the Sublime Porte nonetheless turned down a German overture to negotiate an alliance in mid-1907. The two countries would not formalize their relationship until the summer of 1914. Andrei V. Boldyrev, "Russia, Turkey, and the Problem of the Black Sea Straits in 1898–1908," *Russian Studies in History*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2018.

[140] Frank C. Zagare, *The Games of July: Explaining the Great War*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2011, pp. 62–64.

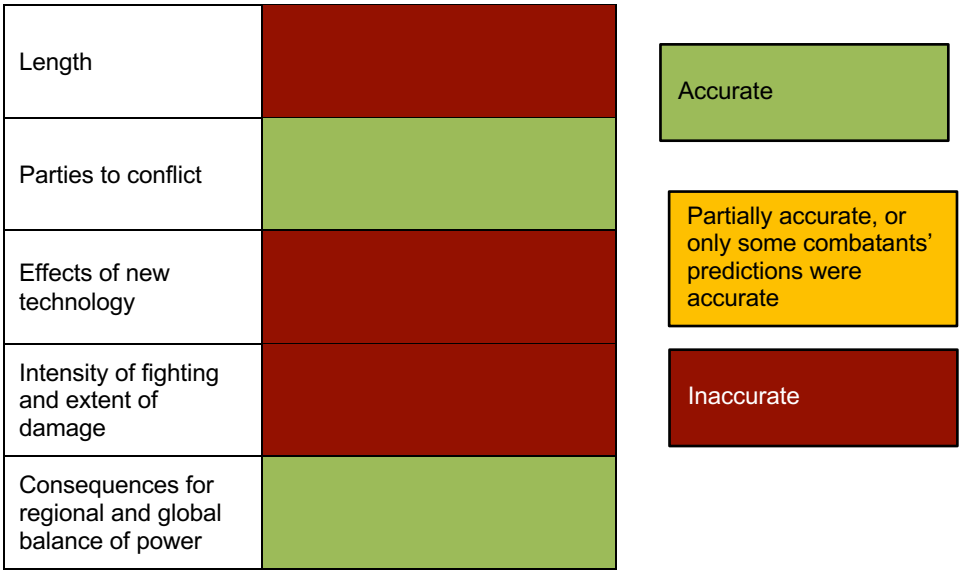
[141] Hall, 2010, p. 3; Boldyrev, 2018, pp. 164–166. Recognizing the dangers of a rivalry in southern Europe, Germany and France signed a neutrality agreement in 1887, but it expired without renewal three years later. In 1891, France and Russia signed the first of a series of agreements codifying their Dual Alliance.

[142] Romania joined in 1883. Hall, 2010, p. 3.

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

The duration and intensity of the fighting exceeded both parties' expectations (Table 5.1). After years of hesitancy, the Russian decision to risk war was premised on the faulty assumption that the war would be short and would not drain the country's already depleted coffers. But while St. Petersburg rightly assessed that the Ottomans were weak, it overstated its own military's ability to execute a two-pronged campaign and was caught off guard by the war's financial, military, and political costs. Likewise, neither country anticipated how the combination of advances in field fortifications and firepower would make battles deadlier, slower, and more indecisive.

Table 5.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Russo-Turkish War



Ottoman and Russian estimates of the future balance of power proved more accurate. Admittedly, the war did not produce the territorial gains that Russian statesmen had hoped for, and a lasting resolution to the Eastern Question remained out of reach. Nonetheless, trendlines in the region continued along tracks established (and recognized) before the fighting began. The Ottoman Empire continued its long decline but staved off complete collapse, Eastern and southern Europe remained a persistent source of instability, and Russian power continued to wane despite incremental and long-deferred attempts at economic and political reform. In sum, the conflict extracted a heavy human and financial toll but did not fundamentally alter the trajectory of events in the region.

6. Sino-Japanese War, 1894

The Sino-Japanese War (also known as the Jiawu War and the Japan-Qing War) established Japan's dominance over Korea and marked the beginning of a period of Japanese imperial expansion that would define Asian politics for the next half-century. Beginning with the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and extending through the attending industrial modernization and administrative centralization campaigns that followed, Japan had sought to expand its economic and political influence in Korea, which was then a vassal of China.[143] Domination of the peninsula would provide Japan with a stable export market to fund its industrial and military modernization. Japanese statesmen calculated that it would also signal Japan's emergence as a regional power and stave off threats to its sovereignty from France, Russia, and the United Kingdom.[144]

The Prewar System

Prior to the war, China and most European observers underestimated the possibility of a Japanese attack because they assumed that China could sustain its regional hegemony indefinitely. China had dominated the region militarily, economically, and culturally for more than a millennium, reigning as "suzerain over all, mediating [its neighbors'] disputes with each other and setting the outlines of their foreign but not domestic policies," as one historian writes. Yet "the very success of Chinese civilization" also "blinded" the Chinese leadership to the technological and institutional changes that revolutionized warfare throughout the 19th century and empowered other Asian powers to challenge the existing order.[145] The disastrous Opium Wars in 1839–1842 and 1856–1860 and the Sino-French War of 1884–1885 demonstrated the

[143] On the Meiji Restoration and Japan's administrative reforms, see James Fulcher, "The Bureaucratization of the State and the Rise of Japan," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 1988.

[144] Scholars continue to debate Japan's motives. Economic realists, such as Copeland, emphasize Japan's desire to claim the Korean market and raw resources; others, such as Conroy, have highlighted the role of private economic interests (Copeland, 2015, Ch. 3; Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868–1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960). Others point to Japan's quest for status (Andrew Q. Greve and Jack S. Levy, "Power Transitions, Status Dissatisfaction, and War: The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895," *Security Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2018) and growing domestic nationalist movements. (For a multicausal analysis that includes a discussion of domestic politics, see Akira Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great Power Status," in Marius B. Jansen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 5, *The Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 728–731, 751.)

[145] S. C. M. Paine, "Imperial Failure in the Industrial Age: China, 1842–1911," in N. A. M. Rodger and Christian Buchet, eds., *The Sea in History—The Modern World*, Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer Press, 2017, p. 310; Samuel C. Chu, "China's Attitudes Toward Japan at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War," in Akira Iriye, ed., *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 75–76.

urgent need to capitalize on advances in steam power, munitions, and riflery, but reforms were disorganized and ineffective.[146] The Manchu government, worried that a unified military might challenge its authority, resisted pressure to increase defense spending or centralize its armed forces. As a result, the Chinese military was regionally divided and lacked an organized engineer corps, transport services, and commissariat when war broke out in 1894.[147]

While China resisted internal and external pressure to reform, Japan eagerly emulated British, Prussian, and U.S. innovations in anticipation of an eventual war with China. Lengthy fact-finding missions brought back new technology, models of centralized civic and military institutions, and tactical innovations learned through foreign wars. Like their counterparts in Europe and elsewhere, the Meiji reformers viewed a professional, well-equipped armed force as a representation of a state's capacity to maintain internal order and a symbol of its national power abroad. In contrast to the Chinese resistance to European models, "the Japanese concluded that they must westernize their political, military, economic, educational, and social institutions, not out of any affinity for Western culture, but from a cold-headed calculation that only by westernizing could Japan defend itself against the West," one historian notes.[148] During the 1860s and 1870s, Japan reorganized its military and invested heavily in coastal defenses and British-manufactured warships, including all-steel vessels mounted with quick-firing guns. By 1894, the Japanese Navy had grown to 28 ships and 24 torpedo boats.[149]

The Chinese paid little attention to Japan's improvements. Indeed, "the plain truth of the matter is that Japan was never very important in the minds of the Chinese, not in the days prior to the war, and not even after war had been declared," writes historian Samuel C. Chu.[150] Most Chinese regarded Japan with contempt, maintaining that their hapless neighbor had failed to absorb Chinese culture and was therefore fated to remain inferior. Chinese historians emphasized Japan's past military defeats while contemporary observers of its naval industry concluded Japan's ships were too small, antiquated, and defensive to pose a credible threat. "In the Chinese mind," Chu concludes, "this neighbor was so insignificant that there was little point in conducting a thorough assessment of its military strength and capabilities," let alone preparing for a potential conflict.[151]

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[146] Paine, 2017, p. 314.

[147] Greve and Levy, 2018, p. 167.

[148] Paine, 2017, p. 315.

[149] Iriye, 1988, pp. 724–725, 731, 753; Greve and Levy, 2018, p. 166.

[150] Chu, 1980, p. 77.

[151] Chu, 1980, pp. 78–81.

War Initiation

Emboldened by its arms buildup, Japan increased its efforts to prompt a domestic "restoration" in Korea in the late 1870s.[152] While China sought to maintain the status quo, Japan courted Korean reformists who opposed the Min royal family and called for independence. Japan's imposition of the Treaty of Kanghwa in 1876 opened three Korean ports to Japanese trade, granted Japanese citizens extraterritoriality, and declared Korea an "independent nation," all of which provoked a backlash from Koreans who insisted that their nation remained reliant on China. Subsequent disputes over shipping rights; commercial issues; financial reforms; and Korea's pursuit of trade agreements with France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States further strained Korean-Japanese relations.[153] All the while, Russia's construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which would allow it to project power into Manchuria and Korea, increased the Japanese regime's sense that the opportunity to claim the peninsula was running out.[154]

Worried that a premature war would weaken economic growth and prompt domestic turmoil, Japanese leaders waited until victory could be guaranteed.[155] In 1894, two events pushed the countries to war. First, Kim Ok-gyun, a pro-Japanese Korean reformer, was assassinated in Shanghai and his quartered body returned to Korea for display.[156] The act sparked outrage in Japan, fanning public calls for military retaliation. When China, at the Korean government's request, dispatched several thousand troops to suppress a popular uprising in July, Japan issued an ultimatum, demanding that China withdraw all forces from Korea and abandon the country's suzerain status or risk war.[157] On July 23, one day after the deadline expired, Japanese forces launched a surprise attack on Chinese warships, seized Seoul, captured the Korean king, and installed a puppet government. After inconclusive negotiations, both countries declared war on August 1.[158]

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[152] Greve and Levy, 2018, p. 173; Iriye, 1988, pp. 744–745.

[153] Bonnie B. Oh, "Sino-Japanese Rivalry in Korea, 1876–1885," in Akira Iriye, ed., *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 40–45.

[154] Greve and Levy, 2018, p. 159.

[155] Greve and Levy, 2018, pp. 159–160; Iriye, 1988, pp. 752–764.

[156] Greve and Levy, 2018, p. 160.

[157] Yumi Moon, "Immoral Rights: Korean Populist Collaborators and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1904–1910," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 118, No. 1, February 2013; Yong-ha Shin, "Conjunction of Tonghak and the Peasant War of 1894," *Korea Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1994.

[158] Douglas Howland, "The Sinking of the S. S. Kowshing: International Law, Diplomacy, and the Sino-Japanese War," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4, July 2008.

Course of the War

By leveraging its technological advantages and the element of surprise, Japan achieved its objective of seizing new territory and forcing foreign mediation in under eight months. Caught off guard, the Chinese struggled to regain their footing and missed the opportunity to sever Japan's overstretched naval supply line. Instead, Chinese troops either retreated to static positions easily targeted by Japan's modern artillery or abandoned their positions without a fight, allowing the advancing Japanese forces to capture abandoned rations, weaponry, and other supplies.[159] Within six months, Japan swiftly dismantled the Chinese presence in Korea, destroyed its naval base at Port Arthur and its fleet in the Yellow Sea (Figure 6.1), seized Manchuria, and crossed the Yalu River to occupy the strategic Liaodong Peninsula. By March 1895, Japanese forces captured China's second naval base at Weihaiwei on the Shandong peninsula, destroyed most of the Chinese fleet, and threatened to continue the war into China.[160]

Figure 6.1. The Japanese Approach to Port Arthur in 1894

SOURCE: "The Japanese Approach to Port Arthur During the Chino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars," *Hawaiian Gazette*, July 10, 1904.

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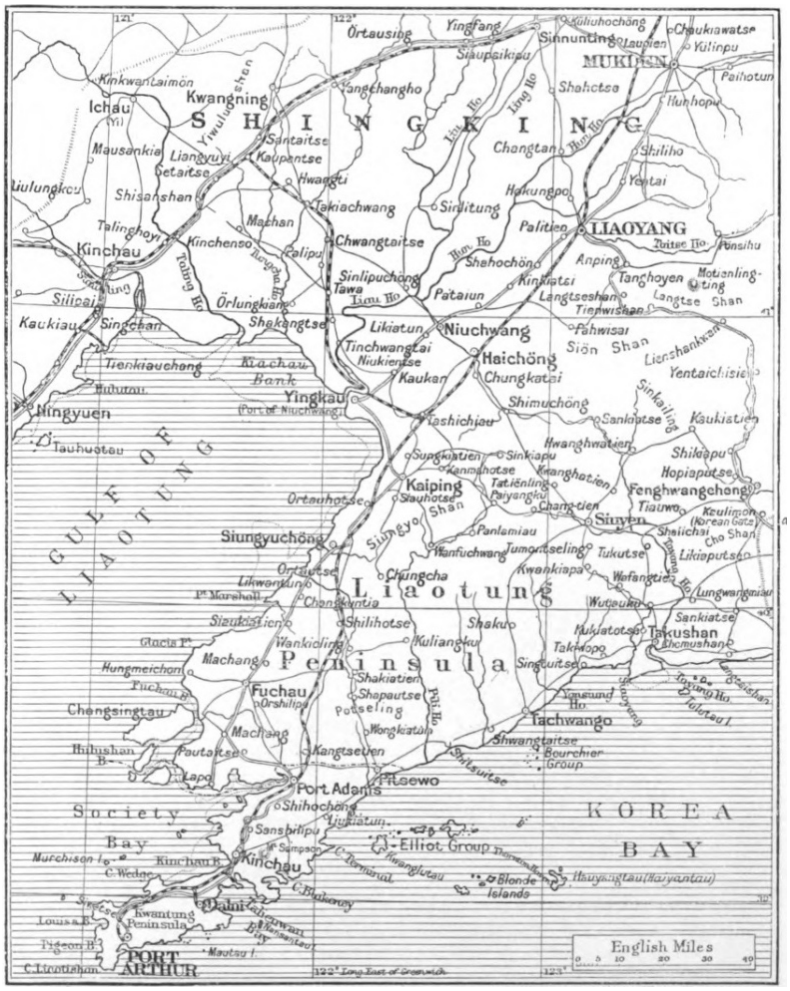
[159] Paine, 2017, p. 316.

[160] Mark R. Peattie and Peter Duus, "The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945," in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 225.

With few options remaining, the Chinese government approached the United States on March 18, 1895, to request its assistance in mediating an end to the war.[161] Signed on April 17, the resulting Treaty of Shimonoseki was a major victory for Japan, which had provoked the war to advance its economic and strategic interests in Korea and to demonstrate its status as a major regional power. With its tributary system discredited and its fleet destroyed, China had no option but to recognize Korean independence; cede Taiwan, the Liaodong Peninsula (Figure 6.2), and the Pescadores Islands to Japan; and open the ports of Shashi, Chongqing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou to Japanese trade. In addition, China agreed to pay an indemnity of 30 million silver dollars.[162]

Figure 6.2. The Liaodong (Liaotung) Peninsula Circa 1904



SOURCE: *Cassell's History of the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. 1, London, Paris, and New York: Cassell, Peter, & Galpin, 1905.

[161] Iriye, 1988, pp. 764–765.

[162] Governments of China and Japan, Treaty of Peace, Shimonoseki, Japan, April 17, 1895.

Regional and International Consequences

By weakening China and validating Japan's aspirations for greater regional influence, the Treaty of Shimonoseki destabilized the East Asian order and planted the seeds for future conflicts in the region. For Tokyo, the war demonstrated Japan's new military strength and encouraged the notion that it could use force to expel Chinese influence from Korea entirely. A precursor to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, the conflict vindicated Japan's ongoing arms buildup and its embrace of a more assertive foreign policy, setting off a search for overseas territory that would end only after Japan's defeat in 1945. The opposite was true in China, where the war was interpreted as evidence of the empire's decline and the need for substantial internal reforms. While internal reformers intensified their demands for industrial modernization and military professionalization, thousands flocked to such radical anti-foreigner movements as the Boxers, a group that decried the regime's inability to preserve Chinese sovereignty and would launch a costly rebellion four years later.[163]

The European powers exploited the postwar chaos in China to claim new territory and check Japanese ambitions. One week after the signing ceremony, France, Germany, and Russia—all fearing that Japanese control of Port Arthur would endanger their own ambitions in Asia—forced Japan to cede Liaodong back to China in an ostensible gesture of friendship.[164] For the next four years, however, Russia forced China to lease it the Liaodong Peninsula, including the ports of Port Arthur and Dalny; in violation of a previous agreement, Germany occupied Tsingtao and pressured the Qing government to grant a favorable lease; France wrangled concessions for Kwangchowan (Guangzhouwan); and the British (although not involved in the so-called Triple Intervention) took possession of Weihaiwei, later extracting a long-term lease. The European powers' growing interference prompted a nationalist backlash, contributing to the Boxer Rebellion of 1890.[165]

Tokyo was also outraged by the European acquisitions. "The [Triple I]ntervention," historian Akira Iriye writes, "made an indelible impression on Japanese minds that imperialist politics was ruthless and kept nations in a perpetual state of potential conflict."[166] Soon after, Japan launched a new ten-year naval construction program, known as the "six-six fleet program," and tightened its grasp on Korea.[167] In reversing Japanese gains, the European powers aggravated Japanese nationalists' sense of encirclement; strengthened their desire to change the rules of the East

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[163] Luke S. K. Kwong, "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, July 2000, pp. 684–686.

[164] Iriye, 1988, p. 768.

[165] Yoji Koda, "The Russo-Japanese War: Primary Causes of Japanese Success," *Naval War College Review*, Spring 2005, pp. 16–17.

[166] Iriye, 1988, p. 768.

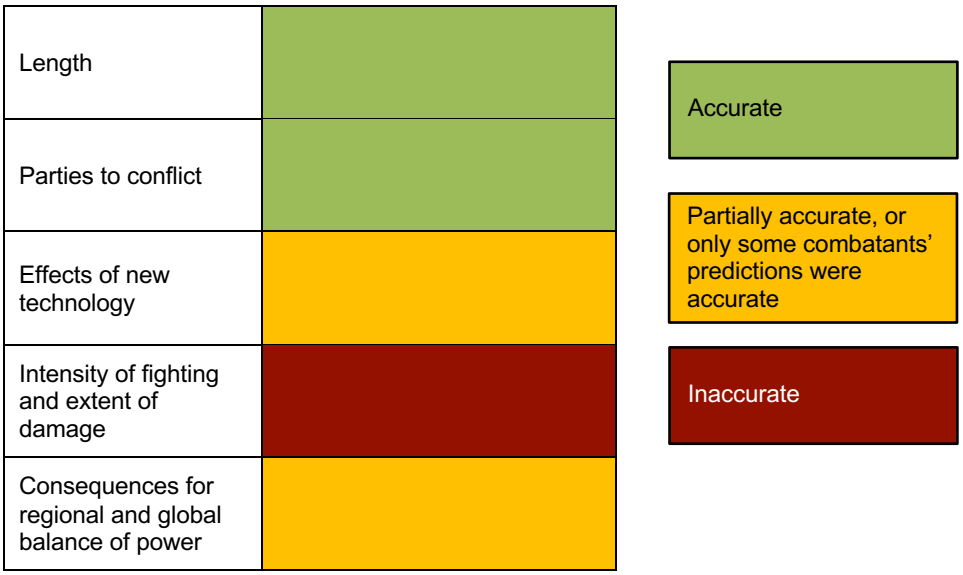
[167] Koda, 2005, p. 20.

Asian order through imperial expansion; and heightened anxiety about Russian maneuvers in Manchuria, contributing to the eventual outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904.[168]

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

Japan's and China's differing predictions about the likelihood and attributes of a future conflict informed the outcome of the 1894 war (Table 6.1). The fighting confirmed Japanese assessments of the importance of emerging naval technologies and demonstrated the error in Chinese assumption that modernization was unnecessary. Japanese strategists also accurately forecast that the war would be short and geographically limited, partly because its assumption that the European powers would attempt to mediate the conflict diplomatically proved accurate, even as the completeness of the Chinese military's collapse exceeded expectations.

Table 6.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Sino-Japanese War



Ultimately, however, China's defeat only partially validated the Japanese prewar assumption that it could use military power to force international recognition of its status as an emerging power. The Japanese victory captured the European powers' attention, but Japan had overestimated its ability to hold on to all of its wartime territorial gains and therefore overstated the conflict's consequences for the regional balance of power. Put otherwise, Japan accurately forecast that the war would alter global perceptions of the country's power but only partially predicted the effects on its political borders.

[168] Iriye, 1988, p. 766; Ikuhiko Hata, "Continental Expansion, 1905–1941," in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 276.

The accuracy of Chinese predictions is more difficult to evaluate because the country's leaders did not seriously consider the possibility that any Asian power would challenge its regional hegemony. Chinese behavior, therefore, was not guided by explicit predictions about the length or parties to future conflict. However, Chinese leaders' suppression of military reforms implies a belief that emerging technologies and organizational systems would not fundamentally alter the nature of warfare or the regional balance of power. This amounted to an underestimation of the effects of new technology and resulted in the Chinese surprise at the intensity and cost of the later naval battles.

7. Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905

Sparked by a daring surprise attack on the Russian naval base at Port Arthur, the Russo-Japanese War upended the regional balance of power and announced Japan's ambitions for global influence. Exploiting new military technologies and Russia's unpreparedness, Japan forced its rival into a short but costly war that revealed substantial improvements in defensive military technologies and daunting structural flaws within the Russian military. Japan's victory forced the European powers and the United States to recognize its claims in East Asia and marked the beginning of a new phase in its imperial expansion.

The Prewar System

Japan continued its pursuit of world power status after the Sino-Japanese War, seeking to close the gap with such advanced powers as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. By the turn of the century, successful industrialization and modernization programs allowed Japan to increase its overseas trade and to purchase new battleships and armored cruisers in anticipation of a war at sea.[169] Japanese elites understood that continued growth depended on access to foreign markets, which would provide both the foreign currency needed to import technology and the raw materials needed to support the military and industrial sectors. The markets of Europe and Asia were out of reach, but Japan now had the military, political, and economic strength necessary to stake a colonial claim to Korea, China, and other neighboring areas.[170]

Russia's concurrent eastward expansion presented a potential barrier to Japanese ambitions. Like Japan, Russia had undertaken an accelerated industrialization policy in an effort to reach parity with the European powers and address structural weaknesses within the empire. In 1892, the country embarked on a policy of *pénétration pacifique* (peaceful penetration) based on the construction of a new railway system to transport Russian goods into Manchuria and Korea. The Russian policy was aimed at competing with the British, who controlled two-thirds of Chinese trade at the time. To Japan, however, the Trans-Siberian railways—combined with Russian efforts to integrate the northern and southern fleets and reinforce the fortress at Port Arthur—appeared to threaten its economic efforts and introduced new impediments to its regional ambitions. Should Russia gain a foothold in Korea, it might cut off Japanese trade and threaten the home islands.[171]

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[169] Koda, 2005, p. 7.

[170] Peattie, 1990, p. 218.

[171] Copeland, 2015, pp. 99, 103; Jack S. Levy and William Mulligan, "Shifting Power, Preventive Logic, and the Response of the Target: Germany, Russia, and the First World War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 5, 2017, p. 734.

Although Japan's economic and military advances had allowed it to claim the status of a regional power, its leaders were initially reluctant to challenge Russia militarily. Decades of investment had brought substantial improvements in the Japanese armed forces' range and firepower, but few believed the Japanese Combined Fleet could match the Russian Pacific Fleet or overcome the advantages conferred by the Russian Imperial Army's size and the country's proximity to Manchuria.[172] Tokyo, therefore, first sought to widen its share of the Chinese market and increase its indirect influence in Korea while pursuing various diplomatic options to persuade Russia to leave Manchuria and acknowledge Japanese dominance of Korea. When that failed, Tokyo tried an alternative tactic, calling for St. Petersburg to recognize Japan's exclusive claim to Korea in exchange for recognition of Russia's sphere of influence in Manchuria. Despite multiple rounds of negotiations throughout 1902 and 1903, the parties were unable to come to terms, "thus convincing the Japanese that their position in Korea would be vulnerable so long as Russian influence remained predominant in southern Manchuria."[173]

Russia's unwillingness to offer the desired concessions compelled Japan to resort to a less desirable option of initiating a preemptive war before Russia grew stronger and while the opportunity to lay claim to Korea remained. Japanese strategists envisioned a short but intense conflict, waged primarily at sea and settled through a U.S. diplomatic intervention before Russia could destroy its forces entirely. A study commissioned in 1903 concluded that competing demands in the Balkans would prevent Russia from concentrating its forces in Manchuria, where Japan could best field a large army.[174] Although the Japanese force would require a long and vulnerable sea line, the Japanese Combined Fleet had achieved a narrow advantage over the Russian Pacific Fleet. If the United Kingdom could be recruited to persuade other nations, particularly France, not to intervene, the odds of reinforcements arriving in time from Europe would be minimized. Forced to fight in Manchuria, the Russian army, reliant on large formations and outdated communication systems, would be at its weakest.[175]

Influenced by cultural stereotypes of Asian inferiority and convinced the Japanese would not resort to war, Russia dismissed evidence of the looming threat.[176] Since its defeat in the Crimean War, Russia had continued with a program of military reforms intended to professionalize and modernize its armed forces, which bolstered confidence in its ground and naval forces. In reality, however, an insufficient railroad system and other logistical challenges hobbled the Russian

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[172] Koda, 2005, pp. 22–23, 25.

[173] Iriye, 1988, pp. 754–755; also see Copeland, 2015, pp. 104, 109–112, 116.

[174] Commissioned by the Government of Japan and the Supreme Headquarters, the Combined Staff Office of the Imperial Japanese Army and Imperial Japanese Navy, the study sought to evaluate the Russo-Japanese balance and identify vulnerabilities that Japan might exploit. The study also highlighted revolutionary unrest within Russia, leading the government to dispatch a special mission to support subversive activities. Koda, 2005, pp. 21–22.

[175] For Japanese military planning, see Koda, 2005, pp. 21–24.

[176] Levy and Mulligan, 2017, p. 734.

position in East Asia while command and control concerns handicapped efforts to reform Russian tactical regulations and prepare the forces to meet new challenges illustrated by recent wars in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere.[177] Nonetheless, Russian military leaders expressed confidence in their superior position and made little effort to address their vulnerabilities in the Far East. Estimating that the Japanese would be able to land only 130,000–140,000 troops on the Asian mainland, Russia's War Ministry concluded as late as 1903 that Russia could handily defeat Japan should a conflict break out in China or Korea.[178] This steadfast optimism in the face of contrary evidence would continue until nearly the war's end as the Russian leadership, particularly Tsar Nicholas II, maintained that their forces would triumph in the "sideshow" fight.[179]

Russian strategic interests also militated against concessions. Since the reign of Ivan the Terrible, expansion into Manchuria had been a common goal in Russian foreign policy, part of a broader pursuit of empire in Central Asia and the Far East.[180] The region had become even more important once Russia industrialized, as control of the warm-water ports and railways through Manchuria promised to boost Russia's growing industrial sector and provide what one scholar describes as a "vital frontline defense against Japa[n] along with other foreign traders and immigrants."[181] But if Russia ceded Manchuria to a competitor—or allowed another state to control the sea lanes crossings the Liaodong—it might lose access to China's vast market and fall further behind France, the United Kingdom, and other European competitors. In these circumstances, Russian negotiators might well have rejected Japanese overtures to cede Manchuria, even if they had recognized Tokyo's intentions, out of concern that it would increase Japanese influence over the straits.

War Initiation

Any remaining hopes for a diplomatic resolution were dashed on January 6, 1904, when Russia's rejection of a compromise arrangement for the Korean peninsula arrived in Tokyo. In a last-ditch effort to avoid war, Japan's government issued a formal request for the resumption of negotiations a week later but received no response. At this point, the Japanese concluded that the

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[177] Murray, 2013, p. 124.

[178] Bruce W. Menning, "Miscalculating One's Enemies: Russian Military Intelligence Before the Russo-Japanese War," *War in History*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006.

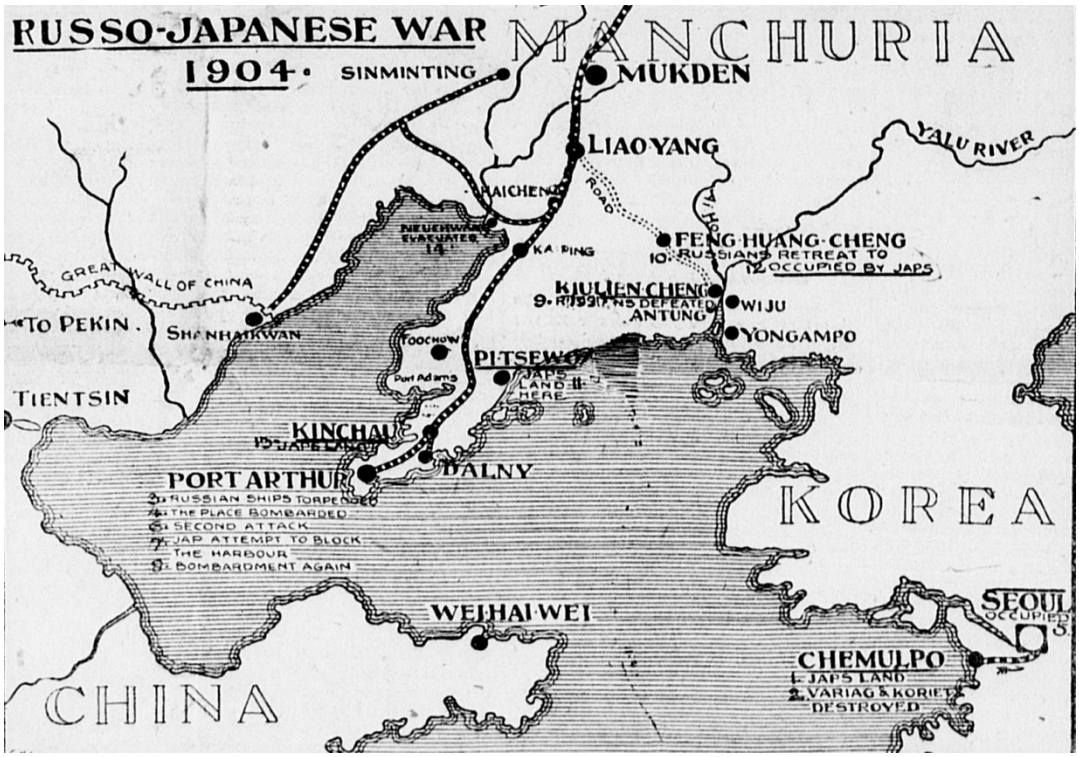
[179] On Russian misperceptions, see Raymond A. Esthus, "Nicholas II and the Russo-Japanese War," *Russian Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4, October 1981, p. 397; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Rewriting the Russo-Japanese War: A Centenary Retrospective," *Russian Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, January 2008; A. J. Echevarria II, "The 'Cult of the Offensive' Revisited: Confronting Technological Change Before the Great War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, March 2002.

[180] John W. Steinberg, "Was the Russo-Japanese War World War Zero?" *Russian Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, January 2008, p. 2.

[181] Copeland, 2015, pp. 109, 100–101.

Russians had not entered the negotiations in good faith and were instead seeking to prolong the process until their military position improved. On February 6, one month after Russia's rejection, Japan severed diplomatic relations. The next day, it launched a sudden surprise naval assault on the Russian Pacific Fleet, anchored at Port Arthur (Figure 7.1). In what the London *Times* described as an "act of daring which is destined to take a place of honor in naval annals," Japanese destroyers torpedoed two Russian battleships and one cruiser. On February 10, with Russia still reeling from the surprise, Japan declared war.[182]

Figure 7.1. The 1904 Japanese Approach to Port Arthur



SOURCE: "The Japanese Approach to Port Arthur . . . ," 1904.

Course of the War

The Russo-Japanese War was the first Asian war to demonstrate the effect of industrialization and technological innovation on warfare. Improvements in armaments and transportation systems allowed Japan to wage a sustained offensive war beyond its home islands. Lasting roughly 16 months (slightly beyond Tokyo's initial forecast), the conflict was fought on both sides with the latest in military technology—mobile heavy guns, quick-firing field artillery,

[182] Koda, 2005, p. 25; Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 440.

long-range and large-caliber gunnery, iron-clads, torpedoes, mines, nascent machine guns, magazine rifles, and large-scale field fortifications—and with the fielding of mass transportation and communication capabilities, such as the telegraph, that were capable of concentrating and commanding armies of several hundred thousand.[183] As Steinberg writes, "what they got . . . was something the strategic planners had not envisioned: prolonged engagements that lasted for days across large-scale (in geographic terms) battlefields; engagements that, in the end, produced not decisive victory, but rather massive casualties."[184] The sheer size and scale of the major land battles dwarfed those of the Crimean, Franco-Prussian, Russo-Turkish, and Sino-Japanese conflicts and prefigured the expansive confrontations that would become common during World War I.

The Russians never fully recovered from the shock of the initial attack and spent much of the war on the defensive, unable to wrest the initiative from the Japanese invaders. On February 8, 1904, the same day as the surprise naval assault on Port Arthur, the Japanese Army landed at Chemulpo, near Seoul, and unilaterally declared a protectorate. During the next month, as the Russian military struggled to mobilize a defense, the Japanese landed at Pyongyang on March 29 and moved north, intending to cross the Yalu into Manchuria in a repetition of the maneuver successfully employed during the 1894 Sino-Japanese War. A Russian attempt to stop the Japanese crossing on April 29 and 30 failed, and the Japanese Army continued across Manchuria, where reinforcements landed on May 14. Thanks to heavy fortifications, including the use of barbed wire and machine guns, the Russians repelled a Japanese assault on Nanshan, which sat along the peninsula to Port Arthur, forcing the Japanese to launch a prolonged siege. Repeated efforts to break the stalemate failed, as heavy rains and the formidable Russian fortifications stymied offensive assaults. By mid-August, Port Arthur had been cut off from the rest of the Russian Army. A subsequent Japanese assault failed to break through, and the siege stretched through the winter, imposing substantial costs on both combatants. Finally, on January 2, 1905, the Russian garrison surrendered, and the Japanese captured the port, shelling the sheltered Russian fleet in the process. All told, the effort cost the Japanese almost 92,000 casualties to battle and disease.[185]

Elsewhere, the Japanese forced a retreat of the Russian Army, weakened by dysentery, bad weather, and poor supply lines. The onset of winter brought a temporary relief in the pace of operations but action resumed in February 1905. Unable to stem the continued Japanese advance and confronted with stirrings of unrest at home, the Russian Army launched one final assault on the strategic town of Mukden. For two weeks, 250,000 Japanese and 335,000 Russian soldiers fought along a 60-mile front in a grueling battle that presaged the trench warfare of World War I.

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[183] Howard, 1991, p. 107.

[184] Steinberg, 2008, p. 4.

[185] Murray, 2013, Ch. 4.

The combatants' use of quick-firing artillery, machine guns, large-scale field fortifications, and mass transportation systems caused 90,000 Russian and 75,000 Japanese casualties.[186]

Mukden was the last major land battle of the war. Although the fighting continued through July 1905, both armies were exhausted and overextended. On paper, the Russians maintained a numerical and geographic advantage; in practice, its options were confined because of the limitations of the Trans-Siberian railway and the 1905 mass mutiny within the Imperial Russian forces, which erupted in opposition to the tsar's policies. Resisting pressure to sue for peace, Nicholas II decided to send the Baltic fleet to the Pacific in hopes of severing Japan's naval supply lines.[187] Instead, the Japanese stole another victory at the Battle of Tsushima in late May. Having attained a stalemate on land, a victory at sea, and the seizure of Port Arthur, the Japanese now had the upper hand to force Russia—which could not afford to maintain the fight without worsening the domestic crisis—into negotiations.[188]

Concerned that the total destruction of either Japan or Russia would destabilize an already fragile balance in East Asia, the United States intervened in April 1905 to urge the combatants to make peace. Reeling from the defeats at Mukden and Tsushima and having recently learned that the French would provide no further loans, the Russians had few options but to acquiesce on June 1. By then, Japan, which had nearly exhausted its supply of forces, was also desperate for an end to the fighting.[189] Under the Treaty of Portsmouth, signed on September 5, 1905, at a peace conference in New Hampshire, Russia recognized Japanese control of Korea and ceded rights to Manchuria—including the strategic ports of Dairen (Dalny) and Arthur and a branch of the Chinese-Eastern Railway—and the southern part of the Sakhalin Islands, which had been exchanged with Japan for the Kuril Islands in 1875. Although many U.S. leaders were personally sympathetic to the Japanese cause, the United States sided with Russia on its refusal to pay indemnities. Japan, having expected to recoup the costs of the conflict, accused the United States of cheating on Tokyo.[190]

The United States' involvement reveals how the otherwise limited conflict, which unfolded primarily in Manchuria and the waters surrounding Korea, was nonetheless shaped by the political and economic maneuvering of international forces. Although neither France nor the United Kingdom intervened militarily, and although each was quick to declare neutrality, both Paris and London provided their allies with substantial financial assistance. As the demands of industrialized warfare skyrocketed, U.S. bankers also intervened, throwing their support behind

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[186] This description of the war is based on Murray, 2013, pp. 127–134; David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887–1941*, Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997, pp. 9–17.

[187] Esthus, 1981, pp. 398–399.

[188] Steinberg, 2008, p. 5.

[189] Esthus, 1981, pp. 401–404.

[190] Peattie and Duus, 1990, p. 226.

the Japanese. Without these international credit lines, Japan—which borrowed more than 100 million yen in London and New York—could not have afforded to initiate or sustain the war.[191] Conversely, when the bankers determined that the Japanese Army lacked the manpower to continue and cut off their loans after the Battle of Mukden, they in effect severed the country's supply line.[192] France's decision to recall its loans to Russia had a similar constraining effect, encouraging some scholars to argue that the 1904–1905 conflict was an international conflict, not a regional one.[193]

Regional and International Consequences

Japan's victory marked a watershed moment in Asian history. Never before had an Asian military bested a European competitor, let alone a force as large and sophisticated as the one fielded by Russia. The event portended a reconfiguration of the regional order and marked the arrival of a new power to the international stage. Although observers foresaw Japan's continued rise, the war raised new questions about Russia's capacity to overcome mounting internal discord and undertake much-needed modernization. The consequences of these two diverging trends would reverberate beyond East Asia, contributing to the formation of new alliance networks and, indirectly, to the outbreak of war in Europe a decade later.

For Tokyo, the war confirmed Japan's self-claimed status as a great power and marked the beginning of a new era of Japanese colonial expansion. In under two years, the country had extended its influence over Manchuria, acquired the Sakhalin peninsula, defeated the navy most likely to threaten its home islands, and declared a protectorate over Korea. Japan had demonstrated its ability to tangle with a great power and to conduct a sophisticated amphibious campaign far from its home islands. The victory rallied nationalist sentiments at home and strengthened the military's influence, factors that, together, pushed Japan to launch another naval buildup and tighten its grip on its overseas territorial possessions.[194] In the years ahead, Tokyo implemented a series of treaties to "legalize" its diplomatic, political, and economic control over Korea until eventually it established a direct colonial administration over the peninsula in 1910.[195]

Japan's new status was also reflected in its pursuit of formal alliances with the European powers that had bankrolled its campaign against Russia. Rather than reject the great powers' division of East Asia, Tokyo sought to operate within the framework that the Europeans had

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[191] Iriye, 1988, pp. 776–777; Steinberg, 2008, pp. 4–5.

[192] Steinberg, 2008, p. 5.

[193] See, for example, David Wolff, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, Bruce W. Menning, John W. Steinberg, Shinji Yokote, eds., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005.

[194] For discussion of Japanese military expenditures between 1905 and 1914, see Hata, 1990, pp. 275–278.

[195] Moon, 2013, pp. 28–29; Iriye, 1988, p. 777.

constructed—now as a colonial power in its own right. In the years after the war, Japan tightened relations with both France and the United Kingdom, securing the signature of the Franco-Japanese Entente in 1907.[196] The Russo-Japanese agreement, signed in 1908, bound Japan to the emerging Triple Entente alliance, an affiliation that would lead to its entry into World War I in 1914.

Even as Japan's relations with France and the United Kingdom improved, new sources of tension with the United States emerged. The Japanese protectorate in Korea and the country's expanding influence in China fostered U.S. suspicions that Tokyo next would attempt to seize the Philippines or challenge other U.S. interests in the region. In 1907, the Theodore Roosevelt administration dispatched the U.S. fleet on a "world cruise" intended to demonstrate Washington's resolve to defend its interests in the region if needed. After a war scare that same year, the United States and Japan reached an agreement to respect the "existing status quo" in Asia by upholding the open door to China and acknowledging the others' territorial possessions, including U.S. acquisitions in Guam and the Philippines and the Japanese presence in Manchuria and protectorate in Korea. The arrangement would last through World War I and into the 1920s, averting a major crisis and shaping the immediate U.S. response to the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in 1931.[197] Beneath the surface, however, U.S. efforts to warn off Japan were interpreted as evidence that Washington was seeking to isolate Tokyo and deny the East Asian power its rightful position in the region. The Treaty of Portsmouth became a symbol of U.S. perfidy, laying the groundwork for a spiral of mistrust and miscommunications that would contribute to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.[198]

The war's immediate effects on Russia were even more destabilizing. The humiliated Russian government, having suffered a serious setback during the war, was struck a second blow shortly after the war's end, when public demonstrations in the summer of 1905 ballooned into a revolution. Political reforms implemented in the years afterward failed to stem the growing radicalization of urban workers, students, and other factions, which would ultimately contribute—along with the strains of World War I—to the overthrow of the tsar in 1917.[199]

The war also forced Russia to confront the reality of its declining international position and to shift its attention from Asia to Europe. Struggling to manage its domestic problems and seeking to avoid further costly encounters, the Russian government adopted a more conciliatory policy premised on the need to avoid a second war with Japan and to reach diplomatic

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[196] Hata, 1990, pp. 277–278.

[197] Copeland, 2015, pp. 151–152; Gerhard Krebs, "World War Zero? Re-Assessing the Global Impact of the Russo-Japanese War 1904–05," *Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 10, Issue 21, No. 2, May 2012, pp. 12–14.

[198] The initial announcement of the Treaty of Portsmouth triggered nationalist riots in Japan. See Naoko Shimazu, "Patriotic and Despondent: Japanese Society at War, 1904–5," *Russian Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, January 2008, pp. 46–48; Steinberg, 2008, p. 6.

[199] On the 1905 Revolution and the years preceding the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, see Fitzpatrick, 2017, Ch. 1.

understandings with both Tokyo and London over outstanding sources of tensions. The desire to buy time to recover from the war was one motive behind the decision to sign the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, settling disputes with the United Kingdom in Central Asia.[200] Russia also took the extraordinary step of pursuing a rapprochement with Japan, recognizing that a failure to settle the status of Korea, southern and northern Manchuria, and outer Mongolia made a second war nearly inevitable. (Still recovering from the financial and human toll of the 1904–1905 war, Japan was eager to oblige.) The resulting 1908 Russo-Japanese Agreement marked the end of the countries' competition in the Far East, freeing Russia to concentrate on its competition in the Balkans, where its support would embolden Serbian nationalists and contribute to the region's instability.[201]

Paradoxically, Russia's weakened state heightened Germany's sense of insecurity. For the United Kingdom and France, both of which looked to St. Petersburg as a potential counterbalance to Germany, the sudden reduction in Russian power presented both an opportunity and a threat, and the two countries moved quickly to formalize a triple alliance. Intended to restore balance to the continent, the Triple Entente, as it came to be known, instead isolated Germany and added urgency to its own effort to formalize new alliances to counterbalance its rivals.[202]

In hindsight, the Russo-Japanese War appears as a precursor to the industrialized trench warfare that would embroil Europe a decade later. At the time, however, its significance was overlooked by European "experts [who] tended to read into the experiences of the war very much what they wanted to find," as historian Howard notes.[203] In France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere, military intellectuals scrutinized the war as evidence of the importance of such intangible factors as soldiers' morale, domestic opinion, and cultural notions of honor and patriotism rather than as evidence of the transformative effect of new technologies on combat. The industrialization of warfare—vividly illustrated in the bloody trenches at Mukden or the costly naval battle at Tsushima Strait—had brought lethal improvements in artillery, small arms, and other firepower, but this was overlooked, just as it had been after the earlier Russo-Turkish and Sino-Japanese wars.[204] Instead, military observers

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[200] Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*, London: I.B. Tauris 2002, p. 197.

[201] Masato Matsui, "The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907: Its Causes and the Progress of Negotiations," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1972, pp. 43–48.

[202] William C. Wohlforth, "The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance," *World Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 3, April 1987, p. 358.

[203] Howard, 1991, pp. 107–108.

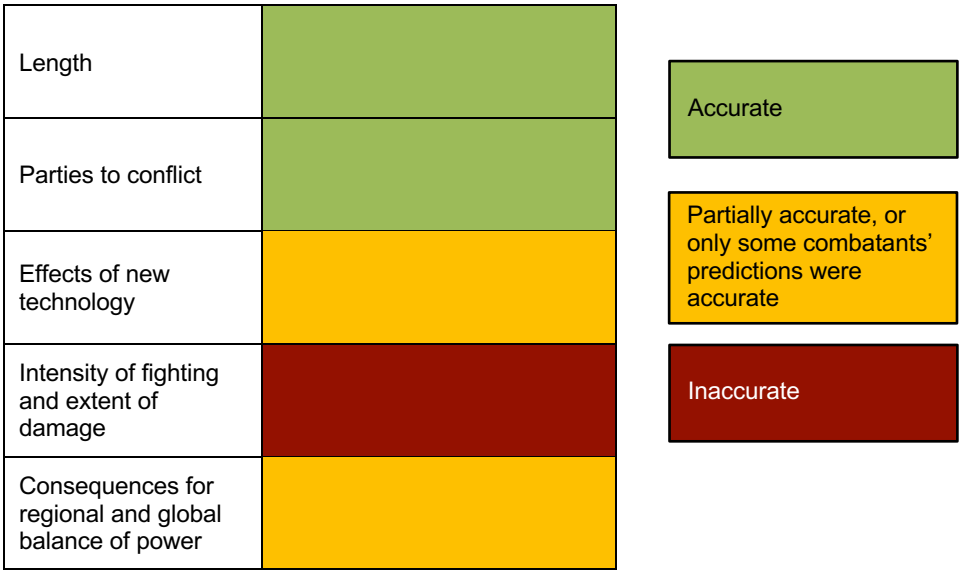
[204] In a reflection of the war's perceived importance, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States each sent military attachés to observe and report on the campaign. Eyewitness reports and observations published after the war were studied widely. Murray, 2013, p. 124; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2008, pp. 81–82.

emphasized the zeal and resolve of Japan's "human bullets" and gave "much thought . . . to inculcating a stronger national spirit in the populace so that it might more willingly undertake the sacrifices necessary in battle."[205]

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

Russian and Japanese planners accurately predicted that a war between the two powers would be short, albeit for differing reasons (Table 7.1). The Japanese assessment had been premised on two valid assumptions: Its investment in European naval technologies would provide a decisive advantage during the early phases of the fighting, and the United States would intervene diplomatically to prevent a protracted conflict. In contrast, Russian expectations for a short war were founded on a misreading of the military balance and the likelihood for Russian victory. Russian strategists underestimated Japan's ability to exploit new technologies and overestimated the efficacy of ongoing Russian professionalization and modernization programs.

Table 7.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Russo-Japanese War



The intensity of the fighting and the extent of damage surprised both powers, however. In hindsight, the Russo-Turkish and Sino-Japanese wars appear as clear evidence that the improvements in small arms, firepower, and transportation along with the difficulties associated with attacking entrenched positions had already produced a technological shift that favored defensive operations more than offensive ones. This was not, however, obvious to Russian, European, or (to a lesser extent) Japanese observers at the time, who emphasized intangible factors (such as morale, domestic opinion, and culture). The sheer scale of the fighting at

[205] Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2008, pp. 83–84.

Mukden, Port Arthur, and other land battles—as well as the magnitude of the casualties—dwarfed prewar estimates. Even Japanese planners who had otherwise accurately forecast the importance of new technologies were surprised by the scale of the losses incurred during attempts to breach improved Russian fortifications.

Lastly, the immediate and long-term consequences of the war differed from both Russian and Japanese prewar forecasts. Russia had not anticipated its defeat and therefore was caught off guard by Japan's continued ascendance in the decades after the war. Japan rightfully predicted that the war would strengthen its position in East Asia and provide a basis to claim greater international status, but also overestimated its ability to hold on to its territorial gains. Japan had expected that the United States would support its claims and was therefore surprised by what it perceived as Washington's attempt to contain or deny the rising Asian power its rightful position in the region. Rather than satisfy Japanese ambitions and promote a stable balance in the region, the war instead created new grievances and introduced an unexpected wedge between the United States and Japan.

8. World War I, 1914–1918

World War I (also known as the Great War) was, in the words of one historian, "the first calamity of the twentieth century, the calamity from which all other calamities have sprung."[206] Waged between 1914 and 1918, the conflict stretched across Europe, the Middle East, and Russia, and it drew Japan and the United States into the fray. Pitting the Central Powers (led by Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire) against the allies or Triple Entente (France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and, after 1915, Japan), the war precipitated the collapse of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, the fall of dynastic families in Prussia and Russia, and the rise of revolutionary ideologies that would inspire global imitation and loathing. At the war's end, representatives of 27 nations gathered at Versailles to negotiate a framework for a new international system founded on the tenets of collective security and self-determination. Rather than promote lasting stability, however, the settlement devised between January and July 1919 left a legacy of grievances that would contribute to the outbreak of a second world war two decades later.

The Prewar System

Agreement about the origins of World War I has eluded historians for more than a century. Despite widespread interest, reams of archival records, and countless publications, scholars continue to disagree about major questions, such as why the war erupted when it did, whether and how to assign blame, and whether the conflict could have been averted.[207] Yet three factors stand out as common elements across the competing explanations of the war's outbreak: the splintering of Europe into two competing alliances, the emergence of radical concepts of nationalism and competition, and persistent and widespread misassumptions about the nature of industrial warfare.

By the turn of the 20th century, competition among the European powers had intensified. Once the continent's dominant force on land, France had been reduced to a second-rate power after its 1871 defeat and was eager to enact revenge against a newly unified Germany, which enjoyed both a numerical and technological edge over its neighbors and had enacted a "forward

[206] Quoted in Clark, 2013, p. 1.

[207] For useful summaries of the major historiographical camps, see Francis J. Gavin, "History, Security Studies, and the July Crisis," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2014, pp. 319–331; Lawrence D. Freedman, "The War That Didn't End All Wars: What Started in 1914—and Why It Lasted So Long," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 6, November–December 2014. Common explanations blame combatants' rigid military plans; the arms race; economic rivalries, trade wars, and imperialism; nationalism, utopianism, and new notions of independence; ideals of honor, gender, and competition; the tension between rising Germany and Japan and declining France, Russia, and the United Kingdom; the deterioration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; and France's and Russia's desire for revenge.

policy" to expand its influence in Europe and claim the mantle of a world power.[208] Its ambitions did not go unnoticed in London. Traditionally reluctant to become entangled in continental affairs but worried that Germany might become a naval and industrial competitor, the United Kingdom signed agreements with France in 1904 and Russia in 1907 settling peripheral territorial disputes and establishing the framework for the so-called Triple Entente alliance.[209] Encircled, Germany mended relations with Austria-Hungary and extended offers of an alliance to the aging Ottoman Empire.[210] Shaken by the Balkan wars and fearful of continued diplomatic isolation, the Ottomans embraced Germany as a potential counterweight to France and Russia and viewed the alliance as a deterrent against foreign meddling within its empire.[211] Four decades after the emergence of a unified Germany, efforts to promote a renewed Concert of Europe had failed, and the continent had splintered into two polarized alliances.[212]

These diplomatic realignments coincided with a strengthening of nationalist sentiments across Europe. Mass industrialization and the expansion of global trade in the 19th century bound the great powers closer together but also encouraged the spread of new social Darwinist concepts of ethnicity and race that privileged competition among states and amplified resentments.[213] In the major capitals of London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, statesmen found themselves under pressure from an increasingly militarist populace while the aging Habsburg and Ottoman dynasties confronted new challenges from separatist movements in the Balkans. The heady cocktail of nationalism and militarism almost brought the powers to war over Morocco in 1905–1906 and 1911 and over the Balkans in 1908–1909 and 1913. Careful diplomacy defused each crisis, but the scares demonstrated the danger that a peripheral flashpoint could spark a wider war.[214]

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[208] Howard, 1961, Ch. 1.

[209] Margaret MacMillan, *The Rhyme of History: Lessons of the Great War*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2013a, pp. 8–11.

[210] In an effort to surpass France, Germany sought to exploit advances in heavy artillery, machine guns, and rail transportation while expanding its submarine and surface fleet. Jonathan Shimshoni, "Technology, Military Advantage, and World War I: A Case for Military Entrepreneurship," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Winter 1990–1991, pp. 210–211. The German High Command believed it could defeat France and Russia if each could be isolated from its allies, but Germany also feared that a Franco-British alliance would tip the balance in the Entente's favor. Jack L. Snyder, "Perceptions of the Security Dilemma in 1914," in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp. 168–179.

[211] The most comprehensive English-language history of Ottoman calculations is Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[212] On Europe's polarization, see Clark, 2013, Ch. 3.

[213] For a study emphasizing the role of ideological and cultural factors (particularly concepts of nationalism, honor, and masculinity), see Margaret MacMillan, *The War that Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War*, London: Profile Books, 2013b.

[214] For a discussion of the regional crises that preceded World War I, see David Stevenson, "Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe Before 1914," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Summer 1997.

Even before the first Balkan crisis, the notion that a major war was inevitable was common throughout Europe. The repeated crises deepened each country's sense of their own persecution and acclimated statesmen to the idea of resolving disputes by force. With the exception of the Napoleonic Wars, many of the conflicts of the 19th century were limited in scope and had ended quickly after a series of decisive battlefield victories. Extrapolating from the wars of German unification, the Crimean War, the Russo-Turkish War, and similar conflicts, statesmen in Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom predicted that a future war could be concluded within a few months and would not involve more than a few combatant nations. "How could it be otherwise?" one historian later pointed out, summarizing European leaders' assumptions at the time. "A prolonged war of attrition . . . could not be conducted when it required the expenditure of milliards to sustain armies numbered in millions."[215]

If war were unavoidable, most European leaders believed it would be best to fight sooner, to control the timing and ensure current advantages, rather than be forced to fight later, after a competitor might have had time to gain ground. (Russia, with its military, population, and economy growing every year, was a notable exception.[216]) European leaders recognized that war would be costly—the lethality of modern firearms had been convincingly displayed during the Franco-Prussian, Russo-Turkish, and Russo-Japanese wars—but nearly all presumed the country that took the offensive had the best chance of minimizing the damage to its own territory and securing victory.[217] Some British analysts cautioned that improvements in defensive technology could force a prolonged war of attrition, but, in general, most downplayed the significance of advances in ammunition, small arms and artillery, and motorization. Overlooking the grinding trench warfare of the Russo-Japanese War, they emphasized instead the importance of training, morale, and will power. To acknowledge otherwise would require contemplating the cost of fighting a long defensive war—a prospect that no European power was eager to imagine.[218]

War Initiation

On June 28, 1914, the Black Hand, a pan-Serbian terrorist group, assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Habsburg throne, in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Determined to punish Serbia and settle the Balkan problem for good, Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum demanding that Serbia crack down on nationalist groups. Although Vienna acknowledged that the Russians would not tolerate the demand, Austrian statesmen argued that inaction would entail abandoning

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[215] Howard, 1991, p. 117.

[216] Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 7.

[217] On the appeal of offensive warfare, see Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984, particularly Ch. 1.

[218] MacMillan, 2013a, pp. 19–20; Howard, 1991, pp. 117–121; Christensen, 1997, p. 83; Shimshoni, 1990–91, pp. 208–210.

the Austria-Hungarian Empire and ceding further Russian encroachment.[219] Assurances of support from Germany, which feared straining relations with its only ally (and was enticed by the opportunity to reduce Russian—and, in turn, French—power), further emboldened Austria to gamble that a war could either be averted or limited geographically.[220] In either event, "a final settling of accounts with Serbia while Germany held the Russians in check must have appeared the only chance of saving the Monarchy, whatever Berlin might say; and with a blank cheque from Berlin, Vienna could surely face the future with a greater confidence than had been felt there for very many years," Howard has observed.[221]

But Russia was unwilling to back down. Weakened by economic malaise and unrest at home, its vulnerabilities laid bare during its disastrous war with Japan, Russia nonetheless was unwilling to abandon Serbia, to reverse the gains it had made in the Balkans in the prior decades, or to cede the opportunity to establish a more favorable landscape in southeastern Europe and Eurasia.[222] German and Austro-Hungarian calculations presumed that Russia was too weak to pose a credible threat, but British and French military analysts believed that Russia remained a powerful ally. Blaming the 1905 defeat on the Japanese military's superior morale and resolve instead of acknowledging the fundamental signs of Russian technological and organizational weakness, West European analysts cited growing Russian investment in new and greater numbers of weapons, improvements in its railway system, and a shift from a defensive to offensive strategy as evidence of its resurgence.[223] Presented with the text of Austria's ultimatum, Russia began a partial mobilization on July 25, even as its diplomats requested that Vienna extend the deadline for a Serbian decision.[224]

After nearly a month of negotiations, the final descent into war was swift. On July 28, shortly after receiving Serbia's rejection of its ultimatum, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Two days later, Russia ordered a complete mobilization, giving Germany cause to declare war on August 1 and to demand free passage through Belgium the following day. After Belgium rejected the demand, German troops invaded the country on August 3, executing the first move in the so-called Schlieffen Plan for a two-front war against France and Russia.[225] But German

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[219] William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War,* 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 212–215.

[220] Howard, 1991, p. 118.

[221] Howard, 1991, p. 117.

[222] In a meeting with the French ambassador in November 1914, Tsar Nicholas II outlined his vision for a postwar world in which Germany was divided and Austria shrunk to allow the creation of friendly Slavic states in Romania, Czechoslovakia, and an enlarged Serbia. This would allow Russia to expand to the natural frontier of the Carpathian Mountains and to create a Russianized Poland that encompassed portions of eastern Prussia. What exactly would happen to the Ottoman territories was unclear, but the empire would be dismembered. McMeekin, 2011, pp. 96–97.

[223] Wohlforth, 1987, pp. 356–365.

[224] D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*, New York: St. Martin's, 1983, pp. 140–145. For a detailed, albeit controversial, study of Russian motivations and ambitions, see McMeekin, 2011.

[225] Germany and France formally declared war at the same time.

planners had underestimated the British commitment to Belgian neutrality. As one historian notes, "ever since the sixteenth century it had been an article of faith in British naval policy that the Low Countries should not be allowed to fall into hostile hands, and this belief had become almost visceral, irrespective of party politics."[226] The occupation rallied the British public and united Parliament, which quickly issued an ultimatum demanding immediate withdrawal. When that failed, the United Kingdom declared war on August 4. Japan, recognizing an opportunity to expand its influence in the Pacific while Germany was distracted, entered the war on the side of the Triple Entente three weeks later.

Italy, convinced that the Central Powers would not grant its claims to Austro-Hungarian possessions, initially declared neutrality. During the first year of the war, however, popular pressure grew to seize control of the contested Trentino region, which ran from the Alps eastward to the Adriatic Sea. In May 1915, Italy defected from the Triple Alliance and declared war against its former partner yet historic enemy Austria-Hungary, opening a new front along the mountainous border region.[227]

Course of the War

The European powers had gone to war expecting a quick decision and instead found themselves trapped in a long and grueling war of attrition that stretched on for more than four years, ending only after the disintegration of the Central Powers and the economic exhaustion of all major combatants except the United States.[228] Misinterpreting the balance of power on the continent and overly preoccupied with such nonmaterial factors as morale and resolve, planners had not accounted adequately for recent improvements in the range, accuracy, and ease of use of rifles, machine guns, and artillery, nor for advances in motorization, communication, and mass transport, which together increased the lethality of firepower and favored the defensive.[229] After initial German advances during the autumn, most of the armies in Europe were confined to trenches; in the few instances in which the line was broken, the resulting battles at the Somme, Verdun, and elsewhere were bloody and inconclusive. The war would require the mass mobilization of societies and widespread use of new classes of destructive weapons, such as poison gas, airplanes, and primitive tanks. "Harnessing modern technology to the ancient art of war," historian George Herring writes, the European powers "created a ruthlessly efficient killing machine that left as many as ten million soldiers and civilians dead, countless others wounded

[226] Howard, 1991, pp. 119–120.

[227] Denis Mack Smith, *Italy and Its Monarchy*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989, pp. 217–226.

[228] Jack S. Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 1, October 1983b, p. 84.

[229] Freedman, 2017, pp. 14–15. The German buildup that preceded the war had prioritized the machine gun, advances in heavy artillery, rail transport, and the submarine. Shimshoni, 1990–91, pp. 210–211.

and disfigured" and "inflicted huge economic and psychological damage on people and societies."[230]

The primary theaters were defined within the first six months of fighting. Determined that a successful offensive was the best guarantor of victory, the Germans launched an attack on France through Belgium, hoping to circumvent Holland, which was essential to the German economy, and preempt a French invasion from the south. The surprise attack showcased German advances in mobile artillery, and the Wehrmacht surged westward until a French counteroffensive into Alsace-Lorraine and then north into the German flank forced a halt. British, French, and German forces battled for weeks, incurring heavy casualties in Alsace, Flanders, and Ypres, before settling into a stalemate along a line stretching from the North Sea to the Swiss border.[231] Meanwhile, a second defensive line developed in Eastern Europe, dividing the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian armies. By the end of 1914, more than a million soldiers had been killed and neither side enjoyed a clear path to victory, though generals on both sides continued to claim that the next offensive would break the stalemate. Instead, the allies and the Central Powers settled into the positions that they would defend for the better part of the next four years.[232]

Overshadowed by the fighting along the Western front, the non-European campaigns of World War I stretched across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Within months of the war's start, the Entente challenged German administration of colonial territories in Togo, Cameroon, German Southwest Africa, and German East Africa, waging a grueling cross-continental campaign in which the European armies relied on conscripted colonial labor, requisitioned civilian livestock and supplies, and contributed to systemic food shortages and the spread of disease, including the 1918 influenza pandemic. With substantial assistance from Japan, the Entente picked off Germany's resource-rich Asian colonies and safeguarded British access to India. By the winter of 1915, Germany's naval presence in the Pacific had been neutralized, and its holdings on the Chinese mainland and in Micronesia, Western Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and the Bismarck and Solomon Islands had all been seized.[233]

Yet both the African and Asian theaters paled against the scale and intensity of the fighting in the Middle East. The Ottomans were slow to enter the war and continued to explore alternative alliances until September 1914, when a German threat to cut all financial and military aid forced its entry.[234] While the Russians challenged the Ottomans from the east, the British conceived of a

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[230] George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776,* Oxford and London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 378.

[231] On the Western European campaigns of 1914–1915, see John Keegan, *The First World War*, London, UK: Hutchinson, 1999, Chs. 4 and 6.

[232] Howard, 1991, p. 100.

[233] Frederick R. Dickinson, "Toward a Global Perspective of the Great War: Japan and the Foundations of a Twentieth-Century World," *American Historical Review,* Vol. 119, No. 4, October 2014, pp. 1161–1162.

[234] Aksakal, 2008, pp. 138–194.

plan to shorten the war by seizing the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli peninsula to link up with Russian forces in the Black Sea. "A good army of 50,000 men and sea power—that is the end of the Turkish menace," First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill pronounced.[235] Instead, the opening assault failed, leaving the British and French armies "dangerously over-extended" in a region with few roads, railways, and industrial manufacturing nodes.[236] Nonetheless, the United Kingdom fended off a Central Powers' attack on Egypt in 1916 and pushed through the Sinai Peninsula, capturing Ottoman Palestine in December 1917.[237]

The internationalization and industrialization of the war meant that control of the seas was more important than ever. The Entente imposed a naval blockade around the Central Powers in an effort to deprive them of the wealth and raw resources needed to sustain the war effort and maintain their own populations' support. Germany had recognized the dangers of such a blockade before the war, but—in spite of decades of investment—its surface craft remained no match for the British fleet.[238] Unable to break the blockade, and unwilling to lose what remained of its High Seas Fleet after the costly Battle of Jutland, Germany resorted to U-boat attacks against merchant shipping in an effort to cut off access to essential industrial materials and foodstuffs. A 1915 campaign in the Atlantic and a 1916 campaign in waters closer to the United Kingdom inflicted substantial damage but failed to shift the stalemate on land. Faced with mounting unrest at home, the German High Command resorted to unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, gambling that by sinking 600,000 tons of merchant shipping within six months, it could force a British surrender.[239]

Germany's submarine campaigns presented a quandary for the United States. Traditionally reluctant to intervene in European affairs, Washington had declared strict neutrality shortly after the war began only to relax restrictions on foreign trade and public loans two months later for domestic economic reasons. Tensions with Germany mounted during 1915, after the United States announced it would not challenge the British blockade and denounced U-boat attacks on commercial vessels as "an unquestionable violation of the just rules of international law."[240] A series of high-profile incidents, including the sinking of the British *Lusitania* liner, soured

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[235] Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History,* 2nd ed., New York: Macmillan, 2004, p. 105.

[236] Ulrichsen, 2014, pp. 3, 33–40.

[237] For the so-called Mesopotamia campaigns, see Ulrichsen, 2014, Chs. 5 and 6.

[238] This reality was underscored in August 1914, when a British force sank or damaged several German light cruisers in German waters at Helgoland Bight, and again that December, when newer, faster, and better-equipped British ships destroyed a German squadron near the Falkland Islands. By early 1915, the majority of the German surface fleet had been destroyed or damaged. On the naval balance, see Shimshoni, 1990–91, p. 212n51.

[239] Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea: A Naval History of the First World War*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014, particularly Chs. 5 and 8.

[240] Woodrow Wilson, letter to Robert Lansing, April 3, 1915, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914–1920*, Vol. I, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 1939.

popular attitudes toward Germany and strained the notion that the United States could remain isolated from the conflict. In early 1917, the British leaked a telegram revealing that Germany had sought to entice Mexico into declaring war against the United States. U.S. officials determined that war could no longer be avoided and entered the conflict as an "associated power" of the Triple Entente.[241]

After nearly three years of trench warfare, the U.S. intervention bought a much-needed infusion of fresh troops and supplies to the allies, although it would take nearly a year to raise, equip, transport, and train the American Expeditionary Force. Perhaps more important was that the United States now threw the full weight of its industrial engines behind the Entente. To sustain the war effort, even the most-liberal states across Europe had transformed into command economies, but shortages of labor, food, fuel, and raw materials were endemic, along with rampant inflation, currency shortages, and societal strife.[242] With only primitive aircraft and tanks, offensive attacks required amassing vast quantities of men, munitions, artillery, and supplies to survive the initial assault across the trenches, overwhelm well-fortified positions, and force an opening to maneuver. The war, "was no longer a conflict to be resolved on the battlefield by superior military skill and morale, but one of endurance between industrial societies in which control of armed forces melded seamlessly into control of production and the allocation of resources."[243]

At the same time, deteriorating conditions within Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman territories, and Russia brought the countries to the brink of collapse. By the winter of 1916–1917, the losses and deprivations of the war had sapped morale. Strikes and bread riots erupted across Central and Eastern Europe as war-exhausted civilians encouraged desertions and demanded an end to the war.[244] Famine spread across the Middle East as Ottoman measures to requisition food, conscript labor, and suppress insurrections compounded the effects of the Entente blockade, killing up to half a million in the Levant in 1916 alone.[245] Meanwhile, the Caucasus campaigns, which pitted the predominantly Muslim Ottoman army against Orthodox Russian forces, intensified sectarian divisions and spurred waves of deportations and ethnic cleansing campaigns

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[241] Herring, 2008, pp. 399–411; Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, New York: Random House, 2003, p. 4.

[242] On economic mobilization and its consequences, see Gerald Feldman, "Mobilizing Economies for War," in Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker, and Mary R. Habeck, eds., *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000.

[243] Michael Howard, *The First World War: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 70.

[244] On economic warfare and the home front, see Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000; Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[245] Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, "The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria," in John P. Spagnolo, ed., *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Ithaca Press, 1992.

across both empires. With British and French support, insurrections erupted in Iraq, Syria, and the Arabian Gulf.[246]

The situation within Russia was equally grim. The government's ineffective management of the war and the armies' catastrophic losses together turned the already disillusioned Russian public against the Romanov dynasty. In February 1917, after riots over food shortages erupted in Petrograd, the tsar abdicated his throne. A new provisional government was established, but it too struggled to gain control of the country's spiraling crises, including mass defections at the front, nationalist insurrections in non-Russian territories, and continued shortages. Bolshevik revolutionaries seized power in October 1917 and, shortly after, called for an immediate withdrawal from the war. On March 3, 1918, Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, formally surrendering to the Central Powers.[247]

To the allies' surprise, the German army collapsed only months later. Exploiting Russia's desperation to end the war, Germany had secured immense eastern territories, gaining 90 percent of Russian coal reserves, 50 percent of its heavy industry, and 30 percent of its prewar population. But strikes and food riots at home threatened to tear the country apart. In a desperate effort to end the war before the bulk of U.S. forces entered the field, the Wehrmacht launched the so-called Ludendorff Offensive in the spring of 1918. The Germans punched through the Western front, advancing quickly during the spring until an allied counteroffensive forced a fighting retreat that summer. While 300,000 Americans streamed into France every month, heavy battle losses, desertions, and mutinies hollowed out the Central Powers' armed forces. The Bulgarians capitulated on September 30, followed by the Ottomans on October 30 and Austria-Hungary on November 3. On November 11, after three days of negotiations, Germany signed an armistice agreeing to withdraw all forces from France, Belgium, and Luxembourg; to turn over their arsenals; cede Alsace-Lorraine to France; and allow an allied occupation of German territory along the Rhine.[248]

From January to June 1919, the allies convened an international conference at Versailles to write the final peace treaty. The resulting agreement required Germany to disarm, surrender its overseas colonies, pay substantial reparations, and return control of Alsace-Lorraine to France. In an Anglo-British compromise to prevent French annexation of the valuable Saar coalfields, the treaty placed the region under the League of Nation's control but granted France a customs union for 15 years. To assuage French fears of German resurgence, the allied powers agreed to impose restrictions on the German Army and Navy, to disband the High Staff and air force, and

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[246] Ulrichsen, 2014, particularly pp. 72–73. On the Armenian genocide, see Taner Akçam, *The Young Turk's Crimes Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012, particularly pp. 125–285, 445–452; Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark, *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011, particularly pp. 260–276.

[247] Fitzpatrick, 2017, Ch. 3.

[248] Howard, 2002, pp. 95–111.

to prohibit the country from acquiring or fielding "offensive weapons" (such as tanks, aircraft, or submarines) or naval vessels exceeding 10,000 tons' displacement. The United States defeated a French bid to annex the Rhineland, but European and U.S. negotiators agreed to demilitarize the region and establish an inter-allied occupation force to monitor German compliance and enforce payment of reparations over the next 15 years. As additional insurance, France extracted a treaty commitment from the United Kingdom and the United States to lend military assistance if France were ever attacked by Germany.[249]

The peacekeepers also redrew the maps of Europe and the Middle East, dismantling the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires into several successor states, including Austria, the Czechoslovak Republic, Hungary, and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Forced by the United States to renounce annexation of Ottoman territories, France and the United Kingdom settled for "mandates" over the new states of Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Transjordan. From Germany's eastern frontiers, the peacekeepers carved out an independent Poland, bolstered with territory taken from Russia and Austria-Hungary; provided for a plebiscite in Schleswig, which later returned to Denmark; and turned the German-speaking Danzig into a free city.[250]

The restoration of stability required more effort. The fighting had drained the continent's wealth and industrial capacity, and millions suffered from shortages of food and other supplies. Along the Western front, France bore a disproportionate share of the burden; twice as many of its soldiers were wounded, its coal mines were flooded, factories were dismantled and carted to Germany, and more than 6,000 square miles of land was ruined that, before the war, had produced 20 percent of France's crops, 90 percent of its iron ore, and 65 percent of its steel.[251] But these material losses paled against the scale of the human devastation. Over four years, 1,800,000 Germans were killed in the fighting, as were 1,700,000 Russians; 1,384,000 French; 1,290,000 Austro-Hungarians; 743,000 British; and 192,000 colonials—in addition to another 20 million who were maimed or injured.[252] The demographic effects would resonate for a generation.

Regional and International Consequences

The years after the war brought additional turmoil. "I cannot say for how many years, perhaps I should say for how many centuries, the crisis which has begun will continue," said

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[249] Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 27.

[250] Costigliola, 1984, pp. 27–28. For a comprehensive history of the settlement negotiations, see MacMillan, 2003.

[251] MacMillan, 2003, p. 29.

[252] MacMillan, 2003, p. xxvi; Carole Fink, "The Great Powers and the New International System, 1919–1923," in Paul Kennedy and William I. Hitchcock, eds., *From War to Peace: Altered Strategic Landscapes in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 18.

Georges Clemenceau, reflecting on the Versailles agreement. "Yes, this treaty will bring us burdens, troubles, miseries, difficulties, and that will continue for long years."[253] The peacekeepers had attempted to fashion a new international order, but the problems unleashed by the war were too complex and numerous to be resolved in a single settlement. Moreover, the victors' desire to punish Germany resulted in sanctions that hindered political and economic reconstruction across the continent. Economic crises, pandemics, uprisings, regional wars, and radical new political movements contributed to continued instability in the 1920s and 1930s and the outbreak of a second world war barely two decades later. Other decisions made in the aftermath of World War I would create intractable problems in the Balkans and the Middle East that continued into the 21st century.

Of the European powers, only France and the United Kingdom emerged from the war intact. Germany was demilitarized; much of its heavy industry was either dismantled or, as in the Saarland, placed outside its direct control. Austria was dismembered into a series of successor states. The war had hastened the Ottoman Empire's disintegration and established the framework for a new state system in the Middle East that remains in place to this day. The new Soviet Union charted a separate course, preoccupied with civil war and internal dissent for years, but the Franco-British alliance survived the war. Many Austro-Hungarian successor states, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, were friendly with France and the United Kingdom and generally antagonistic toward Germany. British and French predominance beyond Europe became even more pronounced, as the two states took over former German colonies and key parts of the Ottoman Empire. And the British-led international trading system was left nearly intact.

The allied powers nonetheless struggled to recover from the war. Continent-wide inflation, unprecedented budget deficits, and paralyzing debts dampened efforts to revive production levels and resume European trade.[254] The United Kingdom managed to secure—and, through its mandates indirectly expand—its imperial territories but discovered that it was dangerously overextended. France, having lost its Russian ally, was divided between its continued suspicion of neighboring Germany and the need to rebuild its economy and restore political stability amid mounting communal unrest within the metropole and its overseas territories.[255] Like other European countries, France and the United Kingdom rapidly demobilized, shrinking their armed forces below prewar levels in recognition of budgetary concerns and pressure from new domestic pacifist movements.[256]

All the while, the problem of Germany remained. France had insisted on the demilitarization of the country and the dismantling of its heavy industry, but its latent demographic, territorial,

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[253] MacMillan, 2003, p. ix.

[254] Fink, 2000, pp. 30–31.

[255] Martin Thomas, "Appeasement in the Late Third Republic," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2008, p. 566.

[256] In 1919 alone, the British Army shrank to a third of its wartime strength. MacMillan, 2003, p. 42.

and economic power remained a source of concern. The establishment of Poland as a buffer between Germany and Russia strengthened the former's strategic position while the dismantlement of Austria-Hungary removed a traditional competitor in Central Europe.[257] The United Kingdom, preoccupied with maintaining its empire, rebuffed efforts to formalize an alliance with France against Germany until the late 1930s—at which point the Nazi regime had already renounced the Treaty of Versailles and reindustrialized the Rhineland.[258]

The effects of the settlement weighed most heavily on Germany. As one historian has summarized, "The Treaty of Versailles not only eliminated Germany as a major military factor by sharply limiting its armed forces, it also reduced the country's population, territory, and resources, and, through the mechanism of reparations, converted Germany into the world's major debtor."[259] German efforts to alleviate these challenges through rapprochement with Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States provided minor short-term benefits but were not enough to counterbalance France's continued animosity.[260] U.S. initiatives, such the Dawes Plan (which revised the Versailles treaty's reparations and limited France's punitive power), helped revive the German economy during the mid-1920s, but the country was hard hit again when the Great Depression descended in 1931.[261] The terms of the European settlement and the deprivations of the postwar reconstruction era helped popularize revanchist sentiments that propelled the Nazi Party's rise and contributed to the recurrence of conflict in 1939.[262]

In contrast, the war increased the relative economic and industrial importance of the United States. In 1918, more than a million U.S. troops were stationed in Europe, and its navy had grown from a coastal defense force to a near-rival of the British fleet. While European economies stagnated, U.S. agricultural and industrial production surged, claiming a large share of world production and trade. The center of international finance shifted from London to New York as the United States displaced the United Kingdom as the primary banker to Europe; by the war's end, the European allies owed more than $7 billion to the U.S. government and nearly half as much again to private U.S. banks.[263] Additional U.S. assistance, in the form of the Dawes and Young plans, was required to ease the burden of wartime debt repayments and allow the purchase of food, raw materials, and machine tools.[264] Although the United States gradually resumed its formal policy of disengagement in European affairs, and despite a rapid postwar

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[257] MacMillan, 2003, pp. 481–482.

[258] MacMillan, 2003, p. 482.

[259] Manfred Jonas, *The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 151.

[260] Jonas, 1984, pp. 152–154.

[261] Costigliola, 1984, Chs. 3 and 4.

[262] F. L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism,* 2nd ed., Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982, Chs. 3 and 4.

[263] MacMillan, 2003, p. 10.

[264] Fink, 2000, pp. 30–31.

demobilization effort, World War I presaged the United States' emergence as a global power during World War II.[265]

Moreover, the upheaval that began in the former Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires soon spread westward and southward. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution inspired communist riots and uprisings across the successor states of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia. New leftist, democratic, and anarchist political parties clashed openly with their conservative and monarchist opponents. In Anatolia, Turkish forces defeated a British-backed Greek invasion, leading to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne recognizing Turkish independence and sovereignty over Asia Minor, Istanbul, and Thrace. The mass atrocities and ethnic cleansing campaigns conducted by both parties, which included an internationally sanctioned population exchange affecting 2 million Greeks and Turks, engendered a lasting distrust that paved the path for later conflicts in the 20th century.[266] Elsewhere in the Middle East, Arab nationalist movements agitated for self-rule while tensions among Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine simmered.[267]

The situation in Asia was also unstable. For Japanese elites, the war signaled the country's arrival as an imperial power capable of shaping both regional and global events. By aligning with the allies and defeating the German presence in the Pacific, Japan demonstrated its international clout, penetrated new markets, secured claims to the Shantung Peninsula and German Micronesia, and issued what became known as the Twenty-One Demands asserting special rights in central and northern China.[268] Like the United States, the country had benefited economically from the war as demands for war assistance, materiel, and manufactured goods increased, providing an infusion of cash that sustained growth through the 1920s. Unlike the United States, however, Japan perceived an opportunity for an alternative regional order centered on a new Asian civilization. Japanese foreign policy grew increasingly assertive in the 1920s, leading to the outbreak of war in Manchuria in 1931.[269]

Other Asian and African countries were also rethinking their relationship with the European powers. The end of the war ushered in what historian Erez Manela describes as a "Wilsonian Moment" as the Paris conference's language of self-determination inspired colonial intellectuals

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[265] On U.S. foreign policy during the interwar years, see John Braeman, "Power and Diplomacy: The 1920's Reappraised," *Review of Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 3, July 1982, pp. 342–369; Melvyn P. Leffler, *Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism: U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security, 1920–2015*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 47–116.

[266] Onur Yildirim, "The 1923 Population Exchange, Refugees and National Historiographies in Greece and Turkey," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring 2006.

[267] Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001*, reprint, New York: Vintage, 2001, Ch. 3.

[268] Yanzhong Huang, "China, Japan, and the Twenty-One Demands," blog post, Council of Foreign Relations, New York, January 21, 2015.

[269] Dickinson, 2014, pp. 1167–1169; Guoqi Xu, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 216–224.

to demand greater autonomy.[270] The result was a surge in nationalist protests, from the 1919 Revolution and the Rowlatt Satyagraha in India, which repudiated British rule, to the March First uprising in Korea and May Fourth movements in China, which rejected both European and Japanese colonialism. Although these uprisings largely failed to achieve their visions for local independence, they facilitated the spread of anticolonial ideologies and movements globally, establishing the foundation for the era of decolonization after World War II.[271]

Many of these challenges had been anticipated in 1919, but the European powers deferred their resolution to the newly formed League of Nations. The emotional trauma of the war produced a new spirit of international cooperation, and the League was followed by a series of conferences and agreements, such as the 1922 Washington Naval Conference and the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, which sought to encourage disarmament, curtail militarism, and safeguard a lasting peace. Yet the League's new powers were limited—partly because the United States did not join the organization after the treaty failed to receive Senate ratification—and it was deliberately denied a mandate to oversee major points of contention among the great powers, including naval disarmament and freedom of the seas, internal affairs within the European empires, inter-allied debts and German reparations, and the status of Soviet Russian territory. Its success, and the success of the other treaties and pacts that followed, depended on states' willingness to cooperate, abide by their agreements, and enforce the terms. As political and economic conditions in Europe deteriorated in the early 1930s, this spirit of cooperation never materialized.[272]

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

World War I represents the most significant prediction failure of all the episodes surveyed in this volume (Table 8.1). The duration of the fighting and the extent of the damage caused by the war exceeded all combatants' expectations by several orders of magnitude. Despite substantial evidence from recent wars in Europe, Asia, and the United States that a prolonged war of attrition was the likely outcome, most European strategists maintained that a series of decisive battlefield victories would bring the war to a swift conclusion. This miscalculation required underestimating the significance of advances in artillery, small arms and munitions, and motorization, and it prevented contemplation of how desperate states might resort to a host of new technologies and techniques, such as chemical weapons, rudimentary tanks, and airpower, to break the stalemate.

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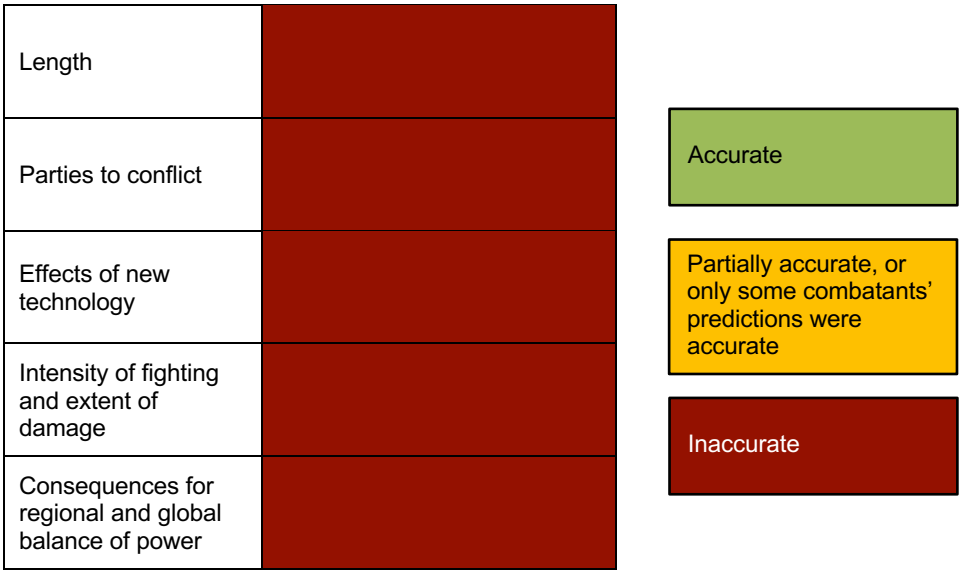
[270] For the history of the Paris Conference's effect on anti-colonial movements, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

[271] Manela, 2007.

[272] Fink, 2000, pp. 19, 24, 29.

Table 8.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to World War I



Having misunderstood the battlefield effects of industrial technologies and underestimated the duration of the fighting, none of the European powers predicted the regional or global consequences of the conflict. Most obviously, the cost of repairing the economic, social, and human damage to the fabric of Europe would have stunned any statesman in 1914. But this failure of imagination also included a too narrow conception of the parties to the conflict and the effects that the war would have on the global colonial system. Few anticipated before the war that the United States would overcome its traditional aversion to intervention in European affairs and assume a major role in both the fighting and postwar reconstruction effort. And if each of the major European powers hoped to gain an advantage over the other, none anticipated that the fighting would result in the collapse of the Russian and Ottoman empires, the disarmament of the once-ascendant German state, the creation of a new mandate system, and the encouragement of anti-colonial nationalist movements in Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere. In short, prewar predictions did not account for the possibility that the conflict would force structural shifts that, despite a brief period of postwar prosperity, would contribute to the start of a global economic crisis and, ultimately, to the outbreak of another world war two decades later.

9. World War II in Europe, 1939–1945

The fragile order established at Versailles collapsed in 1939, when a revanchist Nazi Germany, motivated by a racist ideology that envisioned the creation of an Aryan-dominated Europe, invaded Poland. France and the United Kingdom, determined to prevent German dominance of the continent, soon declared war, widening a conflict that ultimately spanned the Atlantic, Europe, and North Africa and stretched deep into Russia. After 1941, several of the major combatants waged a distinct but linked war in Asia as well (see Chapter 10). World War II, which featured both heavily mechanized ground and strategic bombing campaigns, caused widespread destruction to European military and civilian infrastructure. Mass killing and genocide campaigns, the widespread use of forced labor, the purposeful targeting of civilian infrastructure, and the economic dislocations caused by total mobilization spread the suffering far beyond the formal battlefields. The Allies, led by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States, ultimately defeated the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The effects of the war accelerated the decline of the Western European powers and established the statuses of the Soviet Union and the United States as superpowers. Disputes about the postwar order in Eastern Europe and Asia would also contribute to the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations and the onset of the Cold War.

The Prewar System

A decade of economic hardship and political radicalization preceded the outbreak of war in Europe. World War I had reduced swaths of the continent to ruins, and widespread hunger, disease, and unrest continued into the early 1920s. A substantial but fleeting economic recovery emerged after 1924, until a series of international economic shocks, such as the U.S. stock market collapse of 1929 and the Austrian banking crisis of 1931, swelled into global financial crises.[273] International trade contracted as governments around the world adopted severe protectionist policies, transforming the economic downturn into a prolonged global recession.[274] In the 1930s, production levels plummeted, unemployment skyrocketed, and European governments turned inward, abandoning the cooperative spirit enshrined in the League of

[273] On European economic reconstruction and revival, see Costigliola, 1984, Ch. 4.

[274] For a discussion of the cross-country variations in protectionist policies, see Barry Eichengreen and Douglas Irwin, "The Slide to Protectionism in the Great Depression: Who Succumbed and Why?" *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 70, No. 4, December 2010.

Nations.[275] In Germany and Italy, Fascist parties seized power on the promise to rearm and to rewrite the balance of power on the continent.[276]

The driving force behind the war was Germany. Appointed chancellor in January 1933, Adolf Hitler launched a radical program to reverse the perceived "humiliations" of Versailles, to fortify the German military and restore the nation's status as a continental hegemon, and to conquer racial "living space," or *Lebensraum*, in Eastern Europe. Motivated by imperial ambition, racial ideology, and revanchism, Germany implemented a regime of discrimination, repression, and violence at home and prepared to initiate a war of conquest.[277] It abandoned international disarmament negotiations in 1932; repudiated the military clauses of the Versailles agreement and imposed mandatory military service in 1935; remilitarized the Rhineland and signed a Pact of Friendship and Alliance with Italy in 1936; annexed Austria in 1938; and increased production of tanks, planes, and U-boats during the decade.[278]

Statesmen in London, Paris, and Washington monitored the revival in German power with alarm, but powerful antiwar sentiment in each of the countries discouraged leaders from either confronting Berlin or undertaking substantial military preparations.[279] The rearmament of the Rhineland in 1936 horrified France, but the country, teetering on bankruptcy and hampered by a series of internal political crises, lacked both the men and the equipment necessary to respond effectively. Its armed forces had yet to recover from World War I and could not muster the three-to-one ratio that strategists across Europe believed was required to take the offensive.[280] An Anglo-French coalition might have resolved the matter, but none appeared forthcoming. British planning was constrained by the ten-year rule, a policy implemented in 1919 that dictated the country's armed forces should not plan on fighting a major war for a decade and implemented corresponding cuts in defense expenditures. Not until 1934, one year after Hitler became chancellor, did the United Kingdom begin to rebuild its forces, and the program did not take off in earnest until 1936. Even then, British resources remained overextended abroad. As a result, the French placed their faith in the Maginot Line (a chain of defensive structures completed in

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[275] For an international history of the Great Depression and its ramifications, see Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939,* Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1986.

[276] For a single-volume study surveying fascism across Europe, see Carsten, 1982.

[277] Eric D. Weitz, *Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation*, updated, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015, Ch. 3.

[278] Herring, 2008, p. 512.

[279] Konrad H. Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015, p. 295.

[280] Stephen A. Schuker, "France and the Remilitarization of the Rhineland, 1936," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Spring 1986, pp. 303–304.

1936 that the French High Command was sure would protect against an attack from the east), and the British sought to protect their colonies and buy time for rearmament.[281]

Hitler's threat to annex the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia in 1938 marked a turning point. Although the German High Command cautioned against intervention, Hitler calculated that German rearmament had advanced sufficiently to deter an already reluctant France and United Kingdom from declaring war on Czechoslovakia's behalf.[282] As anticipated, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to concede the disputed territory in exchange for a guarantee that it would be Germany's last territorial claim. The Munich Agreement, as it came to be called, was celebrated across Europe, but the effort to appease Hitler's ambitions bought only a temporary respite. In March 1939, Germany annexed the remainder of the Czech territory and ordered German troops into disputed portions of Lithuania.[283]

Appeasement's failure awakened the French and British to the dangers ahead. The British government accelerated its rearmament plans, purchasing thousands of additional fighter planes. France, buoyed by an improvement in market confidence and overseas trade and increasingly worried about the Italians, accelerated its own rearmament efforts and established a new five-year manufacturing program particularly intended to address a dearth of antitank and antiair capabilities.[284] French and British strategists estimated that the offensive balance in air, on land, and by sea favored Germany, but they predicted that their own defensive advantages would stave off defeat in the event of a prolonged war of attrition that most observers anticipated.[285] In an effort to delay, or preferably avert, further German expansion, France and the United Kingdom pledged in March 1939 to defend Poland, Romania, Greece, and Turkey against further aggression.

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[281] Thomas, 2008, pp. 566–607; Malcolm S. Smith, "Rearmament and Deterrence in Britain in the 1930s," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1978.

[282] Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Munich After 50 Years," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 1, Fall 1988, p. 167.

[283] Historians debate whether a more forceful response in 1938 could have prevented the outbreak of war in 1939. Some argue that Hitler had not sought world domination but had been forced into an expansionist foreign policy by Chamberlain's decision to extend a military guarantee to Poland (for example, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, London, UK: Hamish Hamilton, 1961). Others have portrayed Chamberlin more sympathetically, stressing the constraints on British foreign policy and suggesting that appeasement was a logical attempt to preserve the peace while providing the United Kingdom and France time to rearm (for example, see David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain*, Vol. I, *Pioneering and Reform, 1869–1929*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984; and Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *The Appeasers*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1963). A third school argues that the United Kingdom overestimated German strength, misconstrued German intentions, and pursued a policy of appeasement long after the evidence of German aggression could no longer be denied (for example, see R. A. C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993).

[284] Thomas, 2008, p. 587; Martin Thomas, "French Economic Affairs and Rearmament: The First Crucial Months, June–September 1936," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 4, October 1992.

[285] Christensen, 1997, p. 84; Freedman, 2017, p. 57; Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 46–53.

But it was too little, too late. From the Czechoslovakia crisis, Hitler concluded that the British and their French ally would tolerate German expansion as long as it was directed eastward and Berlin accepted the countries' imperial holdings.[286] "Rather than directly challenging British power, which he had learned to respect, and destroy her Empire, which he had come to admire," Howard writes, Hitler had since the earliest days of his political influence evinced a preference "to establish German hegemony on the basis of East European conquests. He would destroy the Soviet Union and establish an unshakable power base by controlling the Eurasian 'World Island.'"[287] Although Hitler planned to expand Germany eastward, enslaving the Slavic people and destroying what he viewed as an existential threat in Bolshevism, he also sought to delay a war with the Soviet Union. In 1939, those two countries signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, a nonaggression treaty that contained secret protocols to divide Poland.[288] Fearing neither France nor the United Kingdom would act to check German aggression, the Soviet Union hoped the maneuver would reduce the risk of being dragged into war with Germany.[289]

War Initiation

On September 1, 1939, one week after signing a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, Germany invaded Poland. The Nazi leadership, emboldened by its success at Munich, gambled that the Western European powers would not come to Poland's defense, but France and the United Kingdom, awakened to the dangers of German expansionism, declared war within days. Alliance links and security concerns drove Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, and Yugoslavia to join the anti-German Allies soon after. On September 27, 1940, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, formalizing those countries' alliances and linking the wars in Europe and Asia.[290] A month later, Italy, believing its primary ambitions in southern Europe could be achieved within months, attacked Greece, opening a new southern front that stretched into the Balkans.[291]

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[286] R. A. C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History*, revised ed., London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 10.

[287] Howard, 2002, p. 129.

[288] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books, 2010, pp. 115–116.

[289] John Erickson, "Threat Identification and Strategic Appraisal by the Soviet Union, 1930–1941" in Ernest R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemies*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 406–409.

[290] Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan Three-Power Pact, Berlin, September 27, 1940.

[291] Parker, 2002, pp. 42–43. On the Greco-Italian war, see James J. Sadkovich, "Understanding Defeat: Reappraising Italy's Role in World War II," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24, No. 1, January 1989, pp. 37–39.

Course of the War

World War II shattered Europe, wreaking unprecedented human, economic, political, and material damage to the continent. Waged across a vast swath of territory that stretched across the hemisphere deep into Russia and south into North Africa, the war was characterized by vicious fighting enabled by new technological and doctrinal innovations by all major belligerents. Advances in aerial bombing; development of ballistic missiles; and improvements in nearly every class of weaponry, munitions, equipment, logistical support, intelligence, and command-and-control systems made war more lethal, although European fears that the tactical use of chemical weapons would resurface proved unfounded.[292] Beyond the battlefield, the practice of urban bombing increased civilian deaths and reduced many of Europe's industrial and political centers to rubble.[293] The heavy logistical demands of sustaining a prolonged and geographically extended war required mass mobilization that sapped the continent's resources while the expansive fighting destroyed transportation infrastructure and razed fertile land. Total food production in Europe in the year after the war's end was less than two-thirds of its prewar total.[294] In addition to battlefield deaths, tens of millions died of famine, genocide, starvation, disease, and state repression.[295]

The scale of the devastation defied prewar estimates. Only two decades removed from World War I, the European powers anticipated a prolonged attrition war requiring mass mobilization of labor and industry. But after Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland and the Soviet Army invaded Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, and Latvia, the situation in Europe descended into an extended lull. The Phony War stretched for six months until April 1940, when Germany unleashed a blitzkrieg campaign through Scandinavia and Western Europe. The Nazi army swallowed Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium within weeks, skirting France's Maginot Line to force a surrender on June 22. Within three months, German or Soviet forces controlled all of Europe but the United Kingdom.[296]

The fall of France stunned the world. British, French, and American observers had failed to anticipate the speed, precision, and effectiveness of German land capabilities, particularly its

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[292] Stephen L. McFarland, "Preparing for What Never Came: Chemical and Biological Warfare in World War II," *Defense Analyses*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1986.

[293] On Allied strategic bombing in Europe, see Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2016, Chs. 3, 8, and 9. On the German bombing doctrine, see Alexander B. Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004, pp. 143–154.

[294] Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992, p. 1.

[295] Estimates of total worldwide deaths range from 60 million to upward of 100 million. For a breakdown of the deaths by country of origin, see "Research Starters: Worldwide Deaths in World War II," National World War II Museum, New Orleans, La., undated.

[296] For Germany's conquest of Europe, see Parker, 2002, Ch. 2.

improvements in tank armor, and even well-informed observers had expected French defenses to hold.[297] Confronted with the prospect of Nazi domination of Europe, the United States relaxed its policy of neutrality and incrementally expanded assistance to the isolated United Kingdom, which now endured bombing raids against urban and industrial centers.[298] With American materiel assistance, the British outlasted German predictions and forced the cancellation of German plans to invade.[299]

The surprise Axis invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, marked a new phase in the war.[300] Soviet forces were caught unprepared despite substantial evidence of German intentions, and the invading force of 3.5 million troops—the largest ever assembled—advanced 200 miles within a week—killing, capturing, or wounding some 600,000 Soviet soldiers.[301] But Berlin's decision to open a second front soon proved to be a disastrous miscalculation. Drawing on faulty intelligence and racialized notions of Slavic inferiority that underestimated Russian troop numbers and industrial production levels, German commanders erroneously predicted that the Soviet Union would capitulate within ten weeks.[302] Presuming that the Soviet Army would collapse quickly, German strategists also failed to account for the logistical challenges of sustaining a prolonged campaign along a vast distance and inhospitable terrain.[303] But the Soviet Army defied predictions and survived the initial onslaught. Beginning in December 1941, it launched a powerful counteroffensive that entrapped the Wehrmacht in a grueling war of attrition that would drain Germany of men, materiel, and resources just as the United States entered the war.[304] Confronted with the prospect of a prolonged war in the east, and with German

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[297] After Munich, U.S. and British planning stressed the transformative potential of the long-range bomber. The United States feared advances in German airpower would threaten the continental United States. Christensen, 1997, pp. 84–87, 91; David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001, pp. 42–45, 178–179; Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1982, Ch. 2. Recalling the experience of World War I, Soviet, British, and French planners prioritized airpower, motorization, and armor but did not adequately account for changes in German doctrine. Freedman, 2017, pp. 55–57; Shimshoni, 1990–91, p. 200.

[298] German bombing raids against British military and civilian targets killed approximately 23,000 British civilians between July and December 1940. Herring, 2008, pp. 520–530.

[299] For an illustrative moment, see Parker, 2002, pp. 60–61.

[300] On the Soviet Union's failure to anticipate the Nazi invasion, see Erickson, 1986, pp. 419–423.

[301] Betts, 1982, pp. 36–37. Germany's betrayal of its alliance with the Soviet Union also surprised U.S. observers. Reynolds, 2001, p. 134.

[302] Assuring a senior aide, Hitler forecast that "a campaign against Russia would be like a child's game in a sandbox by comparison" to the invasion of Poland. Quoted in Levy, 1983b, p. 84. See also Parker, 2002, pp. 64–67.

[303] "We have only to kick in the front door and the whole rotten edifice will come tumbling down," Hitler reportedly assured his High Command. Quoted in David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-768-RC, 2014, p. 89.

[304] For the eastern front, see Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet Effort: 1941–1945*, revised ed., New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

forces occupying most of Eastern Europe, the Nazi regime intensified its campaign of persecution against the millions of Jews who now resided within its borders. Throughout 1941 and 1942, Germany constructed killing centers across Central and Eastern Europe and began to implement the Final Solution to exterminate the Jews of Europe.[305]

The ramifications of the U.S. entry into the war in December 1941 were not readily apparent. German U-boats continued to terrorize Allied convoys through 1942, destroying as much as 8 million tons of shipping and threatening to sever the United Kingdom's lifeline. The Soviet Union had staved off collapse, but roughly 3 million Axis forces remained within its borders. Meanwhile, Italian and German armies chased the British through North Africa in an effort to seize the Suez Canal, secure Middle Eastern oil resources, and link up with Japanese forces advancing toward the Indian Ocean.[306] But Germany, having quickly seized much of Europe, again underestimated U.S. industrial capacity and its leadership's willingness to devote national resources to the war effort.[307] Since the fall of France a year earlier, the United States had doubled the size of the U.S. combat fleet and produced nearly 7,800 military aircraft. Production levels surged during 1942 and 1943, fueling the British and Soviet war efforts and contributing to a tightening in Allied coordination.[308]

The infusion of U.S. troops helped turn the tide of the campaign in North Africa, leading to the surrender of Axis armed forces there in May 1943, and contributed to the successful Allied invasion of Italy, which surrendered in September 1943 (Figure 9.1). Between 1939 and 1945, the number of U.S. military personnel grew from 334,473 to 12,209,238, with more than 73 percent of all U.S. service personnel serving overseas.[309] Though British commanders played a significant role in Allied military planning, neither the British armed forces nor the Free France forces of the government-in-exile were able to match the level of effort expended by the larger, more capable, and better equipped U.S. military.

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[305] Whether, when, and how the Germany policy of extermination was established are topics of debate, with historians in disagreement over whether it was the result of a long-held strategy or an improvised response to conditions in Eastern Europe. In either event, it is clear that the genocide intensified after 1941. Weitz, 2015, Ch. 3; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008, Ch. 3.

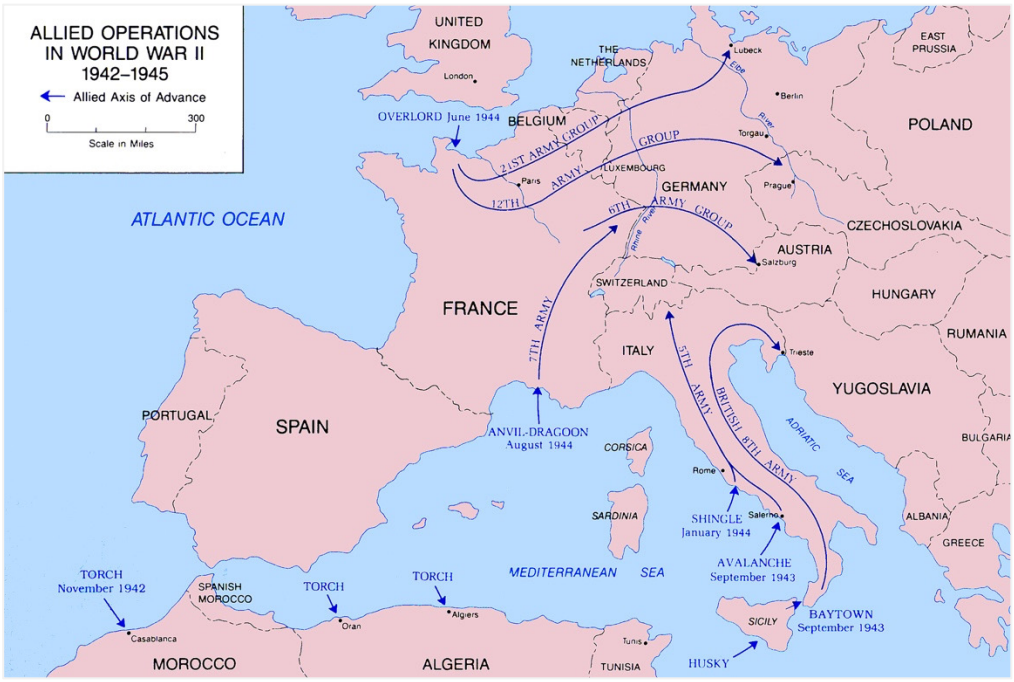
[306] Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1996, p. 15.

[307] Levy, 1983b, p. 83.

[308] Herring, 2008, pp. 541, 549–551.

[309] "Research Starters: US Military by the Numbers," National World War II Museum, New Orleans, La., undated.

Figure 9.1. Allied Operations in Europe, 1942–1945



SOURCE: U.S. Army Center of Military History, *A Brief History of the U.S. Army in World War II: The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II*, Washington, D.C., 1992, pp. 12–13.

Nonetheless, disagreements among U.S., Soviet, and British planners and concerns about U.S. troops' readiness delayed plans for an Anglo-American invasion of Europe until June 1944.[310] The D-Day landing at Normandy coincided with the Soviet Army's liberation of Soviet territory and the start of a new offensive across Eastern and Central Europe. By the end of August, the Allies had liberated all of France and had begun to advance through the Low Countries, forcing the Wehrmacht to retreat. A German counteroffensive in the Ardennes in January 1945 failed to halt the advance; in March, Soviet forces pushed through Poland into East Prussia. With its cities and industrial centers under bombardment by British and U.S. aircraft, Germany exhausted its supplies and struggled to contain mounting public unrest. Nonetheless, the Allies, determined to avoid repeating the mistakes of Versailles, pushed for an unconditional surrender of the Axis forces.[311]

On April 25, Soviet and U.S. troops met near Torgau, completing the encirclement of the remaining German armies. Five days later, and one day after German commanders in Italy signed a secret agreement to surrender their forces, Hitler committed suicide. On April 29, Allied forces captured Berlin and isolated the remaining German armies, which began to surrender on

[310] For a review of Allied planning during this period, see Herring, 2008, pp. 546–555.

[311] The decision to fight until Germany surrendered unconditionally was made at the 1943 Casablanca Conference, two months after the Anglo-American landings in North Africa.

May 2. The German Instrument of Surrender was signed on May 8, 1945. Because only German military representatives signed the agreement, the Allied powers unilaterally adopted a second surrender document, the Declaration Regarding the Defeat of Germany, on June 5, 1945.[312] The document pronounced Germany's complete defeat, noted the absence of a central authority or government, and declared that the four Allied powers would assume all authorities over German territory.

Planning for the postwar settlement had begun years earlier. In 1941, British and U.S. leaders had met secretly to draft the Atlantic Charter, which outlined Allied war aims, called for an end to wars of aggression, promoted the tenets of disarmament and collective security, and pledged to restore prewar borders in Europe. Subsequent conferences in Cairo (1943), Tehran (1943), Bretton Woods (1944), and Dumbarton Oaks (1945) had elaborated on this vision for a postwar order and established such new institutions for international cooperation as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The most important (and most controversial) of the wartime meetings occurred in February 1945 at Yalta. With an end to the fighting in sight, the United Kingdom and the United States granted Soviet terms for hegemony in Eastern Europe, territorial concessions in Europe and Asia, and punitive measures against Germany.[313]

Once Germany surrendered, however, British and U.S. delegates distanced themselves from these compromises during negotiations at Potsdam.[314] Under the resulting agreement, outlined in July 1945, Germany was demilitarized, disarmed, and divided into four zones of occupation, each overseen by one of the Allied powers and administered by the Allies' Control Council. Alsace-Lorraine and the Sudetenland were returned to France (which had rejoined the Allies after the liberation of Paris and establishment of the provisional French Republic in 1944) and newly established Czechoslovakia, respectively; Austria was separated from Germany and divided, for the duration of the next decade, into four zones of occupation. Intended as a short-term measure, Germany's partition was later formalized with the establishment of two states—the German Democratic Republic in the eastern Soviet zone and the Federal Republic of Germany to the west—after relations between the Soviet Union and the United States

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[312] Governments of Provisional Government of the French Republic, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Declaration Regarding the Defeat of Germany and the Assumption of Supreme Authority by Allied Powers, June 5, 1945.

[313] As Leffler highlights, "the desire for Soviet intervention in the Pacific War, the reality of the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe, and the hope for postwar cooperation within a United Nations circumscribed the options available to American officials" at the conference (Leffler, 2017, pp. 191, 195–204). Nonetheless, the question of whether the United Kingdom and the United States could have negotiated better terms—and the validity of Soviet territorial claims—are matters of substantial historical dispute. See John L. Snell, ed., *The Meaning of Yalta: Big Three Diplomacy and the New Balance of Power*, Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1956 ; and Athan G. Theoharis, *The Yalta Myths: An Issue in U.S. Politics, 1945–1955*, Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1970.

[314] Leffler, 2017, p. 205.

deteriorated.[315] After a century-long rise, German power was dismantled and contained.[316] Beyond Germany, the postwar settlements primarily sought to restore the borders drawn in 1919, albeit with some revisions.[317]

Regional and International Consequences

The transformative effects of World War II were unprecedented. With the exception of the United States and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union, the major global powers all exited the war substantially weaker than they had been when it began. The strategic bombing campaigns had flattened major cities and hollowed out agricultural and industrial sectors, resulting in endemic hunger and disease. The economic, social, and political devastation "threatens the very foundations, the whole fabric of world organization which we have known in our lifetime and which our fathers and grandfathers knew," Dean Acheson, U.S. assistant secretary of state, testified in July 1945.[318] The old multipolar order, centered on the major powers of Western and Central Europe, gave way to a new bipolar system that was oriented around the new superpowers; meanwhile, waves of decolonization unraveled the colonial system in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The war opened a window of opportunity for the construction of new international organizations founded on the principle of collective security, but outstanding questions about the distribution of territory, the fate of Germany, and the autonomy of Eastern European states sowed the seeds for a new rivalry between the superpowers.

The Soviet Union and the United States emerged as the new nexuses of the emerging international order. The war demonstrated the United States' preponderant military, economic, and industrial power and established the nation's status as a global superpower capable of shaping the postwar order. In addition to its atomic monopoly, the United States boasted an unrivaled strategic air force, extensive power projection capabilities, and a dominant navy. U.S. manufacturing and production levels had grown rapidly during the war; by the war's end, the United States held two-thirds of global gold reserves and three-quarters of the world's invested

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[315] On the German question and the early Cold War, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945–1963*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999.

[316] It was also, as historian Howard (1991, p. 128) noted, "the end of half a century of German wars, and of the Germany which had provoked them."

[317] Poland ("a country on wheels") was redrawn 200 miles to its west and ceded extensive territory to the Soviet Union and Germany. Italy was forced to renounce its claims to Ethiopia, Libya, and Somaliland and to transfer territory to Yugoslavia; its Dodecanese islands went to Greece; France gained Briga and Tenda; and other border revisions were also made. Albania was carved out of Italy and recognized as an independent state. Trieste and the surrounding area were incorporated into a new independent state, the Free Territory of Trieste, until 1954, when it was subentrusted to the Italian Government. Finland, Romania, and Bulgaria were restored to their 1941 borders. Hungary regained its 1938 borders.

[318] Leffler, 1992, p. 36.

capital.[319] During the war's final years and continuing through the next decade, the United States led an effort to build international organizations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and Food and Agriculture Organization to institutionalize the principles of collective security and self-determination, govern the international system, and promote peaceful conflict resolution. These organizations codified new universal rights, even if they lacked independent enforcement capabilities.[320]

The Soviet Union exited the war second only to the United States in power and capabilities, although it maintained a distinct numerical military advantage in Europe. For Soviet leaders, the war underscored the strategic imperative of controlling Eastern Europe and suppressing Germany's latent power. In the war's immediate aftermath, the Soviet Union annexed or established Soviet-style socialist republics throughout Eastern Europe in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland, as well as other, lesser territories. Despite U.S. efforts to satisfy the Soviet Union's legitimate security interests in Eastern Europe and North Asia, unresolved issues related to the postwar settlement (particularly disagreements about the fate of Germany and Eastern Europe) would compound the countries' ideological differences and drive them into a Cold War rivalry by 1948.[321]

With the exception of the United States, the cost of defeating Germany had exhausted the victors as well. For France, German occupation and the enfeeblement of its armed forces, the destruction of its industry, and the civil unrest that accompanied the war's end marked the culmination of a decline that had begun after the 1870 wars.[322] The situation in the United Kingdom, which lost one-third of its national wealth and tripled its debt during the course of war, was equally dire.[323] Dependent on U.S. aid to recover, the European powers conceded to postwar settlements that stripped imperial holdings from the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands and outlined a framework for additional decolonization in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. These territorial losses, paired with the immense damage wrought

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[319] Melvyn Leffler, "The Emergence of an American Grand Strategy, 1945–1952," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 1, *Origins*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 67.

[320] For U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the outbreak of a second world war confirmed his belief that lasting stability required the extension of the principles of liberal democratic capitalism and the construction of new international organizations to promote collective security. On the relationship between U.S. domestic and foreign policy, see Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights*, New York: Belknap Press, 2007.

[321] Leffler, 2017, pp. 210–213; Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Krushchev*, revised, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997, Chs. 2–3.

[322] William I. Hitchcock, "Reversal of Fortune: Britain, France, and the Making of Europe, 1945–1956," in Paul Kennedy, William I. Hitchcock, eds., *From War to Peace: Altered Strategic Landscapes in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 80.

[323] Hitchcock, 2000, p. 82.

by the war, accelerated declines in France and the United Kingdom, inspired nationalist movements throughout the Global South, and triggered a process of decolonization that would continue into the 1960s.[324]

After six years of war, the great powers now confronted the task of reconstructing Europe. In the aftermath of Germany's surrender, the Allied powers organized to provide relief to millions of displaced Europeans, including both survivors of the European concentration camps and refugees across the continent and North Africa.[325] Meanwhile, the violence in Central and Eastern Europe continued: The Soviet Union suppressed oppositional movements within its zone of influence; and ethnic cleansing campaigns in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania resulted in the expulsion and resettlement of large German communities.[326] In contrast to U.S. actions in the aftermath of World War I, when policymakers had sought "engagement without commitment," the United States expanded its role in Europe after World War II through government aid programs (such as the Marshall Plan), strategic institutions and alliances (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and establishment of a permanent military presence in West Germany.[327] The Soviet Union established parallel institutions, such as the Warsaw Pact, with subordinated states in Eastern Europe.

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

A flawed prediction started World War II, and the conflict continued to defy prewar estimates throughout its course (Table 9.1). On the one hand, German strategists believed that they could avoid a long war by launching a series of short campaigns to defeat and capture surrounding countries one by one. This theory of victory, however, underestimated the strength of British and French commitments to Poland and, therefore, resulted in a miscalculation of both the duration of and potential parties to the conflict. Over the remainder of the war, Germany continued to underestimate the industrial capacity, political will, and military resolve of its adversaries, as evidenced in (1) the failure of the bombing of the United Kingdom, (2) miscalculation of the time and resources required to defeat the Soviet Union, and (3) neglect of U.S. willingness to devote national resources to first bolster the United Kingdom and then intervene directly. On the other hand, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States overestimated the strength of West European defenses and underestimated the speed of the Nazi

[324] Howard, 1991, p. 134.

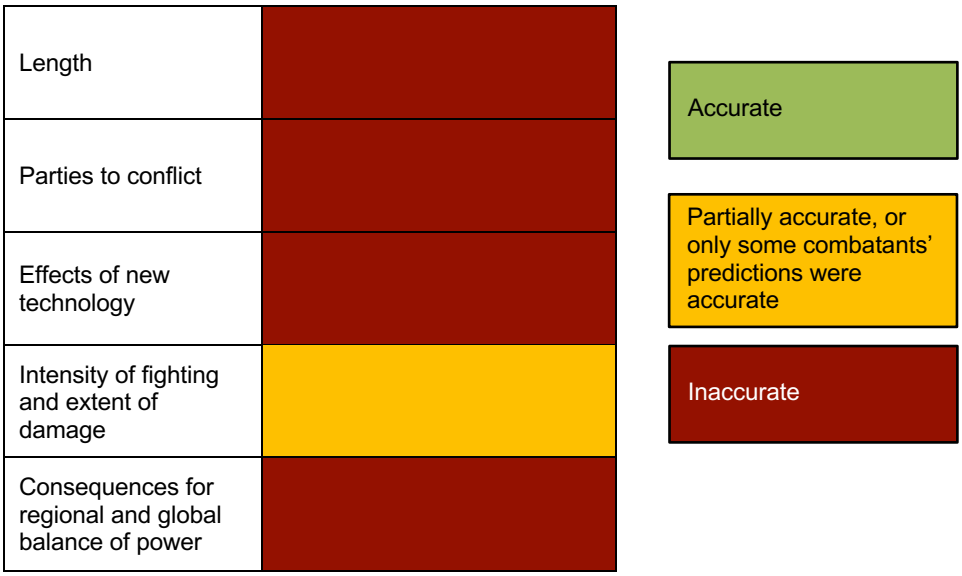
[325] William I. Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe*, New York: Free Press, 2008, Chs. 6–7.

[326] Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2014, pp. 151–180.

[327] Leffler, 2017, pp. 124, 131–132; Michael J. Hogan, "The Search for a 'Creative Peace': The United States, European Unity, and the Origins of the Marshall Plan," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Summer 1982.

advance after 1939. That a foreign power could defeat France in under six weeks was not anticipated, and the country's fall sent shockwaves across the Atlantic.

Table 9.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to World War II in Europe



Other major powers made similar and significant errors in predicting the parties to the conflict. Although historians disagree about the Soviet Union's motives for signing a pact with Germany, it is clear that the country's leaders were surprised by the 1941 German invasion. Likewise, the notion that the United States would overcome domestic opposition to renounce its stated position of neutrality and once again intervene in a European conflict—let alone that it would lead the Allied coalition—was not anticipated by any state in the late 1930s.

After the First World War, most military thinkers recognized that a war among industrialized powers would be costly, but they still did not anticipate how the fighting would stretch across the continent, leaving almost no population center untouched, or that one power would undertake a genocidal campaign to exterminate multiple minority communities. Slow to rearm, neither Britain nor France had anticipated the intensity of the fighting or the manpower required to slow the Nazi advance. But Germany also miscalculated; the overconfidence that propelled the decision to invade the Soviet Union was made possible by a simultaneous underestimation of the Soviet ability to punish the German armies and the manpower and materiel required to withstand the campaign on the eastern front.

Prewar predictions of the conflict's defining technologies were also inaccurate. The Wehrmacht's Blitzkrieg strategy offers one example of how existing military technologies were used in unforeseen ways to produce significant battlefield effects, but the conflict also contributed to the emergence of new classes of weapons, such as rudimentary ballistic missiles. Chemical weapons did not play a major role in the fighting, as some strategists had feared, but

both the Axis and Allied powers made improvements in nearly every class of weaponry, munitions, equipment, logistical support, intelligence, and command-and-control systems. Because the parties to the fighting had not anticipated a long war, they were unable to predict the variety and nature of the innovations it inspired.

Similarly, military thinkers did not anticipate the magnitude of the changes in the international system that followed the war. Of course, Nazi planners working toward domination of the European continent did not include the possibility that Germany would be stripped of its overseas holdings, temporarily occupied, and then divided for another 55 years. But the predictions of the other European powers, which had underestimated German ambitions and neglected the risk of war until the late 1930s, also proved inadequate. By 1939, international observers recognized that the United States' international economic and political influence was likely to grow in the decades ahead, but neither U.S. nor European strategists anticipated the scale of U.S. military, industrial, economic, and political domination that would follow World War II—nor that a country that historically evinced a doctrine of nonentanglement would embrace an internationalist grand strategy. Likewise, there were signs that the United Kingdom and France were overextended abroad, but few anticipated the speed of the decolonization that followed the war. Having not anticipated the collapse of the old multipolar order and the emergence of a new bipolar system dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, prewar military thinkers were unable to conceive of the notion that a new, global competition would define international politics for the remainder of the 20th century.

10. World War II in Asia, 1931–1945

World War II in Asia marked the pinnacle of Japan's six-decade ascendance. Alienated from the other major powers but determined to consolidate its dominance over East Asia, Japan exploited unrest in China and, after 1940, the defeat or preoccupation of the European colonial powers to expand its empire through South Asia and the Dutch East Indies. But Japan's rapid expansion put the country on a collision course with the United States. The result of a dramatic underestimation of U.S. resolve, Japan's decision to attack Pearl Harbor trapped the country in a cross-Pacific war of exhaustion that exploited the United States and the Allies' superior industrial, military, and technological power. The dropping of the atomic bomb and Japan's unconditional surrender soon after heralded the end of the country's imperial ambitions, the start of a process of global decolonization, and the arrival of the United States as the dominant Pacific power.

The Prewar System

By 1930, Japan was poised to enter a new phase of imperial expansion. During the prior decades, it had acquired a unified administrative state, a growing industrial economy, and a powerful professional military; it had built an empire that encompassed Taiwan, Korea, the southern portion of Sakhalin, and various Pacific islands; and it had wrung economic concessions from China.[328] By intervening on behalf of the Entente during World War I, Tokyo had secured a seat as a member of the Big Five at Versailles, a gesture that conferred long-sought international recognition of Japan's status as a major power. Yet the conference's rejection of Japan's proposed Racial Equality Clause, which would have declared the equity of all races represented within the League of Nations, deepened Japanese leaders' sense of alienation and reinforced the notion that Japan could secure its interests only by force.[329]

Economic pressures reinforced Japan's drive to expand the territory under its control. Perennial shortages in oil, rubber, alloys, and other critical resources plagued Japan's industrial base, constrained its military development, and left the country dependent on European and U.S. suppliers. During the 1920s, Japan had grown even more dependent on exports, which consumed roughly one-third of its manufactured goods. Already suffering from domestic deflation, the Japanese economy had been hard hit by the global economic slump that had begun in 1929. The

[328] Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 3–4, 27–28.

[329] On the Treaty of Versailles' reception in Asia, see Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt Against Empire in 1919," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 5, December 2006, pp. 1327–1351.

value of the yen rose, the price of Japan's exports fell, protectionist barriers to trade increased, and the problem of finding and securing a stable resource supply and foreign market became dire.[330]

Chinese and Japanese officials recognized that the latter's ambitions made conflict inevitable, and neither expected the Chinese regime to survive a military confrontation.[331] Long declining, China was further hobbled by a revolution in 1911 that overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established the Chinese Republic. Rather than promote the state's revitalization, the political transition had produced mass upheaval as warlords and revolutionaries competed for territory, popular support, and power.[332]

Whether the other major powers would intervene in a Sino-Japanese war was unclear. China did not expect that France, the United Kingdom, or the United States (which all maintained substantial economic interests within China) would intervene militarily on its behalf, but it nonetheless sought to strengthen diplomatic ties and encourage foreign cooperation.[333] Japan was determined to prevent a repetition of the 1895 Triple Intervention and sought to block the formation of an anti-Japanese coalition by exploiting inter-European rivalries even as it aligned with the imperial powers to formalize its claim to zones of interest in China. The 1922 Nine-Power Treaty to stabilize competition over China, for instance, recognized Japan's special interests in Manchuria.[334]

Japan's rise also drove the United Kingdom and the United States closer together. In an effort to prevent an arms race that might spark another war, the three powers, joined by France and Italy, in 1922 signed the Washington Naval Treaty, which imposed national limits on the construction of battleships, battlecruisers, and aircraft carriers, among other restrictions. The Japanese had secured a provision prohibiting the construction of new U.S. or British naval bases in the Pacific but were forced to accept stricter limits on the tonnage and construction of capital ships and aircraft carriers. In an additional slight, the United States, which was granted higher tonnage and construction levels, conditioned its signature of the treaty on the United Kingdom's agreement that it would end its alliance with Japan, a move that deepened Tokyo's sense of alienation and encirclement.[335]

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[330] Jeffrey Record, *Japan's Decision for War in 1941: Some Enduring Lessons*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009, pp. 1–2; Parker, 2002, pp. 73, 76.

[331] Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937–1945*, Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2014, pp. 82–83.

[332] Young, 1998, pp. 35–37.

[333] Mitter, 2014, pp. 82–84, 102–108.

[334] Young, 1998, pp. 26–27; Nicholas Tarling, "The British and the First Japanese Move into Indo-China," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 1990, p. 36; Herring, 2008, p. 455.

[335] Herring, 2008, pp. 454–455.

By the mid-1920s, British and U.S. military planners already recognized the danger of a war with Japan in the Pacific. Despite securing a favorable 5:3 ratio of capital ships at the Washington conference, the United Kingdom viewed Japan as a likely threat to its naval supremacy and a direct threat to its colonial possessions in Asia. Prohibited from constructing new fortifications, the Admiralty devised a series of war plans between 1921 and 1937 to impose a blockade to starve Japan, which was deemed vulnerable to economic warfare because of its weaker financial position, less developed industrial base, and reliance on overseas holdings. If Japanese maritime communication could be cut, the British might be able to force Tokyo to submit without destroying Japan's main fleet.[336] The plan, which emphasized surface fleet actions and discounted the impact of airpower, presumed both that the British could expect French support and that it would be able to dispatch enough ships in time to mount an offensive strategy while defending its colonies.[337]

Since Japan's attack on Russia in 1904, the United States had also braced for the possibility of a war in East Asia. In 1913, a Joint Army-Navy Board completed the foundation of a war plan, ORANGE, predicated on a defense of the Philippines—which U.S. planners assumed that Japan would strike first—that relied on then-incomplete bases at Pearl Harbor and Guam to secure the Pacific Fleet's lines of communication, relieve defenders, and support an offensive to secure control of the western Pacific. The Washington Treaty's restrictions on base construction made the task of defending U.S. interests more difficult, but war planning during the 1920s and early 1930s continued to identify Japan as the most probable adversary in the region and a naval war as the most likely outcome. Adjusting to the new constraints, planners envisioned an offensive, primarily naval, campaign "directed toward the isolation and harassment of Japan" by seizing its sea lanes and targeting her naval forces and economic infrastructure. Notably, the plans presumed that Washington would initiate such a war, concluding that Japan's economic dependence on trade with the United States ensured that Tokyo would never start the fight.[338]

War Initiation

Japan's war across Asia began in Manchuria. Known to the Chinese as the Three Eastern Provinces, the northeastern region offered new commercial opportunities that could strengthen the Japanese economy and fuel its military expansion. Japan had maintained a sizable military presence within the Kwantung Leased Territory since 1905, when the Treaty of Portsmouth had granted Japan's request to enforce an informal buffer zone with Russia and deter or counter Russian efforts to revise the settlement. China's political unrest during the 1910s and 1920s,

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[336] Christopher Bell, "The 'Singapore Strategy' and the Deterrence of Japan: Winston Churchill, the Admiralty and the Dispatch of Force Z," *English Historical Review*, Vol. 116, No. 467, June 2001, pp. 608–609.

[337] Bell, 2001, pp. 607–610.

[338] Louis Morton, "War Plan Orange: Evolution of a Strategy," *World Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, January 1959, pp. 222–223, 227–228, 233–234.

however, introduced new opportunities and the Japanese Kwantung Army began to conspire with local warlords to wrest Manchuria and neighboring Mongolia from China. During the 1920s, this effort expanded to include funding, weapons, military advice, and other support to their co-conspirators. Meanwhile, the Japanese population within the region ballooned, from 16,612 civilians in 1906 to 233,749 in 1930.[339]

The onset of the global economic depression after 1929 made the task of safeguarding Japanese investments in Manchuria more urgent. The United States' 1930 Smoot-Hawley tariff intensified Tokyo's fears of encirclement by hostile Western powers and made control of Manchuria, one of the few foreign markets still open to Japan, vital to the preservation of the Japanese regime.[340] At the same time, China's economic and political crisis had fueled a nationalist movement to revoke the Kwantung leasehold, among other anti-imperial measures. A series of armed skirmishes in 1931 heightened tensions and convinced Japanese officials in Kwantung that the situation had reached a tipping point.[341]

On September 18, 1931, a cadre of Kwantung Army officers manufactured a crisis by staging an explosion on some train tracks near a Chinese military base. Using the bombing as a pretext, the Japanese soldiers opened fire on the Chinese garrison. The Japanese government in Tokyo had not sanctioned the operation, but it now refused to restrain its forces. In May 1932, the Japanese, with assistance from Chinese collaborators, declared the creation of an independent state called Manchukuo that was bound to Japan by a mutual defense treaty, which granted the Kwantung Army full responsibility of local security. Despite the pretense of autonomy, Manchukuo was governed as a Japanese colony.[342]

The suddenness of the crisis in Manchuria stunned the international community. Although neither side formally declared war, the League of Nations debated evoking the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact outlawing war, but the global depression sapped any desire that the major powers might have once had to enforce the toothless treaty. Despite substantial economic interests, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States chose not to intervene, agreeing that it was not worth fighting a conflict over China. In a symbolic gesture, U.S. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson issued a statement, later known as the Stimson Doctrine, that the United States would not recognize a Sino-Japanese treaty or agreement that violated U.S. rights or previous agreements.[343] In the Soviet Union, where officials viewed Japan as "the darkest cloud on the international horizon," the crisis was interpreted as further evidence that Germany and Japan

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[339] Young, 1998, pp. 24–27, 30–31, 33.

[340] David M. Gordon, "The China-Japan War, 1931–1945," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 70, No. 1, January 2006, pp. 140–141.

[341] Young, 1998, pp. 37–40.

[342] Young, 1998, p. 40.

[343] Herring, 2008, p. 489.

were conspiring to encircle the Soviet Union.[344] Worried about the prospect of war on two fronts, Soviet officials wanted to avoid a fight in the Far East until the Soviet Army had regained strength.[345]

The Sino-Japanese War escalated again on July 7, 1937, when an incident on the Marco Polo Bridge in Beijing sparked a full-scale war.[346] The fighting spread south, as Japanese forces seized Shanghai (Nanjing) and executed a six-week reign of terror that involved rampant looting, mass rape, and the execution or enslavement of prisoners of war and civilians, including women and children.[347] Emboldened, Japanese troops clashed with the Soviet Army in a series of bloody frontier battles—with the heaviest fighting at Changkufeng (Lake Khasan) along the Russo-Manchurian border and Nomonhan, a village straddling the Mongolian-Manchurian border—that confirmed the Soviet Army's superiority and spurred the signature of a Soviet-Japanese nonaggression pact in 1941.[348] Although Japan sought to assure the alarmed British that it would uphold the status quo in South and Southeast Asia, it continued to search for a favorable moment to challenge European colonial possessions across the region.[349]

The outbreak of war in Europe a year later presented the ideal moment: Two of the major colonial powers in the region, France and the Netherlands, had been overrun and a third, the United Kingdom, was isolated without a clear path to survival. Although Japanese officials evinced some concern that the United States might intervene to defend the British, they ultimately chose, in the words of Army Minister Shunroko Hata, to "seize this golden opportunity! Don't let anything stand in [Japan's] way."[350] In August 1940, Tokyo declared the creation of a "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" encompassing Southeast Asia, China, Manchuria, and Korea. A month later, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, formally enshrining its military alliance with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Japanese strategists hoped that the alliance would deter British or U.S. interference and did not seriously plan for joint action with

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[344] Erickson, 1986, p. 385.

[345] Erickson, 1986, p. 384.

[346] Who fired first remains a matter of debate. The Chinese general headquarters did not declare a mass mobilization until August 15, 1937, and did not formally declare war until August 1941; Japan never issued a similar declaration, instead referencing the conflict as an "incident" with China. David A. Graff and Robin Higham, *A Military History of China*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2012, p. 213; Hata, 1990, pp. 303–305.

[347] Mitter, 2014, pp. 134–44.

[348] Erickson, 1986, p. 406; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Balancing Risks: Great Power Intervention in the Periphery*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004, pp. 115–117. Although the Russo-Japanese border skirmishes caused significant casualties, historians tend to describe the clashes as a border crisis rather than a full-scale conflict. Neither Tokyo nor Moscow declared war, instead referencing the military confrontations as "incidents" or "controversies" at the time. The sporadic fighting was contained before it could escalate into an open war. Martin Blumenson, "The Soviet Power Play at Changkufeng," *World Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 2, January 1960; Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Battle of Lake Khasan Reconsidered," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2016.

[349] Tarling, 1990, pp. 36–37.

[350] Scott D. Sagan, "The Origins of the Pacific War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars), Spring 1988, pp. 896–897.

the Germans. The maneuver was interpreted in London and Washington, however, as evidence that the wars in Europe and Asia were linked, elevating the perceived threat of further Japanese expansion.[351]

Japan's maneuvers concealed continued uncertainty about how European and U.S. leaders would respond to its expansion into Southeast Asia. Japanese Army staff argued that Japan could advance its regional goals without provoking a U.S. intervention by executing an immediate surprise strike in the Far East, before England collapsed. The Imperial Navy, however, cautioned that a war likely could not be limited to the European powers alone; to the contrary, a May 1940 war game suggested that further Japanese expansion risked sparking a prolonged conflict with the United States that would exhaust the Navy's oil reserves and end in the country's defeat. The result was an uncomfortable compromise to begin planning for both an attack against European possessions and a war with the United States while simultaneously pursuing diplomatic options to reduce the likelihood of the latter.[352]

Despite the warning signs, Tokyo continued its push through Asia. In September 1940, Tokyo used the threat of war to coerce the French colonial administration in Indochina to allow the stationing of Imperial Army troops in the northern territories and the use of airfields for operations in China.[353] Fearing an imminent attack on Singapore, the British urged the United States to make clear that it would respond forcefully to further Japanese aggression. But Washington, constrained by popular and congressional isolationist sentiments, delayed responding until the spring of 1941. Hoping to deter further Japanese aggression and avoid war, the United States cut off negotiations, increased its defenses in the Philippines, dispatched a lend-lease mission to China, and imposed new economic sanctions.[354] In June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union—surprising Tokyo, which had just signed a neutrality pact in order to concentrate its attention on Southeast Asia. After a debate over whether to direct forces to invade Siberia, Japan chose instead to advance southward into Indochina in July.[355]

Japan's invasion of China, alliance with Germany, and occupation of northern Indochina raised U.S. hackles, but it was the southward move (which prefigured the conquest of Malaya, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies) that compelled the United States to act. Japanese

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[351] Jansen, 2000, pp. 625–627, 635–636; Hata, 1990, p. 309; Sagan, 1988, p. 900.

[352] Sagan, 1988, pp. 896–898.

[353] Unlike other French colonial administrations, which followed Charles de Gaulle's government in exile, Indochina was under Vichy control.

[354] Herring, 2008, p. 534; Sagan, 1988, pp. 901–903; Record, 2009, pp. 15–16. In July 1940, the United States banned Japanese acquisition of high-octane aviation gasoline, some grades of steel and iron, industrial lubricants, and other items deemed vital to national defense. In September, the ban was expanded to all scrap iron exports, forcing Japan, which was dependent on imported U.S. scrap, to draw down its stockpile. By the end of January 1941, iron ore, steel, steel products, copper, brass, bronze, zinc, nickel, and potash—almost all the components with which the United States supplied Japanese industrial producers—were embargoed.

[355] Hata, 1990, p. 310; Sagan, 1988, p. 903.

domination of Southeast Asia would seal the British defeat and allow two authoritarian allies to control a resource-rich belt spanning North Africa and Eurasia, and stretching to the Pacific.[356] Over the next several months, the United States retaliated by announcing an embargo on petroleum, redeploying the U.S. Fleet to Pearl Harbor, and dispatching B-17 long-range bombers to the Philippines. These measures were intended to communicate U.S. resolve and deter further Japanese advances, but the prospect that Tokyo might attempt to attack U.S. territory directly was dismissed as improbable. Underestimating Japanese naval and air power, particularly the range of Japan's Zero fighter aircraft and development of a shallow water torpedo,[357] "Americans assured one another," historian Gordon W. Prange later observed, "that Japan was virtually bankrupt, short of raw materials, and hopelessly bogged down in China."[358] While the United States' superior industrial base and resource advantages could support a prolonged war, Japan's "wheel-barrow economy would shatter like a teacup hurled against a brick wall."[359]

Preferring to concentrate its resources on defending the United Kingdom against Germany, the United States hoped to contain Japan and avoid a war in the Pacific for as long as possible. Yet Japan, which had been deprived of 80 percent of its oil requirements, now confronted the choice of either submitting to U.S. demands (thereby giving up its ambitions of dominance in Asia and accepting continued economic dependency) or risking a war in the hope that it could inflict such heavy costs to the United States that the American people would force Washington to accept a settlement ceding Japanese dominance of East Asia.[360] Japanese leaders were not confident in the likelihood of such an outcome—many recognized that the United States might instead try to prolong the war to better apply its industrial advantages—but they agreed that war was now inevitable and the situation was intolerable.[361] Just as racialized notions of Asian

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[356] Record, 2009, pp. vii–viii.

[357] Robert Jervis, "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, p. 28.

[358] Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*, revised ed., New York: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 35.

[359] Prange, 1991, p. 35. Also see Reynolds, 2001, pp. 88–89; and Betts, 1982, pp. 42–50.

[360] This logic was evident during a 1941 Imperial Conference, at which Japanese participants concluded: "Although America's total defeat is judged utterly impossible, it is not inconceivable that a shift in American public opinion due to our victories in Southeast Asia or to England's surrender might bring the war to an end" (quoted in Dan Reiter, *How Wars End*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 188). On Japanese strategy and underlying assumptions, see Record, 2009, p. 8; and Jervis, 1985, p. 26.

[361] Eri Hotta, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013, pp. 11–19; Sagan, 1988, p. 895; Record, 2009, pp. 23–25. The effects of the U.S. embargo were already felt by December 1941, and Japanese analysts projected that their naval tonnage would drop from 70 percent of total U.S. tonnage to 65 percent in 1942, 50 percent in 1943, and 30 percent by 1944.

inferiority had reinforced U.S. blinders, Japanese conceptions of Americans as weak, irresolute, and spiritually corrupt contributed to Tokyo's decision to gamble on a preemptive strike.[362]

On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. The operation was intended to destroy the U.S. fleet in advance of a Japanese push to conquer the oil-rich Dutch East Indies and sweep across Malaya, Singapore, and the Philippines.[363] Yet the attack, which killed nearly 2,500 Americans, neither encouraged U.S. concessions nor achieved Japan's strategic aims. Instead, the United States—backed by allied Canada, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—declared war on Japan. Soon after, Italy and Germany declared war on the United States, formally linking the European and Asian theaters.[364]

Course of the War

Although China, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States had anticipated the likelihood that the war, once internationalized, would be long, the intensity of the fighting and the scale of the human and material losses exceeded all combatants' expectations. With the exception of the underequipped and unmodernized Chinese forces, the major combatants marshaled advances in airpower, naval technologies, and firepower to wage a bloody war of attrition that stretched from Hawaii to the Indian Ocean and featured battles in Australia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, and Indonesia in addition to those on Japanese, Chinese, and Korean territory. The war spurred the innovation of new doctrine for the coordination of air, ground, and naval operations, and it showcased the development of new amphibious landing craft, aerial torpedoes, long-range bombers, and fighter aircraft.[365] It also triggered the use of weapons of mass destruction, such as Japanese use of biological and chemical weapons and U.S. use of the atomic bomb. Such atrocities as the pillaging of Nanjing in December 1937, the Bataan Death March that began in February 1942, and the sexual enslavement of thousands of Korean women are only the best-known examples of a sweeping pattern of violence that extended the suffering far beyond the battlefield and involved the ruthless killing of noncombatants, systematic abuse of prisoners of war, forced sexual and manual labor, and use of chemical and biological weapons.[366] In China alone, an estimated 20

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[362] Record, 2009, p. viii. Japanese descriptions of the United States often portrayed the country as a bellicose but ultimately cowardly bully, an interpretation that led them to conclude that "defiance and assertiveness were the most valued currencies in dealing with the United States" (Hotta, 2013, p. 73).

[363] Record, 2009, pp. vii–viii.

[364] Parker, 2002, pp. 83–85.

[365] Jansen, 2000, pp. 662–663.

[366] Walter E. Grunden, "No Retaliation in Kind: Japanese Chemical Warfare Policy in World War II," in Bretislav Friedrich, Dieter Hoffmann, Jürgen Renn, Florian Schmaltz, and Martin Wolf, eds., *One Hundred Years of Chemical Warfare: Research, Deployment, Consequences*, Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2017, pp. 259–271.

million civilians died and another 100 million (almost a quarter of the Chinese population at the time) became refugees during the war.[367]

Such an outcome was not conceivable during the first limited phase of the war. Between 1931 and 1933, Japan extended its military control over Manchuria westward to the Amur River, northward to the Siberian border with the Soviet Union, and southward to the Great Wall of China. There, it established a colonial administration that planned to attract 5 million Japanese farmers and create a new generation of "continental Japanese" that would establish lasting domination of the region. The Chinese nationalist government, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, had little recourse to stop the Japanese expansion; struggling to control regional warlords and facing growing internal pressure from communist opposition forces, China sought, at first, to buy time to build strength and secure foreign support.[368] But the success of its Manchuria campaign encouraged Japan to expand its aims. Although the Chinese forces outnumbered the invaders 4:1, superior Japanese equipment, firepower, mobility, leadership, and training allowed Japan to push south and west, seizing Shanghai (December 1937), Hankow (October 1938), and Canton (October 1938) with little resistance.[369] Ultimately, only Chinese forces' "belated embrace of guerrilla warfare" denied Tokyo the swift victory it sought.[370]

Japan had conquered most of northern and central China, all its major ports, and several surrounding islands, by the time the war expanded to the Pacific in the winter of 1941–1942. Initially, Tokyo's plan to sweep eastward before the United States could recover appeared feasible. As the United Kingdom teetered on the brink of collapse and the United States scrambled to mobilize for a two-theater war, Japanese forces conquered Malay and then Singapore in February 1942 in what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill described as the "largest capitulation" in British military history.[371] By March, Japanese forces controlled Java, Borneo, and Rangoon and had landed on New Guinea. The Philippines surrendered on May 6 after weeks of intense fighting, allowing the Japanese to claim control of thousands of miles of the Pacific stretching from the Bay of Bengal to the Micronesian atoll of Wake Island.[372]

But as the war expanded from a limited conflict with China to a total global war, Japan's technological and material disadvantages became decisive factors. Japan could not reach the United States and therefore could not interrupt its industrial production, which outpaced Japan in every category of weapons, armaments, and other materiel. Armed with long-range bombers, aircraft carriers, and the world's most sophisticated industrial and supply chain, the United States

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[367] Graff and Higham, 2012, p. 224.

[368] Graff and Higham, 2012, pp. 212–213.

[369] Graff and Higham, 2012, p. 218.

[370] Hata, 1990, p. 306; Alvin D. Coox, "The Pacific War," in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 318.

[371] Fred Glueckstein, "Churchill and the Fall of Singapore," *Finest Hour*, Vol. 169, Summer 2015.

[372] Herring, 2008, p. 539.

could bring the war to the Japanese home islands and, in the process, starve the country of the resources it needed to continue fighting.[373]

The turning point arrived in June 1942, when the U.S. Navy defeated the Japanese in the Battle of Midway. Japan hoped to lure and destroy the surviving U.S. carriers, then establish a defensive perimeter before pushing onward to Hawaii. Instead, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, supported by Allied elements, ambushed the Imperial Navy, sinking all four of its available carriers. Having seized the initiative, Allied forces pushed west. In August 1942, the Allies launched their first amphibious landing at Guadalcanal, capturing the island only after a grueling six-month fight that involved continual air combat, three major land battles, and seven battles at sea. Having blunted Japanese efforts to disrupt supply routes to Australia and New Zealand, Allied forces next executed a two-pronged island-hopping strategy, pressing the Japanese back from the southwest and central Pacific simultaneously. For the next two years, the United States and its allies used the Pacific's vast distances to their advantage, isolating Japanese strongholds in a bloody war of attrition.[374] Japan would not win a single major engagement during this period but fought on nevertheless, hoping to raise the cost of war as a way to compel the United States to abandon its demand for unconditional surrender.[375]

The war in the Pacific forced Japan to divert resources away from China, where the fighting continued to demonstrate the "great disparity in combat power" between the modernized Japanese forces and the irregular Chinese armies. While the Japanese demonstrated a "mastery of strategic coordination, tactical maneuver, and combined arms warfare . . . the Chinese performance varied from exemplary to deplorable," as one historian later summarized.[376] Having survived the 1937–1941 assault, a coalition of anti-Japanese Chinese forces enacted a strategy to bleed the Japanese forces and deny their ability to hold and control territory. Yet divisions between (and within) the Nationalist and Communist armies prevented them from creating the unified front needed to evict the Japanese, and the war ground into a bloody stalemate.[377]

Two factors allowed the Chinese to stave off defeat. The first, and perhaps most important, was Allied entry into the Asian war. British and U.S. forces in October 1940 reopened the Burma road, China's primary supply route to Rangoon, while funneling financial, materiel, and limited air power support to the Chinese forces. Beginning in 1944, British and U.S. forces operating from the China-Burma-India theater expanded supply lines and began bombing Japanese military

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[373] Record, 2009, p. 1; Hata, 1990, p. 310.

[374] "The Pacific Strategy, 1941–1944," National World War II Museum, New Orleans, La., undated.

[375] Reiter, 2009, pp. 186–187.

[376] Marvin Williamson, "The Military Dimension, 1937–1941," in James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, eds., *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937–1945*, Armonk, N.Y., and London: Sharpe, 1991, pp. 141, 151.

[377] Graff and Higham, 2012, pp. 216, 221–222.

bases, industrial centers, and transportation lines across northern China and Taiwan. With few reserves, the battered Japanese forces were forced on the defensive.[378]

The Chinese forces also benefited from their opponent's failure to prepare for a long war against determined enemies on the continent and across the Pacific. As historian Gordon has noted, Japan had "launched the war against China . . . as a leap in the dark, without any plan to bring these conflicts to an end. Combined with a disregard for military intelligence or logistics, the belief that 'something will turn up' to solve military problems helped doom Japan's efforts from the start."[379] A confluence of ideological factors (including a racialized contempt for the Chinese and a confidence in the inevitability of Japanese dominance), historical experience (particularly such decisive battles as Mukden and Tsushima), and wishful thinking (planners recognized that Japan's underdeveloped industrial base and vulnerable economic infrastructure could not support a long war) encouraged the Japanese leadership to plan for a quick battle that relied on surprise and decisive force.[380] Having failed to anticipate the willingness of the Chinese or other indigenous forces in Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and elsewhere to continue fighting, Japan found itself overstretched in South Asia at the same moment that its supply lines in the Pacific were under the greatest threat.

By autumn 1944, the Allies controlled the southwest Pacific, had destroyed many of Japan's airfields and other vital infrastructure, and were progressing toward the Japanese home islands. In October, U.S. forces launched an invasion to recapture the Philippines in advance of a direct attack on the Japanese home islands. The offensive faced fierce resistance, including the use of Kamikaze counterattacks and urban guerrilla warfare in Manila, but the final Japanese defenses fell in July 1945. In the interim, 285,000 men invaded Okinawa (at that time an island of 500,000) in the last major battle of the war while the bombardment of major Japanese cities intensified. Allied aircraft dropped 1,665 tons of incendiary bombs during a series of nighttime raids on Tokyo, killing an estimated 90,000–100,000 residents in one of the most devastating aerial attacks in history.[381] The intensity of the final months of fighting, paired with reports of Japanese soldiers committing suicide rather than surrendering, persuaded Allied planners that the U.S. Navy's preferred strategy of imposing a total blockade, enforced by air and sea bombardment, would be insufficient.[382]

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[378] Graff and Higham, 2012, pp. 216, 223–224.

[379] Gordon, 2006, pp. 141–142.

[380] Hata, 1990, p. 306; Coox, 1990, p. 318.

[381] Jansen, 2000, p. 651; Will Hillcox, "Marching to Victory: The Tokyo Fire Raids," Truman Library Institute, March 9 2020; Thomas R. Searle, "'It Made a Lot of Sense to Kill Skilled Workers': The Firebombing of Tokyo in March 1945," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 66, No. 1, January 2002.

[382] Barton J. Bernstein, "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1, January–February 1995.

The effort to force a Japanese surrender accelerated after Germany's surrender in May 1945. On July 26, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States called for Japan to surrender unconditionally or face "prompt and utter destruction."[383] On August 6, the United States dropped the first of two atomic bombs on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, a move that U.S. officials justified as means to end the war quickly and avoid the estimated half-million to 1 million U.S. casualties that analysts predicted would be suffered during an invasion of the Japanese home islands.[384] On August 8, the Soviet Union, which until now largely had avoided involvement in East Asia, preferring to concentrate its resources against Germany, declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. The next day, the United States detonated a second atomic weapon over Nagasaki. The dual shocks of the Soviet assault and the devastation of the atomic bombs had their intended effect. Even as some military leaders, determined to continue fighting, plotted a coup, Japanese Emperor Hirohito agreed to an unconditional surrender on August 14, 1945. The instrument of surrender was signed on the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2.[385]

The terms of the postwar settlement had been set at the Potsdam Conference of July 1945. The Allies occupied Japan and its overseas holdings, dismantled the Meiji state, demobilized and disarmed the Japanese military, and forced the emperor's demotion. Japan ceded all of its former territorial possessions in Asia (except for its four home islands) while the United States reclaimed Guam and the Philippines and established a permanent military presence in Okinawa, Japan. Indochina was returned to France; Singapore, Malaya, and Burma were returned to the United Kingdom. Korea, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, was liberated from Japanese rule and divided into Soviet and U.S. zones of occupation. Finally, the Soviet Union regained territories lost during the Russo-Japanese War, notably the southern Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands, and it occupied Manchuria, where it would remain until May 1946.[386] In 1951, the Treaty of San Francisco formally reestablished peaceful relations between Japan and most of the Allied powers, although the Soviet Union refused to send a delegation to the conference and the People's Republic of China was not invited to attend. The agreement also allowed for the Allied confiscation of all assets owned by Japanese organizations, firms, or private citizens in colonized or occupied countries, exempting China; returned Manchuria and Inner Mongolia to China; and ordered Japan to "pay reparations to the Allied powers for the

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[383] Governments of China, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender, Potsdam, Germany, July 26, 1945. On the decision to demand unconditional surrender and Allied debates at Potsdam, see Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2009, pp. 155–158.

[384] For a summary of the U.S. decision, and the arising controversy, see J. Samuel Walker, "Recent Literature on Truman's Atomic Bomb Decision: A Search for Middle Ground," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, No. 2, April 2005.

[385] Reiter, 2009, pp. 196–198; Herring, 2008, p. 592.

[386] Jansen, 2000, pp. 666–674; Jeff Mankoff, *The Legacy of the Soviet Offensives of August 1945*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 13, 2015.

damage and suffering caused by it during the war," with the terms to be negotiated over follow-on conferences.[387]

Regional and International Consequences

The war unraveled the regional order in East Asia. Occupied and disarmed, Japan was forced to give up its quest for international influence, along with its colonies and military presence in Korea, China, Taiwan, and elsewhere. A parallel reduction in British, French, and Dutch imperial influence accelerated the process of global decolonization that had begun during World War I. As in Europe, the United States emerged as the dominant power in the region, equipped and eager to play a more active role in regional affairs. In the years following the war, U.S. efforts to build a network of regional alliances, bases, and trade and political relationships would face opposition from communist forces in China, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere.

By the time Japan surrendered, the very framework of the old colonial system was in tatters. The war had drained the coffers of the major European colonial powers, who now lacked the military and financial reserves necessary to suppress the resurgent nationalist movements that swept across Asia. The United Kingdom insisted, over Chinese objections and despite U.S. resistance, on reoccupying Hong Kong and Singapore, but the war accelerated the process of Indian independence and, with it, the ongoing decline of British power.[388] The United States granted the Philippines independence in July 1946, although it retained some economic and military privileges, and pressured the Dutch to recognize Indonesian independence in 1949.[389] France held on to Indochina for another decade, until forced after a long war to in 1954 accept the creation of two independent states in Vietnam.[390]

Occupied, bankrupt, and disarmed, Japan was forced to abandon its quest for international status in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. U.S. aspirations to demilitarize and democratize Japan were enshrined in a new, U.S.-drafted constitution that proclaimed the state's commitment to "an international peace based on justice and order" and "forever renounce[d] war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes . . . land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.

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[387] Governments of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Syria, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam and Japan, Treaty of Peace with Japan (with two declarations), San Francisco, September 8, 1951.

[388] Aron Shai, "Britain, China and the End of Empire," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 2, April 1980, pp. 288, 291; Hasegawa, 2009, p. 239.

[389] Herring, 2008, p. 634.

[390] Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History,* New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008, Chs. 1–2.

The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."[391] All Japanese overseas forces and diplomats were recalled to the home islands, cutting the country's remaining ties abroad.[392] But as U.S. relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated, Nationalist China collapsed, and the economic revival of Europe lagged behind predictions, the United States began to reconsider its punitive approach to Japan. Between 1947 and 1950, U.S. planners encouraged Japan's economic reconstruction by reviving indigenous industry; promoting foreign trade with continental Asia, Europe, and the Americas; and elevating Japan's status as a second-rank power in the region. To minimize the risk of future aggression while ensuring it would benefit from Japan's restoration, the United States bound Japan to the existing system and formalized a bilateral alliance through the 1951 U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, which was signed alongside the Treaty of San Francisco ending the occupation.[393]

The Chinese Republic would not be resurrected. The United States pledged at the Cairo conference to restore all territories that Japan had seized, but it agreed two years later to grant Soviet demands for a naval base at Port Arthur, the internationalization of Dairen, and protections for Soviet interests in South Manchuria and outer Mongolia in exchange for its entry into the Pacific war.[394] This decision was made without Chinese consent, but there was also no clear government to oppose it. Internecine fighting between communist and nationalist factions in China (which had begun long before the war) worsened in the aftermath of Japan's defeat, as Chiang's nominal government sheltered in the southwest and Mao Zedong's forces gained strength in the north. The United States attempted to ward off a civil war (and contain Soviet influence in the country) by mediating the creation of a coalition government, but the effort failed to restore stability.[395] The Soviet Union's withdrawal from Manchuria in May 1946 provoked armed clashes that escalated into another war. The civil war lasted until 1949, ending with the establishment of the People's Republic of China on the mainland and the Republic of China in Taiwan.[396]

The defeat of Japan and the erosion of British, French, and Dutch influence paved the way for the United States' rise as the dominant Pacific power. Determined to safeguard its interests in the region, prevent the resurgence of another aggressive power, and contain the spread of Soviet or communist influence in the region, the United States assumed a direct role in postwar reconstruction and began to play a more assertive role in the region. In the years after the war,

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[391] Excerpted in Jansen, 2000, p. 671.

[392] Jansen, 2000, p. 674.

[393] Bruce Cumings, "Japan's Position in the World System," in Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2015, pp. 35–53.

[394] Shai, 1980, p. 291.

[395] Herring, 2008, pp. 630–633.

[396] For a history of the Chinese civil war, see Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950,* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003.

the United States erected the framework for a lasting presence, including (1) negotiation of new or revised bilateral alliances with the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, the independent Philippines, and Japan and (2) an attending expansion in its regional network of bases, airfields, and other critical military infrastructure. The United States' dominant position in the region enabled it to strengthen its economic and political influence there as well, stimulating an increase in trans-Pacific trade and encouraging the construction of liberal market economies in Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and elsewhere.[397]

Power had not shifted to the United States alone, however. The Soviet Union's late entry in the Pacific had paid off, and it emerged from the war as the second major power in the region. To strengthen its position and counterbalance the United States, Moscow pursued close relations with communist leaders across the region, contributing to the consolidation of communist regimes in China, North Korea, and North Vietnam. The tension between the United States and the Soviet Union would come to a head with the Korean War that erupted in 1953, which we explore in the next chapter.[398]

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

Like the war in Europe, the course of the conflict in Asia was informed by a series of flawed predictions made by each of the major powers involved (Table 10.1). The Japanese military strategy, for instance, was premised on an expectation that the country could seize and pacify territory quickly. This assumption appeared valid for the first phase of the war, but Japan failed to anticipate the intensity of the local opposition to occupation or the possibility that Chinese, Vietnamese, Malaysian, and other national movements would organize insurgencies that would hinder its colonial expansion and provide the Allied powers with inroads to form anti-Japanese alliances. Similar to inaccurate predictions about state parties to a conflict, this incorrect forecast of civilian reactions contributed to an underestimation of the length and costs of conflict.

Japan and China accurately predicted that the European powers would not intervene to stop Japan's initial invasion, but Japanese planners' understanding of how the United States would react to events in Asia was unsound. Focused on their regional ambitions, Japanese strategists neglected the possibility that Washington would perceive its actions as part of a global strategy with Germany to control the world's resource-rich territories and therefore underestimated the

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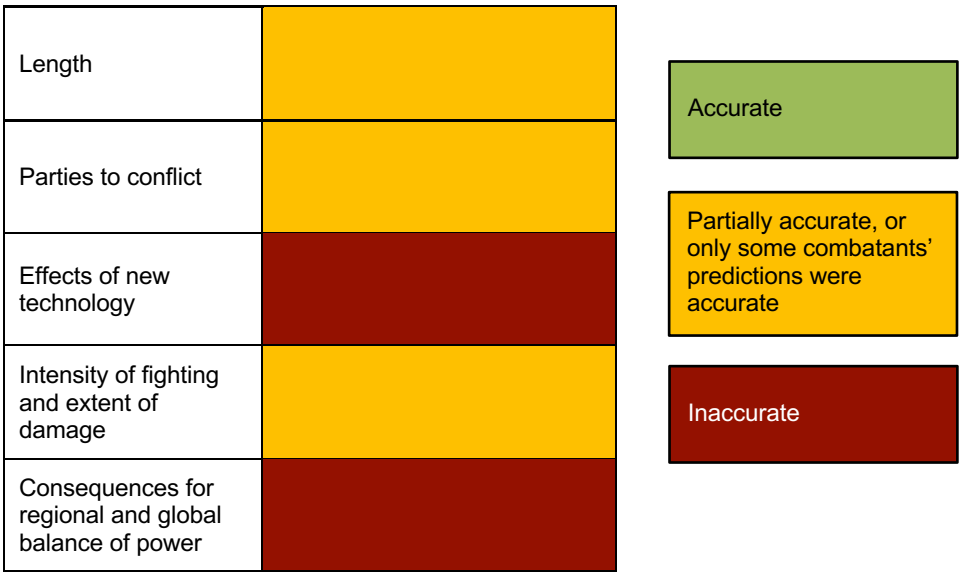
[397] Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Winter, 2009–2010; John A. Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America's Global Role*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015, p. 260; Andrew Preston, "America's Pacific Power in a Global Age," in N. A. M. Rodger and Christian Buchet, eds., *The Sea in History—The Modern World*, Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer Press, 2017, pp. 620–625; Leffler, 2017, pp. 125–127.

[398] For the origins of the Cold War in Asia, see Russell D. Buhite, *Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945–1954*, Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981; Michael Schaller, "Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 2, September 1982.

pressure that its actions put on the United States. This mistake contributed to Japan's underestimation of the United States' political will and, therefore, to its decision to gamble that U.S. leaders would, after an initial period of fierce fighting, accept a negotiated resolution that ceded domination of East Asia rather than continue a costly cross-Pacific campaign.

Table 10.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to World War II in Asia



Prewar U.S. forecasts of a future war in East Asia were more accurate than those of their Japanese counterparts. U.S. planners did not predict the location of Japan's initial attack, but they did anticipate that the war would be determined at sea and characterized by a slow campaign of cross-Pacific island hopping. Although some revisions were required, U.S. strategists were able to draw on preexisting war plans when mobilizing a response to the Pearl Harbor attack.

But neither Japan nor United States foresaw the destruction caused by the dropping of two atomic bombs over Japan. The invention and use of nuclear weapons invalidated Japanese and U.S. predictions of the role of technology in shaping the course of the conflict (particularly how the war would end) and strained prewar theories of the extent of the damage caused by the fighting.

Similarly, the war caused seismic changes in the regional balance of power that neither power's prewar forecasts accurately captured. Disarmed, occupied, and stripped of its colonial possessions, Japan did not achieve the sprawling empire that its planners had envisioned in the early 1930s. That China both survived the war and, after a bloody civil war, would once again become a regional power in its own right also was not foreseen by either Japanese or Chinese thinkers. Similarly, none of the powers anticipated that the United States would maintain a permanent military presence in Asia, a policy that fundamentally altered the military balance in the region.

11. Korean War, 1950–1953

The first major conflict of the Cold War era, the Korean War began in June 1950 when the North Korean People's Army crossed the 38th parallel to invade the south. Defying North Korean and Soviet leaders' predictions, the United States intervened to defend the noncommunist government in Seoul and, leading a United Nations force, chased the communist forces north. Yet the U.S. decision to cross the Yalu River spurred Chinese entry into the war, which soon ground into a stalemate. In 1953, the combatants agreed to an armistice that suspended open hostilities, restored the prewar division, and carved out a demilitarized zone along the 38th parallel. The effects of the war, which included a substantial human toll and catastrophic damage to both Koreas, reverberated far beyond the peninsula: Direct confrontations between Chinese and U.S. forces, along with covert battles between U.S. and Soviet forces, hardened the superpower rivalry and contributed to the Cold War's internationalization.

The Prewar System and Common Assumptions

The seeds of the Korean War were planted during the waning months of World War II, when Allied military planners convened at the Potsdam Conference agreed to temporarily divide the Korean Peninsula along the 38th parallel (Figure 11.1). The arrangement was intended to demarcate U.S. and Soviet zones of occupation during a transitional period of reconstruction and nation-building, but the partition hardened as tensions between the superpowers mounted. After United Nations–brokered unification negotiations collapsed in 1947, Washington and Moscow supported the establishment of rival governments and withdrew their occupation forces. In 1948, two independent states were established: the U.S.-supported Republic of Korea in the south and the Soviet-backed Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north.[399]

That Washington and Moscow would seek to deny the other exclusive influence over the Korean Peninsula says much about the region's geographic importance. As the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars half a century earlier demonstrated, Korea had long been seen as a stepping-stone to dominance of the broader region; whichever state controlled the peninsula could push east to Japan, west to China, or north through Manchuria into Russia's vulnerable southeastern flank. Soviet strategists, therefore, had long sought to deny adversaries' access to the area, and the United States, which had played only a minor role in Korean affairs before World War II, had initially intended to maintain only a temporary presence after Japan's expulsion and defeat. The Cold War competition, however, forced a recalculation; the prospects

[399] William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 18–27; Michael H. Hunt, *Crises in U.S. Foreign Policy: An International History Reader*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 170–171.

of either Soviet domination of the region or a vacuum of authority that might destabilize the area and prompt another war were both now causes for alarm.[400]

Figure 11.1. The Occupation and Partition of Korea, 1946

SOURCE: U.S. Department of State, Division of Map Intelligence and Cartography, "Korea: Zones of Occupation," Washington, D.C., 1946.

The peninsula's partition—an act that the vast majority of Koreans opposed—only fanned tensions in the region. While North Korean Premier Kim Il-Sung consolidated power, revolts against the ruling conservative party, led by the U.S.-backed Syngman Rhee, spread across the south, engulfing such cities as Yeosu and Taegu and triggering brutal repression from the increasingly dictatorial regime in Seoul.[401] Exploiting the opportunity, Kim formed the

[400] For Korea's historic strategic importance, see Stueck, 1995, pp. 13–20.

[401] Su-kyoung Hwang, *Korea's Grievous War*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, Chs. 1 and 2. The scale and intensity of the violence between 1947 and 1950 have led some historians to suggest that the Korean

Democratic Front for the Unification of the Fatherland in June 1949 and dispatched 1,300 covert forces to cross the 38th parallel and assist guerrillas already operating across the south. The north's support intensified the violence but a successful South Korean counteroffensive that winter convinced Pyongyang that internal subversion alone would not overthrow the southern government. Burgeoning ties between South Korea and Korea's former colonial master, Japan (as well as talks of a separate U.S.-Japanese peace treaty), lent urgency to the task; fearful that the military and economic balance might tilt to the south's favor, Kim redoubled his efforts to persuade the Soviet Union to support a plan to invade the south while North Korea's advantage was greatest.[402]

Despite the warning signs, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union anticipated a major confrontation on the peninsula. The possibility that North Korea might invade South Korea was widely discussed, but U.S. strategists calculated that the risk of nuclear escalation would deter Chinese or Soviet intervention and contain a confrontation between South and North Korea, which was viewed as a dependent Soviet proxy; in this context, a major war over the Koreas was deemed unlikely outside the context of a wider U.S.-Soviet confrontation triggered in Europe, not Asia.[403] Even within the context of U.S. policy in Asia, the prospect that North Korea might invade was a decidedly secondary concern compared with the risk of a communist invasion of Taiwan or French woes in Indochina, both of which preoccupied U.S. policymakers in 1949.[404] Entrusting China and the Soviet Union to restrain Pyongyang should an incident arise, the United States therefore limited the aid it provided to South Korea and withdrew the majority of U.S. forces in October 1949.[405]

The Soviet Union interpreted the U.S. demonstration of confidence as evidence of disinterest and irresolution. Still recovering from the losses suffered during World War II and aware that it could not muster the industrial strength needed to match the United States, the Soviet Union was not eager to provoke a direct confrontation with its rival. Washington was expending substantial resources to rebuild and defend Western Europe, but it appeared reluctant to intervene militarily

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War is best conceived as a civil conflict lasting from 1948 to 1953. For instance, see Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. 2, *The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

[402] On North Korea's confidence that it enjoyed a military and political advantage over South Korea, see Hunt, 1996, pp. 173–175; Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*, New York: Basic Books, 2017, p. 168. On North Korea's role in fomenting strife in South Korea, see Stueck, 1995, pp. 28–32.

[403] Betts, 1982, pp. 51–52; Hunt, 1996, p. 171; Jonathan Mercer, "Emotion and Strategy in the Korean War," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 2, Spring 2013, p. 231.

[404] Approximately 500 American troops were stationed in South Korea at the time of the northern invasion. Stueck, 1995, p. 30.

[405] Betts, 1982, pp. 51–61; Kathryn Weathersby, "The Soviet Role in the Korean War: The State of Historical Knowledge," in William Stueck, ed., *The Korean War in World History*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2004, p. 65; Conrad C. Crane, "Measuring Gains on the Battlefield and at the Peace Table: Shifting Assessments During the Korean War," in Leo J. Blanken, Hy Rothstein, and Jason J. Lepore, eds., *Assessing War: The Challenge of Measuring Success and Failure*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015, p. 155; Leffler, 1992, Chs. 8 and 9.

in Asia and had rejected regional partners' offers to construct a "Pacific Pact" similar to the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Soviet leaders took note of the fact that the Truman administration had not intervened to defend the nationalist government in China, appeared unwilling to defend Taiwan by force, and had pointedly excluded Korea from public descriptions of the U.S. defensive perimeter. Together, these factors reinforced Soviet assumptions that the United States would not intervene to defend South Korea if it were attacked.[406]

Kim's proposal for an invasion of South Korea, therefore, presented an alluring opportunity for the Soviet Union. By 1950, the Kremlin began to pursue a more forward policy in Asia in an effort to monitor the new communist regime in China and turn U.S. attention away from Europe, where recent NATO maneuvers amid the Berlin crisis appeared to portend a more assertive effort to roll back Soviet influence. If the north could defeat the south quickly—and both Soviet and Korean analysis suggested that the balance of forces on the peninsula favored the north—the collapse of South Korea might undermine U.S. credibility, weaken Western European leaders' confidence in the United States, and draw China deeper into the Soviet Union's orbit. The Soviet leadership approved its Korean allies' plan to move south and agreed to supply the necessary arms, ammunition, logistical support, and tactical advising deemed necessary to execute a quick and decisive invasion.[407]

War Initiation

To conceal its military preparations, Pyongyang launched a major diplomatic initiative on June 1, 1950. Over the next three weeks, the Kim regime, working through the Democratic Front for the Unification of the Fatherland, unveiled a series of national assemblies and international conferences to negotiate an improvement in relations between South and North Korea. "Confident that his military forces were superior to the enemy's, that his attack would spark strong anti-Rhee uprisings in the South, and that the United States would either stand aside or intervene too slowly and on too small a scale to make a difference, Kim saw every reason to seek unification by force," notes historian William Stueck, but Kim sought to maintain the illusion that South Korea had attacked first.[408]

The long-anticipated invasion began on June 25. A predawn skirmish along the border in the western Onjin region—who started the incident remains disputed—provided Pyongyang with a

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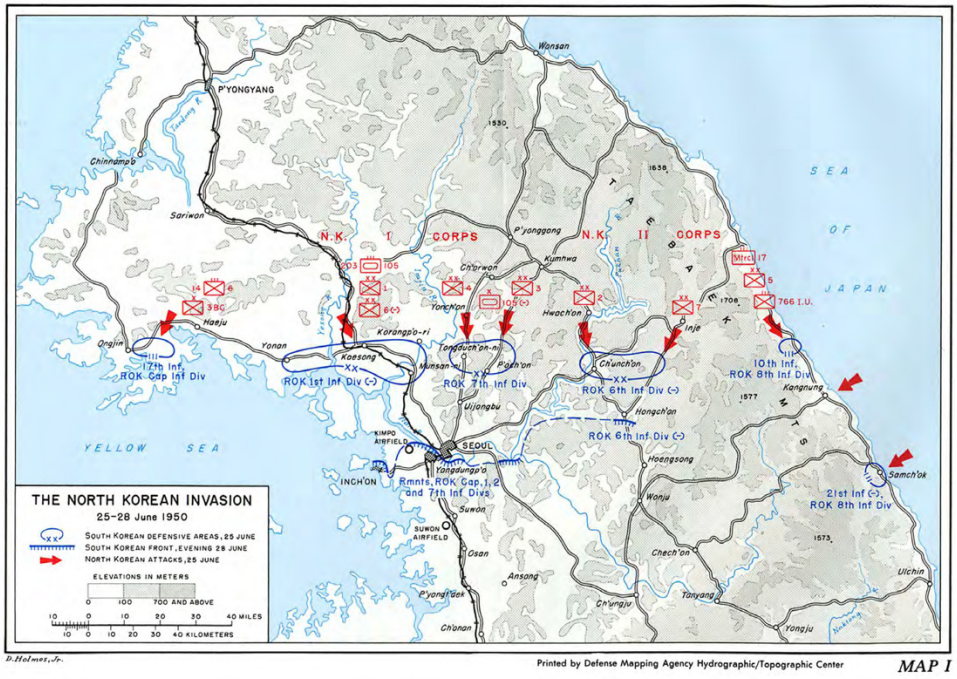
[406] Stueck, 1995, pp. 33–37, 44–45. Notably, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin initially opposed North Korea's request out of concern that the United States would intervene, and even interpreted the U.S. withdrawal from South Korea in June 1949 as a prelude to an attack. The accumulation of evidence that the United States had "written off" South Korea to focus on Europe, including congressional opposition to funding a continued presence, changed Stalin's mind. On this reversal, see Mercer, 2013, pp. 230–231.

[407] Westad, 2017, pp. 167–168; Weathersby, 2004, pp. 65–71.

[408] Stueck, 1995, pp. 40–41.

pretext to launch a coordinated artillery barrage along seven sites across the 38th parallel. Later the same morning, North Korean troops, backed by Soviet military advisers, invaded the south by land and by sea, seizing the rail station town of Kaesong and severing other major arteries to the southern capital (Figure 11.2). By noon, South Korea was under aerial attack. For a brief moment, it appeared that the North Korean plan for a quick and decisive defeat of the southern government would succeed.[409]

Figure 11.2. The North Korean Invasion, 1950



SOURCE: Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992, p. 21.

But one critical assumption proved incorrect: Contrary to Soviet and North Korean expectations, the United States soon intervened to repel the northern invasion and defend South Korea. The United States had adopted a Europe-first posture in the wake of World War II, but recent events—including the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb in August 1949, the declaration of the communist People's Republic of China in October 1949, and the signature of a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in February 1950—had drawn U.S. attention to Asia. Convinced that North Korea could not have acted without the Soviet Union's consent, U.S. policymakers interpreted the crisis in Korea as a test of U.S. global credibility that required a

[409] Stueck, 1995, pp. 10, 29.

forceful response.[410] Within days, the United States declared support for South Korea, dispatched the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits to neutralize the island and dissuade the Chinese from attacking while U.S. attention was diverted, and introduced a resolution before the United Nations calling for international action "to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the region."[411] Using language almost identical to that of the U.S. resolution, the United Nations quickly authorized the establishment of a coalition force commanded by the United States "to restore international peace and security in the area."[412] On June 29, after confirming the invasion was not a distraction from a larger Soviet attack elsewhere, the Truman administration formally authorized the deployment of U.S. troops to support the southern government. Determined to demonstrate U.S. resolve, officials in Washington believed that a swift and decisive intervention would persuade the Soviets to back out quickly.[413]

Course of the War

North Korea's vision of a quick war of liberation, the U.S. plan for a quick and decisive rebuff, and U.S. and Soviet fears that a superpower confrontation would escalate into a global conflagration all amounted to nothing. The first six months of the war brought a series of rapid advances and reversals that internationalized the conflict and increased the perceived stakes of defeat but carried neither side meaningfully closer to their objectives. Despite challenges from Soviet MiG-15s (part of a covert Soviet campaign to provide air combat, anti-aircraft, and other support to Chinese and North Korean forces), numerical and technological advantages allowed the United States to establish air superiority over the peninsula, facilitating a strategic bombing campaign that dropped an estimated 635,000 tons of conventional bombs and chemical explosives on northern industrial, agricultural, and population centers throughout the course of the war.[414] While Chinese, Korean, Soviet, and U.S. pilots battled in the skies over the peninsula, the ground war devolved into a war of attrition, with fighting concentrated along northern and

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[410] For the effect of the Chinese revolution on U.S. attitudes toward Korea, see William Stueck, *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy Toward China and Korea, 1947–1950*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. For more on the U.S. reversal, see Mercer, 2013, pp. 231–239.

[411] Hunt, 1996, pp. 175–176.

[412] In addition to the United States and South Korea, 15 nations (including Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and the UK) contributed to the United Nations coalition. "Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, June 27, 1950," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* Vol. VII, *1950, Korea*, Washington, D.C.: Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, 1976.

[413] Leffler, 1992, p. 367.

[414] Charles K. Armstrong, "The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950–1960," *Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol. 7, March 2009, p. 1; Stephen Joiner, "The Jet That Shocked the West," *Air & Space Magazine*, December 2013. Between 40,000 and 70,000 Soviet personnel were covertly deployed to North Korea and China throughout the course of the war (Austin Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War," *International Organization*, Vol. 70, No. 1, Winter 2016, p. 120).

central parts of the peninsula.[415] By the time an armistice brought the fighting to an unsatisfying halt, more than 1.5 million combatants had been killed on the battlefield, and another 3 million civilians had died of disease, starvation, and mass killings committed by North Korean, South Korean, United Nations, and U.S. forces.[416]

That the war would deteriorate into a prolonged quagmire was not apparent during the first few months of the war. The North Korean army advanced quickly during June and July of 1950, capturing all of the south except for the city of Pusan, where a single U.S. division had deployed on July 1 to support South Korea. Vastly outnumbered, the defenders staved off defeat but lost nearly 30 percent of the men deployed. Predicting that their position would soon be overrun, U.S. commanders "brac[ed] for a 'Dunkirk.'"[417]

The landing of U.S. troops at Inchon, west of Seoul, on September 15 reversed the war's tide just as U.S.-led United Nations forces broke through the Pusan perimeter (Figure 11.3). Caught off guard, the North Korean forces began a disorderly retreat back to the 38th parallel. Within two weeks, Seoul had been liberated and South Korean President Rhee reinstated as head of the southern government. The counteroffensive's stunning success brought a commensurate broadening in U.S. war aims from the restoration of the 38th parallel to the unification of the Koreas and the complete destruction of the North Korean army. On October 1, as South Korean troops crossed into the north, the United States called on retreating North Korean forces to submit to an unconditional surrender, a demand that North Korea promptly rejected. On October 8, one day after the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for creation of a unified Korean government, U.S. troops crossed the 38th parallel and pushed into North Korea.[418] In Washington, North Korea's imminent defeat was treated as a fait accompli.

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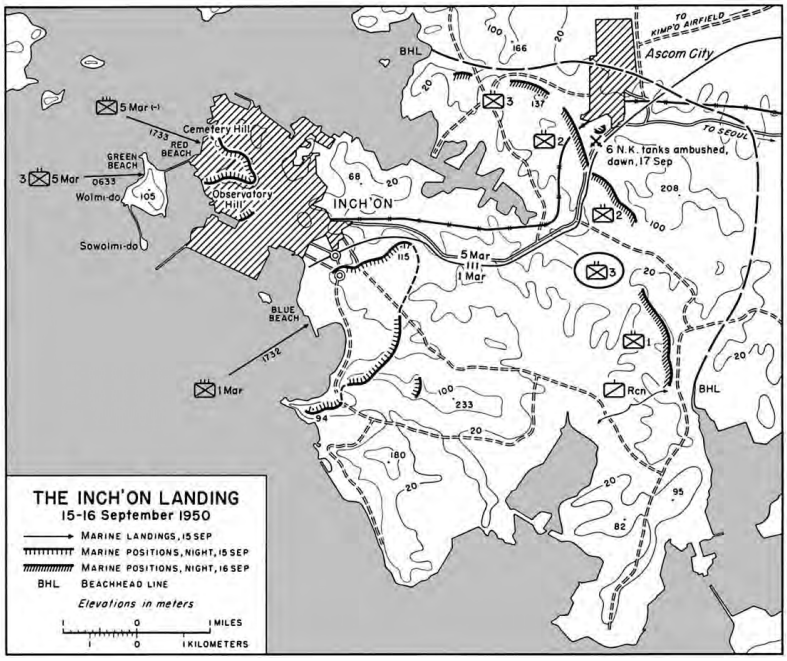
[415] Weathersby, 2004, p. 78.

[416] Elizabeth Stanley, *Paths to Peace: Domestic Coalition Shifts, War Termination and the Korean War,* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 70.

[417] H. W. Brands, *The General vs. the President: MacArthur and Truman at the Brink of Nuclear War*, New York: Doubleday, 2017, p. 165.

[418] Hunt, 1996, pp. 176–178; Max Hastings, *The Korean War*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, pp. 114–121.

Figure 11.3. The Landing at Inchon, 1950



SOURCE: Appleman, 1992, p. 504.

With the northern army on the brink of collapse, China came under renewed pressure from the Soviet Union and North Korea to intervene. Beijing had learned of Pyongyang's intention to invade the south as early as 1949 but had avoided offering a definitive commitment to North Korea because it was preoccupied with the internal challenge of consolidating the communist regime, was unsure whether the Soviet Union would extend sufficient materiel support, and feared attending negative consequences for its primary ambition of claiming Taiwan.[419] The U.S. entry into the war had caught China off guard—like their Soviet counterparts, Chinese strategists had predicted that the United States would not intervene in an intra-Korean dispute[420]—but Beijing had decided against providing direct support for North Korea out of concern that it might provoke U.S. attacks on China's offshore holdings. Now, however, the presence of non-Korean forces north of the 38th parallel forced a decision. On October 2, 1950, the Chinese Politburo voted to deploy Chinese forces to Korea on the condition that the Soviet Union provide air

[419] William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic History*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 104–107. For a discussion of Chinese–North Korean relations in the years before the war, see Chen Jian, "In the Name of Revolution: China's Road to the Korean War Revisited," in William Stueck, ed., *The Korean War in World History*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2004, pp. 103–105.

[420] Chen, 2004, p. 96. In 1949 and 1950, Chinese national policy was focused on halting inflation and reconstructing the economy—objectives that appeared to necessitate austerity measures. So far as Chinese military planners did consider the risk of a war with the United States, they anticipated that it would unfold over Taiwan or Tibet, not Korea. Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-356, 1960, p. v.

support and military supplies.[421] On October 19, Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River into North Korea and launched a counteroffensive against U.S. and United Nations troops. By November, an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Chinese troops were in Korea, with another 350,000 massed on the Manchurian border.[422]

China's entry into the war surprised the United States, which had dismissed Chinese threats of intervention in September as an empty bluff. Although U.S. officials had acknowledged the risk of a broader war during the initial July 1950 debate, China's initial inaction had reinforced U.S. strategists' confidence that the nuclear imbalance would deter Beijing from extending more than indirect support to the North Korean regime.[423] Several senior Chinese officials had expressed concern that the People's Liberation Army was unready for battle, although the prospect of U.S. nuclear use was dismissed as unlikely or ineffective.[424] Ultimately, however, Chairman Mao's argument that confrontation with the United States was inevitable had sealed the Politburo's decision. If a war were to be fought, Chinese leaders concluded that Korea offered "the most favorable terrain, the closest communications to China, the most convenient material and manpower backup and the most convenient way for us to get indirect Soviet support," as one senior official later summarized.[425] Inaction, however, would undermine the Chinese Communist Party's self-image as the guardian of Asian communism, jeopardize the effort to encourage national liberation movements across the continent, and allow "foreign imperialists" to regain a foothold in the region.[426]

Chinese offensives in October and November reversed the war's momentum once again, and the United Nations coalition was forced into a long and costly southward retreat. Chinese morale was high. In September, a conference of People's Liberation Army field commanders had predicted that the technologically inferior Chinese forces would defeat their U.S. opponents because the U.S. troops were deemed inexperienced in close fighting and night operations; tactically inflexible thanks to a rigid adherence to military codes and regulations; and, having found themselves embroiled in a foreign country far from their homeland, irresolute and mentally weak. Even if the United States should employ its nuclear weapons—a possibility the

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[421] Stueck, 1995, pp. 39–40, 45, 98–101. On Mao's belief that war was inevitable, see Yufan Hao and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *China Quarterly*, No. 121, March 1990, pp. 106–111.

[422] Stueck, 1995, p. 115.

[423] Levy, 1983b, p. 90; Betts, 1982, pp. 51–61.

[424] On China's interpretation of U.S. military and diplomatic signals, see Christopher P. Twomey, *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012, pp. 141–143.

[425] Stueck, 1995, p. 98.

[426] Whiting, 1960, pp. 4–7, 30–33, 84–91, 96–109, 114–115.

Chinese leadership believed that the Soviet nuclear arsenal would deter—the Chinese command gambled that the country's large and rural population would allow it to fight on.[427]

Like their Korean, Soviet, and U.S. counterparts, however, Chinese strategists soon learned that they had misjudged their adversaries' strength. British, U.S., and allied troops' superior mechanization and firepower allowed them to evade entrapment, and the People's Liberation Army suffered extensive casualties.[428] By the year's end, the two sides found themselves in roughly the same position they had been in before the war began. As the armies faced off along the 38th parallel, thousands of North Korean soldiers joined anti- South Korean insurgents to wage a guerrilla campaign across the southwestern South Cholla Province and the Taebaek mountain range. West European protests deterred the United States from expanding the conflict into Manchuria, but United Nations forces nonetheless found themselves overextended in inhospitable terrain. The United States debated but decided against using either nuclear weapons or an air campaign against Chinese territory, and the war ground into a stalemate that would stretch on for two more years. Unable to secure the quick victory they had anticipated, both sides curtailed their ambitions and contained the conflict to the peninsula, aware that the costs of escalation were too high to justify.[429]

Negotiations for an armistice dragged on for two years, hindered by the absence of direct communication channels between the United States and China and persistent disagreements about the repatriation of prisoners of war. The stalemate might have continued indefinitely had not Stalin died and U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower been inaugurated in early 1953.[430] After the new presidential administration hinted at the prospect of using atomic weapons to break the impasse, the new Soviet leadership moved quickly to end the prolonged conflict.[431] On July 27, 1953, China, North Korea, and the United States finally signed an armistice agreement suspending open hostilities, establishing a 4,000-meter-wide demilitarized zone along the 38th parallel, prohibiting both sides from entering the air, ground, or sea territories controlled by the other, arranging for the release and repatriation of displaced persons and the repatriation of prisoners of war, and establishing the Military Armistice Commission to oversee adherence and mediate any violations.

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[427] Stueck, 2002, p. 110.

[428] Twomey, 2010, pp. 155–162.

[429] Stueck, 2002, p. 124.

[430] On the disputed role of the U.S. nuclear threat, see Rosemary J. Foot, "Nuclear Coercion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Winter 1988–1989.

[431] Weathersby, 2004, pp. 173–174.

Regional and International Consequences

The profound consequences of the Korean War would reverberate across the 20th century. The conflict reshaped the Cold War, internationalizing and intensifying the U.S.-Soviet rivalry and hardening the nascent U.S. containment strategy. After 1950, the United States instituted substantial and permanent increases in its defense spending and moved to consolidate and expand its alliance system, signing a mutual defense treaty with South Korea, committing to the economic reconstruction and rearmament of Japan and West Germany, building the hydrogen bomb, and deciding on the permanent stationing of U.S. troops in Western Europe, South Korea, Japan, and elsewhere.[432] The conflict erased any lingering hope for accommodation between Washington and the young communist regime in Beijing, deepening the division between the countries and driving China deeper into the Soviet orbit. Partially in response to intensified U.S. hostility, China doubled the size of its air force, engaged in a substantial civil defense program, and established its own nuclear program.[433]

Intended as an interim arrangement until a permanent peace treaty could be reached, the 1953 armistice agreement remains in place to this day. An international conference convened in Geneva in 1954 to conclude the state of war between North and South Korea, but the conference ended without agreement. The demarcation line and demilitarized line have endured for more than six decades, during which time the peninsula has remained a consistent source of instability in the region. The formalization of the U.S.–South Korean alliance brought an attending infusion of economic assistance that rebuilt the southern economy and infrastructure and tilted the balance in Seoul's favor. Once the more prosperous and industrialized of the two Koreas, the North entered a protracted and dramatic economic decline despite substantial postwar assistance from the Soviet Union and China.[434]

Perhaps the sole victor of the Korean War was Japan. The United States had already begun to reexamine occupation policies and reconsider rebuilding Japan's defensive capabilities, but the intensity of the Korean conflict, which vividly illustrated the risks of a major confrontation in Asia, underscored U.S. vulnerability in the Pacific and lent new urgency to a search for anti-communist allies.[435] Signed in 1951, the Treaty of San Francisco ended the state of war between Japan and the United States and 46 other allies, excused Japan from reparations levied at the end of World War II, and ended the U.S. occupation of the country. Transformed from a defeated enemy into an anti-communist ally, Tokyo received an infusion of U.S. assistance that allowed Japan to revitalize its economy, rebuild its industrial infrastructure, and accelerate its rise as a

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[432] On the Korean War's effect on U.S. defense policy, see Leffler, 1992.

[433] On China's doctrinal and technological adaptions, see Twomey, 2010, pp. 165–166.

[434] Armstrong, 2009, pp. 2–3.

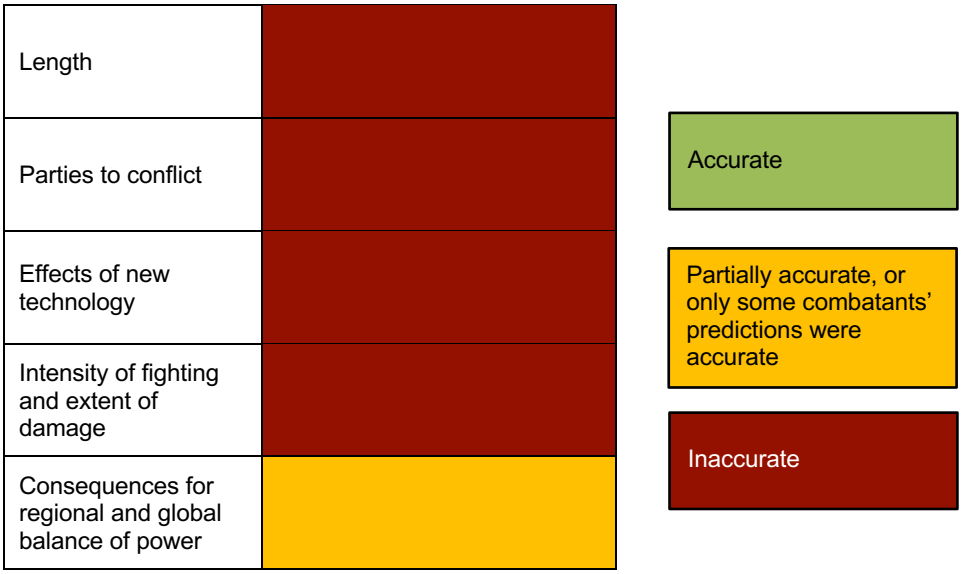
[435] For a concise discussion of U.S. policy before the Korean War, as well as the conflict's effects, see Jennifer M. Miller, "The Struggle to Rearm Japan: Negotiating the Cold War State in US-Japanese Relations," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 46, No. 1, January 2011, pp. 85–95.

major trade nation. As historian Michael Schaller writes, "Japan emerged from the Korean carnage unscathed and, in a sense, reborn."[436]

Evaluating the Accuracy of Prewar Predictions

Despite the sophistication of U.S., Soviet, and, to a lesser extent, Chinese planning institutions, all three states inaccurately predicted important elements of the conflict that erupted in 1950 (Table 11.1). The first error that set the others in motion was the Soviet, North Korean, and Chinese underestimation of U.S. willingness to intervene in the conflict. This contributed to a second mistake: Because the prospect of U.S. support to South Korea was deemed unlikely, both North Korean and Soviet analysts calculated that the North Korean forces could force a rapid unification of the peninsula at minimal cost. This led to an underestimation of the length and scope of the conflict, as well as of the consequences for the regional and global balance of power.

Table 11.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to the Korean War



For their part, U.S. analysts also did not accurately predict what a great power conflict in the years following World War II would look like. They downplayed the likelihood that the Soviet Union would enable a North Korean invasion and then overestimated the likelihood that a swift U.S. intervention could compel the Soviets to withdraw support and force North Korea's surrender. Similarly, U.S. analysts misunderstood how China would perceive the threat presented

[436] Michael Schaller, "The Korean War: The Economic and Strategic Impact on Japan, 1950–1953," in William Stueck, ed., *The Korean War in World History*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2004, p. 145.

by the presence of U.S. and United Nations forces north of the Yalu river, and neglected the possibility for Chinese military intervention. In short, none of the major powers expected to confront each other on the Korean peninsula.

Moreover, the war demonstrated that both U.S. and Soviet strategists had misunderstood the role of nuclear weapons in either deterring or deciding the next major conflict. The implicit threat of U.S. nuclear retaliation did not keep China or the Soviet Union from the fight, and the United States ultimately decided against employing atomic weapons on the Korean peninsula. The United States also overestimated the decisiveness of its air power, which proved less effective than expected once the war devolved into a stalemate on the ground. At the same time, China underestimated the strength of U.S. mechanization and firepower and overstated the importance of sheer manpower in determining the course of the conflict. These misjudgments contributed to the protracted stalemate and the underestimation of the extent of the war's damage.

Finally, predictions about the long-term implications of the war had mixed success. Soviet and U.S. planners correctly understood by 1950 that the global distribution of power was and would continue to be bipolar for some time to come. However, predictions about U.S. defense spending and the distribution of power in Asia proved incorrect. Until the outbreak of the Korean War, domestic and economic factors indicated that the United States would reduce defense spending. Instead, the war triggered a prolonged and substantial rearmament program that established a new precedent for U.S. defense spending in peacetime, increased U.S. military power, and intensified the emerging U.S.-Soviet arms race.

The war also spurred a major shift in U.S. military presence in Asia that none of the powers foresaw. The United States reversed its policy and constructed permanent bases in South Korea and Japan that fundamentally altered the military balance in the region. The new security architecture was made possible by a second, equally dramatic policy change: the decision to end the state of war with Japan and enter a security alliance with its defeated enemy. The postwar infusion of U.S. economic assistance revitalized Japan and established the foundation for Japan's resurgence as a global technological power.

12. Conclusion

The history of great power conflict over the past two centuries offers a stark reminder of how difficult it is to forecast the timing, complexity, and consequences of large-scale interstate warfare. In the years prior to each of the conflicts surveyed here, politicians and military planners held flawed assumptions and made inaccurate predictions about critical aspects of the war that would follow (Table 12.1). At a minimum, these errors complicated the prosecution of the wars or preparation for their aftermaths. In the worst cases, incorrect predictions contributed to a major power's defeat.

Table 12.1. Accuracy of Key Predictions Prior to Great Power Wars

Great Power War	Length	Parties to Conflict	Effects of New Technology	Intensity of Fighting and Extent of Damage	Consequences for Regional and Global Balance of Power
Crimean War (1853–1856)					
Austro-Prussian War (1866)					
Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871)					
Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)					
Sino-Japanese War (1894)					
Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905)					
World War I (1914–1918)					
World War II (Asia) (1931–1945)					
World War II (Europe) (1939–1945)					
Korean War (1950–1953)					

NOTE: Dark red indicates each of the great power combatants' prewar assumptions about this factor were incorrect; light green indicates that all of the great power combatants accurately forecasted major features of the war; yellow indicates mixed success where either combatants' predictions included both accurate and inaccurate elements, or where one or more (but not all) of the primary combatants correctly predicted that particular aspect of the war. To account for the conflict in Asia before Japan's 1940 entry into the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, and to consider combatants' regionally specific prewar assumptions and ambitions, the history of World War II in Asia is treated separately from the European theater.

Multiple Factors Contribute to Observed Forecasting Errors

In some cases, there were obvious shortcomings in analysis or decisionmaking that arose from institutional disorganization, faulty intelligence collection and analysis procedures, poor leadership, or individual and communal hubris. In other cases, sophisticated planners and

statesmen made predictions that appeared reasonable based on the information available at the time but did not account for plausible but low-probability outcomes. In other cases, "black swans"—unpredictable but transformative events—interfered to change the course of a war. Although the causes and significance of these errors varied across each historical episode, four types of common misassumptions are apparent. (A lengthier discussion of each category is available in Volume 1.[437])

Incorrect Predictions About Length, Intensity, or Cost of Conflict

Great powers have frequently underestimated conflict duration and the scale of military losses, often because of the reasons discussed in the following sections. The European powers' July 1914 prediction that their war would be over by Christmas is perhaps the most infamous example of underestimating the length of a conflict, but decisionmakers expressed undue confidence in the likelihood of a swift and decisive victory in nearly every historical episode we surveyed. The exact causes of each error varied, but common factors were misreadings of the military balance; underestimates of another state's resolve; and overestimates of the aggressor state's own capacity to meet the technological, industrial, and political requirements of waging war.

Incorrect Predictions About the Parties to a Conflict and Their Will to Fight a Long War

Relatedly, great powers often misestimated the willingness of external powers to intervene in a conflict. This error commonly entailed an underestimation of the resolve of another state or group of states. Germany, for instance, sparked what would become World War II when it underestimated British and French commitments to go to war after Poland's defeat in 1939. Similarly, Kim Il Sung's and Joseph Stalin's assumptions that the United States would not fight to defend South Korea in 1950 informed the timing and outbreak of the Korean War, with lasting implications for the stability of the peninsula. In other instances—such as Japan's decision to attack the United States at Pearl Harbor—great powers recognized that their actions might provoke another state to enter the conflict but underestimated that state's willingness to sustain a protracted and costly war. Less frequently, a great power overestimated other states' willingness or capacity to provide sustained support. In 1870, for instance, France discovered too late that the United Kingdom, Italy, and other alienated European powers did not share its perception of Prussia and, therefore, would not join in a coalition to defeat and contain the German Confederation. The effects of such miscalculations reverberated throughout the course of a conflict; having underestimated the number of combatants, aggressors often also misestimated the length, cost, and even the eventual outcome of a war.

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[437] Miranda Priebe, Bryan Frederick, Anika Binnendijk, Alexandra T. Evans, Karl P. Mueller, Cortez A. Cooper III, James Benkowski, Asha Clark, and Stephanie Anne Pillion, *Alternative Futures Following a Great Power War*: Vol. 1, *Scenarios, Findings, and Recommendations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A591-1, 2023.

Misunderstanding the Effects of New Technology

History is replete with examples of military planners struggling to understand the implications of a rivals' acquisition of new technology or capabilities, misinterpreting the significance of organizational or doctrinal changes, or overestimating the extent of their own recent improvements. Over the decades before World War I, for example, European planners misinterpreted or overlooked evidence that changes in the technology, organization, and conduct of warfare were making battles longer, more lethal, and less decisive. Ideological and cultural factors can make these misassumptions particularly pernicious, as Russia's defeat in 1905 at the hands of Japan attests. In that case, pervasive cultural stereotypes of Asian inferiority and undue optimism over the effect of Russia's own military reforms blinded Russian military leaders to the significance of Japan's arms buildup, which they discounted on the assumption that Asian militaries could not exploit modern technology. Late-19th-century strategists' concurrent preoccupation with willpower and resolve similarly inhibited postwar learning, as U.S. and European military intellectuals falsely attributed Japan's victory to cultural notions of honor and sacrifice rather than to the transformative effect of lethal improvements in artillery, small arms, and firepower that had been illustrated bloodily during the fighting.

In other instances, a conflict can incentivize innovation or accelerate the production of new classes of technologies that require states to adapt midstride. The German fielding of the first long-range guided ballistic missiles in World War II, for instance, presaged the development of a new class of munitions and spurred a hunt for new types of defensive technologies and techniques that continued for decades after the war. The U.S. detonation of the world's first atomic weapon in 1945 offers an even more dramatic illustration of how the emergence of a new technology can strain existing theories of conflict and create ripple effects that extend long beyond the final ceasefire.

Misunderstandings About the Consequences of Conflict

States have struggled to foresee the strategic consequences of a conflict, including the durability of wartime gains, the ease of restoring stability, the risk of a conflict recurring, and the long-term implications for the balance of power. Concentrated on the task of defeating a rival or securing territorial and political concessions, states often did not anticipate that once-neutral observers might exploit post-conflict vulnerabilities to their detriment, as Russia experienced after its war with the Turks in 1879 and Japan discovered after its wars with China in 1894 and Russia in 1905. Similarly, states have overestimated the likelihood of a decisive outcome and misjudged the risk of postwar instability that can strain alliances or partnerships, prompt the renegotiation of postwar settlements, or produce new flash points for later crises. Territorial compromises and new governing arrangements were common fodder for new conflicts. For example, having allied to wrest Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark in 1864, Austria and Prussia went to war a mere two years later partly over control of the same territory.

Likewise, a war's potential effect on the regional or international balance of power can be difficult to predict because a conflict could both accelerate underlying trends and introduce new and unforeseen dynamics. For example, the United States' military, economic, and political domination of the international system in the immediate years after World War II exceeded planners' expectations in scale, but not entirely in character. For decades, U.S. and European strategists predicted the rise of the United States as a major international player, but they did not expect that it would accumulate such preponderant advantages—nor that a country that historically evinced a doctrine of nonentanglement would embrace an internationalist grand strategy.

Implications for U.S. Planners

These histories do not offer exact analogies to the challenges that U.S. strategists confront today. The sophistication and scale of U.S. intelligence and planning institutions will likely allow the United States to avoid some of the errors that misled planners in the past. But not all predictive errors, historical or contemporary, can be attributed to inaccurate, misleading, or waylaid information. U.S. planners and statesmen are probably better equipped to understand adversary capabilities than planners in the past, but they are not necessarily better placed to understand other states' perceptions or to anticipate foreign behavior and decisions in a conflict. Analytic resource constraints may also cause trade-offs that conceal certain trends or minimize specific risks relative to other priorities. Even when adequate information is available, military planners and analysts might, when confronted with complex problems, interpret the same evidence in different but equally defensible ways. As the events of September 11, 2001, the eruption of the Arab Spring, and other recent events demonstrate, surprises still occur.

The complexity of human and state behavior—combined with the number of real and potential challenges to U.S. interests—ensures that coping with uncertainty will remain a key challenge for decisionmaking. An examination of the historical record is instructive because it offers a stark reminder that even the best-laid plans cannot capture every element of a future war, and it reinforces for today's planners and decisionmakers the importance of humility in predicting the course or consequences of a conflict. To manage uncertainty requires examining a broad range of plausible scenarios and outcomes, particularly those that challenge shared assumptions or expectations. In addition to considering the conditions in which established theories of conflict may prove misleading, planners and decisionmakers can consider how they would adapt their strategy in turn to respond to unforeseen dynamics or events. Planners cannot predict a future war with perfect accuracy, but, by identifying and stress-testing common assumptions, they can adopt mindsets and plans that are more agile and resilient, enabling more flexible and effective responses.

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