

Dilemmas of Decline, Risks of Rise:  
The Systemic and Military Sources of Rising State Strategy towards Declining Great Powers

by

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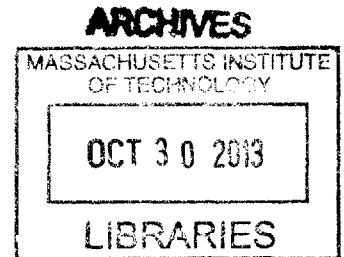
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**ABSTRACT**

What explains variation in relatively rising state strategy towards declining great powers? This project develops and tests a theory of state strategy vis-à-vis declining great powers, termed Realist Decline Theory. Realist Decline Theory argues that states debating the strategies to adopt towards a declining peer are forced to consider the costs and benefits of either preying on the declining state, or supporting the decliner and helping it maintain its place within the great power ranks. As the costs and benefits wax and wane, states adopt different degrees of predation or support for self-interested reasons. Two variables – the polarity of the international system and the declining state’s military posture – determine these costs and benefits by shaping the security threats facing relatively rising states.

This study uses multiple primary and secondary sources to measure Realist Decline Theory’s variables and evaluate its analytic power against competing explanations. The argument is tested using two structured, focused comparisons of rising state strategy in the post-1945 international system: American policy towards the declining Soviet Union (1989-1990), and American and Soviet strategy towards the declining United Kingdom (1945-1949). These cases were selected because they provide strong tests of the theory vis-à-vis competing theories. The cases also permit observation and evaluation of substantial variation in the nature of rising state strategy. The overall finding is that Realist Decline Theory indeed explains variation in rising state strategy, although other factors are important.

This study makes several contributions. First, it identifies and explains an empirical puzzle that is either overlooked or only loosely explained by existing research. Second, the study attempts to synthesize different streams of international relations theory in the realist tradition into a unified realist theory of state strategy. Third, the research contributes to Cold War historiography. Finally, the study offers insight for policymakers worried about the possible decline of the United States and rise of new great powers to international prominence.

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## Chapter One:

### Introduction:

#### The Puzzle of Rising State Strategy towards Declining Great Powers

“As President Obama has said many times, the United States welcomes the rise of a peaceful, prosperous China. We do not want our relationship to become defined by rivalry and confrontation. And I disagree with the premise put forward by some historians and theorists that a rising power and an established power are somehow destined for conflict. There is nothing preordained about such an outcome. It is not a law of physics, but a series of choices by leaders that lead to great power confrontation.”

- National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon, 11 March 2013<sup>1</sup>

“I do not accept second place for the United States of America.”

- President Barack Obama, 2010 State of the Union Address<sup>2</sup>

#### I. Introduction

This dissertation investigates the security consequences of great power decline – a great power’s sustained loss of economic and military capabilities relative to one or more other great powers – in post-1945 world politics. It does so by examining when and why other, relatively rising great powers threaten the security and power of a declining state rather than try to slow or stop a declining state’s fall down the great power ranks. Despite substantial policy interest in the “decline of the United States” and a wide-ranging literature on the sources of great power decline, there has been no systematic examination of when and why relative decline leads other, relatively rising states to challenge a declining state’s security.<sup>3</sup> This project seeks to fill the gap by asking three inter-related questions.<sup>4</sup> First, why do some great powers take advantage of

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Donilon, “The United States and the Asia-Pacific in 2013” (The Asia Society, New York, March 11, 2013), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/11/remarks-tom-donilon-national-security-advisory-president-united-states-a>.

<sup>2</sup> Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address,” January 27, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> For policy discussions, see Christopher Layne, “The Waning of U.S. Hegemony – Myth or Reality?: A Review Essay,” *International Security* 34, no. 1 (Summer 2009); Eric S. Edelman, *Understanding America’s Contested Primacy* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, October 21, 2010); Gideon Rachman, “American Decline: This Time It’s For Real,” *Foreign Policy*, February 2011; National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternate Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, 2012); Michèle A. Flournoy, Vikram J. Singh, and Shawn Brimley, “Making America Grand Again,” in *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, ed. Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimley (Washington: Center for a New American Security, 2008); Robert D. Kaplan, “America’s Elegant Decline,” *The Atlantic*, November 2007; Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2008); Michael Beckley, “China’s Century? Why America’s Edge Will Endure,” *International Security* 36, no. 3 (Winter 2012): 41–78; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin and Michael Beckley, “Debating China’s Rise and U.S. Decline,” *International Security* 37, no. 3 (December 2012): 172–181; on sources of decline, see Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1987); Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, “Relative Decline and the Overconsumption-Underinvestment Hypothesis,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1991); William R. Thompson and Karen A. Rasler, *The Great Powers and Global Struggle 1490-1990* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> On the hole in the literature, see Jack S. Levy, “Preventive War: Concept and Propositions,” *International Interactions* 37, no. 1 (March 2011): 94; Jeffrey W. Legro, “What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (2007): 515–534.

another great power's decline by adopting *predatory strategies* that try to maximize their power at the declining state's expense? Second, when and why do great powers pursue the opposite course and adopt *supportive strategies* to slow or stop a declining state's fall? Above all, what causes variation in both the choice and degree of predation and support across time and space?

The lack of attention to these questions is striking given variation within and across cases in the timing and degree to which rising states challenge decliners. On the one hand, history is replete with rising states seeking to grow their power at others' expense. Witness, for instance, American efforts to subvert Great Britain's presence in North America throughout the nineteenth century, and Soviet expansion in the aftermath of World War Two.<sup>5</sup> Predation, however, is not a universal trend. Having taken advantage of the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century, for example, the United States repaired its relationship with the declining United Kingdom in the late 1800s and formed a permanent alliance in the aftermath of World War Two. Similarly, Wilhelmine Germany tethered its cart to Austria-Hungary's increasingly decrepit horse in the years before World War One.<sup>6</sup> In short, great power decline is not always accompanied by inveterate rising state efforts to take advantage of the situation. The goal of this project is to uncover the sources and logic behind this variation in rising state strategy.

Unfortunately, scholars lack a baseline theory to understand this variation. In particular, realism, the theoretical tradition that ought to be most concerned with power shifts, does not offer a clear and consistent take on rising state strategy and great power decline. Structural realism, in arguing that states seek survival and security, makes indeterminate predictions of rising state behavior: although it shows that pressures from the system affect state strategy, it is opaque whether rising states are better off trying to push declining states from the ranks of the great powers in order to reduce threats to their security, or are better served cooperating with declining states and trying to avoid causing other states to balance against them.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, classical, hegemonic stability, and offensive realist accounts view international politics as a zero-sum competition for power. These approaches therefore expect rising states to prey upon declining states as the distribution of power shifts in their favor by using their newfound advantages to try and further the trend.<sup>8</sup> Yet while these arguments might explain cases such as Anglo-American rivalry in the 1800s, they have difficulty accounting for instances of relatively rising state support for declining great powers.<sup>9</sup> Offense-defense realism offers still a third perspective, suggesting that decisions to prey upon or support a declining great power hinge on whether military technology and geography enable a rising state to easily wage war and coerce a

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<sup>5</sup> On Anglo-American rivalry, see James Davidson and Mira Sucharov, "Peaceful Power Transitions: The Historical Cases," in *Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order*, ed. Charles Kupchan et al. (New York: United Nations University Press, 2001); for Soviet expansion, see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Clarendon, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Volker Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> On classical realism, see Hans J Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations; the Struggle for Power and Peace*, 1st ed. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948); for hegemonic stability theory and the related power transition theory, see Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; A. F. K Organski, *World Politics*, 2d [rev.] (New York, Knopf, 1968); A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); for offensive realism, see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2001); Eric J. Labs, "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies* 6, no. 4 (1997): 1-49.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 73-112; Robert Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership: Britain and America, 1944-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

declining great power.<sup>10</sup> Yet although offense-defense realism may explain both intra-case and inter-case variation, it faces problems accounting for why rising state strategy often changes within the span of a few months or years without any apparent change in the state of technology or geography. Ultimately, existing strands of realist theory capture some aspects of rising state behavior towards declining great powers while leaving other cases or parts of cases unexplained.

To improve our understanding of rising state strategy during another state's decline, this dissertation advances what I term "Realist Decline Theory." Realist Decline Theory draws from the different strands of the realist tradition and attempts to integrate their insights into a unified approach. It proposes that rising state decisions to support or prey upon a declining great power depend on whether the declining state can help engender a stable and secure international environment for the other great powers, or whether the declining state is inherently a threat to a rising state. Drawing from the classical/hegemonic/offensive realist traditions, I show that rising states often do try to maximize power at a declining state's expense and that, under certain conditions, predation is a likely response to great power decline. However, drawing from structural realism, I argue that predation is limited by the security costs a rising state pays for the privilege of growing its power: when confronted with the possibility of internal balancing by the decliner, of other states flocking to the aid of the declining state, and of losing the declining state as an ally against other great power threats, rising states avoid the most extreme types of predatory behavior and may even adopt supportive strategies. Finally, using an insight related to offense-defense theory, I show that variation in the degree of rising state support or predation hinges on the declining state's military posture, that is, its ability to perform military missions needed to secure itself and penalize other states' predation. I elaborate on the theory and contrast it with competing hypotheses drawn from Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory in Chapter Two.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. Following this introductory section, I elaborate on the research questions and explore variation in state strategy towards declining great powers. Having done so, I show that existing realist theories leave substantial inter- and intra-case variation unexplained and highlight the need for a revised approach. Next, I briefly note the competing liberal explanations that have gained prominence in the policy and academic worlds in the absence of an integrated realist argument, paying particular attention to hypotheses drawn from Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory as the two most widespread of the type. I conclude with a preview of the remainder of this project.

## **II. Decline and Variation in Rising State Strategy**

### **A. Decline and Worries of Rising State Predation**

This project is motivated by a puzzle borne of the security concerns of declining great powers, and the actual policies adopted by their relatively rising peers. On the one hand, states in decline fear the future. Decline can occur as one state's growth slackens or becomes negative, or due to the accelerating growth of one or more other great powers.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of its source, however, declining states "worry that if they allow a rising state to grow, it will either attack

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–214; Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (July 1984): 58–107; Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 44–82; an overview can be found in Keir Lieber, *War and the Engineers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*; Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*.

them later with superior power or coerce them into concessions that compromise their security.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, states fear that as their relative power wanes, relatively rising states will expand the range of issues over which they seek influence in world affairs and escalate the political, economic, and military demands placed on declining states. Given the changing distribution of power, rising states can back these demands with increasingly credible threats to use force if declining states balk at the terms. Eventually, these escalating demands can threaten a declining state’s vital interests, leaving the declining state in the unpalatable position of accepting threats to its survival or risking war with a powerful adversary.<sup>13</sup> Levy captures the overall dynamic, noting that states worry that decline “will be accompanied by a weakening of one’s bargaining position and a corresponding decline in the political, economic, cultural, and other benefits that one receives from the status quo; and further that one might be faced with a future choice between a dangerous war and a sacrifice of vital interests.”<sup>14</sup> Put simply, states in decline fear that rising states will adopt *predatory strategies* that exacerbate relative losses to their power, hinder their security, and ultimately push them down or from the great power ranks.

These concerns, moreover, can carry profound real-world consequences. Arms races and spirals of insecurity may emerge as declining states try to build up their militaries to hedge against rising state coercion.<sup>15</sup> Alliances may form and reform as declining states seek allies against the possibility of rising state aggression and rising states respond in kind, thereby generating the possibility of war via misperception. Crises may break out if declining states attempt to spur economic and military growth but end up threatening other states in the process.<sup>16</sup> Above all, a declining state may face increasingly strong preventive motivations for war and launch preventive attacks to arrest a change in the distribution of power and forestall the possibility of rising state predation.<sup>17</sup> Preventive attacks, in turn, may escalate into broader systemic wars that ensnare most of the great powers and reshape the basic distribution of power in the international system.<sup>18</sup> Declining state fear of predation, in short, may lead to foreign policies and systemic consequences that undermine international peace and stability.

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<sup>12</sup> Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>13</sup> For a general discussion of the tradeoffs declining states may face, see Samuel P. Huntington, “Coping with the Lippmann Gap,” *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 3 (January 1987): 453–477; Charles Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Paul MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, “Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment,” *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 7–44.

<sup>14</sup> Jack S. Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,” *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (October 1987): 82–107; see also Levy, “Preventive War”; Douglas Lemke, “Investigating the Preventive Motive for War,” *International Interactions* 29, no. 4 (December 2003); Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 38; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 197, 207; Steve Chan, “Exploring Puzzles in Power-Transition Theory: Implications for Sino-American Relations,” *Security Studies* 13, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 103–141; James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*.

<sup>17</sup> Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War”; Levy, “Preventive War”; Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*; Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Chan, “Puzzles in Power-Transition”; Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> For example, the preventive attack launched by Sparta and its allies against Athens triggered the Second Peloponnesian War that led to Athens’ defeat and upended the status quo in ancient Greece. Two thousand years later, preventive motivations were central to Germany’s decision for war in 1914, helping inaugurate the First World War and the reshuffling of European politics in the first half of the twentieth century. For these cases, see Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner and M. I. Finley (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1972); Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, chap. 4–6. Note, however, that not all preventive motivations

## B. Predation and the Weight of History

At first glance, declining state concerns appear well founded as rising states often adopt predatory strategies that try to further their gains at a declining state's expense. Having reviewed the behavior of several rising states, Schweller offers that "the stronger and richer a state becomes, the more influence it wants and the more willing and able it will be to fight to further its interests."<sup>19</sup> Empirically, scholars including Steiner, AFK Organski, and Jacek Kugler note that Wilhelmine Germany seemed wedded to preying on the declining British Empire before World War One.<sup>20</sup> Miranda Priebe shows that the rising United States similarly worked to evict Britain from North America throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Later, a rising Japan tried to carve out a sphere of influence in East Asia during the interwar period at the expense of the United States, Britain, and France.<sup>22</sup> Copeland suggests Nazi Germany used its conquest of Western Europe in 1939-1941 to force a showdown with the USSR – the last remaining great power on the continent – as German power peaked.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, the Cold War saw first the Soviet Union try to evict the United States from Europe as Soviet growth took off in the 1950s, before the United States worked to exacerbate Soviet problems in the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>24</sup> And while the jury remains out, many policymakers and scholars watching China's rise and growing assertiveness in East Asia argue that China will seek hegemony in the Western Pacific by evicting the United States and dominating smaller states in the region.<sup>25</sup>

Still, a deeper look at history shows rising states do not invariably pursue predatory strategies towards their declining peers.<sup>26</sup> First, some relatively rising states, at certain times and

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are acted upon; see Marc Trachtenberg, "A 'Wasting Asset': American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954," *International Security* 13, no. 3 (Winter 1989): 5-49; William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle': The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (December 2000): 54-99.

<sup>19</sup> Randall L. Schweller, "Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory," in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Zara S Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977); Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*.

<sup>21</sup> Miranda Priebe, "Managing the Rise of Regional Challengers: Reassurance and Deterrence from Dominance" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, forthcoming).

<sup>22</sup> Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire*, chap. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, chap. 5.

<sup>24</sup> William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 100-183; Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Jack F. Matlock, "The End of Detente and the Reformulation of American Strategy, 1980-1983," in *Turning Points in Ending the Cold War*, ed. Kiron Skinner (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2008), 11-39; Jason Saltoun-Ebin, ed., *The Reagan Files* (Self-Published, 2010); note that acknowledging that the United States sought to weaken the USSR does not mean (as some claim) that American efforts caused the USSR to collapse; Celeste A. Wallander, "Western Policy and the Demise of the Soviet Union," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 137-177.

<sup>25</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (December 2010): 381-396; Gary Schmitt, "When Will the Realists Get Real?," *AEI Foreign and Defense Policy*, March 2, 2011, <http://www.aei.org/article/foreign-and-defense-policy/when-will-the-realists-get-real/>; for overviews and discussion, see Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War-Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (April 2011); Robert J. Art, "The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul," *Political Science Quarterly* 125, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 359-391.

<sup>26</sup> Making a similar point is Vasquez, who observes that a number of power transitions -- situations where one great power surpasses another in overall capabilities -- do not end in war; historically, some rising and declining states even found themselves allied with one another; John A. Vasquez, "When Are Power Transitions Dangerous?," in *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of The War Ledger*, ed. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 44-45.

in certain places, pursue supportive strategies seeking to preserve declining states as great powers. For example, having defeated Austria-Hungary during the wars of German unification, Germany subsequently allied itself to Austria-Hungary, maintained the alliance despite Austria's mounting weaknesses, and protected Austria-Hungary against Russia in the various Balkan disputes before 1914.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, a rising Japan cultivated Britain as an ally at the turn of the twentieth century, while a rising Russia and declining United Kingdom made common cause against Wilhelmine Germany in the decade before 1914.<sup>28</sup> Nor is this variation simply a matter of prewar diplomacy. After World War Two, for instance, both the United States and Soviet Union bid for a rapidly declining United Kingdom's friendship by offering Britain a military alliance and military backing.<sup>29</sup> And, amidst concerns in the 1970s that the United States was declining, Japan and the members of NATO increased their military spending to alleviate some of the United States' defense burden, while China repaired its relationship with the United States and emerged as a de facto ally.<sup>30</sup>

Recognizing that states may be as likely to support declining great powers as prey upon them is an important and unexplored aspect of rising state strategy. However, this dichotomy still omits important variation in the *degree* of rising state predation or support. Simply put, not all rising states are equally predatory or supportive at all times and in all places, and there is significant variation in the degree of rising state support or predation. Classical realists obliquely hinted at part of this phenomena by differentiating between rising states holding "limited aims" interested in making only minor changes to the extant international order, and "revolutionary aims" seeking fundamental changes in the international system.<sup>31</sup> Because classical realism focused the systemic consequences of "limited aims" and revolutionary behavior, it sidestepped the question of how these different types would act towards a declining state per se; by assuming all states inherently maximize power, classical realism also missed the possibility that rising states might pursue varying degrees of support and cooperation. The basic insight, though, still stands: besides pursuing either predatory or supportive strategies, rising states can adopt varying degrees of predation or support.

Take, for instance, American strategy towards the declining United Kingdom in 1945-1949, and the declining Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the former case, the years immediately after World War Two saw the United States take very limited steps to prevent the decline of British power in Europe. This policy went so far that it was only after British power collapsed in the winter of 1947 that the United States changed course and provided extensive economic, diplomatic, and military assistance to the United Kingdom.<sup>32</sup> Forty years

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<sup>27</sup> Samuel R Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*; William Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1931).

<sup>28</sup> Ian Hill Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907* (London: Athlone, 1966); Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); William Kirby, Robert Ross, and Gong Li, eds., *The Normalization of U.S. - China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Schweller, "Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory," 18-20; Jason W. Davidson, "The Roots of Revisionism: Fascist Italy, 1922-39," *Security Studies* 11, no. 4 (2002): 125-159.

<sup>32</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*; John L. Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?," *Foreign Affairs* 52, no. 2 (January 1974): 386-402; Peter G. Boyle, "Britain, America and the Transition from Economic to Military Assistance, 1948-51," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 3 (1987): 521-538.

later, Soviet power in Europe collapsed due to Soviet economic, military, and political difficulties. Yet although the United States preyed upon the USSR throughout this period, newly released documents show that the United States was significantly more predatory in 1990, as American policymakers worked to reunify Germany, than when Soviet decline first began to weaken the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe in 1988-1989. In the earlier period, policymakers were hesitant to exacerbate Soviet problems, going so far as to encourage Communist governments in the region to remain in power. In 1990, however, American policy not only became extremely predatory, tried to accelerate the Soviet withdrawal from Germany, and denied any Soviet influence over the pace and outcome of German reunification, but did so on the very issue that was regarded as the most sensitive and important to Soviet security. In other words, the United States was moderately predatory in 1989, but extremely predatory in 1990.<sup>33</sup> Thus, just as some rising states pursue supportive strategies towards their declining peers, so too do states pursue varying degrees of support or predation. The goal of this project is to identify the origins of this inter- and intra-case variation, explain when declining state fears of rising states are correct, and explore when decline is not as pernicious as states seem to fear.

### **III. Rising State Strategy and Realist Theory: Shortfalls and Prospects for Recovery**

#### **A. Realism, Power Shifts, and Baseline Predictions**

Aside from the gap between declining state concerns and the weight of history, this project seeks to fill a theoretical hole in the realist literature on great power behavior during power shifts. Simply put, variation in rising state strategy is puzzling for scholars working in the realist tradition. Although a family of theories rather than a single argument, common to all realist accounts is an emphasis on states' pursuit of power and security as the primary driver of world politics.<sup>34</sup> As a body of literature, it ought to therefore be most concerned with the implications of fundamental change in the distribution of power borne of a power shift and able to provide significant insight into relatively rising state strategy. Yet as noted earlier, this is not the case. Not only are different strands of realist thinking contradictory, but each leaves significant variation in rising state strategy on the table. As a result, a detailed examination of the sources of rising state strategy can help scholars address a perennial debate in international relations theory, namely: when and why do states maximize power at the expense of other actors, when and why do they maximize security, and what causes states to act as power maximizers at some times but power satisficers at others?<sup>35</sup>

#### **B. Structural Realism: Indeterminate Predictions**

One argument comes out of the structural realist tradition. Structural realism, as formulated by Kenneth Waltz, offers that states operating in an anarchic international system try to survive as sovereign actors by providing for their security. Here, states seek power not as end unto itself, but rather as a means to a security end. As a result, balances of power tend to form and re-form as security-seeking states internally and externally balance threats to their security.

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4. For an overview, see Gregory F. Domber, "Skepticism and Stability: Reevaluating U.S. Policy During Poland's Democratic Transformation in 1989," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 3 (2011): 52-82; James Goldgeier and Derek Chollet, "Once Burned, Twice Shy? The Pause of 1989," in *Cold War Endgame: Oral History, Analysis, Debates*, ed. William C. Wohlforth (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 141-173; Mary E. Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1998): 31.

<sup>35</sup> On power maximization versus power satisfaction, see Barry R. Posen, "The Best Defense," *The National Interest*, Spring 2002.



Thus, this approach rightly suggests that decline may imperil the stability of the international system as balancing breaks down, misperception of the distribution of power increases, and declining states try to chain-gang their relatively stronger peers into contests with relatively rising states in order to address a looming power shift.

Structural realism contains the central insight that pressures from other actors in the international system affect state behavior. At the macro level, this core prediction might explain why rising states sometimes try to maximize power and other times maximize security: depending on the specific configurations of external power facing rising states, the system may allow for greater degrees of predation or encourage power satisficing behavior as other states balance a rising state's growing capabilities. Put differently, a rising state may improve its security by maximizing power under certain conditions, while under other conditions, maximizing power may threaten the security of other actors, cause them to balance, and thus undermine a rising state's security.<sup>36</sup> The possibility that systemic pressures may or may not incentivize power maximizing behavior is a powerful and potentially useful insight.

However, and as Waltz writes elsewhere, structural realism is a theory of international politics rather than a theory of foreign policy.<sup>37</sup> As the preceding discussion implies, it is thus indeterminate whether the theory predicts rising state security will be enhanced by acting as a power maximizer or power satisficer at any given point; predatory behavior vis-à-vis the USSR by the late Cold War United States is just as in line with structural realist insights as supportive behavior vis-à-vis the United Kingdom in the early Cold War since both policies helped ensure American security. Additional variables are therefore needed to round out the parsimonious structural realist framework and derive specific predictions for any particular rising state. This pushes us to look elsewhere to develop a specific theory of rising state policy towards declining great powers.

### C. Power Maximizing Realism: Predation Uber Alles

A second argument comes out of scholarship in the classical realist, hegemonic stability, and offensive realist traditions. Although these different strands make otherwise distinct predictions about the dynamics of the international system, they share a common assumption that states (especially rising states) maximize power where and when they can. As power maximizers, rising states therefore seek out opportunities to shift the distribution of power further in their favor at a declining state's expense. Mearsheimer's discussion of American strategy towards the Soviet Union is instructive. Writing in 1990, he argued that "states are principally concerned about their relative power position in the system; hence, they look for opportunities to take advantage of each other. If anything they prefer to see their adversaries decline, and thus will do whatever they can to speed up the process and maximize the distance of the fall."<sup>38</sup> In this view, rising states are on the hunt for declining state blood. As Lemke and Kugler describe, as decline occurs and power shifts, "the resulting disjunctures generate

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<sup>36</sup> Davide Fiammenghi, "The Security Curve and the Structure of International Politics: A Neorealist Synthesis," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 126–154.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (September 1996): 54–57.

<sup>38</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 53.

challenges for the dominant state and opportunities for the rising states in the system, who eventually will attempt to change the rules.”<sup>39</sup>

The notion of rising states as natural born killers is a powerful one and, as discussed, is a popular perspective among states in decline. It also aptly captures instances in which rising states adopted predatory strategies. The argument faces problems, however, accounting for cases of rising state support. That is, if rising states are on the lookout for opportunities to grow their capabilities and “do whatever they can to speed up [decline] and maximize the distance of the fall,” then instances in which rising states preserved declining states as great powers raise questions of the argument’s underlying logic. A similar issue relates to variation in the degree of rising state predation. If states maximize power at declining states’ expense, then they should logically increase the degree of predation as the distribution of power moves in their favor over time and they become relatively stronger. However, this hypothesis faces problems explaining cases, such as the post-1890s Anglo-American rapprochement and the post-1968 Chinese-American rapprochement, where the degree of predation *decreased* as the distribution of power moved in the rising state’s favor. Again, the empirical record suggests power maximization arguments are incomplete and need either refinement or additional variables to explain the full range of rising state strategies.

#### D. Offense-Defense Realism and Variation

A third and final argument comes from offense-defense realism.<sup>40</sup> Offense-defense theory has gone through several iterations over the last thirty years.<sup>41</sup> At its core, though, is an argument that war and coercion are more likely when geography, technology, and socio-political structures (“the offense-defense balance”) make it easier for states to aggress against each other; periods of “offense-dominance” also hinder international cooperation. Conversely, war and coercion are less likely, and cooperation easier to sustain, when geography, technology, and socio-political structures favor the defense and the system is “defense-dominant.” Applied to rise and decline, offense-defense arguments suggest predation should dominate during periods of offense-dominance, while defense-dominance breeds supportive strategies. That is, because offense-dominance makes aggression easier, it creates power maximization incentives that penalize weakening states. On the other hand, because defense-dominance makes it easier for states to obtain security for themselves without aggressing against other actors, rising states need not prey on decliners, decliners can more readily penalize states pursuing predation, and both risers and decliners can improve their security by avoiding steps that threaten each other; defense dominance thereby limits predation and creates incentives for support.

Because offense-defense theory is designed to explain variation in the propensity of states to war and challenge one another, it seemingly offers a way of accounting for intra- and inter-case variation in rising state predation and support. However, like power-maximizing realism, it encounters empirical anomalies. First, there are notable cases in which “defense dominance,”

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas Lemke and Jacek Kugler, “The Evolution of the Power Transition Perspective,” in *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of The War Ledger*, ed. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 9.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Van Evera, “Cult”; Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”; Glaser and Kaufmann, “What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?”; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” *International Organization* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 137–168.

<sup>41</sup> A good overview can be found in Lieber, *War and the Engineers*.

produced extreme forms of predation rather than causing supportive strategies. This is notably the case in the late Cold War when the United States intensely preyed on the Soviet Union despite the defensive revolution wrought by nuclear weapons.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, periods in which policymakers perceived the offense to be dominant produced rising state support.<sup>43</sup> This is most prominent in the Anglo-Russian rapprochement before 1914, and the increasingly intense support given to a declining Austria-Hungary by Germany.

A second problem comes from the precise nature of the intra-case variation. Because offense-defense theory focuses on slow moving variables such as the nature of military technology, the intra-case variation it explains should be similarly gradual and emerge haltingly over time. In practice, however, rising state strategy often changes rapidly, in some cases almost overnight. American strategy and the decline of the USSR is instructive. As described above and discussed in detail later in this project, American strategy went from moderately predatory to extremely predatory in the span of a few months in the winter of 1990 as the U.S. rejected prior efforts to pressure without directly challenging the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe and instead sought to directly evict the Soviets from Germany. Yet although American policy changed, but there was no concurrent shift in military technology, political constructs, or geography. As a result, the variables central to offense-defense theory could not have driven the changes in the case. Combined, the fact that we see predation during periods of defense-dominance, support during periods of offense-dominance, and variation in the degree of predation/support without a change in the offense-defense balance suggest offense-defense theory is similarly a problematic account of rising state strategy towards declining great powers.

#### E. Net Assessment: Realism and the Puzzle of Rising State Strategy

On balance, although realism as a school of thought should have much to say about the behavior of relatively rising states towards, each of the major strands of the realist tradition faces problems accounting for the empirical record. This presents an immediate theoretical puzzle. If rising states sometimes prey on declining states, sometimes support them, and exhibit different degrees of supportive or predatory behavior that is un- or under-explained by the current literature, then an effort to uncover the sources of this variation may help scholars better understand the origins of power- and security-seeking behavior more generally. This effort, in turn, can help bridge the different streams of realist thinking and begin integrating the different insights into a unified realist theory in the context of great power decline and rise. Thus, aside from the importance of this project to current policy debates and for addressing the chasm between declining state concerns and the historical record, this dissertation hopes to improve our theoretical understanding of rise and decline dynamics by linking what have heretofore been disparate realist arguments. Towards this end, this project derives and tests a unified realist model of rising state strategy towards declining great powers.

### IV. **Alternative Explanations**

Absent a consistent realist explanation of great power decline and rise, alternate explanations from the liberal tradition have moved in to fill the theoretical gap. If realist arguments as a group suggest power shifts are fraught with danger and problems for both the system and declining states themselves, then liberal accounts offer more room for optimism. For

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<sup>42</sup> on nuclear weapons as defense-dominant, see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*; Van Evera, "Cult."

arguments in this camp, not only can power shifts be peacefully managed, but declining states themselves can take steps that discourage rising state predation and encourage support.

Two liberal arguments have gained particular salience in the policy and academic worlds as potential accounts of rising state-declining state relations. The first is Democratic Peace Theory. As I discuss in the following chapter, Democratic Peace Theory suggests that the spread of liberal democracy discourages competitions for power among the great powers and can thus breed rising state support during power shifts. Since the end of the Cold War, democratic peace arguments have been used by American foreign policy elites to both predict how rising states might treat the United States if and when American dominance begins to erode, as well as offer recommendations as to what policies the United States should pursue to ensure a benign world for itself as other great powers begin to rise.<sup>44</sup> The George W. Bush Administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy* hinted at the logic, noting that the United States was "attentive to the possible renewal of old patterns of great power competition" as states such as India and China developed their economic and military capabilities and proposed the key to avoiding such competition was promoting a "balance of power that favors freedom."<sup>45</sup> The subsequent 2006 *National Security Strategy* was even more explicit.<sup>46</sup> Building on ideas developed during the Clinton Administration, the report concluded that whether the United States and other "main centers of global power" enjoyed cooperative relations hinged on "states' treatment of their own citizens."<sup>47</sup> That is, because "states that are governed well are most inclined to behave well," the United States needed to "encourage all our partners to expand liberty, and to respect the rule of law and the dignity of the individual, as the surest way to [. . .] cement close relations with the United States." Faced with rising states such as China and India, the spread and deepening of democratic institutions would ensure that a changing distribution of power "will contribute to regional and international security."<sup>48</sup> Similar recommendations were endorsed by the Princeton Project on National Security (many of whose members advised the Obama Administration) and by Republican candidate Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential election.<sup>49</sup> If these arguments are correct, then the United States should devote its resources to spreading liberal democracy in order to ensure a peaceful landing if and when the United States declines.

A second argument comes from Institutionalist Theory. Broadly speaking, Institutionalist Theory argues that the spread and deepening of international institutions can breed cooperation and support amidst a shifting distribution of power by giving rising and declining states a mutual

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<sup>44</sup> For overviews, see Thomas Donnelly, *Rising Powers and Agents of Change*, National Security Outlook (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, January 2006); Zalmay Khalilzad, "Losing the Moment? The United States and the World After the Cold War," *Washington Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 94; G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, eds., *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century: Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security* (Princeton: Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, 2006), 47–49.

<sup>45</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002), 25–26.

<sup>46</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2006).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 36; William Jefferson Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, DC: The White House, October 1998), 33–35, 47; William Jefferson Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 1999), 25–27, 36; William Jefferson Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 2000).

<sup>48</sup> Bush, *NSS 2006*, 40–42.

<sup>49</sup> Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Liberty Under Law*, 49; Mitt Romney, *An American Century: A Strategy to Secure America's Enduring Interests and Ideals* (Romney for President, October 2011), 5.

stake in maintaining the international status quo. As with Democratic Peace Theory, Institutional Theory is prominent in the policy and academic worlds. Then-Undersecretary of State Robert Zoellick, for instance, argued that the United States and a relatively rising China could best cooperate with one another if China became a “responsible stakeholder” in the international system and embraced the international institutions sponsored by the United States in the post-1945 era; the 2006 National Security Strategy reiterated this theme.<sup>50</sup> The Obama Administration has also embraced this logic, arguing that to “achieve a just and sustainable order that advances our shared security and prosperity, we are [ . . . ] deepening our partnerships with emerging powers and encouraging them to play a greater role” in international economic and security institutions.<sup>51</sup> And in a range of articles and reports, prominent scholars such as Ikenberry, Slaughter, and Deudney propose that by embedding rising and declining states in common international institutions, “power transitions are likely to be more peaceful and incremental [ . . . ] than in the past” by giving rising states “multiple access points and pathways for integration” with the international status quo.<sup>52</sup> This school of thought implies the United States should devote itself to deepening international institutions and embedding rising states in their structures to ensure a peaceful and benign international environment as American power wanes.<sup>53</sup>

Overall, Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory offer optimistic visions of rising state strategy towards declining great powers. So long as declining states make the right policy choices today, they can discourage rising state predation and encourage supportive strategies even as the distribution of power shifts in the future. Yet while these arguments are prominent in both the academic and policy worlds, no study systematically evaluates their claims. Thus, in addition to testing a refined version of realism as a theory of rising states strategy towards declining great powers, this project also assesses the analytic traction afforded by democratic peace and institutionalist arguments coming out of the liberal tradition. In doing so, I hope to establish not just whether realism can be repaired to offer insight into rising state-declining state relations, but also which theoretical tradition offers the most insight into rising state strategy towards declining great powers in order to better guide ongoing policy debates.

## V. Conclusion: The Path Forward

Having outlined the research questions and their importance to both policy and scholarly debates, the remainder of this project proceeds as follows. Chapter Two details my unified realist theory of rise and decline – what I term “Realist Decline Theory” – and discusses testing

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<sup>50</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, “Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?” (presented at the Remarks to National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, Washington, DC, September 21, 2005); Bush, *NSS 2006*, 41.

<sup>51</sup> Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 45.

<sup>52</sup> G. John Ikenberry and Thomas Wright, *Rising Powers and Global Institutions* (Washington, DC: The Century Foundation, 2008), 11–12; also G. John Ikenberry, “Woodrow Wilson, The Bush Administration, and the Future of Liberal Internationalism,” in *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. G. John Ikenberry et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1–24; Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); G. John Ikenberry, Vikram J. Singh, and Shawn Brimley, “An Agenda for Liberal International Renewal,” in *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, ed. Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimley (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2008), 45–59; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (April 1999): 179–196; G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), chap. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Liberty Under Law*.

procedures. To ensure a three-cornered test of my integrated realist argument, I also use Chapter Two to detail competing, non-realist explanations of rising state behavior drawn from Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory. Next, Chapters Three and Four test my argument against its competitors using the history of American foreign policy towards the declining USSR over the course of 1989 – 1990. These chapters leverage intra-case variation and extensive qualitative research to show that Realist Decline Theory outperforms its challengers. Chapters Five and Six subsequently provide a second test of the argument, using the history of America and, to a lesser extent, Soviet foreign policy towards the declining United Kingdom after the Second World War for empirical and theoretical leverage. Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the results of the tests, delineates the implications of my research for international relations theory, outlines future avenues for research, and discusses policy implications.

## Chapter Two:

### Realist Decline Theory and Its Competitors

#### I. Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the central questions of this project and the puzzle of rising state strategy towards declining great powers. In this chapter, I detail my competing theory – what I term Realist Decline Theory – by laying out its core logic and contrasting it with competing explanations drawn from Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory.

To preview the discussion, Realist Decline Theory is situated in the structural realist tradition. It argues that states debating what strategies to adopt vis-à-vis a declining peer are forced to consider the costs and benefits of either preying on the declining state, or supporting the decliner and helping it maintain its place in the great power ranks. As the costs and benefits wax and wane over time and space, states adopt varying degrees of predation or support for purely self-interested reasons. Two variables – the polarity of the international system and the declining state’s own military posture – combine to shape the nature of the security consequences and propel the relatively rising state’s strategy. Thus, unlike power-maximizing realist arguments, Realist Decline Theory offers a more optimistic assessment of the fate of declining states as they are not universally preyed upon by their rising peers. Finally, and using a basic offense-defense realist insight, the declining state’s own military choices strongly influence the degree of support or predation. I elaborate on my argument and the specific predictions that follow later in this work.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds in several sections. Following this introduction, I define what I mean by great power decline and outline an approach to studying the strategies used to manage another state’s decline. Next, I discuss the underlying assumptions of Realist Decline Theory. Subsequently, I explicate the costs and benefits a rising state may face from preying upon a declining great power. I then discuss how polarity and posture shape influence these costs and benefits, and thus determine a rising state’s incentives to pursue varying degrees of predation or support. From this, I discuss the predictions that flow from this theory. To lay the foundation for a fuller test of my argument, I thereupon outline competing explanations and predictions derived from Democratic Peace Theory and Liberal Institutional Theory. Afterwards, I review the methodology used to test these arguments. I conclude by previewing subsequent chapters.

#### II. Defining Decline

##### A. Conceptualizing Decline

I define relative decline *one great power’s sustained loss of a significant share of its economic and military capabilities relative to one or more other great powers*. There are seven elements to this definition. First, decline is about change among the *great powers*. Modifying Mearsheimer’s definition, I define a great power as a state with sufficient economic and military assets “to put up a serious fight in an all-out conventional war against the most powerful state in the system.”<sup>54</sup> Second, decline reflects changes in *economic and military capabilities*. This

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<sup>54</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 5.

approach treats ‘power’ as material assets rather than as international influence. I do so because capabilities are necessary to obtain international influence.<sup>55</sup>

Third, this definition is agnostic as to the *source* of decline. Decline can occur in two ways. First, a state can grow absolutely weaker over time if, for instance, its economy shrinks, thereby causing other states to become relatively stronger. Second, even if a given state continues growing, it can still decline in relative terms if another state’s capabilities expand at a faster rate. Britain’s pre-1914 decline, for instance, resulted from the superior growth of the American and German economies that reduced Britain’s economic lead.<sup>56</sup> My definition accommodates both types.

Fourth, relative decline is about *sustained* change in the distribution of power. Decline matters because it creates windows of vulnerability that leave a great power worse off tomorrow than today. These windows give relatively rising states opportunities to exploit the decliner’s worsening position.<sup>57</sup> For this situation to emerge, rising states need time to respond to the changing distribution of power.<sup>58</sup> Focusing on sustained change – meaning that a state slipping down the great power ranks is unable to recover for a politically meaningful period – accommodates this situation.<sup>59</sup>

Fifth, decline is about *significant* losses to a state’s relative power, that is, a fundamental, large-scale shift in power.<sup>60</sup> A number of variables affect how large a shift is necessary for fundamental change, but the notion stands: decline refers to a major change in the distribution of power rather than small oscillations in great power performance.<sup>61</sup>

Sixth, decline reflects changes among the *great powers as a set*. In other words, it reflects shifts in power among the strongest states in the system, as well as changes in which actors constitute the strongest states. This is the most contentious part of my definition, as scholars are divided over what actors matter when discussing decline. Analysts working in the power transition and hegemonic stability theory traditions define decline as the emergence of a state approaching parity with the strongest actor in the system (i.e., the hegemon); decline is thus an issue of the dyadic relationship between a hegemon and a rising challenger.<sup>62</sup> In contrast, scholars working within the classical realist, structural realist, and liberal traditions focus on great powers as a set: decline can occur as the strongest state moves into second place or, for instance, as the third place state moves into fourth place.<sup>63</sup>

I follow the latter approach because focusing solely on the two strongest actors risks understating the importance and frequency of decline. Theoretically, even if a state is “only” the third strongest state in the system, its decline might lead it to take risky behaviors that increase

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<sup>55</sup> Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*; A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958).

<sup>56</sup> Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*.

<sup>57</sup> Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,” 87–88.

<sup>58</sup> Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 5–6.

<sup>59</sup> MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment.”

<sup>60</sup> Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*.

<sup>61</sup> Van Evera, *Causes of War*.

<sup>62</sup> Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*; Jonathan M. DiCicco and Jack S. Levy, “Power Shifts and Problem Shifts,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 6 (December 1, 1999): 686–687.

<sup>63</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations; the Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1954); Ludwig Dehio, *The Precarious Balance: Four Centuries of the European Power Struggle* (New York: Knopf, 1962); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2001); Robert O. Keohane, “The Demand for International Regimes,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (April 1982): 325–355.



international tensions and the likelihood of war.<sup>64</sup> Empirically, scholars ascribe important international developments to shifts in power among states that qualify as great powers but not hegemons or challengers. For example, the emergence of Europe's bipolar order hinged on the postwar decline of British power, while the decline of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman power spurred European rivalries that contributed to the First World War.<sup>65</sup> Capturing the range of great power declines that are empirically meaningful suggests a non-hegemonic standard.

Finally, decline may reflect either a *downward change in the ranking* of one or more great powers (e.g., decline from first to second place), or a *loss of power within an existing ranking* (e.g., State A declining from 50 to 40 percent of State B's GDP). This is also contentious. Recent research treats decline as a change in the ordinal great power rankings.<sup>66</sup> This contrasts with earlier work that allows decline to occur even without change in ordinal rankings.<sup>67</sup> I follow the latter approach as there is no reason to assume ordinal rankings are more or less important than shifts of power within an existing great power system. A simple thought exercise demonstrates the point. Consider a multipolar system with four great powers. At the start, State A has 35 percent of the capabilities in the system, State B has 30 percent, State C 25 percent, and State D 10 percent. Now imagine that the distribution of power changes as states A and C gain at B and D's expense, such that a few years later the distribution of capabilities is State A – 50 percent; B – 20 percent; C – 25 percent, and D – 5 percent. With 50 percent of system capabilities, A is now stronger than any but a combination of all the other actors in the system: B, C, and D have all declined relative to A, and A may be able to challenge their security with little fear of military defeat. Focusing on ordinal rankings alone, however, would miss this fundamental shift and the decline in B, C, and D's fortunes. Instead, the only change captured by ordinal assessment is C's overtake of B. This may be an important development, but it is likely to pale in comparison to these states having to deal with significant losses relative to A. To capture the possibility that shifts in capabilities within rank may be as or more important than shifts in ranks, I allow decline to reflect either a change within the great power ranks or among the rankings themselves.

## B. Measuring Great Power Decline

I generate a list of declining states in two stages. First, I define and identify a list of great powers. Second, using this list, I identify shifts in the distribution of power that qualify as decline. In the chapters themselves, I also check for evidence that policymakers recognized a change in the distribution of power.

### *i. Identifying Great Powers*

To qualify as a great power, a state must meet two criteria. First, it must hold significant aggregate capabilities. Second, it must be able to make a good showing in an all-out conventional fight against the strongest state in the system. To meet the first criteria, I modify MacDonald and Parent's recent approach and look for states holding at least 10 percent of the overall resources in a given region (e.g., Europe, East Asia). Because major conventional war

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<sup>64</sup> Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 37–42.

<sup>65</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*; Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*.

<sup>66</sup> MacDonald and Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment"; Robert J. Lieber, *Power and Willpower in the American Future: Why the United States Is Not Destined to Decline* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Beckley, "China's Century?"

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Grieco, Robert Powell, and Duncan Snidal, "The Relative-Gains Problem for International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 727–743; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979; Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*.

will see states mobilize their societies for international competition, I focus after 1950 on states holding at least 10 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a region. 1950 was chosen as a rough point after which states had recovered from the damage of World War Two. Here, I use GDP data developed by Angus Maddison. Before 1950, I use the Correlates of War (COW) Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC). CINC scores are a reasonable proxy for the pre-1950 period as 1) the Second World War helped reveal the distribution of power in Europe in a fully-mobilized fight, and 2) only three states potentially able to shape European politics (the U.S., Soviet Union, and United Kingdom) survived the war roughly intact, such that overall GDP levels are unreliable for this period.

After generating a list of states with at least 10 percent of the capabilities of a region, I determine which states held at least one-fourth the resources of the strongest state therein. The one-fourth threshold is an artificial construct to capture Mearsheimer’s qualification that a great power must be able to make a fair showing against the strongest state in the system. A 25 percent cutoff comports well with historical comparisons. The USSR, for example, is described as one of the two poles in the bipolar Cold War competition despite a GDP that ranged between thirty and forty percent of U.S. GDP, whereas Britain, France, and Germany held roughly 15 percent of U.S. GDP and are considered lesser powers.

Using this approach, the European great powers since 1945 were the United Kingdom (through 1949), the USSR (through 1991), and the United States (ongoing). Before 1949, the United Kingdom was the weakest the three surviving European great powers, but was nevertheless quite powerful in geopolitical terms as it held roughly half the capabilities of the Soviet Union as late as 1948.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the late Cold War Soviet Union was significantly weaker than the United States, but was still much more powerful relative to any other actor.

**Table 2.1: European Great Powers since 1945**

State	Years as Great Power
United Kingdom	1945-1949
Soviet Union	1945-1991
United States	1945-

*ii. Identifying Decline*

To identify declining great powers and the periods of their decline, I measure change in the distribution of capabilities among these states. The hallmarks of this change are that one or more states lose a significant share of their relative capabilities, within a short period of time, and are unable to recover from the trend. To meet these criteria, I define decline as situations in which 1) a great power loses at least 5 percent of its share of great power capabilities, 2) within a ten year window, after 3) at least five years of sustained losses to great power capability share. Methodology and justification are presented in the Appendix. When these conditions are met, I code the situation as a case of great power decline and begin analyzing the strategies of other states after this point. I continue this analysis until the declining state either drops from the great power ranks entirely (falling below the 10 percent overall share/25 percent share of strongest state thresholds), begins to recover as identified by 5 or more years of positive growth in capability share, or a decade elapses. Table 2.2 summarizes the results.

<sup>68</sup> Unavailable when I began this project, Paul Avey’s recent work also includes Britain as a great power nearly on-par with the Soviet Union immediately after World War Two; see Paul C. Avey, “Confronting Soviet Power: U.S. Policy During the Early Cold War,” *International Security* 36, no. 4 (April 1, 2012): 159–164.

**Table 2.2: Declining European Great Powers, 1945-2008<sup>69</sup>**

State	Years of Decline	Relatively Rising State(s)
United Kingdom	1945-1949	United States, Soviet Union
Soviet Union	1989-1991	United States

### III. Dependent Variable: Rising State Strategy

Decline gives rise to debates as to how a declining state will provide security for itself at a time when resources are growing scarce and the margin for strategic missteps is narrowing. To obtain security in lean times, a declining great power must respond to the policies other, relatively rising states adopt in response to its changing fortunes.<sup>70</sup> Reflecting this situation, the dependent variable of this study is a relatively rising state's strategy towards a declining great power.

Rising state strategies are substantively important for declining great powers. Because power is a means to security, declining states live in a world where their resources may be insufficient to address the array of threats they face. As a result, the policies adopted by relatively rising states help determine the quality of the decliner's international political life.<sup>71</sup> If a rising state decides to challenge a declining state's security, the decliner may find itself involved in rivalries it cannot sustain and wars it cannot win. In this situation, a declining great power can find its security imperiled by needing to accept defeat, reducing its international presence and risking another state gaining control over vital interests, or exhausting itself trying to balance more powerful foreign threats. Conversely, if a rising state comes to the aid of a decliner, then the declining state can find allies that deter other states from taking advantage of its weakness. As a result, a declining state may be in a more secure international position than would be the case if left to its own devices. For scholars interested in assessing the consequences of great power decline, the strategies of rising states towards declining great powers are a good place to begin.

#### A. Definition and Concept

I define strategy as a political-military ends-means chain adopted by a rising state designed to structure relations with a declining state.<sup>72</sup> Using this definition, I identify four strategies a rising state can pursue. These vary by 1) the goals a rising state pursues and 2) the intensity of the means used to achieve its goals.

##### i. Goals: Predation versus Support

Rising states can pursue one of two goals towards a declining great power. By goal, I mean the rising state's plans for structuring the declining state's place among the great powers.<sup>73</sup> First, a rising state can try to eliminate a declining state as a great power and push it down or from the great power ranks.<sup>74</sup> When a state pursues this goal, I refer to it as pursuing a *predatory*

<sup>69</sup> Although I did not know it when this dataset was being generated, Wohlforth also codes 1989 as the start of Soviet decline; see William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter, -1995 1994): 103.

<sup>70</sup> Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War."

<sup>71</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

<sup>72</sup> Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 4.

<sup>73</sup> For a related approach to strategy, see Brendan R. Green, "The Systemic and Ideological Sources of Grand Strategic Doctrine: American Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century" (PhD Diss., Department of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010), 27.

<sup>74</sup> Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*.

*strategy*: a rising state looks to shift the distribution of power further against a decliner and exacerbate the decliner's relative losses. Because power is a means to security in an anarchic system, predatory strategies harm the declining state's security and worsen its situation in world politics.

Alternatively, a rising state can pursue a *supportive strategy*. With support, a rising state looks to slow or prevent losses to a declining state's capabilities and sustain the declining state as a great power. Although support is the inverse of predation, existing scholarship has left the phenomena under-developed and understudied.<sup>75</sup> Drawing on the notion of rising state predation, however, supportive strategies emerge when a rising maintains a declining state as a great power by working to protect the decliner's power and security at a time of weakness.

ii. *Means: Intense versus Cautious*

Rising states pursue predatory and supportive strategies using the diplomatic and military means at their disposal. To prey upon a declining state, a rising state must either 1) cause the declining state to waste its capabilities and exhaust itself, or 2) directly take capabilities away from the declining state. Rising states have three options in this process. First, a rising state can maintain or escalate diplomatic and military disputes with the declining state. Maintaining or escalating disputes may require the declining state to expend its resources balancing challengers. An extreme variant of this option is what Mearsheimer calls a "bait and bleed" policy in which a rising state maneuvers a declining state into a competition with another state to exhaust both of them; the option is analogous to American efforts to sustain the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan in order to exhaust the fraying USSR.<sup>76</sup> Second, a rising state may try to weaken the decliner's economy and society by denying it critical materials, technological inputs, and encouraging domestic opposition groups to challenge a ruling government. Such economic attacks and domestic subversion limit the resources a declining state can mobilize for international purposes.<sup>77</sup> Finally, a rising state can try to strip the decliner of allies or threaten a war against the decliner that will directly undermine the declining state's capabilities and harm its security.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Although classical realists allowed that some rising states might be "satisfied" with the international status quo, they also argue rising states seek to expand their power and influence. It is difficult to understand how a rising state can be interested in expanding, but also be satisfied; there is a tension in classical realist arguments. Regardless, existing research focuses on when and why rising states adopt predatory strategies towards decliners and I am unaware of a study that examines the origins of rising state "satisfaction." See Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*; A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics*, 2d [rev.] (New York: Knopf, 1968); Randall L. Schweller, "Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory," in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1–31; Douglas Lemke and William Reed, "Power Is Not Satisfaction: A Comment on De Soysa, Oneal, and Park," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (1998): 511–516; for partial exceptions, however, see Steven Lobell, *The Challenge of Hegemony: Grand Strategy, Trade, and Domestic Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003); Jason W. Davidson, "The Roots of Revisionism: Fascist Italy, 1922–39," *Security Studies* 11, no. 4 (2002): 125–159.

<sup>76</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 153–154; Stephen M. Walt, "What Obama Could Learn from Muhammad Ali," *Foreign Policy Blogs*, April 5, 2012, [http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/04/05/time\\_to\\_rope\\_a\\_dope](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/04/05/time_to_rope_a_dope).

<sup>77</sup> For claims that economic and political subversion were critical to the decline of the USSR, see Norman Bailey, *The Strategic Plan That Won The Cold War: National Security Decision Directive 75* (McLean, VA: Potomac Foundation, 1998). Interviews with former Reagan Administration officials confirmed this perspective; author interviews with Norman Bailey (16 June 2011); Tom Reed (10 March 2011); Roger W. Robinson (9 August 2011).

<sup>78</sup> On strategies of splitting opposing coalitions, see Timothy W. Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 155–189.

To support a declining state, on the other hand, a rising state 1) reduces the capabilities a declining state uses to maintain its security so that the decliner does not exhaust itself, and/or 2) transfers capabilities to the declining state. Again, a rising state has three general options. First, it can settle outstanding political and military disputes with a declining state. Settling disputes means that a declining state does not have to expend resources balancing a rising state. Second, a rising state can extend diplomatic and military guarantees such as alliance offers to a declining state. As noted earlier, these guarantees help deter or defeat other states from engaging in predation.<sup>79</sup> Finally, a rising state can directly transfer economic and military resources in the form of economic and military aid to a declining state. Much like the Marshall Plan after World War Two, resource transfers can subsidize a declining state's own capabilities.<sup>80</sup>

However, the intensity with which states use these means to pursue predation or support also varies over time. By intensity, I mean the resources a rising state invests in aiding or weakening a declining state and the extent to which a rising state is willing to see its policies compromised based on other states' input. A rising state's means are *intense* when it uses any and all means at its disposal to undermine or buttress a declining state's position, and sustains these actions irrespective of signals of approval or disapproval from the other states in the system. For example, when a rising state strips a declining state of allies or launches a war against the decliner, it is using intense means to substantially weaken a declining state by resolutely using all of its capabilities to challenge the decliner. On the other hand, means are *cautious* when a rising state refuses to invest substantial economic, military, or political resources (relative to other policy options) in challenging or aiding a declining state's position, and is willing to reshape its policies based on the approval or disapproval of other actors. A rising state's provision of symbolic or rhetorical diplomatic support to a decliner is evidence of cautious means: by circumscribing the extent to which the rising state identifies itself with the decliner's political position, it limits the extent to which it must come to the decliner's aid if war breaks out and the likelihood other states will retaliate against it if the decliner behaves recklessly.<sup>81</sup>

The difference between cautious and intense means is illustrated by the change in American strategy at Cold War's end. Simply put, there is a qualitative difference between American efforts in 1989 to encourage reform in members of the Warsaw Pact that might gradually move these states out of the Soviet orbit, and the all-out effort to reunify German, place the reunified state in NATO, and destroy the Warsaw Pact after 1990.<sup>82</sup> In 1989, the United States used cautious means: by limiting its effort to undermine the Soviet position in Eastern Europe to rhetorical support for East European reforms rather than (as some hoped) an effort to immediately pull these states out of the Soviet orbit, the United States limited its exposure if the USSR were to launch a crackdown in the region, and consciously tried to avoid linking U.S.-Soviet relations with the fate of Eastern Europe. Conversely, American means were intense in 1990 as the United States focused on using all of its diplomatic and military means to pull East Germany – the USSR's premier ally – out into the American orbit and refused to back

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<sup>79</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>80</sup> William C. Cromwell, "The Marshall Plan, Britain, and the Cold War," *Review of International Studies* 8, no. 4 (1982): 233–249; Scott Jackson, "Prologue to the Marshall Plan: The Origins of the American Commitment for a European Recovery Program," *The Journal of American History* 65, no. 4 (March 1979): 1043–1068.

<sup>81</sup> For a similar approach, see Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 37–42.

<sup>82</sup> Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of U.S. Policy in Europe, 1989–1992* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997).

away from this effort even when Soviet opposition spiked. Although the United States consistently preyed on the USSR in 1989-1990, it did so with varying degrees of intensity.

**B. Range of Variation**

Combined, the different goals pursued and means used give rise to four ideal-type rising state strategies. These are summarized in Figure 1 and discussed below. Please note that although I discuss four ideal types, I recognize the dependent variable could also be conceptualized continuously; the key is finding some way to make finer-grained distinctions among the ends and means of rising state behavior. Nevertheless, the categories discussed below correspond to what I see as the four basic strategies a relatively rising state may adopt towards a declining state and provide a good baseline for future research.

**Figure 2.1: Range of Rising State Strategies**

		<u>Rising State Goals</u>	
		Eliminate Decliner as Great Power	Preserve Decliner as Great Power
<u>Rising State Means</u>	Intense	Extreme Predation	Extreme Support
	Cautious	Moderate Predation	Moderate Support

*i. Extreme Predation*

First, a rising state may pursue a strategy of Extreme Predation. With Extreme Predation, the rising state’s goal is predatory – to push the declining state from the ranks of the great powers – and the means used are intense – to undercut the decliner’s capabilities as directly as possible using any and all means at the rising state’s disposal. The United States, for instance, pursued Extreme Predation toward the United Kingdom throughout the nineteenth century. As Miranda Priebe points out, before the rapprochement of the late 1890s, the United States assiduously worked to evict British power from North America, even fighting a war and risking several militarized crises with the United Kingdom for the privilege.<sup>83</sup> Extreme Predation is therefore marked by policies that sap significant resources from the declining state, undercut the declining state’s capabilities, and directly threaten the declining state’s security even at significant cost and risk to the rising state. Examples of such policies include waging war against the declining state, targeting the declining state’s allies, diplomatically isolating the decliner, and waging economic

<sup>83</sup> Priebe, PhD Dissertation (Forthcoming).

warfare (see Figure 2.2). Extreme Predation represents the classic fear of declining states, namely, a situation in which a rising state’s policies significantly weaken the declining state and leave it vulnerable to the unknown and potentially-hostile intentions of its competitors.

**Figure 2.2: Extreme Predation with Policy Indicators**

		<u>Rising State Goals</u>	
		Eliminate Decliner as Great Power	Preserve Decliner as Great Power
<u>Rising State Means</u>	Intense	Extreme Predation  <b>Indicators:</b> Alliance predation War/Offensive Alliance Economic warfare Diplomatic isolation	Extreme Support
	Cautious	Moderate Predation	Moderate Support

ii. *Moderate Predation*

Second, a rising state might pursue Moderate Predation. Here, a rising state’s goal is to weaken and eliminate the declining state as a great power, but it pursues this goal using cautious means that avoid direct challenges to the declining state. Specifically, a rising state uses limited investments of its own resources to make small, incremental gains at a declining state’s expense without causing immediate swings in the distribution of power, and backs away from even these steps if other great powers begin to oppose the effort. In effect, a rising state tries to cause limited shifts in the distribution of power in its (the rising state’s) favor while limits its exposure and resource commitment. Although these changes may accrue over time and lead to a fundamental shift in the distribution of power, there is no expectation of dramatic change in the near future.

Rising state policies indicative of Moderate Predation are refusal to negotiate over outstanding political differences with a declining state, making asymmetric bargaining demands that will disproportionately hurt the decliner, and launching limited arms races that may gradually yield a military advantage to the riser (Figure 2.3). The archetype of a Moderate Predation strategy is that which the United States pursued in the period leading up to the Revolutions of 1989. As I explain below, the United States sought to create political and economic conditions that would undermine Soviet influence in Eastern Europe over time and hinder the USSR’s ability to threaten the West, but which did not seek to immediately move the states of the Warsaw Pact out of the Soviet orbit.

**Figure 2.3: Moderate Predation with Policy Indicators**

		<u>Rising State Goals</u>	
		Eliminate Decliner as Great Power	Preserve Decliner as Great Power
<u>Rising State Means</u>	Intense	Extreme Predation	Extreme Support
	Cautious	Moderate Predation <b>Indicators:</b> Negotiation refusals Asymmetric demands Limited arms races	Moderate Support

*iii. Moderate Support*

Third, a rising state may adopt a Moderate Support strategy. With Moderate Support, a rising state's goal is to maintain a declining state as a great power. However, the means employed are limited: a rising state is not prepared to incur significant risks or expend significant resources of its own to aid the decliner. Instead, while a rising state is willing to take low-cost and low-risk efforts to signal a generic interest in preserving the declining state, prevent other states from challenging the declining state, and reduce the capabilities the declining state must use to provide security for itself, the rising state is unwilling to go beyond a fairly low threshold in support of these objectives. Thus, the hallmarks of Moderate Support are limited diplomatic and military concessions to the declining state and a clear sense of the limits to which a rising state will go to maintain the existing distribution of power. Illustrative policies are the provision of token or ambiguous political and economic assistance, and the scaling back of arms races. These policies forego opportunities for a rising state to shift the distribution of power against a declining state and make it somewhat easier for the declining state to provide security for itself by limiting the threat posed to the declining state's security, but neither fully identify the riser with the decliner's security nor see the rising state use substantial resources of its own to come to the declining state's aid. Figure 2.4 provides a summary.

American behavior towards the United Kingdom in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War corresponds to a Moderately Supportive strategy. By the end of World War Two, the United States wanted a declining Britain to play a significant role in Europe to hedge against a revived Germany and help balance the Soviet Union. It was therefore willing to offer Britain limited economic assistance and provide symbolic political-military cooperation at a time of British weakness. However, the United States also refused to formally commit itself to Britain's (or Europe's) defense, and refused to provide the economic aid British and American officials believed necessary to rebuild Britain's shattered economy. In effect, American policymakers wanted Britain to remain a great power, were willing to offer some limited steps in



pursuit of this objective, but were unwilling to make more fundamental sacrifices for the sake of the United Kingdom.<sup>84</sup>

**Figure 2.4: Moderate Support with Policy Indicators**  
Rising State Goals

		Eliminate Decliner as Great Power	Preserve Decliner as Great Power
		Rising State Means	Intense Extreme Predation
Cautious	Moderate Predation	Moderate Support  <b>Indicators:</b> <b>Token political support</b> <b>Limited economic aid</b> <b>Ending arms races</b>	

iv. *Extreme Support*

Finally, a rising state might adopt a strategy of Extreme Support. Extreme Support is a strategy in which a rising state uses intense means (i.e., it is willing to bear significant expense and take large risks) to pursue the goal of preserving a declining state as a great power. To do so, a rising state defines a declining state as a vital security interest, takes steps to strengthen a declining state, and actively tries to prevent other states from growing stronger at the declining state’s expense by using its own resources to come to the declining state’s aid. In effect, Extreme Support sees a rising state help the declining state provide security for itself by subsidizing and reinforcing a declining state’s capabilities. Policies indicative of Extreme Support are the provision of extensive economic and military aid to a declining state, offers of diplomatic guarantees, and the formation of a military alliance (Figure 2.5). Historically, Extreme Support characterized American strategy towards the United Kingdom after 1947. Whereas the United States earlier worked to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power using low costs and limited means, after 1947 the floodgates of American assistance opened as Britain received substantial economic aid via the Marshall Plan, as well as military guarantees via the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

<sup>84</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*; Terry Anderson, *The United States, Great Britain, and the Cold War, 1944-1947* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981).

**Figure 2.5: Extreme Support with Policy Indicators**  
Rising State Goals

		Eliminate Decliner as Great Power	Preserve Decliner as Great Power
<u>Rising State Means</u>	Intense	Extreme Predation	Extreme Support  <b>Indicators:</b> Alliance offers Large scale foreign aid Diplomatic guarantees
	Cautious	Moderate Predation	Moderate Support

#### IV. Foundations of Realist Decline Theory

##### A. Security, Power Maximization, and Balancing

To explain variation in the predatory or supportive nature of rising state strategy, this project advances what I call Realist Decline Theory. Realist Decline Theory is rooted in the structural realist tradition, but complements a Waltzian focus on structure with insights from power maximizing realism and offense-defense realism. It argues that states operating in an anarchic system seek to survive as sovereign units and to advance their security by operating with as few threats to their vital interests as possible.<sup>85</sup> To obtain security, I argue that states look to gain power: states seek to grow their economic and military capabilities relative to other actors. In anarchy, power is the *ultima ratio* for ensuring state security and settling conflicts of interest. Power therefore helps if a state goes to war and shapes bargaining over vital interests in peace.<sup>86</sup> As a result, states try to gain capabilities of their own while undercutting the capabilities of their peers.

The international system, however, limits how far power maximization can proceed. Because all states seek power as a means to security, a given state can grow only so far before its peers worry about its mounting capabilities, move to protect themselves, and counter the trend by balancing. Balancing occurs as states 1) ally and pool capabilities with one another (“external balancing”), and 2) develop their individual capabilities to confront potential threats (“internal

<sup>85</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. For definitions of “security,” see David A. Baldwin, “The Concept of Security,” *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 1997): 13; Arnold Wolfers, ““National Security” as an Ambiguous Symbol,” *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 1952): 485.

<sup>86</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations; the Struggle for Power and Peace*, 1st ed. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948); Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995); Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1999).

balancing”).<sup>87</sup> The net effect is that states respond to changes in the distribution of power by countering others’ growth in order to protect themselves.<sup>88</sup> As a result, states that constantly seek greater capabilities can wind up in a less secure position as other states balance, offset the gains from aggrandizement, and leave the power maximizing state in a more tense and conflict-prone environment. As Snyder offers, blindly maximizing power is likely “to undermine [state] power and security by provoking an overwhelming coalition of opposing states.”<sup>89</sup>

Because balancing can erase the gains from aggrandizement, states will forego growing their power when doing so promises to hurt their security by leading other states to balance. States may want to be power maximizers, but they will first act as power satisficers, defined as actors who value the security afforded by their current capabilities rather than the capabilities they could obtain through aggrandizement. Put differently, states grow their power where they can, but avoid power maximization when they must.<sup>90</sup> Thus, states try to identify opportunities to maximize power while constantly assessing whether power maximization threatens to lead other states to balance against them. As threats and opportunities change over time, so do state calculations over the benefits of power maximization and thus whether states act as power maximizers or power satisficers. Ultimately, states evaluate the costs and benefits of power maximization and will walk back aggrandizement when doing so is necessary to avoid or limit balancing.

#### B. Decision-making, Rationality, and Updating

This approach does not assume states and their leaders are strategic geniuses that successfully calculate the costs and benefits of every possible course of action. However, neither does it assume states remain perpetually ignorant of structural constraints and only revise their policies when the reactions of their peers begins to tell. Instead, I follow Mearsheimer and argue that the constraints from the system and incentives for power maximization eventually manifest themselves in state calculations and influence state policy. States and their leaders, in other words, are rational actors who think carefully about the security problems before them and attempt to adopt policies that improve their security and power.<sup>91</sup> This process plays out in two manners.

First, states may be forced to think in realist terms because a decision point has been reached and the need to deal with a declining state compels states to think as strategic forward-thinkers. This has to do with the anarchic nature of world politics. In an environment where threats are manifest and security difficult to obtain, states cannot readily afford to miscalculate how others might react to their drive for power. This is particularly true during periods of decline. The potentially momentous shifts in relative power that can result from decline require all major states to anticipate whether their peers will respond to the situation by taking advantage of the changing distribution of power or hanging back.<sup>92</sup> Otherwise, if a state fails to anticipate international reactions, it is likely to find its power and security under duress by other states

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<sup>87</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Posen, *Sources*; Walt, *Origins of Alliances*.

<sup>88</sup> Waltz, *Theory*, 106, 118. See also T.V. Paul, “Introduction: The Enduring Axioms of Balance of Power Theory and Their Contemporary Relevance,” in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 6.

<sup>89</sup> Jack L. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 6; Fiammenghi, “Security Curve.”

<sup>90</sup> Posen, “The Best Defense.”

<sup>91</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 30.

<sup>92</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Colin Elman, “Horses for Courses: Why not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?,” *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (1996).

eager to both protect themselves and improve their positions.<sup>93</sup> Operating in a competitive international market, the stakes of the game during decline generally compel states to act as strategic, rational actors.<sup>94</sup>

Still, not all states at all times successfully calculate the reactions of other great powers. One need only look at Germany before 1914 or the Soviet Union during the Cold War to see that states sometimes fail to properly assess others' responses when seeking security.<sup>95</sup> However, states may still behave in line with my assumptions as they change their policies in response to others' reactions: even if a state fails to correctly anticipate the consequences of its behavior ahead of time, it can alter course as other states balance and it begins to see the consequences of its poor decisions. The structure of the system therefore provides a corrective that encourages states to adjust their policies even if they initially fail to appreciate the consequences of their behavior.

## V. Costs and Benefits of Predation

Building from these assumptions, I argue that whether and to what extent a rising state adopts a predatory or supportive strategy depends on the costs and benefits of predation. In turn, the preceding framework suggests both clear benefits to predation, as well as potential costs. As these costs and benefits vary over time and space, states act with different degrees of predation or support. In what follows, I first detail the specific costs and benefits to predation before showing how they vary to produce different state behaviors.

### A. Costs of Predation

There are three possible costs a relatively state may face from preying upon a declining great power. These costs relate to the ways states balance one another. Some of these are military costs that a state might immediately pay if it adopts a predatory course. Others are political costs that take effect over time. Combined, however, they can provide strong reasons for a rising state to avoid or limit predatory behavior.

#### i. *External Balancing*

The first cost is external balancing. As noted, states are concerned with their relative power position and the possibility that increasingly powerful states will harm their security.<sup>96</sup> As a result, states may ally with similarly concerned states to obtain the resources to prevent or overcome foreign threats. This behavior is more likely if one or more states becomes relatively more powerful at the expense of a decliner.

The possibility of external balancing means a state debating whether and how far to grow its capabilities at a decliner's expense will eventually consider that efforts to increase its relative power will lead other states to align against it. Once external balancing is recognized, rising states must consider that predation will harm their security. First, a counterbalancing coalition means the rising state may find itself involved in more crises or arms races than was previously (before predation) the case. Second, a state can find itself in a more tense and conflict-prone international environment. If, for instance, several geographically disparate states join a counterbalancing coalition, then the state faces the problem of confronting multiple adversaries

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<sup>93</sup> For arguments on how shifts in the distribution of power can lead to miscalculation, see Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>94</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 66–111, 212–254; Scott D. Parrish, "The USSR and the Security Dilemma: Explaining Soviet Self-Encirclement, 1945-1985" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, 1993).

<sup>96</sup> Walt, *Origins*; Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*; Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*.

on several fronts, thereby increasing the risk of miscalculation and raising the costs a rising state must pay to defend itself.<sup>97</sup> Finally, balancing raises the prospect of wartime defeat as the riser faces a proportionally stronger counterbalancing coalition. With the possibility of victory curtailed, the state finds itself in a dangerous situation in which enemies are legion and opportunities for acquiring the capabilities to deter or defeat them scarce.

ii. *Internal Balancing*

The second cost is internal balancing by the declining state. Faced, for example, with the growth of German naval power before 1914, the declining United Kingdom expanded and consolidated the Royal Navy near British home waters to offset German gains.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, the United States responded to its ostensible decline vis-à-vis the USSR in the 1970s by refocusing its energies on defending Western Europe.<sup>99</sup> Declining states, in other words, do not remain passive in the face of external challenges, but mobilize their resources to deter or defeat predation. As a result, a rising state pursuing predation may find itself involved in a crisis and accidental war with the decliner, or push the declining state to lash out in a preventive war.<sup>100</sup> Particularly problematic is a war with a declining state that is at least the military equal of a rising state, as the rising state then stands a good chance of defeat. Facing this dynamic, a rising state must decide whether and to what extent a decliner's internal balancing is likely to cause problems that outweigh the benefits of predation. Given a declining state that may not go quietly into the good night of international irrelevance, a rising state may need to bide its time until the declining state is unable to oppose predation by force.

iii. *Lost Allies*

The final cost is the loss of potential allies. The anarchic nature of international relations means states can never be fully confident as to others' intentions.<sup>101</sup> With each state forced to protect itself using in an anarchic system, today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy (and vice versa) if the threat environment changes.<sup>102</sup> The need to preserve potential allies against an uncertain future imposes a third cost from predation. Although a rising state may welcome another's decline given today's international environment, it cannot be confident that the wholesale elimination of a declining great power is in its long-term best interest.<sup>103</sup> After all, a new threat may require the rising state to find allies, in which case today's declining state may be a useful partner. Particularly as a declining state grows weaker, risers may not want to prey on the declining state or let it fall from the great power ranks entirely lest they foreclose future alliance options. As Edward Gullick observes, failure to otherwise preserve one's future alliance

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<sup>97</sup> See the problems outlined in Scott D. Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986).

<sup>98</sup> Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*.

<sup>99</sup> John Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982* (Fort Monroe, VA: United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1984).

<sup>100</sup> Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 37-42; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, chap. 5.

<sup>101</sup> David Edelstein, "Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs About Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers," *Security Studies* 12, no. 1 (October 2002): 1-40; James D. Fearon, "Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation," *International Organization* 52, no. 2 (1998): 269-305.

<sup>102</sup> Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking Under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (December 1, 2000): 136.

<sup>103</sup> Jack S. Levy, "What Do Great Powers Balance Against and When?," in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, ed. T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 39.

options may, “mean a failure to establish a workable balance” as successful balancing requires “preserving the significant counterweights in the system of equilibrium.”<sup>104</sup>

### B. Benefits of Predation

The benefits of predation are straightforward: by shifting the distribution of power in its favor at a declining state’s expense, a relatively rising state can gain more power that can be used to advance its security. This benefit accrues in two ways. First, by weakening a declining state, a rising state limits the threat the decliner poses to its security. A good example of this phenomenon comes from the late Cold War. At the time, Soviet officials rightly worried that a rising United States’ efforts to reunify Germany within NATO would exclude the Soviet Union from influencing European security affairs and allow the United States to dominate the continent.<sup>105</sup> In purely dyadic terms, a state that successfully preys on a declining great power means that it 1) has less reason to worry about aggression on the part of the decliner, and 2) has reinforced its bargaining leverage in conflicts of interest with the decliner.

Second, by acquiring resources such as economic markets or strategically advantageous territory, a state may improve its position relative to other states in the system. American and British leaders, for instance, worried that the Soviet Union would take advantage of British weakness after World War Two, gain military bases in the Eastern Mediterranean, and use these bases to threaten Western access to Persian Gulf Oil. Outside of the purely dyadic relationship with a declining state, a predatory state may be able to gain capabilities that improve its ability to compete with other great powers.

## VI. **State Calculations: Roles of Polarity and Posture**

### A. Polarity Posture, and Costs of Predation

Overall, rising states benefit from shifting the distribution of power in their favor at a declining state’s expense, but face potential political and military costs along the way. Nevertheless, a rising state does not face these costs and benefits at all times and in all places. Two variables – the *polarity of the international system*, and the declining state’s own *military posture* – shape the opportunities a rising state will have to reap the benefits of predation, and the costs it is likely to face along the way. In turn, when a state faces substantial costs from predation and receives few benefits, it is likely to support a declining state. Conversely, when a state can reap large benefits and pay few costs, it is likely to pursue predation. In what follows, I first briefly define polarity and posture before showing how they interact to produce different degrees of predation or support.

#### i. *Polarity*

The first variable is the polarity of the international system. Following Mearsheimer and Waltz, I define polarity as the number of great powers present in a given international system.<sup>106</sup> Polarity can take one of two values: multipolar or bipolar. A multipolar system has three or more great powers, each of which can challenge every other’s power and security.<sup>107</sup> In contrast, a bipolar system only has two great powers, each of which constitutes the principal threat to the other. Polarity matters because it determines the range of costs from predation: multipolarity

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<sup>104</sup> Edward V. Gulick, *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955), 76–77.

<sup>105</sup> Kristina Spohr, “Precluded or Precedent-Setting?: The ‘NATO Enlargement Question’ in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990-1991,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14, no. 4 (2012): 4–54.

<sup>106</sup> Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 55, 60-75; Waltz, *Theory*, 131.

<sup>107</sup> The archetype of a multipolar system is pre-1914 Europe; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

maximizes the number of costs, while bipolarity minimizes them. As a result, multipolarity limits how far a rising state can prey on a declining state before the costs of predation begin to tell, whereas bipolarity imposes fewer costs and facilitates predation.

In a multipolar environment, a state confronts several great powers that can challenge its security either now or in the future. The presence of several potential threats maximizes the costs from predation. First, predation may cause the formation of a powerful counterbalancing coalition as the decliner attracts capable allies. Second, the declining state may lash out in a preventive war, crisis, or effort to spoil one's relative rise. Finally, because other great powers may one day threaten one's security, eliminating the declining state as a great power deprives oneself of a potential future ally. In short, all three costs of predation may emerge in multipolarity as limits to predatory behavior. As a result, the rising state must carefully calculate whether the benefits of power maximization are outweighed by the costs.

In contrast, bipolarity minimizes the costs of predation. With only two great powers in the system, one of which is rising and the other declining, the riser can significantly improve its relative power and security if it eliminates the decliner as a great power and removes the only great power threat in the system. Moreover, in the absence of other great powers, the riser does not need to fear external balancing as the declining state lacks potential allies. Finally, even internal balancing by the decliner is a wasting asset. Although the decliner's own internal balancing can deter rising state predation over the short and medium term, internal balancing becomes less credible and less capable of deterring predation as the distribution of power shifts over time. Eventually, the costs imposed on the riser by the decliner's internal balancing will wane as the rising state grows too powerful. Combined, the limited losses and prospective gains from predation in bipolarity creates significant incentives for a rising state to "kill" the decliner provided it can do so without provoking internal balancing.

ii. *Posture.*

The second variable is the declining state's military posture. By posture, I mean whether a declining state can deploy sufficient military assets to secure its vital interests relative to an opponent's ability to challenge them. In other words, it reflects a simple net assessment of whether the declining state can perform the military missions needed to protect its power and security. This approach draws from existing research on conventional deterrence and military strategy. Scholars working in the offense-defense tradition such as Mearsheimer, Posen, Glaser, and Schelling emphasize that a critical component of a state's ability to defend against threats is its ability to oppose another state's hostile actions at a particular time and place.<sup>108</sup> To achieve these ends, states must hold sufficient military assets to either defeat or deter a given adversary.

Posture can take one of two values. A *robust posture* exists when a declining state has the military tools at its disposal to deploy and sustain adequate forces to secure a given interest – it has the ability to perform required military missions to protect itself against expected threats. *Weak postures*, however, occur when the state lacks the military tools to protect its vital security interests.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Posen, *Sources*; Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 2008 ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Charles L. Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models," *World Politics* 44, no. 4 (July 1992): 497–538.

<sup>109</sup> Many scholars characterize military postures as offensive, defensive, or deterrent. These are useful typologies. My use of the term, however, comes closer to Press' and Glaser's conceptualization, in which a state can either attain its military objectives with the forces at its disposal, or cannot. Although the offensive, defensive, or deterrent nature of a state's military can have important political effects, the first issue is whether a state has sufficient

Posture matters because it indicates the depths a declining state may go to arrest its decline and the threat it poses in this process. As a result, posture affects the likelihood that a rising state will bear the costs and reap the benefits of predation. When a declining state holds a robust posture, other states are compelled to worry about its future behavior. First, a robust posture means a declining state can more readily challenge and aggress against relative risers. As Mearsheimer observes, all great powers inherently possess some offensive capability.<sup>110</sup> As a result, rising states must worry that 1) a decliner with robust military forces will lash out in a preventive strike, and 2) that a crisis will erupt and escalate into a costly but inadvertent conflict.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, even if a decliner is threatened by a rising state, a robust posture limits other states' incentives to come to the decliner's aid: if a declining state is willing to pump its resources into securing itself, then other states can buck-pass and wait to see how the rising state's challenge evolves.<sup>112</sup>

Weak postures carry the opposite effects. With a weak posture, a state lacks the capacity to provide security for itself. This may carry two consequences. First, weak postures signal rising states that the decliner is unlikely to threaten their security. Hence, risks that a declining state may launch a preventive war or initiate a military crisis are largely eliminated. Second, because a weak posture leaves a declining state unable to come to the aid of other states lest it leave itself even more vulnerable to predation, weak postures indicate that the decliner may be lost as an ally unless other states come to its assistance.

#### B. Interactions of Posture and Polarity: Predictions

Combined, polarity and posture unlock the costs and benefits of rising state predation. With two variables that can each hold two values, this framework generates four ideal-type strategies a rising state may adopt depending on the precise combination of polarity and posture. This approach also generates a series of process predictions that describe 1) how rising states are expected to calculate the costs and benefits of predation, and 2) the circumstances in which the process changes over time.

##### *i. Bipolarity and Robust Posture*

First, a relatively rising great power may face a declining state in a bipolar system in which the decliner holds a robust posture and can still provide security for itself. In this situation, I predict a rising state will adopt a Moderate Predation strategy.

As noted, bipolar environments are characterized by the presence of two great powers each of which constitutes the principle threat to the other. When one of these states declines, the relative riser has an opportunity to eliminate all threats to its security and increase its relative power by eliminating the declining state as a great power. Furthermore, because the declining state cannot attract allies and has no value as a partner against future great power threats, all that keeps the riser from trying to eliminate the decliner is the fear of the decliner's internal balancing. Yet with a decliner holding a robust posture, the riser must take this threat seriously: if the rising state pursues predation too intensely, the declining state may lash out in a war or

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military resources in the aggregate that it could obtain its international objectives if it tried. In other words, separate from whether a state's military is optimized for offensive, defensive, or deterrent missions, is the issue of whether or not it has the raw military capacity to obtain given political objectives; see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>110</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 30–31.

<sup>111</sup> Levy, "Preventive War"; Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War."

<sup>112</sup> Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks"; Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266–279.



crisis that harms the rising state. The rising state's ability to defend itself, in other words, keeps the intensity of rising state predation in check. Moreover, given the trends in the overall distribution of power, a rising state need not intensely prey upon a declining state and risk a war in order to maximize its power. Time is on the riser's side and opportunities for killing the decliner likely to mount in the future if the rising state simply bides its time. Instead, slow and steady pressure on a declining state can yield results by exhausting the decliner and gradually running it into the ground. In other words, despite the incentives for predation created by bipolarity, the decliner's robust posture signals that the rising state should tread lightly: the benefits of predation are significant, but the costs of predation are potentially high.

In this situation, I argue that rising states will adopt a strategy of Moderate Predation. I expect the rising state will pursue limited arms races to cause the decliner to expend scarce resources and gradually shift the military balance of power in the riser's favor, deny the decliner access to economic markets, and refuse to negotiate away outstanding political differences diplomatically. If successful, this strategy will eventually so weaken the declining state that it either falls from the great power ranks, or declines to the point where its posture changes and it can no longer defend itself. In the interim, however, rising states will calculate that their optimal approach is to prey upon the declining state with limited intensity. The aim is to kill the decliner as a competitor, but to do so prudently to avoid a preventive war or accidental conflict.

*ii. Bipolarity and Weak Posture*

Rising state strategy will change if the declining state is no longer able to defend itself. If a rising state confronts a declining bipolar rival and the rival holds a weak posture, then I predict a rising state will pursue an Extreme Predation strategy. A rising state might, for example, strip the declining state of allies or launch a war against a declining state. It may also provide aid to the declining state's opponents, akin to the political backing the United States gave West Germany when negotiating the fate of the Soviet presence in Central Europe.<sup>113</sup> Lastly, a rising state can diplomatically isolate the decliner and engage in economic warfare to ensure the declining state is unable to recover from its present weakness.

The logic undergirding Extreme Predation is simple. The rising pole in a bipolar system can significantly improve its security by gaining power at a declining state's expense. All that keeps it from doing so is fear of internal balancing by the declining state. However, if a declining state holds a weak posture, then the rising pole can prey upon the declining pole confident that the decliner cannot retaliate. The rising state will thus calculate that it can substantially benefit from power maximization and pay almost no costs. Here, the drive for power propels a rising state to prey on the decliner in the hopes of eliminating it as a competitor, while the decliner's military weakness means the riser can do so intensely.

*iii. Multipolarity and Robust Posture*

Third, a rising state may face a declining state in a multipolar environment in which the declining state holds a robust posture. This situation creates complex calculations for the rising state. On the one hand, there are potentially large costs to predation as other states ally with the decliner against predation, the decliner itself might be lost as a future ally, and the declining state internally balances. On the other hand, too intensely aiding a declining state that retains significant military options of its can backfire if the decliner chain-gangs the rising state into unwanted conflicts.<sup>114</sup> As a result, a relatively rising state can also improve its security by letting

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<sup>113</sup> Mary Elise Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to 'Bribe the Soviets Out' and Move NATO In," *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 110–137.

<sup>114</sup> Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks."

the declining state weaken to the point where its posture changes, the decliner can no longer provide security for itself, and the declining state is unable to entrap other coming to its assistance.

On balance, a rising state is likely to respond to these cross-cutting incentives by adopting a Moderate Support strategy. Moderate Support is characterized by cautious steps that do little to actively help the decliner arrest its fall, but which also try to avoid making life harder for the declining state. In effect, a rising state tries to prevent other states from gaining at the decliner's expense, while doing little to directly preserve or protect the declining state. Adopting Moderate Support allows the rising state to advance its security as the declining state weakens and the threat of the decliner's internal balancing recedes. At the same time, preventing other states from weakening the decliner means the rising state can still use the declining state as a future ally. And, by avoiding predation, the rising state prevents the declining state from attracting allies that might counterbalance and threaten the rising state. Overall, Moderate Support benefits the rising state by allowing it to gradually obtain a stronger power position vis-à-vis the declining state while limiting the risks involved. The goal in this situation is to preserve the decliner, but to do so prudently until the threat environment clarifies.

*iv. Multipolarity and Weak Posture*

Finally, a great power may face a declining state in a multipolar system where the declining state holds a weak posture. This situation leads to an Extreme Support strategy. Extreme Support is characterized by intense efforts to prevent the declining state from growing weaker and becoming vulnerable to others' predation. Policies indicative of Extreme Support are alliance guarantees, the provision of significant economic and military aid, and consistent diplomatic backing. These policies aim to preserve the declining state as a great power even at large cost and sacrifice to the rising state.

In this situation, a rising state would still benefit by maximizing power at the declining state's expense. However, there are significant costs associated with predation. In holding a weak posture, the declining state signals to the other great powers that it is unable to defend itself and is vulnerable if other states threaten it. As a result, a rising state will anticipate that predation carries substantial costs as 1) other states ally with the decliner to prevent the rising state from gaining power at the decliner's expense, and 2) the declining state is lost as a future ally. Relatively rising states, in other words, have reason to come to the decliner's aid for purely self-interested reasons, and no reason not to. The result is a strategy of Extreme Support that tries to preserve the declining state using all means at a rising state's disposal. Extreme Support is unlikely to help the decliner recover to the point where it can again threaten its peers, but it will at least keep the declining state a member of the great powers and help it avoid falling any further.

C. Summary

In sum, I argue that relatively rising great powers shape their strategies towards declining great powers depending on the costs and benefits of power maximization. Drawing on insights from structural realism, power maximization realism, and offense-defense realism, these costs and benefits are determined by the polarity of the international system, as well as the declining state's military posture. Framed differently, rising states are attuned to threats to their power and the opportunities for gaining more of it as structured by the international system. This situation may not only lead rising states to circumscribe predation, but even support and help declining states survive as great powers. Figure 2.6 summarizes the expected strategies resulting from the combination of polarity and posture.

**Figure 2.6: Predicted Rising State Strategies**  
Declining State Military Posture

		Weak	Robust
<u>Polarity</u>	Bipolar	Extreme Predation	Moderate Predation
	Multipolar	Extreme Support	Moderate Support

## VII. Alternate Explanations

To assess the explanatory power of Realist Decline Theory, we want to know not just how it performs in explaining rising state strategy towards declining great powers, but also how it performs relative to other accounts of rising state behavior. In other words, we want to stage a multi-cornered fight that evaluates 1) whether my argument has any explanatory power, and 2) how much explanatory power it provides versus alternate accounts.<sup>115</sup> To do so, I derive a series of hypotheses about rising state strategy from democratic peace and liberal institutionalist arguments. To be clear, these theories have not been previously used to offer a full range of arguments about rising state strategy towards declining great powers. However, because their core logics and causal mechanisms relate to how states prioritize interests, recognize threats, and look to advance their security, they can be used to deduce a series of rival hypotheses. Equally important, elements of both the democratic peace and institutionalist theories of international cooperation enjoy widespread appeal in the policy world. American policymakers in particular employ democratic peace and institutionalist arguments to guide American relations with rising states such as China and India. Thus, by testing hypotheses gleaned from Democratic Peace and Institutional Theories against my argument, we are able to assess the overall utility of my argument and use the results to inform ongoing policy debates.

### A. Democratic Peace Theory: Joint Democracy Causes Support

#### i. *Democracy Promotes Peace*

Democratic Peace Theory argues that the spread of liberal democracy can dampen, if not eliminate, the risk of international conflict.<sup>116</sup> Drawing from the statistical finding that

<sup>115</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 38, 83.

<sup>116</sup> Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 1151–1169. The notion that democracies will only fight other democracies is only intended to apply to *liberal* democracies. I use the terms "democracy" and "liberal democracy" interchangeably.

democracies rarely wage war against one another, democratic peace theorists identify three causal mechanisms linking liberal democracy to a reduced risk of conflict.<sup>117</sup> First, democratic institutions are transparent, make it difficult for statesmen to mobilize publics for a given course of action and penalize leaders who fail to produce the desired results. As a result, democratic institutions help states credibly signal their interests and power, and reduce the risk of conflicts due to misperception and uncertainty.<sup>118</sup> Second, democratic institutions require policymakers to respond to public opinion and the “will of the people.”<sup>119</sup> Because voters rather than policymakers bear the direct costs of war while benefiting from peace, liberal democracies tend to share a core set of interests relating to peace and mutual gains from cooperation. This situation reduces the likelihood of war due to conflicting interests. Third, democracy promotes “norms of compromise,” the notion that disputes between democracies should be resolved cooperatively rather than by force.<sup>120</sup> By externalizing these norms, democratic states tend to accommodate the interests of other democracies but contest conflicting interests with non-democracies.

ii. *Implications for Rising State Strategy*

Applied to rising state strategy, democratic peace arguments suggest that whether a rising state adopts support or predation depends on whether both rising and declining states are democracies. If both rising and declining states are democratic, then the rising state will support the decliner. Three factors drive this prediction. First, popular pressure may force rising states to sympathize with the interests of a similarly democratic declining state. Second, statesmen may recognize their common interest in preserving a fellow democracy against illiberal and potentially hostile non-democracies. Finally, norms of compromise may prohibit predation because predation implies coercion and would violate the mandate to resolve disputes cooperatively. Instead, liberal states should bargain with other liberal states in a spirit of fairness and a desire to see them advance against illiberal actors.

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<sup>117</sup> My understanding of democratic peace theory treats it as a dyadic phenomenon. Though Kant’s original formulation argued republican states are individually more pacifist than monarchies, Doyle and others responsible for its modern revival treat it as a dyadic proposition. See Doyle, “World Politics.” For an overview of Democratic Peace Theory, see Sebastian Rosato, “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (November 2003): 585–602.

<sup>118</sup> James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 577–592; T. Clifton Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell, “Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints, and War So Why Kant Democracies Fight?,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, no. 2 (June 1991): 187–211; Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, “Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations,” *International Organization* 50, no. 01 (1996): 109–139; Bruce Bueno De Mesquita et al., “An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace,” *American Political Science Review* (1999): 791–807; Kenneth A. Schultz, “Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises,” *The American Political Science Review* 92, no. 4 (December 1998): 829–844; Kenneth A. Schultz, “Do Democratic Institutions Constrain or Inform? Contrasting Two Institutional Perspectives on Democracy and War,” *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (April 1999): 233–266; Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace* (Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 4.

<sup>119</sup> Owen, “Liberalism;” Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics”; De Mesquita et al., “An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace”; David A. Lake, “Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War,” *The American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (March 1992): 24–37.

<sup>120</sup> Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, “Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986,” *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 624–638; J. Joseph Hewitt and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, “Democracies in International Crisis,” *International Interactions* 22, no. 2 (1996): 123–142; William J. Dixon, “Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict,” *American Political Science Review* (March 1994): 14–32.

The three mechanisms producing democratic peace also predict support should move from Moderate to Extreme as the declining state weakens. First, a rising state that fails to preserve a democracy may allow non-democracies to prey on the decliner, strengthen, and subsequently threaten the rising state. To avoid this situation, a democratic great power should support a declining state as necessary to prevent non-democracies from gaining at the decliner's expense. Second, because leaders must regularly compete to stay in power, leaders that fail to preserve a declining democracy against illiberal competitors will be removed from office. To avoid electoral punishment, leaders should be on the lookout for signs other democracies are declining and provide support as necessary. Finally, with democracies externalizing norms of compromise and accommodation, there should be few barriers such as misperception and miscommunication inhibiting a supportive response.

If, however, the decliner and rising state are not both democracies, then rising states will pursue predation.<sup>121</sup> First, popular pressure for supportive behavior may be lacking. Second, the absence of a common set of democratic values may breed divergent interests and intense competition. Finally, the absence of a common normative framework encouraging compromise means states will be willing to resort to threats of force and coercion whenever state interests diverge. This same logic suggests that the intensity of predation should increase over time as rising states take advantage of the decliner to maximize power at the decliner's expense.

iii. *Extensions: Changes in Declining State Regime Type*

Democratic peace logic also suggests relatively rising states should respond to changes in the domestic institutions of declining states. As Haas and Owen note, great powers sometimes adopt different domestic regimes and become more or less liberal, democratic, autocratic and so on over time.<sup>122</sup> Domestic changes are particularly likely when a state is weak and the international system in flux. At such times, domestic reformers in a declining state are likely to push for internal changes to emulate more powerful members of the system.<sup>123</sup>

These conditions seem particularly likely to emerge in declining great powers.<sup>124</sup> Because decline can cause fundamental shifts in the distribution of power, declining states operating in a competitive international system face strong incentives to try to revitalize the bases of their power. This may lead them to copy the domestic institutions of their rising, more successful peers. Anecdotal evidence suggests rising states seriously consider such options even if they are never implemented. In the years leading up to 1914, for instance, German leaders considered liberalizing the German political system to shore of domestic legitimacy and mobilize greater resources against a rising Russia. Similarly, Mikhail Gorbachev focused on liberalizing and democratizing the Soviet Union in order to spur Soviet economic growth and better compete with a surging United States.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> This situation may emerge because both the riser and decliner are non-democracies, or because one of the states is a democracy and the other is a non-democracy.

<sup>122</sup> John M. Owen, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); John M. Owen, "When Do Ideologies Produce Alliances?," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2005): 73-99; Mark L. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security* (New York: Oxford, 2012).

<sup>123</sup> Owen, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics*, 5.

<sup>124</sup> This is strongly suggested by Mark L. Haas, "The United States and the End of the Cold War: Reactions to Shifts in Soviet Power, Policies, or Domestic Politics?," *International Organization* 61, no. 01, International Organization (2007): 145-179.

<sup>125</sup> Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (London: Bodley Head, 2009), 481-502.

Because regime type may change, rising democratic states should monitor internal reforms undertaken by a declining peer. If a rising democracy sees a declining non-democracy beginning to liberalize, then the rising state should gradually reduce the intensity of predation. Walking back predation not only allows the rising state to assess whether the declining state will become a democracy, but also avoids intense predation that can empower hardliners in the declining state opposed to liberalization from limiting domestic reforms by emphasizing the threat posed by the rising state.<sup>126</sup> Ultimately, reforms that seem on the verge of converting a declining state into a full-fledged democracy may lead a rising state to reorient its policy, embrace the democratizing state to prevent backsliding, and adopt a supportive strategy. However, the opposite is also true: a rising democracy that sees a declining democracy begin to adopt non-democratic institutions will employ less support over time. In the end, a declining state that appears on the verge of changing from democracy to non-democracy will lead to predation.

Because non-democracies adopt predatory strategies, a rising non-democracy will disregard changing declining state domestic institutions and act as described in the preceding section.

## B. Liberal Institutional Theory: Institutions Breed Support

### i. *Institutions Cause Support*

A final set of arguments comes from liberal institutionalist theories of cooperation. These arguments propose that the spread of international institutions, defined as “formal and informal organizations, rules, routines, and practices that are embedded in the ‘wider’ political order and define the ‘landscape’ within which actors operate,” help states reap absolute gains from cooperation rather than relative gains from competition.<sup>127</sup> Applied to great power rise and decline, scholars such as Ikenberry, Lake, and Slaughter propose that by embedding rising states and declining states in binding international security institutions, rising states will be encouraged to pursue supportive strategies as the distribution of power shifts in their favor.<sup>128</sup> Ikenberry

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<sup>126</sup> In other words, there may be a “second image reversed” dynamic in which external competition undermines incentives for domestic change. In the late Cold War, for example, several analysts worried American pressure would weaken Gorbachev’s hand at home and end the Soviet liberalization drive; Jack L. Snyder, “International Leverage on Soviet Domestic Change,” *World Politics* 42, no. 1 (October 1989): 1–30; on the second image reversed, see Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (October 1978): 881–912.

<sup>127</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 16.

<sup>128</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 23–37; G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Ikenberry, *After Victory*; G. John Ikenberry and Thomas Wright, “Rising Powers and Global Institutions,” *Washington, DC, The Century Foundation* (2008): 10; G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century: Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security* (Princeton: Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, 2006); Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (April 1, 1999): 179–196; Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2008); Fareed Zakaria, “The Future of American Power: How America Can Survive the Rise of the Rest,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (June 2008); Charles A. Kupchan, “After Pax Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity,” *International Security* 23, no. 2 (Autumn 1998): 40–79; G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (July 1, 1990): 283–315; Andrew Moravcsik, “Europe: Quietly Rising Superpower in a Bipolar World,” *EUROPE* (2009); Andrew Moravcsik, “Europe: The Quiet Superpower,” *French Politics* 7, no. 3 (2009): 403–422; David A.

makes the point well in discussing China's rise and American decline, arguing that, "the Western order has the potential to turn the coming power shift into a peaceful change on terms favorable to the United States."<sup>129</sup> The key to doing so, as he writes elsewhere, is ensuring the United States strengthens "the rules and institutions of the liberal international order" while trying to "accommodate and institutionally engage China."<sup>130</sup>

ii. *Implications and Limitations for Rise and Decline*

In theory, binding international institutions cause supportive strategies by helping rising and declining states reach long-term, mutually beneficial cooperative agreements. They do so by serving three functions. First, they "facilitate the flow of reliable information" surrounding the interests of different states and provide a forum to help states negotiate on the basis of this information.<sup>131</sup> Second, institutions offer enforcement mechanisms in the form of tit-for-tat punishment and intra-institutional sanctions. Punishment and sanctions discourage defection from agreements by increasing the costs of violation.<sup>132</sup> Finally, institutions are a way for powerful states to both limit their capacity to coerce weaker states and to reassure potential opponents. As Lake describes, by "agreeing to work through institutions that have the potential to block certain policies [. . .] the dominant state signals its commitment to 'moderate' ends supported by key member states of that organization."<sup>133</sup> Thus, barriers to cooperation are reduced as weaker states come to trust stronger states, while stronger states accept constraints on their power.<sup>134</sup> By extension, institutions also provide ways for declining states to secure political and military backing from rising states, as the free flow of information makes it easier for declining states to credibly signal weakness while rising states are given an interest in coming to a declining state's aid.

Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence that the theory works. Because Institutionalist Theory requires great powers be institutionally embedded before decline occurs, the paucity of international institutions until recently in world history leaves analysts unable to test whether they sustain cooperation when power shifts. Analysts have instead looked to see whether 1) ad hoc institutions created during the course of great power decline, and 2) solely the rising state's membership in binding institutions, produce some of the benefits as hypothesized.<sup>135</sup> Scholars propose that even if institutions are absent ahead of time, rising and declining states can use ad hoc or informal institutions created during a power shift to reap some of the benefits that would

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Lake, "American Hegemony and the Future of East-West Relations," *International Studies Perspectives* 7, no. 1 (February 2006): 23–30; David A. Lake, "Making America Safe for the World: Multilateralism and the Rehabilitation of US Authority," *Global Governance* 16, no. 4 (December 2010): 471–484.

<sup>129</sup> Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West," 33.

<sup>130</sup> Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 356; see also Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Liberty Under Law*, 47–51.

<sup>131</sup> Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 92; Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Lisa L. Martin and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories and Empirical Studies of International Institutions," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (October 1, 1998): 729–757.

<sup>132</sup> Kenneth A. Oye, "Explaining Cooperation Under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies," *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (October 1, 1985): 1–24; Keohane, *After Hegemony*.

<sup>133</sup> Lake, "American Hegemony and the Future of East-West Relations," 27; also Alexander Thompson, "Screening Power: International Organizations as Informative Agents," *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations* (2006): 229–54.

<sup>134</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 5–7; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 51, no. 6 (2009).

result from deeper forms of institutional cooperation.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, rising states can unilaterally reassure decliners by working through their own institutions to signal their benign intentions. The level of support resulting from ad hoc and one-sided institutions is less than what might result if both rising and declining great powers were embedded in the same institutions ahead of time. However, such institutions may still provide ways for states to cooperate amidst a changing distribution of power to a greater degree than might exist absent any institutional mechanism.

*iii. Predictions*

Combined, Institutionalist Theory leads to the core prediction that decisions to prey upon or support a decliner will depend on the presence or absence of binding international institutions. If rising and declining states are bound by existing international institutions or can create ad hoc institutions, then rising states will adopt supportive policies. Otherwise, the barriers to cooperation in an anarchic world encourage zero-sum competitions for power and security, thereby causing rising state predation. Because institutions enable states to reap gains from cooperation, institutions foster a status quo bias: states would rather reap absolute gains from cooperation than compete for relative advantage. When a state in an institution declines, the change in the distribution of power raises the possibility of defection as the decliner's interests change and its capacity to participate in the institution diminishes. Defection, however, would require the remaining states in the institution to renegotiate the terms of interaction and, owing to its failure to deter defection, undermine the institution's credibility.<sup>137</sup> Rising states will be loath to accept these outcomes. Instead, they will support the decliner in order to "purchase" its continued institutional participation. This also implies that, in security affairs, rising states should avoid buck-passing behavior that might leave the declining state vulnerable to external coercion and undermine the credibility of the regime. Relatedly, the intensity of support should increase over time as the decliner continues to weaken and the threat of defection grows.

A related hypothesis deals with situations in which only a rising state is institutionally embedded. Absent mutually binding institutions, a rising state has no ex ante incentive to support a declining state and forego predation. However, its own institutional participation acts as a check on predation: the rising state cannot prey on a decliner without the approval of other states in the institution. Because these other states 1) may be interested in cooperating with the decliner, and 2) fear they will be chain-ganged into a conflict with the decliner, they are likely to oppose predation.<sup>138</sup> Because it might forfeit the benefits of cooperation and risk destroying the institution if it ignores its partners, the rising state will respond to these pressures.<sup>139</sup> The result will be a Moderate Support strategy. In this situation, the rising state will accept the demands of its institutional partners and forego predation, but will do little to actively support and protect the declining state as expected if *mutually* binding institutions were present.

C. Summary

In sum, Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory present strong competing arguments to Realist Decline Theory. Whether by adopting particular domestic regimes or

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<sup>136</sup> This is clear in Ikenberry's discussion of the post-1945 and post-1989 settlements; Ikenberry, *After Victory*.

<sup>137</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pp. 100-103.

<sup>138</sup> A realist might also argue that weaker states will fear the change in the distribution of power from predation and worry that the rising state will target them next. However, because scholars such as Lake and Ikenberry propose institutions limit opportunities for coercion and give weaker states influence over stronger states, Institutionalist Theory suggests this concern is a non-issue.

<sup>139</sup> Lake, "Making America Safe for the World."



working through international institutions, these alternate accounts suggest purposeful state action can limit the tendency of rising great powers to prey upon their declining rivals.

## VIII. Research Design

Three tasks are needed to test my argument against its competitors. First, I need to develop procedures for measuring the dependent variable (rising state strategy) in each case. Second, the independent variables of the competing accounts must be operationalized. Finally, we need a set of cases and testing procedures to weigh explanatory power afforded by the different accounts. In this section, I review and justify my approach to these tasks.

### A. Measuring the Dependent Variable

To measure rising state strategy, I rely on two key pieces of evidence. First, I look at the policies adopted by rising states. Strategy, as Posen, Art, and others note, consists of a pattern of policies adopted and maintained over a period of time.<sup>140</sup> By interrogating the pattern to identify the ends sought and means chosen, we can use the underlying logic to identify the strategy.<sup>141</sup>

Here, diplomatic policies refer to the rising state's use of political and economic means to affect the declining state's place among the great powers. Focusing on diplomatic policies follows a basic insight: predatory strategies require a rising state to isolate a declining state to ensure other states do not come to the decliner's assistance; conversely, support strategies involve some form of diplomatic engagement with and backing for the declining state. Extreme Predation occurs when a rising state actively organizes an anti-decliner coalition, hinders the decliner's economic growth, and ensures the decliner's continued isolation. Moderate Predation occurs when a state goes along with others' efforts to isolate the declining state or simply refuses diplomatic negotiations with the decliner. With supportive strategies, however, rising states use political and economic diplomacy to aid, protect, and back a declining state. I code Extreme Support when rising states extend alliance offers, diplomatic assurances, and economic assistance, whereas I code Moderate Support when I see limited or symbolic offers of support and tentative diplomatic negotiations.

Military policies denote the rising state's use of its military to try to weaken or preserve the declining state. Because force is the final arbiter in international politics, military policy reveals significant information about a state's preferences for aiding or undermining a declining state. Tracking whether and to what extent military policies are designed to defend or challenge relatively declining states thus reflect the logic of rising state strategy. For example, the more predatory a strategy, the more we expect military policies to try to seize a military advantage over a declining state. The more supportive a strategy, the more military policies will try to sustain the military status quo by either de-escalating military competitions with a declining state and preparing to defend the declining state directly.

The second piece of evidence consists of the statements and arguments policymakers in rising states use to explain a course of action. In public and, especially, in private, statesmen present arguments for different policies and elaborate on the expected outcomes of these actions. These direct quotes provide insight into the goals statesmen sought by adopting particular policies, thereby allowing me to code the ends of a given strategy. The more predatory a strategy, the more statesmen in a rising state should argue that a declining state is a threat and should therefore be weakened or eliminated. Conversely, the more supportive a strategy, the

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<sup>140</sup> Posen, *Sources*; Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>141</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

more statesmen should argue that the declining state is a potential boon to ensuring the rising state's security and thus the attractiveness of preserving a declining state as a great power.

Table 2.3 summarizes the coding scheme.

**Table 2.3: Coding Scheme to Identify Rising State Strategies**

Rising State Strategy	Indicators		
	<i>Diplomatic Policy</i>	<i>Military Policy</i>	<i>Quotes about Goals</i>
<u>Extreme Predation</u>	Isolation of declining state, creating anti-decliner coalition	Extensive arms races, buildups, offensive threats towards declining state; efforts to establish military superiority	Statements and arguments such as "with this strategy, we will do what it takes to eliminate the declining state as a great power."
<u>Moderate Predation</u>	Refusal to negotiate diplomatic agreements; asymmetric diplomatic demands; free-riding on other isolation efforts	Limited arms races, buildups	Statements and arguments such as "with this strategy, we may be able to eliminate the declining state as a great power."
<u>Moderate Support</u>	Rhetorical & symbolic political support, limited financial aid (e.g., UNSC backing)	Ending arms races, disarmament provisions	Statements and arguments such as "with this strategy, we may be able to preserve the declining state as a great power."
<u>Extreme Support</u>	Diplomatic Guarantees, cooperative negotiations, extensive financial assistance	Military alliance, military assistance	Statements and arguments such as "with this strategy, we will do whatever it takes to preserve the declining state as a great power."

## B. Measuring Independent Variables

### i. *Realist Decline Theory: Polarity and Posture*

To measure the central to Realist Decline Theory, I rely upon a series of indicators. Measuring the polarity of the system is straightforward. As noted earlier, polarity refers to the number of great powers present in the international system, and depends on the overall economic and military capabilities at a state's disposal. Thus, using the list of great powers developed earlier in this chapter, I count the number of great powers present at any point. When there are two great powers, I code the system as bipolar. When there are at least three great powers, I code the system as multipolar. Within the cases themselves, I also incorporate qualitative descriptions of the economic and military capabilities available to the great powers to provide a fuller sense of international politics within a given system.

Measuring the declining state's military posture is more complicated. Here, I rely on two pieces of evidence. The first is the military balance between two states, and whether the declining state has sufficient "military stuff" in terms of personnel, combat equipment, and military plans to secure itself against a particular rising state threat. When the gross military balance allows a declining state to secure itself against a rising state threat, then I code a robust posture. When, however, a rising state can aggress and aggrandize and the declining state cannot punish the effort, then I code a weak posture.

The second piece of evidence is whether a declining state is able to deploy and sustain its forces in the field. Robust postures exist when a declining state not only enjoys sufficient assets to protect its interests, but can project this power when threats manifest. That is, for robust posture to exist, a declining state must have secure lines of communication and the ability to project power to the point of confrontation. This situation prevails when a state has basing and

transit rights through intervening territory or waters, no or manageable opposition from the inhabitants of intervening territory, and the airlift, sealift, and ground transport to move personnel and supplies. Conversely, weak postures exist when a declining state is unable to deploy or sustain its forces. Indicators of weak postures are insufficient lift to deploy or supply a given sized force in the field and faces significant military or political opposition to the movement of personnel and supplies through intervening territories or waters; in these situations, a state's lines of communication are vulnerable and securing a vital interest becomes a touchy proposition.<sup>142</sup>

Overall, I code posture by offering a rough net assessment of the declining state's ability to protect and provide security for itself against the specific threat(s) posed by the rising state. I do not conduct full campaign analyses in each case, but rather look at the specific threat(s) posed to a declining state by a relatively rising state and assess 1) the rough balance of forces, and 2) the declining state's ability to deploy these forces to defend itself. Following Press' earlier work, the intent is not to see how a war or military campaign will play out.<sup>143</sup> Rather, the aim is to establish whether a declining state can, at the end of the day, provide military security for itself against the range of challenges a rising state might pose and thus the role played by the declining state's military in the rising state's cost-benefit calculations.

ii. *Alternate Explanations*

a. Democratic Peace Theory: Regime Type

I establish the presence or absence of democratic regimes using two sets of data. Following convention, I first measure the presence or absence of democratic institutions using the Polity IV scores of domestic regime type.<sup>144</sup> Polity measures the democratic and non-democratic features of ruling regimes on a categorical scale. Democracy is coded using on an eleven point scale ranging from 0 to 10 depending on whether and to what degree a state holds 1) regular and institutionalized elections, 2) has legislative constraints on the use of force by the executive, and 3) guarantees civil liberties to a state's citizens; the higher the score, the more democratic the regime. Countries scoring above 6 are considered democracies, while those below 6 are considered non-democracies.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, because democracy scores are assessed annually, we can measure movement towards or away from democracy by looking at whether combined scores move closer to or above 6 (indicating democratization) or away from 6 (increased non-democracy).<sup>146</sup> Overall, this approach establishes whether rising and declining states are democracies, whether one or both are non-democracies, and whether the declining state is becoming more or less democratic over time.

Second, within the cases, I supplement the Polity scores by using primary and secondary sources to identify the institutional features making a given state democratic or non-democratic. Specifically, I assess whether both states 1) were led by elected leaders who 2) were accountable

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<sup>142</sup> Thus, the U.S. faced perennial concerns throughout the Cold War as to whether its airlift and sealift assets were up to the task of delivering U.S. forces to Europe in the event the Cold War turned hot.

<sup>143</sup> Press, *Calculating Credibility*.

<sup>144</sup> Monty G. Marshall et al., "Polity IV, 1800-1999: Comments on Munck and Verkuilen," *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 1 (February 2002): 40-46. The Polity scores have been updated through 2011 and are available online at: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm> (accessed March 2013).

<sup>145</sup> Sara McLaughlin et al., "Timing the Changes in Political Structures: A New Polity Database," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 2 (April 1998): 231-242; George Modelski and Gardner Perry III, "'Democratization in Long Perspective' Revisited," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 69, no. 4 (May 2002): 359-376.

<sup>146</sup> Michael D. Ward and Kristian S. Gleditsch, "Democratizing for Peace," *The American Political Science Review* 92, no. 1 (March 1998): 55-56.

to the people, and 3) respected civil liberties such as freedom of speech and assembly; I also look for signs that significant democratic reforms are occurring. The results lend greater confidence in and provide nuance to the Polity scores.

**b. Institutional Theory: Presence of Binding Security Institutions**

For Institutional Theory to operate, we need to know whether binding international institutions were present or created in the course of a change in the distribution of power. Scholars working in the institutionalist literature, however, have generally failed to offer ways of coding the presence or absence of binding institutions. Instead, they either qualitatively detail whether which case-specific institutions successfully engendered great power cooperation, or simply count the international institutions present in a case irrespective of the degree to which they meaningfully bound states.<sup>147</sup>

To address this situation, I proceed in two steps. First, I take claims by institutionalist scholars at face value. That is, I use existing studies to identify institutions scholars claim successfully produced international cooperation and affected rising state strategy. As noted earlier, many of these were ad hoc organizations, while others only bound the rising state. Nevertheless, I use current scholarship to identify the institutional presence or absence of in the interest of giving institutionalist claims as generous of a test as possible.

Second, I establish whether organizations not identified in current research were present in a given case and met the implicit definition of a binding international institution. I first determine whether other security institutions were present using the definition discussed earlier: I look for “formal and informal organizations, rules, routines, and practices that are embedded in the ‘wider’ political order” to help manage security affairs between rising and declining states. Having done so, I code whether a given institution in a particular case can be considered binding. A binding institution, as Ikenberry and others suggest, minimally consists of 1) multilateral decision-making procedures, 2) an open negotiating venue in which states can exchange information and bargain with each-other, and 3) an indefinite operating timeframe (necessary for states to engage in tit-for-tat punishment strategies).<sup>148</sup> Only when all three conditions are met does an institution meet the criteria for Institutional Theory to apply. Otherwise, I consider the institution to be little more than epiphenomenal.

**C. Cases and Testing Procedures**

*i. Case Selection*

I test Realist Decline Theory against its competitors using a series of case studies. These case studies examine rising great power strategies towards the two declining great powers identified in post-1945 Europe: post-war Britain from 1945 to 1949, and the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1990. With Britain’s decline, I examine the strategies adopted by the United States and Soviet Union; owing to data limitations on the Soviet side, I devote greater effort to assessing

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<sup>147</sup> For the former, see Deudney and Ikenberry, “The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement”; Alexander Thompson, *Channels of Power: The UN Security Council and US Statecraft in Iraq* (Cornell University Press, 2010); for the latter, see Elizabeth Fausett and Thomas J. Volgy, “Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and Interstate Conflict: Parsing Out IGO Effects for Alternative Dimensions of Conflict in Postcommunist Space,” *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2010): 79–101; Jon Pevehouse and Bruce Russett, “Democratic International Governmental Organizations Promote Peace,” *International Organization* 60, no. 4 (2006): 969–1000.

<sup>148</sup> Other features may include the presence of a permanent supranational bureaucracy that can facilitate monitoring and compliance with international agreements, and a formalized dispute settlement mechanism. While useful additions, they are not necessary for an institution to be binding. Yoram Z. Haftel and Alexander Thompson, “The Independence of International Organizations Concept and Applications,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 2 (2006): 253–275.

American behavior. For the Soviet Union's decline, I examine American strategy as the bipolar contest that dominated Cold War Europe gave way to the United States' unipolar era; because of the chaos and confusion surrounding the breakup of the USSR in 1991, I end the analysis of U.S.-Soviet relations one year before the formal fall of the USSR as a great power, though Appendix C offers a brief précis of the case.

There are two reasons to focus on cases of great power decline and rising state strategy in the post-1945 environment. First, these cases partially control the presence of nuclear weapons as a force in world politics. Because nuclear weapons maximize the advantages of the defender, they may give declining states military advantages and provide rising states additional room for caution that are missing from earlier cases of rise and decline.<sup>149</sup> Second, modern states have the knowledge and means to stage large-scale state interventions in their domestic economics and societies. This may give declining states additional means to compete with rising states in the face of a shifting distribution of power that were largely absent before the modern, post-1945 international system, and thus provide rising states reasons to tread lightly before pursuing predation.<sup>150</sup> Combined, great power rise and decline in the post-1945 world may operate differently than decline in earlier periods. Analyzing the cases is thus intrinsically important for building a theory of rising state behavior towards declining great powers.<sup>151</sup>

#### ii. *Testing Procedures*

I test Realist Decline Theory against its competitors using four methods. First, I perform a series of congruence tests. These tests establish whether the predicted values on the independent variables yield the predicted outputs on the dependent variable.<sup>152</sup> It would be problematic for the theory if, for instance, a relatively rising state in a bipolar world adopted a supportive strategy. By assessing whether independent variables align as expected with the dependent variable, we establish which theory offers more analytic traction than the others.

The second method is process tracing.<sup>153</sup> The competing theories specify not just different conditions under which states pursue predatory or supportive strategies, but also different rationales and intervening steps by which changes on the independent variables to rising state strategy. By looking at sequences of events and the arguments statesmen use to justify state policy, I establish whether the logic of the theories links movement on the independent and dependent variables as anticipated. In other words, process tracing tests whether what Press calls the "transmission mechanism" of a given theory is present or absent.<sup>154</sup> This is necessary for three reasons. First, idiosyncrasies in a case may lead outcomes to diverge from theoretical expectations even if the causal logic of a theory is strongly present. A state may, for example, begin to prey on a declining great power, only to suddenly support the decliner if a new threat unexpectedly emerges. Second, process tracing helps avoid spurious correlation. Even if independent and dependent variables in a case align as expected, process tracing can show if the rationale for a given strategy diverged from a theory's expectations; if so, then it would bring the explanatory power of the theory into question.<sup>155</sup> Finally, and related to the

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<sup>149</sup> Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*.

<sup>150</sup> Thanks go to Barry Posen for this suggestion.

<sup>151</sup> Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 83, 85.

<sup>152</sup> Alexander L George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005), chap. 9.; Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 54.

<sup>153</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chap. 10.

<sup>154</sup> Press, "What Causes Credibility," 85-86.

<sup>155</sup> Press, "What Causes Credibility," 85-86.

preceding, because the different theories sometimes predict the same outcome, process tracing can help us assess which theory offers comparatively more explanatory power.

Process tracing is particularly useful for assessing the utility of Realist Decline Theory as a realist theory of foreign policy. Specifically, if the configuration of power and polarity produce the calculations I predict, then we ought to see process evidence of the expected cost/benefit calculations in the empirical record. To this end, I am particularly interested in assessing what I term the “Rationales” – the debates, arguments, and justifications recorded in memoranda, reports, and meeting minutes – offered by policymakers when shaping American foreign policy.<sup>156</sup> For example, if I am correct and the combination of bipolarity and a weak declining state posture produces Extreme Predation, then we ought to see statesmen discuss the 1) extensive benefits and 2) limited costs that come from weakening a declining state, and thus 3) the need to press the decliner as hard as possible. Similarly, if bipolarity and a robust posture produce Moderate Predation, then statesmen should underscore the need for caution and prudence while still highlighting the attractiveness of weakening the decliner. On the other hand, if multipolarity and a robust declining state posture produce Moderate Support, then statesmen in a rising state will emphasize the desirability of protecting and aiding a declining state but acknowledge the potential costs and thus limits to which they are willing to do so. Finally, if multipolarity and a weak posture produce Extreme Support, then policymakers in the rising state should emphasize the value of preserving the declining state, the problems that would result from weakening or challenging it, and indicate their willingness to use any and all means at their disposal to help the decliner.

Third, I use deep historical research to generate multiple points of observation against which to assess the theories. By deep historical research, I mean extensive work using primary and secondary resources to put oneself in the shoes of policymakers and think through a state’s policy options at the time.<sup>157</sup> This approach leverages the fact that each case is not a single observation as quantitative social science would offer, but rather provides multiple points against which to test theories and weigh evidence. Equally important, states generate mountains of paper in the form of memorandum, transcripts, and reports when pursuing their foreign objectives. This qualitative record can provide a detailed blueprint of the strategic outcomes a rising state sought, the policies it used to get there, and the reasoning behind the strategy. By acquiring deep knowledge of a given case, I better establish whether a state adopted a particular strategy for the reasons offered by my argument or its competitors.

Towards this end, I assembled thousands of unique primary documents from the Reagan and H.W. Bush Presidential Libraries, the personal papers of Secretary of State James Baker, and the U.S. National Archives. I also collected documents from the online collections of the Truman Presidential Library and the British Royal Archives. This work was particularly important for understanding the decline of the Soviet Union. Given the contemporary nature of the Soviet case, the secondary literature is not as well established as the British case, requiring an extensive effort to declassify documents and triangulate among sources. The upshot is that many of the policymakers involved in the Soviet case are still alive, and I was able to interview more than 50 senior policymakers from the Reagan and H.W. Bush Administrations, including key decision-makers such as Robert McFarlane, John Poindexter, Colin Powell, Brent Scowcroft, George Shultz, and Dan Quayle to supplement the archival record.

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<sup>156</sup> For a similar discussion of realism as a guide to foreign policy practice, see Marc Trachtenberg, “The Question of Realism:,” *Security Studies* 13, no. 1 (October 2003): 156–194.

<sup>157</sup> This approach is inspired by Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History*, chap. 3.

Finally, I selected cases to present a series of hard tests for my theory against its competitors. By hard test, I mean that my theory goes up against a case where the independent variables central to one or more of the competing theories are strongly present.<sup>158</sup> As a result, at least one of the competing explanations should provide significant insight into rising state strategy if the competing theories are correct. Conversely, the cases provide strong evidence that my argument is correct if Realist Decline Theory explains more of the cases than its competitors.<sup>159</sup> Put another way, if my argument outperforms competing arguments in cases the competing arguments should easily explain, then we have significant evidence that my argument offers significant explanatory power: if it were not a good explanation of rising state strategy, then it should have readily failed such tests.<sup>160</sup> Thus, the more we find evidence my argument holds within and across these cases, the more confident we can be that the theory operates as expected because it survives serious challenges from competing approaches.

An added advantage of this approach is its ability to engage competing theories on their home turf. Because other scholars have used the theories I argue against to explain several of the cases examined in this project, I am loading the dice against my argument. If other theories are correct, then there we should not have to look hard to find evidence of their success. On the other hand, if they do a worse job accounting for the evidence than Realist Decline Theory in cases they should explain, then there is reason to view extant accounts with some degree of skepticism. Overall, testing my theory against cases used by other scholars helps accumulate knowledge by assessing whether existing arguments can survive theoretical and empirical challenges.

## **IX. Conclusion: Preview of Subsequent Chapters**

Having outlined my argument and contrasted it with its competitors, the remainder of this dissertation tests and evaluates my claims. I begin in Chapters 3 and 4 with a detailed analysis of American strategy towards the declining Soviet Union from 1989 through 1990. These chapters show that American policy moved from Moderate Predation to Extreme Predation in a two year stretch. It did so as Soviet military posture unexpectedly changed from robust to weak and affected the United States' interest in challenging Soviet power and influence. These chapters confirm 1) the hypothesis that a rising state in a bipolar system will prey on a declining state, and 2) that the declining state's posture affects the degree of rising state predation.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss changes in American and, to a lesser extent, Soviet strategy towards the declining United Kingdom immediately after World War Two. American and Soviet responses to British decline provide insight into decline processes in multipolar systems. Again, the results offer strong support for my argument over its competitors, as American and Soviet policy responded to changes in British military posture more than domestic politics or institutionalization. The case is also empirically interesting and shows not just the ambivalence with which the United States approached Anglo-American relations for much of the 1945-1946, but the depths to which the Soviets went to avoid challenging a weakening United Kingdom until

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<sup>158</sup> Here, I try to take other scholars at their word: if prominent institutionalist or democratic peace scholars claim a case supports their theory, I accept that the independent variables they identify must be strongly present until proven otherwise.

<sup>159</sup> Press, "What Causes Credibility," 86-87. For a related description of "strong" versus "weak" tests that also informs my approach, see Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 30-35

<sup>160</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 80-81. The inverse is also true. If the competing explanations cannot explain cases in which the variables they identify are strongly present, then we have good grounds for questioning their explanatory potential; Press, "What Causes Credibility," 86-91.

mid-1947. I delve into the history of American and Soviet policies using primary source materials collected from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, the British Royal Archives, and Truman Presidential Library, alongside memoirs, contemporary reports, and secondary sources.

I conclude in Chapter 7 by summarizing the successes and failures of my theory relative to its competitors and discussing the implications of the argument for current debates surrounding the decline of the United States. Equally important, the chapter reviews next steps in the research agenda, as well as the broader theoretical implications of the project. Overall, offering a theoretically and historically grounded approach towards understanding rising-declining state relations promises to make a contribution to ongoing policy debates, historical scholarship, and international relations theory.



## Chapter Three:

### Soviet Decline and American Strategy, Part I:

#### Moderate Predation in 1989

##### I. Introduction

###### A. American Strategy and the Decline of the Soviet Union, 1989-1990

The prior chapters presented the puzzle of state strategy towards declining great powers, described Realist Decline Theory, and outlined a research agenda to evaluate my claims against competing explanations. The next two chapters test Realist Decline Theory by examining American strategy towards the declining Soviet Union in 1989-1990. As a whole, the Soviet case tests Realist Decline Theory's predictions of great power behavior in bipolar systems. The present chapter focuses on American behavior in 1989, while the following chapter addresses strategy in 1990. I derive, test, and weigh separate predictions from the competing theories in each.

Combined, these chapters revolve around a puzzle: why did American strategy towards the declining USSR become more predatory over the course of 1989-1990? Specifically, why did U.S. policymakers move in the winter of 1990 to evict the Soviet Union from Central and Eastern Europe, where they were previously hesitant to directly challenge the Soviet presence in the region? By 1989, American policymakers agreed that the Soviet Union was declining and that the United States enjoyed a window of opportunity to press the Soviet Union for "concessions" to American interests. With the United States surging ahead, American pressure would either force Soviet leaders to appease the United States or accept an international competition that a weakening USSR could not sustain.<sup>161</sup>

Despite this opportunity, American policymakers avoided intensely preying on the Soviet Union and used cautious means to roll back the Soviet presence through the end of 1989.<sup>162</sup> In military affairs, American policymakers advanced a series of arms control proposals to reduce both American and Soviet military forces that would stabilize Soviet-American military competition on favorable, but not overwhelming, terms for the United States.<sup>163</sup> Equally significant was the diplomatic game. As Communist governments throughout Eastern Europe weakened in 1989, American policymakers avoided exacerbating unrest in the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact clients and challenging the Soviet alliance network.<sup>164</sup> As recent scholarship shows, the United States adopted a hands-off policy in which it pocketed Soviet concessions, but avoided further threats to Soviet security.<sup>165</sup>

Yet having seemingly adopted plans for stable, long-term change, American policymakers shifted course in 1990 and pursued Extreme Predation. The change occurred as the U.S. and Soviet Union negotiated the terms under which East and West Germany could reunify.

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<sup>161</sup> Colin Powell to The President, "Your Meetings with Gorbachev," 2 December 1987, Duberstein Files, Box 4, "Washington Summit Briefing Book," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (hereafter RRPL).

<sup>162</sup> Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," 120.

<sup>163</sup> Interview, NSC official, 14 March 2013.

<sup>164</sup> Amembassy Warsaw to SecState, "How To Elect Jaruzelski Without Voting for Him, and Will He Run?" 23 June 1989, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB42/>; Brent Scowcroft to The President, "The Soviets and the German Question," 29 November 1989, Scowcroft Files, Box 91116, "German Unification (November 1989)," George H.W. Bush Presidential Library (hereafter GBPL).

<sup>165</sup> Domber, "Skepticism and Stability"; Sarotte, 1989.

Having sought through the close of 1989 to stabilize U.S.-Soviet relations by limiting pressure for German reunification, the Bush Administration moved in 1990 to seek rapid German reunification within NATO. This was a striking turn. American officials recognized that East Germany constituted “the cornerstone of [Soviet] security posture, the jewel in [the Soviet] imperial crown.” Ending East Germany’s independence and integrating a reunified Germany with NATO would thus destroy the Soviet alliance system and directly threaten Soviet security in Europe.<sup>166</sup> Previously, the Bush Administration worried that pushing German reunification, let alone reunification inside NATO, would trigger a military crisis; by 1990, however, the United States pushed for reunification as rapidly as possible and ignored Soviet protests over the process. The result was that a reunified Germany emerged in October 1990 on terms highly favorable to the United States and detrimental to the USSR.

#### B. Failure of Existing Arguments and Contribution of Realist Decline Theory

This shift from Moderate to Extreme Predation is difficult to explain using existing theories. Democratic Peace arguments suggest the United States should have been Moderately Predatory in 1989 before becoming less so in 1990.<sup>167</sup> The period saw the Soviet Union implement democratic reforms announced earlier in the 1980s, including a popularly elected legislature with decision-making powers and laws allowing freedom of speech and assembly. The Soviet Union was not a democracy, but it was moving in that direction. In general, we therefore expect American policymakers to monitor Soviet domestic politics as a clue to Soviet behavior, grapple with the implications of Soviet reforms for American security, and shape American policy in response to Soviet internal changes. Moderate Predation makes sense in 1989 as a way of hedging against a backslide in Soviet reforms, before moving to a mixed strategy in 1990 falling between Moderate Predation and Moderate Support as Gorbachev’s reforms take root and gain traction. Neither was the case. American policymakers pursued Moderate Predation in 1989 because of the continued Soviet military threat to Europe throughout the year and ignored evidence of changing Soviet domestic institutions. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter Four, 1990 was the height of American predation: rather than moving closer to support due to Soviet internal changes, American strategy became more predatory.

Institutionalist Theory also predicts the United States should move away from predation in 1989-1990. Ikenberry in particular describes the situation from 1989 onward as one in which “the overall institutional character of Western order [. . .] presented a relatively benign face to the Soviet Union during its time of troubles. The Western democracies together formed a grouping of countries that made it very difficult for them individually or collectively to exploit or dominate the Soviet Union.”<sup>168</sup> This process of restraint and cooperation began in 1989 and reached its apogee in the debates over German reunification as the United States and its allies used “Western institutions to signal restraint and provide reassurance to the Soviet Union as it faced the loss of the GDR [German Democratic Republic, i.e., East Germany].”<sup>169</sup> We therefore expect to see Moderate Support begin in 1989 before giving way to Extreme Support in 1990 as international institutions were used, deepened, and created to integrate the Soviet Union into the Western system. We also expect American policymakers to work through these institutions: institutions, if they shaped American policy, should serve as the prime venue for U.S.-Soviet

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<sup>166</sup> Raymond Seitz to The Secretary, “The Future of Germany in a Fast-Changing Europe,” 10 October 1989, NSA, Soviet Flashpoints Files, Box 38, National Security Archive (hereafter NSA).

<sup>167</sup> Haas, “The United States and the End of the Cold War,” 146–147, 152–155.

<sup>168</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 219.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

negotiations. As noted, however, American strategy was predatory from the start of 1989 and became more predatory as Soviet power waned. In the process, American policymakers both circumscribed the mandate of extant institutions and structured diplomatic negotiations to avoid using institutions that might help the USSR obtain *Western* concessions; U.S. policymakers avoided all but hints of institutional cooperation with the USSR for fear of actually being institutionally restrained. As with democratic peace arguments, institutionalist accounts fall short.

In contrast, I argue Realist Decline Theory provides a powerful tool to understand American strategy. Given the bipolar U.S.-Soviet competition, the United States benefited by preying on a declining USSR, as weakening the USSR limited the Soviet threat. Still, the United States sought to avoid costly Soviet internal balancing. In 1989, American officials feared that pressing the Soviets too hard would trigger a crisis that could escalate and imperil American security. In the winter of 1990, however, changes to Soviet military posture meant that the Soviet Union could no longer protect its position in Eastern Europe by force. These changes meant that the United States could reap the benefits of predation while paying none of the costs – they created an opportunity for the United States to immediately rollback Soviet power Eastern Europe. Once the United States concluded that predation would no longer carry costs, American strategy shifted from Moderate to Extreme predation. I deal with strategy in 1989 in this chapter, before discussing the shift to Extreme Predation in Chapter Four.

### C. Broader Contribution of the Argument

The argument advanced in these chapters stands on its own as a contribution to scholarship on American policy at the end of the Cold War. Political scientists spent much of the 1990s and early 2000s debating why the Cold War ended with peaceful Soviet retrenchment rather than a military showdown. Overwhelmingly, scholars focused on Gorbachev's decision to end the Cold War on American terms.<sup>170</sup> Theoretical treatments of American policy, however, are scarce.<sup>171</sup> Among available studies, the majority look to explain why the United States ostensibly cooperated with the Soviet Union in ending the Cold War on mutually agreeable terms.

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<sup>170</sup> See, inter alia, Jeff Checkel, "Ideas, Institutions, and the Gorbachev Foreign Policy Revolution," *World Politics* 45, no. 2 (January 1993): 271–300; Jack Snyder, "International Leverage on Soviet Domestic Change," *World Politics* 42, no. 1 (October 1989): 1–30; Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Cornell University Press, 2002); Thomas Risse, "Ideas, Discourse, Power and the End of the Cold War: 20 Years On," *International Politics* 48, no. 4 (July 2011): 591–606; Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 185–214; Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); reviews the debate can be found in Richard K. Herrmann and Richard Ned Lebow, eds., *Ending the Cold War: Interpretations, Causation, and the Study of International Relations*, 1st ed., *New Visions in Security* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>171</sup> I am referring mainly to theoretical treatments of American foreign policy. Among histories of the period, see Jeffrey A. Engel, "A Better World...but Don't Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush Twenty Years On," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 25–46; Sarotte, 1989; Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*, 1st ed (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993); Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1990* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991); Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994); Christopher Maynard, *Out of the Shadow: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*, 1st ed (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008); Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); see also the essays in Kiron K. Skinner, ed., *Turning Points in Ending the Cold War* (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2008); Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey Legro, eds., *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

For these scholars, the United States and USSR reached a benign rapprochement thanks to the Soviet Union's success in convincing American policymakers that the USSR would not trick the United States if the U.S. adopted a supportive strategy.<sup>172</sup> The resulting trust encouraged American policymakers to restrain American ambitions, integrate the USSR into Western institutions, and meet Soviet demands for security guarantees in Eastern Europe. Wohlforth provides a good summary of this argument, offering that "From December 1989 onward, [Gorbachev's] policy became increasingly focused on [. . .] stabilizing Western support for the Soviet Union's eroding international position. Only at this point did the Western powers, led by the United States, move 'beyond containment' to deep cooperation with Moscow."<sup>173</sup> The "restrained America" perspective offers a rosy account of Soviet fortunes and a benign interpretation of American foreign policy.<sup>174</sup>

In contrast, a smaller group of scholars challenge the notion of American restraint and support. In the analyses set out by Wohlforth (revising earlier arguments), Schweller, and Layne, American strategy focused on rolling back Soviet power once it became clear that the Soviet Union was declining.<sup>175</sup> As a result, by 1989 the United States simply had to maintain a policy demanding "complete Soviet surrender."<sup>176</sup> Although no scholar has traced American policy throughout the whole of 1989-1990, individual arguments collectively suggest that German reunification, the demise of the Warsaw Pact, and the expansion of American power into Eastern Europe followed from constant American efforts to press U.S. advantages whenever possible.<sup>177</sup>

This project advances the state of the debate, as my empirical work poses problems for both perspectives.<sup>178</sup> In contrast to the latter school of thought, I argue that there was important variation in American policy between 1989 and 1990. In 1989, the United States was concerned that intensely preying on the Soviet position in Eastern Europe would trigger a Soviet backlash.

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<sup>172</sup> James Goldgeier and Derek Chollet, "Once Burned, Twice Shy? The Pause of 1989," in *Cold War Endgame: Oral History, Analysis, Debates*, ed. William C. Wohlforth (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 141-173; Joseph Leggold, "Failure or Learning Opportunity? The End of the Cold War and Its Implications for International Relations Theory," in *Cold War Endgame: Oral History, Analysis, Debates*, ed. William C. Wohlforth (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 331-332; Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 215-247; Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 215-233; Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 214-244; Risse-Kappen, "Ideas Do Not Float Freely."

<sup>173</sup> Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," 122.

<sup>174</sup> Among historical works, see Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 366-368; Beschloss and Talbot, *Highest Levels*, 469-472; Robert B. Zoellick, "Practical Lessons for the post-Cold War Age," *European Affairs* 4 (1990): 79-84; Robert B. Zoellick, "Two Plus Four: The Lessons of German Unification," *National Interest* (Fall 2000): 19; Alexander Moens, "American Diplomacy and German Unification," *Survival* 33, no. 6 (November 1991): 537-538.

<sup>175</sup> Randall L. Schweller and William C. Wohlforth, "Power Test: Evaluating Realism in Response to the End of the Cold War," *Security Studies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 60-107; William C. Wohlforth, "German Unification: A Reassessment," in *The Cold War: Reassessments*, ed. Arthur L. Rosenbaum and Chae-Jin Lee (Claremont, CA: The Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies, Claremont McKenna College, 2000), 171; Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 106-113.

<sup>176</sup> Schweller and Wohlforth, "Power Test," 93.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-95; Wohlforth, "German Unification: A Reassessment," 175-176.

<sup>178</sup> For an effort to grapple with the different ways of viewing U.S. policy in the period, see Robert Legvold, "Lessons from the Soviet Past," in *Reversing Relations with Former Adversaries: U.S. Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. C. Richard Nelson and Kenneth Weisbrode (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998), 29-35.

The solution was to encourage gradual change, but do nothing that might be seen as immediately threatening to Soviet security. This changed in 1990, however, as the United States concluded the USSR could no longer defend Eastern Europe, resulting in a revisionist policy that quickly unified Germany in NATO and expelled the USSR from Eastern Europe. American policy changed over time, such that treating American policy as monolithic mischaracterizes the strategy.

Yet even if I follow the first school of thought in identifying a shift in American policy during 1989-1990, the direction of change is the opposite of what Ikenberry, Haas, and others argue. Far from cooperating with the Soviet Union, the United States became extremely predatory and highly revisionist as time wore on. By early 1990, the United States not only looked to evict the USSR from Central Europe, but actively created a diplomatic coalition to isolate the USSR. In retrospect, members of the Bush Administration have argued that the American strategy helped the USSR meet its “legitimate” security interests, as Soviet interests were redefined. This is too glib by half: American policy was designed to limit Soviet options so that Soviet leaders had no choice but to accept Soviet interests as defined by the United States.

#### D. Outline of Chapter

The remainder of this chapter evaluates American strategy in 1989. It proceeds in five parts. Following this Introduction, I describe the changing distribution of power in the late Cold War and the recognition that the Soviet Union was declining. Next, I code the independent variables central to Realist Decline Theory and generate a series of predictions about the case, before doing the same for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory. I then test the various predictions against the empirical record, before summarizing the evidence and previewing the subsequent chapter.

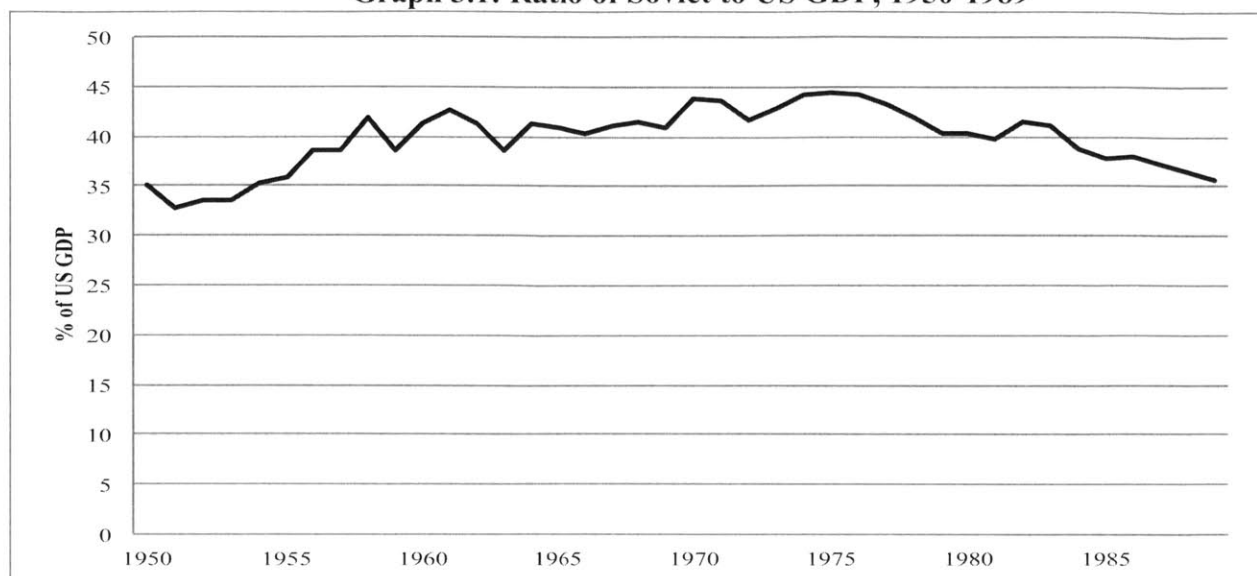
## II. **Identifying Soviet Decline**

In line with existing scholarship on the international consequences of Soviet decline, I begin the analysis of American strategy towards the USSR in 1989.<sup>179</sup> By this time, Soviet power as measured by share of great power GDP had declined relative to the United States without any sign of improvement since the mid-1980s (Graph 3.1). The size and intractability of Soviet losses allowed time for American policymakers to recognize and respond to the trend. In this section, I confirm 1989 is a good starting point by briefly reviewing Soviet performance versus the United States over the course of the 1980s and the effects thereof on American assessment of the U.S.-Soviet competition. Although I code decline using great power GDP shares, I mention political and military developments during the period to provide a more nuanced qualitative analysis. Due to space constraints, a fuller discussion of the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power is provided in the Appendix.

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<sup>179</sup> Wohlforth, “German Unification: A Reassessment,” 159; Legvold, “Lessons from the Soviet Past,” 17; Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 215.

**Graph 3.1: Ratio of Soviet to US GDP, 1950-1989**



Over the course of the 1980s, the Soviet Union declined relative to the United States.<sup>180</sup> The change is ironic, as the start of the decade saw the U.S. officials worried that the United States was declining due to the poor performance of the U.S. economy and concerns over American military weakness.<sup>181</sup> By the mid-1980s, however, the revival of American economic power and Carter-Reagan defense buildup helped arrest the ostensible decline of American fortunes. These changes led senior American policymakers to hope the United States might soon recover lost ground.<sup>182</sup> At the same time, Soviet economic problems, which analysts had identified in the late 1970s, began to accumulate.<sup>183</sup> By the middle of the decade, the Soviet economy dropped fell below 40 percent of the United States' for the first time in decades. After a brief recovery, Soviet economic performance remained below that of the United States for the rest of the 1980s. Already smaller than the U.S. economy (Graph 3.2), the Soviet Union fell further behind that United States in economic potential.

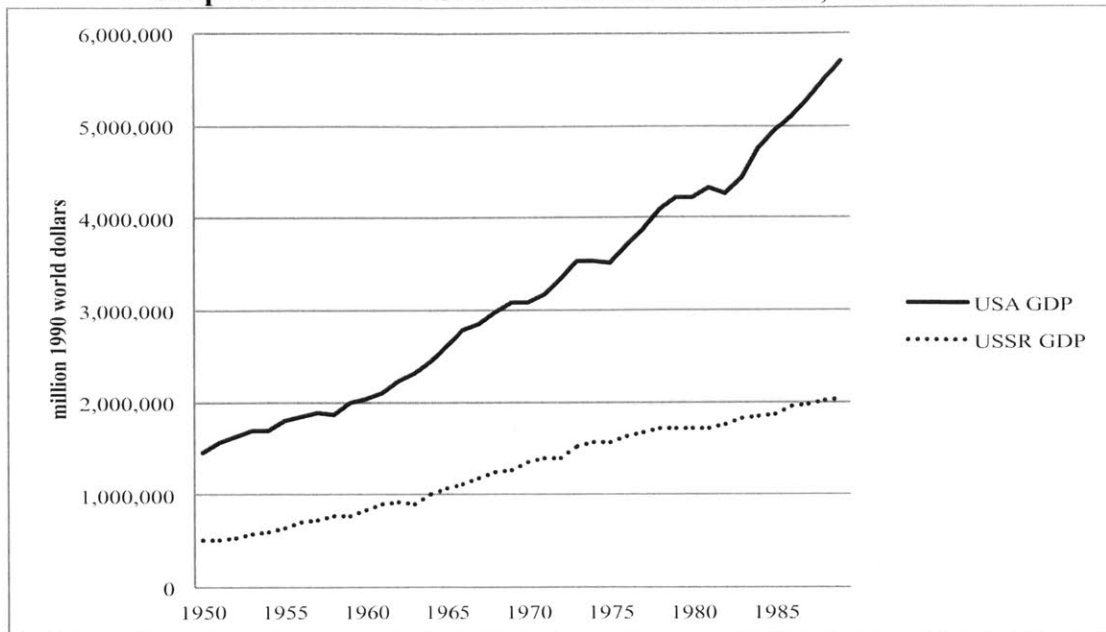
<sup>180</sup> On the Soviet economic slowdown, see Abraham C. Becker, "Intelligence Fiasco or Reasoned Accounting? CIA Estimates of Soviet GNP," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10, no. 4 (October 1994): 291–329; Gertrude E. Schroeder, "Reflections on Economic Sovietology," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, no. 3 (July 1995): 197–234.

<sup>181</sup> Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, 1st ed (New York: Random House, 2004), 11, 13; George P. Shultz, "A Perspective From Washington," in *Turning Points in Ending the Cold War*, ed. Kiron Skinner (Stanford, C.A.: Hoover Institution Press, 2008), xx; Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, and Erez Manela, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>182</sup> William P. Clark to The President, "The Prospects for Progress in US-Soviet Relations," 4 February 1983, Clark Files, Box 8, "US-Soviet Relations Papers Working File: Contains Originals (2)," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (hereafter RRPL).

<sup>183</sup> "Agenda for Briefing of President-elect Briefing," 11 December 1980, available online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19801211.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19801211.pdf); Richard Allen to The President, "CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate," 21 November 1989 and Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Dependence of Soviet Military Power on Economic Relations with the West," SNIE 3/11-4-81, both online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19811117.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19811117.pdf); Richard Pipes, "Reagan Soviet Policy (Short Version)," November 1981, Pipes Files, Box 3, "Miscellaneous Papers," RRPL.

**Graph 3.2: Absolute Size of U.S. and Soviet GDP, 1950-1989**



The overall distribution of power, however, does not capture the USSR's qualitative decline. For example, Soviet economic efficiency, meaning the rate at which raw economic inputs produced goods and services, collapsed. In some cases, Soviet factor productivity was negative, meaning the USSR was lowering its net worth by its economic activities!<sup>184</sup> Intelligence estimates, meanwhile, stressed the growing Soviet lag in high technology (Table 3.1) and by 1989 concluded that the USSR was unable "to compete in high-technology fields and to efficiently integrate technological advances in the production process."<sup>185</sup> These trends promised to further hinder Soviet economic competitiveness and leave the USSR behind in the most advanced military technologies as well.<sup>186</sup>

**Table 3.1: The Soviet Lag in Critical Technologies<sup>187</sup>**

Technology	U.S. Lead, 1985	U.S. Lead, 1988-1989
Microcircuits	4-6 years	8-10 years
Minicomputers	4-6 years	4-10 years
Mainframes	6-8 years	8-15 years
Computer-operated Machine Tools	3-4 years	5-9 years
Flexible Manufacturing Systems	5-6 years	7-10 years

<sup>184</sup> William Easterly and Stanley Fischer, *The Soviet Economic Decline: Historical and Republican Data* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1994); Richard E. Ericson, "The Soviet Statistical Debate: Khanin Vs. TsSU," in *The Impoverished Superpower: Perestroika and the Soviet Military Burden*, ed. Henry S. Rowen and Charles Wolf (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1990), 13-62.

<sup>185</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The Soviet Economy in a Global Perspective*, March 1989, 19-20.

<sup>186</sup> Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter -2001 2000): 16.

<sup>187</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *A Comparison of the US and Soviet Economies: Evaluating the Performance of the Soviet System*, October 1985, 15; Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Subcommittee on National Security Economics, *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China, April 14, 1989* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 47.



Soviet problems were sufficiently acute by 1985-1986 that newly selected Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sought ways of revitalizing Soviet strength.<sup>188</sup> When early efforts at boosting economic performance through managerial accountability and a “disciplinary campaign” failed,<sup>189</sup> Gorbachev embarked on more extensive economic and political reforms. The intent was to emulate Western economic systems while giving Soviet citizens a stake in the success of the effort in order to mobilize support and encourage popular sacrifices. These efforts culminated in 1987-1988 with laws 1) allowing limited private enterprises 2) creating a parliamentary system (the Congress of People’s Deputies) with free elections, and 3) tolerating free-speech and political movements.<sup>190</sup> By the close of 1988, Gorbachev took another step by slashing the Soviet defense budget and reducing military forces in Eastern Europe.<sup>191</sup> After military cuts were announced on 7 December 1988, the CIA reported that the changes would prevent the USSR from carrying out offensive military operations against Western Europe without substantial reinforcements. A few months later, Gorbachev further allowed the political liberalization of Soviet client states in Eastern Europe as democratic opposition movements gained strength. Although decline did not determine that the USSR would pursue such a profound retrenchment, Gorbachev seems to have believed that only by reducing competition with the United States could the USSR 1) obtain support from the West for Soviet internal reforms, and 2) reduce the USSR’s military burden to free-up resources for domestic recovery. As Brooks and Wohlforth conclude, Soviet decline significantly increased the odds of Gorbachev’s domestic reforms and foreign retrenchment.<sup>192</sup>

These efforts proved insufficient. By 1989, the Soviet economy was in a state of crisis. Instead of spurring economic growth, Gorbachev’s reforms led to uncertainty and confusion that worsened Soviet economic performance. Moreover, the military balance was in flux as Soviet withdrawals proceeded and Soviet military strategists tried to modify plans in light of the military retrenchment. Political liberalizations added to these problems by sowing dissent within the Soviet leadership over whether the USSR should continue reforms, or maintain the status quo.<sup>193</sup>

At a time when the United States had recovered from the doldrums of the early 1980s, American policymakers recognized the distribution of power was shifting in the United States’ favor by 1988-1989.<sup>194</sup> Soviet problems suggested that the USSR faced a period of decline and serious limits on its ability to compete with the West. As National Security Advisor Frank Carlucci (echoing Secretary of State George Shultz) put it in December 1987, “the Soviet Union is in deep trouble at home, in East Europe, and around the world. It can only get out of that trouble with far-reaching reforms and, even then, only with Western help. This gives us an

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<sup>188</sup> Legvold, “Lessons from the Soviet Past,” 21–22.

<sup>189</sup> Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR from 1945* (London: Longman, 2003), 178–185.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 195–197.

<sup>191</sup> Gerard Snel, “‘A (More) Defensive Strategy’: The Reconceptualisation of Soviet Conventional Strategy in the 1980s,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 2 (March 1998): 205–239.

<sup>192</sup> Brooks and Wohlforth, “Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War.”

<sup>193</sup> Miller Center Interview with Robert M. Gates, interview by University of Virginia Miller Center, July 23, 2000, 36–38. Also Central Intelligence Agency, “Gorbachev’s Strategy for Managing the Defense Burden,” April 1989, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000499116.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000499116.pdf).

<sup>194</sup> Legvold suggests American policymakers still worried about a Soviet recovery in 1986-1987, before changing course in 1988-1989; Legvold, “Lessons from the Soviet Past,” 23–25, 27.



opportunity to demand a high price on behalf of peace, stability, and freedom.”<sup>195</sup> In short, the Soviet Union was losing ground to the United States, offering the United States an opportunity to define the policy agenda as it saw fit.

By the time the Bush Administration came into office in January 1989, the view of a declining USSR was well-established. Of Bush’s seven principal advisors on foreign policy – the “Core Group” of Secretary of State James Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, Chief of Staff John Sununu, and Vice President Dan Quayle – Gates, Powell, and Baker all served in the Reagan Administration, while Scowcroft served as an outside advisor.<sup>196</sup> As Bush was Vice President for Reagan’s two terms, a critical mass of policymakers in the Bush Administration were privy to and agreed with the Reagan-era assessments of the U.S.-Soviet competition. For instance, around the time Carlucci described Gorbachev’s need for Western help to overcome its problems, then-Deputy CIA Director Gates offered that, “The Soviets’ need to relax tensions is critical because only thus can massive new expenditures for defense be avoided and Western help in economic development be obtained.”<sup>197</sup> By early February 1989, Baker similarly argued that Gorbachev needed to cope with an “era of stagnation” that limited Soviet policy options.<sup>198</sup> Less than one week later, Bush and Scowcroft launched a review of U.S. policy towards the USSR inspired by the realization that “the pressures of a failing system at home and frustrated policies abroad” had caused the USSR to focus on its internal problems and created “trends in US-Soviet relations [that] are, in large part, favorable to us.”<sup>199</sup> So long as the United States maintained its economic health and a strong military, the Soviet Union would continue to fall behind the United States.<sup>200</sup>

### III. Coding & Predictions: Realist Decline Theory

This section codes the independent variables central to Realist Decline Theory and derives predictions of U.S. policy in 1989. First, I argue that Soviet decline occurred in a bipolar environment: although weaker than the United States, both the U.S. and USSR were significantly stronger than other states and were the only two great powers. Second, I show that Soviet military posture was robust throughout 1989. Not only did it station large forces throughout Central and Eastern Europe, but it had the ability to deploy additional troops as needed from the Soviet homeland to secure the region. Finally, given bipolarity and the Soviet Union’s robust posture, I predict the United States should adopt a strategy of Moderate Predation: I argue the United States will maximize American power at the USSR’s expense to improve American security, but will use cautious means to avoid provoking a crisis with a declining but still potent USSR.

#### A. Polarity of the System: Bipolar

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<sup>195</sup> Frank Carlucci to The President, “Scope Paper on December US-Soviet Summit,” no date, Jameson Files, Box 92305, “Summit/Background Material,” RRPL.

<sup>196</sup> Miller Center, Interview with Scowcroft, 31-33.

<sup>197</sup> Powell “ Meetings with Gorbachev;” Gates, “Gorbachev’s Gameplan.”

<sup>198</sup> Baker annotations on “U.S.-Soviet Relations,” 10 February 1989, Box 108, Folder 2, Baker Papers, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University (hereafter BP).

<sup>199</sup> George H.W. Bush, “National Security Review 3: Comprehensive Review of US-Soviet Relations,” 15 February 1989, online at: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr3.pdf>.

<sup>200</sup> “JAB personal notes from 2/6/89 mtg w/POTUS & Others, WDC,” 6 February 1989, Box 108, Folder 2, BP.

Despite Soviet decline, Europe remained a bipolar system. As one NSC staff member later put it, “We certainly still saw the Soviet Union as a peer.”<sup>201</sup> Although Soviet growth was stagnating, the USSR could call upon resources that dwarfed all other European actors save the United States.

It is difficult to accurately measure the distribution of power in late Cold War Europe due to unreliable data on Soviet capabilities. Although analysts at the time assumed that the Soviet economy was roughly one-half the United States,<sup>202</sup> information released under Gorbachev and since the fall of the USSR shows this was an overestimate.<sup>203</sup> Rather than half the size of the American economy, recent scholarship suggests that the Soviet economy was between thirty and forty percent that of the United States in the mid-late 1980s.<sup>204</sup> Thus, only by extracting resources at an extremely high rate did the USSR compete with the United States for as long as it did.

Ex post revelations of the true state of the Soviet state create two problems for measuring the distribution of power. First, it suggests a disjuncture between what policymakers at the time believed, and what ex post assessments reveal.<sup>205</sup> Second, because the USSR collapsed shortly after revelations of Soviet problems came to light, there have been few efforts to re-weight Soviet performance and incorporate this data into a broader assessment of the European distribution of power. This makes systematic data collection difficult.

To accommodate this situation, I use the best available economic data as a baseline, before layering on additional indicators of Soviet capabilities. My goal is to triangulate among sources and arrive at a holistic sense of what states were the principal players in Europe. Data from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Maddison’s *Statistics on the World Economy*, Congressional reports, and the scholarly literature suggests one overwhelming finding: despite Soviet problems, late Cold War Europe remained bipolar.

I begin with Maddison’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dataset, which dovetails with ex post analyses placing Soviet GDP between thirty and forty percent that of the United States.<sup>206</sup> Applying the coding scheme discussed in Chapter Two, only the United States and Soviet Union qualify as great powers in late Cold War Europe: only the United States and USSR had 1) at least 10 percent of the capabilities of the region, and 2) at least 25 percent the capabilities of the strongest state therein (here, the United States). Table 3.2 illustrates the situation in 1989. At the time, the United States controlled roughly forty percent of total European GDP versus fifteen percent for the USSR (note that the distribution of capabilities was not so weighted in the American favor since American power was diffused across North America, Asia, and Europe).

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<sup>201</sup> Interview with Philip Zelikow, 18 August 2011.

<sup>202</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *A Comparison of the US and Soviet Economies: Evaluating the Performance of the Soviet System*; Central Intelligence Agency, *The Soviet Economy in a Global Perspective*.

<sup>203</sup> For an overview of the data problems and revised estimates, see Anders Aslund, “How Small Is Soviet National Income,” in *The Impoverished Superpower: Perestroika and the Soviet Military Burden*, ed. Henry S. Rowen and Charles Wolf (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1990), 13–62.

<sup>204</sup> Abram Bergson, “How Big Was the Soviet GDP?,” *Comparative Economic Studies* 39, no. 1 (1997): 1–14; Anders Aslund, “Gorbachev, Perestroika, and Economic Crisis,” *Problems of Communism* 40, no. 1–2 (1991): 18–41.

<sup>205</sup> Joint Economic Committee, U.S. Congress, November 9, 15, and 16, 1989, *American Economic Power: Redefining National Security for the 1990’s* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 117.

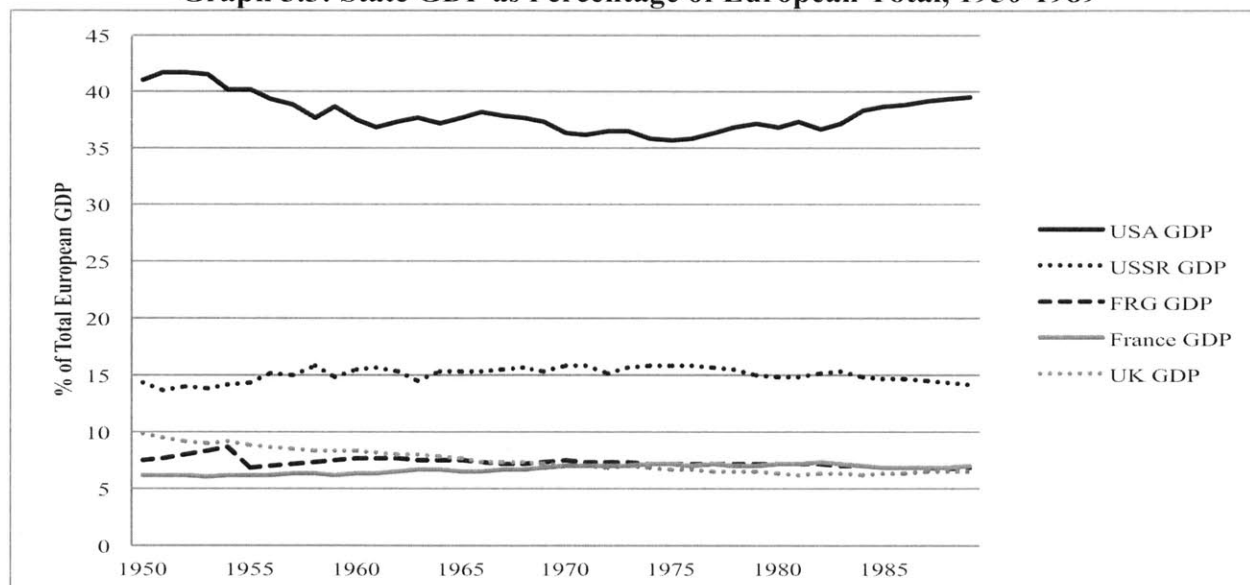
<sup>206</sup> Maddison’s GDP data is also the most systematic of available datasets and comports with what scholars have been able to infer of the actual size of the Soviet economy. In the most thoughtful reconstruction of the disagreement, Bergson suggests Soviet GDP may only have been between thirty-five and forty percent that of the United States in 1990. This estimate matches Maddison’s data.

In contrast, the next three largest economies in Europe (Britain, France, and West Germany) each enjoyed between six and seven percent of European GDP. This situation was fairly steady throughout the Cold War (Graph 3.3). Only an alliance among the majority of other states in Europe could match the resources the United States or USSR could bring to the international contest.

**Table 3.2: Identifying the European Great Powers, 1989<sup>207</sup>**

Great Powers			Other States (for illustration)		
State	Share of European GDP	Share of Strongest State (USA)	State	Share of European GDP	Share of Strongest State (USA)
USA	39.5	100	United Kingdom	6.5	16.5
USSR	14.1	35.7	France	6.9	17.5
			West Germany	6.8-9.0	17.2-22.8

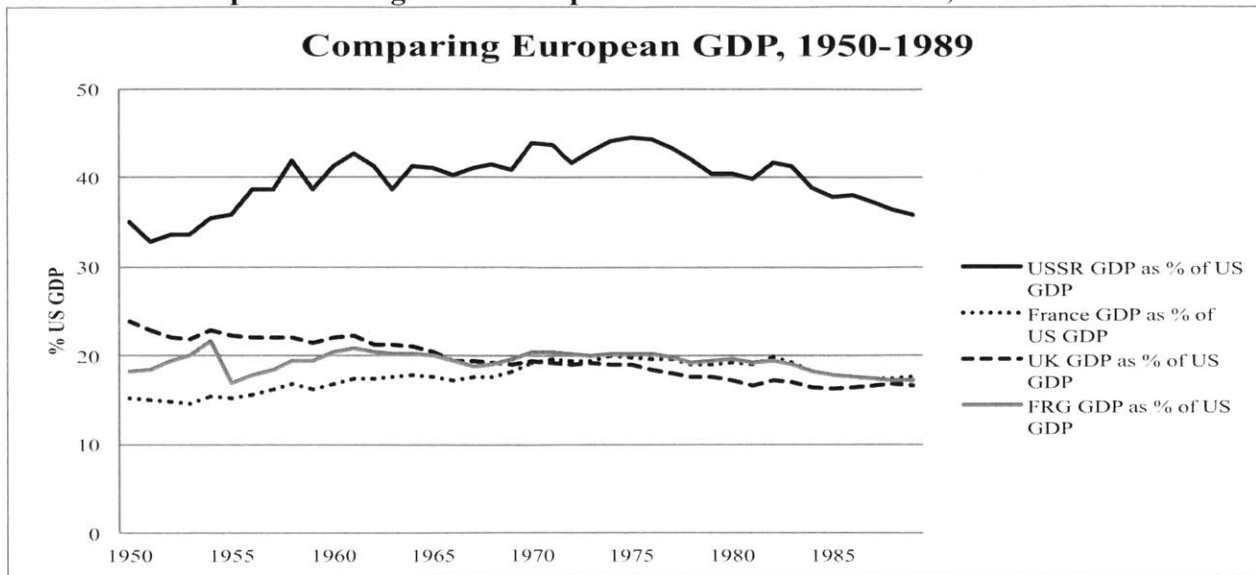
**Graph 3.3: State GDP as Percentage of European Total, 1950-1989**



Looking at the ratio of GDP between the United States and other states in Europe puts the picture in starker terms (Graph 3.4). While the Soviet economy was less than 40 percent that of the United States in the late 1980s, it was still more than 50 percent larger than West Germany, Britain, or France. Moreover, as late as 1989, the United States and Soviet Union combined accounted for nearly 54 percent of total European GDP, while the next three largest states collectively accounted for only 20 percent. In short, the Soviet Union and the United States were the big players in terms of gross capabilities, holding sufficient resources to threaten each other but largely inured against other competitors.

<sup>207</sup> Maddison only reports data for unified Germany, giving it approximately 9 percent of European GDP. However, the 1987 CIA World Factbook shows FRG GDP was between seventy-five and eighty percent of the GDR and FRG total. Using 75 percent as a rough estimate of the FRG share, Maddison's data shows West German GDP was approximately 6.8 percent of the European total. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 1987* (Washington: CIA, 1987).

**Graph 3.4: Long-Term European Distribution of Power, 1950-1989**



Adding other capabilities into the mix reinforces the view of a bipolar Europe. First, the U.S. and USSR retained the largest populations in Europe (Graph 3.5).<sup>208</sup> These demographic bases provided the US and the USSR with the foundations upon which labor and economic resources could be married for international, particularly military, purposes.

Still, given its larger economy, the United States should have been able to spend more for international purposes, particularly on its military, than the Soviet Union. However, because the Soviet Union was willing to suppress civilian consumption, the USSR mobilized proportionally more resources on a per capita basis.<sup>209</sup> As a result, where the U.S. spent approximately 6 percent of its GDP on the military, the USSR devoted 16 percent to comparable efforts.<sup>210</sup> By the late 1980s, CIA estimates thus put Soviet and American annual military expenditures on par with one another, while total military expenditures from 1965 through 1989 were nearly identical at \$6.3 trillion for the USSR versus \$6.1 trillion for the United States in 1988 dollars.<sup>211</sup> Annual and cumulative expenditures far exceeded those of other European states.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Population data from Maddison.

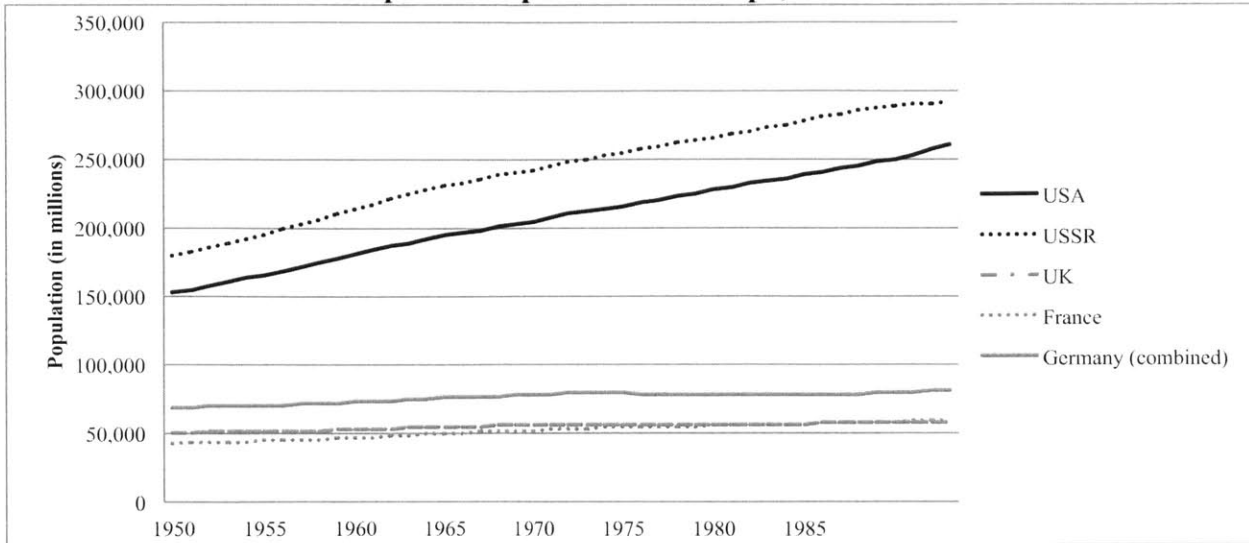
<sup>209</sup> Depending on the sources used, Soviet per capita consumption ranged between one-fourth and four-fifths of U.S. per capita consumption, even though Soviet per capita GDP ranged between one-third and one-half that of the United States. This difference between per capita GDP and per capita consumption reflects government resource extraction; Bergson, "How Big Was the Soviet GDP?," 3. Author calculations from the Penn World Tables (version 5.6) put per capita GDP at 42 percent of the U.S. total, and per capita consumption at 32 percent the U.S. total in 1989; William D. Nordhaus, "Soviet Economic Reform: The Longest Road." *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 1990, no. 1 (1990): 288.

<sup>210</sup> Frank Carlucci, *Department of Defense Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 1990* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), Chart I.C.3, 46.

<sup>211</sup> Noel Firth and James Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending: A History of CIA Estimates, 1950-1990* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 116, 119; General Accounting Office, *U.S.-NATO Burden Sharing: Allies' Contributions to Common Defense During the 1980s* (Washington, DC, October 1990), 11.

<sup>212</sup> As with the size of the Soviet economy, there is a long-standing debate surrounding how much the Soviets spent on defense; see Franklyn D. Holzman, "Politics and Guesswork: CIA and DIA Estimates of Soviet Military Spending," *International Security* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 101-131; James H. Noren, "The Controversy Over Western Measures of Soviet Defense Expenditures," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, no. 3 (1995): 238-276. However, even low-range estimates of Soviet military spending show the United States and USSR far outspent other states in Europe

**Graph 3.5: Population in Europe, 1950-1989**



These resources were used to acquire substantial military forces. On one level, the Soviet military was quantitatively the largest in Europe, while the Soviet industrial base could produce advanced military equipment on a large scale.<sup>213</sup> American forces, however, were generally better resourced, the equipment of higher caliber, and, because most military scenarios expected the United States to defend against a Soviet attack, could count on the advantages of the defender to offset Soviet quantitative superiority.<sup>214</sup> Both forces were significantly larger and better resourced compared to other European actors (Table 3.3).<sup>215</sup> Equally important, the two countries retained the largest and most diversified nuclear arsenals, holding both a majority of nuclear warheads and redundant delivery options unmatched by other states (Tables 3.4 and 3.5). Mirroring the economic and demographic situation, the Soviet Union and United States were the main military players in late Cold War Europe.<sup>216</sup>

and does not affect the overall bipolar coding; see SIPRI, *Military Expenditure Database, 1988-2012*, [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database) (accessed March 2013).

<sup>213</sup> Carlucci, *Annual Report FY1990*, 19-21.

<sup>214</sup> Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 72, 102; also John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe," *International Security* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 1982): 3-39; Barry R. Posen, "Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment," *International Security* 9, no. 3 (December 1984): 47-88.

<sup>215</sup> In addition to the table, see Congressional Budget Office, *Budgetary and Military Effects of a Treaty Limiting Conventional Forces in Europe* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, January 1990), 7; Congressional Budget Office, *Budgetary and Military Effects of a Treaty Limiting Conventional Military Forces in Europe* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, September 1990), 8.

<sup>216</sup> For similar conclusions on U.S.-Soviet parity, see Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe"; Posen, "Measuring the European Conventional Balance"; Joshua M. Epstein, *Conventional Force Reductions: A Dynamic Assessment* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1990); Congressional Budget Office, *Budgetary and Military Effects (January 1990)*, 14; Congressional Budget Office, *Budgetary and Military Effects (September 1990)*, 23.

**Table 3.3: Select Conventional Military Assets, 1989**

State	Ground Forces (Active & Reserve)	Tanks	Infantry Fighting Vehicles	Personnel Carriers	Artillery Tubes	Tactical Aircraft (fighters & attack)
USA	1850000	15992	4883	26480	5397	3205
USSR	4600000	53350	28500	30000	31500	4595
UK	410700	1290	200	3437	550	570
France	559500	1340	960	150	764	598
West Germany	1057000	5005	2138	856	1272	507
East Germany	370000	3140	1000	4350	1260	335

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1989* (London: IISS, 1990). Only army forces are counted for ground forces and associated equipment.

**Table 3.4: Nuclear Assets, 1989<sup>217</sup>**

State	Strategic Warheads				Tactical Warheads
	<i>ICBM-delivered</i>	<i>SLBM-delivered</i>	<i>Air-delivered</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
USA	2,592	5,410	5,965	13,967	8,207
USSR	7,382	3,085	1,651	12,118	23,700
Britain	-	96 (est.)	-	96 (est.)	200 (est.)
France	18	80-96	28	126-142	268-284 (est.)

**Table 3.5: Strategic Delivery Systems, 1989<sup>218</sup>**

State	Strategic Delivery Systems (launchers)		
	<i>ICBM</i>	<i>SLBM</i>	<i>Aircraft</i>
USA	1,000	592	311
USSR	1,379	949	160
Britain	-	64	-
France	18	96	18

Finally, Europe's political geography reinforced the bipolar contest. In the abstract, both the United States and Soviet Union were confined to the flanks of Europe: the United States was separated from the continent by the Atlantic Ocean, while the Soviet Union was on the extreme eastern fringe of the region. Each would have to traverse large distances to access major power centers in Central and Western Europe. Critical to the American and Soviet presence in Europe, therefore, were their alliance networks. The alliances – NATO on the American side and the Warsaw Pact for the USSR – helped the two states to station large military forces in Europe, overcome the geographic barriers to power projection on the continent, and organize the resources of lesser states. Inversely, by threatening to withdraw their security umbrellas or intervening in local politics, the two great powers could ensure smaller European actors adopted

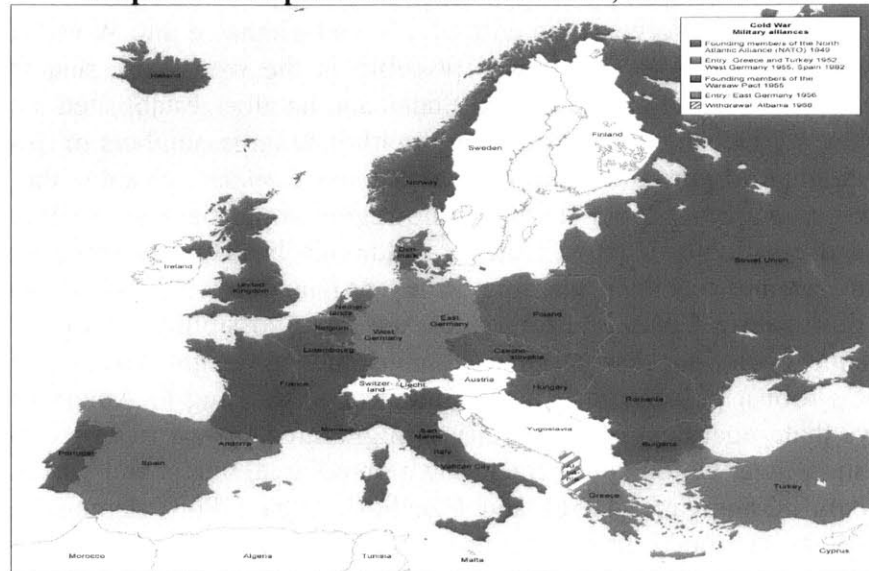
<sup>217</sup> American and Soviet forces from National Resource Defense Council (hereafter NRDC), Archive of Nuclear Data, <http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/datainx.asp> (accessed March 2013). British and French forces estimated based on Robert S. Norris, "British, French, and Chinese Nuclear Arsenals: Research Findings and Arms Control Implications," Paper prepared for 4<sup>th</sup> ISODORACO Beijing Seminar on Arms Control, 26-30 April 1990, 8-9; Charlotte Phillips Preece and James M. Freeman, *British and French Strategic Nuclear Force Modernization*, Congressional Research Service Report 89-140 F, 2 February 1989; United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, *Nuclear Weapons: A Comprehensive Study* (New York: United Nations, 1991), 17-18; NRDC, Archive of Nuclear Data.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid..



policies they would otherwise avoid. In short, the alliance networks functioned as a force multiplier that both facilitated and reinforced the bipolar competition. Map 3.1 illustrates the geopolitical situation in the late 1980s.

**Map 3.1: European Alliance Networks, late Cold War**<sup>219</sup>



**B. Military Posture: Robust**

Within the bipolar contest, the Soviet Union retained a robust military posture in 1989: it could secure its position in Central-Eastern Europe against the U.S. The USSR’s robust posture encompassed two interlocking components. First, the USSR stationed large conventional forces throughout the region. The Group of Soviet Forces Germany (GSFG) alone deployed 380,000 soldiers and 6200 tanks, while an additional 185,000 soldiers and 3200 tanks were stationed elsewhere throughout Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>220</sup> These forces provided the USSR a potent instrument to advance its political objectives. Second, because states in the region were led by Communist regimes allied with the USSR, Soviet forces enjoyed significant operational freedom. Ensured of local backing, the Soviet Union could redeploy, reinforce, and sustain its forces in either peace or war.<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, it could call upon East European forces to operate alongside Soviet units when necessary in either peace or war.<sup>222</sup> And, above all, the USSR could stage its forces out of East European bases instead of operating from Soviet home territory. Simply put, friendly regimes in the region guaranteed Soviet lines of communication and bases of operation,

<sup>219</sup> Exploring European History and Heritage Project, “NATO-Warsaw Pact Map,” <http://historiana.eu/sources/show/nato-warsaw-pact-map> (last accessed March 2013).

<sup>220</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989* (London: IISS, 1989), 28–42 and inset; for a general discussion of Soviet military policy in the period, see Coit D. Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy, 1985-1991* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993). For a précis, see CIA, *Warning of War in Europe: Changing Warsaw Pact Planning and Forces*, NIE 4-1-84, September 1989, vi

<sup>221</sup> Vojtech Mastny, “The Warsaw Pact as History,” in *A Cardboard Castle?: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991*, ed. Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (Central European University Press, 2005), 53.

<sup>222</sup> Epstein, *Conventional Force Reductions*; Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes, “Political Reliability in the Eastern European Warsaw Pact Armies,” *Armed Forces & Society* 6, no. 2 (January 1980): 270–296.

giving the USSR the capacity to maintain its position in the region in peacetime and sustain combat operations in wartime.

The robust Soviet presence in the region carried three implications for the United States. First, the Soviet Union might decide or be provoked into launching an attack. Soviet forces, as many scholars observe, were optimized for offensive operations.<sup>223</sup> In a crisis, forward deployed forces could be reinforced to serve as the core of a Soviet offensive into West Germany. Due to the size of forward deployed forces, it was possible in the worst case that the USSR could mobilize and defeat NATO before the United States and its allies established a solid defense.<sup>224</sup> Nor did Gorbachev's 7 December 1988 pledge to withdraw large numbers of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe and reconfigure the remainder for defensive operations solve the problem. Even after enacting these changes, Soviet forces in the region could be built up if a crisis with the West mounted and eventually used to attack.<sup>225</sup> Although NATO was more likely to defeat a Soviet offensive given the longer warning times provided by the Soviet withdrawals, any fighting risked devastating Central Europe and raised the possibility of a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange.<sup>226</sup> Hence, even a successful defense against the Pact might prove a pyrrhic victory. In short, the USSR's robust posture gave it the option of responding to American actions with a military offensive that, regardless of the specifics, might threaten American security.

Second, the Soviet Union could crack down on political unrest and internal turmoil in the region. As events in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) demonstrated, the Soviet Union could use its stationed forces to prevent East European Communist regimes from liberalizing and threatening to leave the Soviet orbit.<sup>227</sup> Because the Soviet Union could direct its military against states in the region, it could defeat any political movement, including any backed by the United States, that might try to move a Soviet ally out of the Soviet bloc.

Finally, a crisis or war could emerge from a Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe. Several paths could lead to problems. American leaders might misperceive a Soviet crackdown as a prelude to war, take steps that further ratcheted tensions, and induce a spiral of insecurity; in extremis, Western forces placed on alert might end up fighting similarly alerted Soviet forces, thereby risking an inadvertent conflict. Relatedly, American and/or West European leaders might face domestic pressures to support East Europeans challenging Soviet influence.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe"; Richard Ned Lebow, "The Soviet Offensive in Europe: The Schlieffen Plan Revisited?," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (April 1985): 44–78; Jack L. Snyder, "Limiting Offensive Conventional Forces: Soviet Proposals and Western Options," *International Security* 12, no. 4 (April 1, 1988): 48–77.

<sup>224</sup> Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation*, 68–128.

<sup>225</sup> NIC NIE 11-14-89, "Trends and Developments in Warsaw Pact Theater Forces and Doctrine Through the 1990s," February 1989; NIE 4-1-84, "Warning of War in Europe: Changing Warsaw Pact Planning and Forces," September 1989; NIC, "Status of Soviet Unilateral Withdrawals," M 89-10003, October 1989; NIC, "Soviet Theater Forces in 1991: The Impact of the Unilateral Withdrawals on Structure and Capabilities," NIC M 89-10005, November 1989. For a review of the changing warnings of war on U.S. military plans, see Lorna S Jaffe, *The Development of the Base Force, 1989-1992* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1993). Interviews with Generals Colin Powell and Lee Butler reinforced the point.

<sup>226</sup> Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation*.

<sup>227</sup> Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 2 (April 1998): 163–214; Mark Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine," in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111–162.

<sup>228</sup> See, for instance, the discussion of the 1980-1981 Poland crisis in Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1990).



Western injection into intra-Pact debates, however, could aggravate an already fraught situation and risk escalation as the Soviets countered Western moves. On the Soviet side, meanwhile, Soviet leaders might conclude that any American response suggested malign intentions. Worried about a weakened position in Eastern Europe during or following a crackdown, they might calculate it was better to launch a preventive war to salvage what they could of the Soviet position, rather than await further unrest and Western aggrandizement.<sup>229</sup> Collectively, a crackdown risked a broader crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations that could harm U.S. security.

### C. Predictions

Given bipolarity and a robust Soviet posture, I argue that the United States should pursue a Moderate Predation strategy. This strategy carries several observable implications. First, American strategy will try to weaken the USSR. In practice, this means the United States will attempt to improve its relative power at the USSR's expense while preventing a Soviet recovery: the United States will both continue balancing the only great power threat to its security and try to improve its relative position. Given a robust Soviet posture, however, cautious means will be employed in order to avoid Soviet internal balancing. Thus, the United States will attempt to identify the limits of Soviet tolerance and avoid going beyond that threshold: in essence, the United States will try to slowly move the balance of power in its favor without posing an immediate threat to the USSR. American military policy should therefore focus on gaining military superiority through limited arms races and arms control proposals weighted in the United States' favor. Diplomatically, we anticipate efforts to refuse Soviet proposals for managing the consequences (e.g., in Eastern Europe) of Soviet decline; with American leverage growing stronger as the USSR weakens, the United States should see no need to negotiate in the short term when it could obtain a better deal in the future. Above all, policies that might strengthen the USSR such as the provision of economic aid, diplomatic support, and military assistance should be rejected.

Second, American policymakers will avoid intense means to undercut Soviet power. Therefore, policymakers will try to avoid leaving the USSR totally isolated less the United States seem to force the USSR into a strategic corner. Similarly, the United States should avoid encouraging the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and forego opportunities to prey upon Soviet allies in Eastern Europe. Finally, we expect to see policymakers struggling to square a circle, namely, how to weaken the USSR without appearing to do so. Thus, if confronted with a choice between 1) increasing American relative power but risking a Soviet backlash, or 2) foregoing immediate gains but ensuring the USSR weakens over time while avoiding Soviet internal balancing, the U.S. should pursue the second option.

Similarly, we expect to see stark rationales offered for U.S. behavior. One of the core insights of Realist Decline Theory is that a rising state in bipolarity will prey on its declining rival to eliminate future threats. Hence, American strategists should discuss the security benefits, such as a reduced risk of war and fewer threats to American allies, resulting from a weakened USSR. However, policymakers will also fear that too assertive of a stance might trigger Soviet internal balancing. In their private analyses, they ought to justify less intense predation out of 1) concern of triggering a hostile Soviet military or political response, and 2) the desirability of maintaining a positive trend in U.S.-Soviet relations that allows the U.S. position to gradually

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<sup>229</sup> As Eisenhower put it, a failed intervention might lead the Soviets "to resort to very extreme measures and even to precipitate global war." United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957: Volume XXV, Eastern Europe*, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970), 299.

improve. In short, policymakers will argue that playing for time and ensuring U.S.-Soviet relations remain stable while the USSR weakens best advances U.S. security.

By extension, signs of the Soviet Union is preparing to launch a military operation should lead to efforts to avoid Soviet internal balancing by reassuring the USSR. Although seeking to weaken the USSR, policymakers will recognize that a crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations might harm American security and derail efforts to gain at the USSR's expense in the long-term. Thus, if it appears the USSR is balancing, the United States will scale back predation to allay Soviet concerns. These efforts, however, will be tactical moves to avoid an immediate crisis. Once the threat of Soviet balancing recedes, cooperation should cease and predation resume.

#### **IV. Alternate Explanations**

The predictions from Realist Decline Theory are different than those offered by both Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory. In this section, I code the independent variables and derive predictions from both arguments.

##### A. Democratic Peace Theory

###### *i. Coding Regime Type*

By any standard, the United States was a democracy in 1989. Polity assigns it a democracy score of 10, indicating fully open elections, leadership accountability, and widespread civil and political liberties.<sup>230</sup> With a longstanding liberal-democratic ethos, I accept the Polity score and code the United States as fully democratic.

The Soviet Union, however, was not a democracy in 1989. Polity assigns it a democracy score of 1 for 1989, indicating almost no popular elections, leader accountability, or civil and political liberties.<sup>231</sup> This matches qualitative evidence. Historically, the Soviet Union enshrined the role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in Soviet politics and banned competing political organizations. In this system, not only did the CPSU maintain a monopoly on power, but the organs of Soviet government were fused with CPSU functions. This limited political accountability. Prior to 1988-1989, the USSR's prime governing body was nominally the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union. In theory, the Supreme Soviet was composed of popularly elected representatives, who would vote amongst themselves to select a Council of Ministers to run the Soviet government. In practice, however, the Communist Party dominated Soviet decision-making by both selecting which candidates could run for the Supreme Soviet, prohibiting more than one candidate for running for the same seat, and requiring candidates to be CPSU members. As a result, Soviet politics hinged on CPSU internal deliberations and the decisions of the CPSU leadership (Politburo): Politburo decisions would determine the position of the Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers and thus drive Soviet policy. Yet because the Politburo was neither elected nor subject to government oversight, there was no way even in theory to remove leaders from office and hold them accountable.<sup>232</sup>

Despite this legacy, the Soviet political system was in flux by 1989 due to Gorbachev's reforms. Over significant opposition, Gorbachev pushed to remake Soviet political institutions and democratize the Soviet system. By late 1988, these efforts crystallized into plans to replace

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<sup>230</sup> Monty G. Marshall, Keith Jagers, and Ted Robert Gurr, *Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012* (Center for Systemic Peace, 2012), <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm>.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> For overviews of Soviet politics before Gorbachev, see Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 33-60; Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 101-114; Neil Robinson, "Gorbachev and the Place of the Party in Soviet Reform, 1985-91," *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 3 (1992): 423-443.

the Supreme Soviet with a popularly elected Congress of People's Deputies (CPD); CPD representatives would be chosen from several competing candidates. The CPD itself would then select and oversee a revised Supreme Soviet, which would in turn select a reformed Council of Ministers. Because Gorbachev's plans also called for the CPSU leadership to be appointed to the revised Supreme Soviet and created an independent judiciary, the reforms constituted meaningful moves towards democratic institutions, variegated political choice, and political accountability. Additional reforms provided for freedom of speech, assembly, and the press to ensure institutional reforms were accompanied by political debate. By the time CPD elections were held in March 1989, the Soviet system was reforming. Even if the USSR was not yet a democracy, it was clearly moving in that direction.<sup>233</sup>

ii. *Predictions from Democratic Peace Theory*

Because the Soviet Union was not a democracy but was enacting democratic reforms, Democratic Peace Theory predicts a democratic United States will face contradictory impulses. On one level, the absence of Soviet democracy gives the U.S. reason to pursue predation. In the absence of joint democracy, the United States has no reason to come to the USSR's aid, while Soviet-American relations are likely to be fraught with misunderstanding and suspicion. However, Gorbachev's domestic reforms should also give American policymakers pause before increasing pressure on the USSR. With the Soviet government democratizing in the face of significant domestic opposition, American predation might discredit Gorbachev's efforts by showing that the reforms left the USSR vulnerable to its adversaries and empower Gorbachev's opponents to reassert traditional Communist rule.

These incentives are likely to interact in complex ways. On balance, it would be surprising if the Soviet reforms enacted over the course of 1988-1989 were enough to generate American support for the Soviet Union: given the legacy of Communist rule, a few months of institutional reform is unlikely to change American perceptions over night. Instead, given the contrast of a non-democratic legacy and current reforms, American strategy should err on the side of caution and be Moderately Predatory in 1989. However, we should also see American policymakers monitoring the state of Soviet reforms and grappling with the implications of the internal changes for Soviet strategy. As Soviet reforms take root, we expect American policymakers to debate whether the reforms were constraining Soviet decision-making, fostering liberal norms, and influencing Soviet strategy in line with democratic systems. In other words, we expect American policymakers to grapple with whether the Soviet Union looked and acted like a democracy.

By extension, American policymakers should emphasize the state of Soviet internal politics when justifying American strategy. Where Realist Decline Theory predicts the primary driver of American policy will be the security benefits accruing from weakening USSR and the fear of Soviet internal balancing, Democratic Peace Theory suggests policymakers should underscore the advantages of weakening a rival autocracy and to thus (to use Woodrow Wilson's term) "make the world safe for democracy." However, once it became clear from mid-1989 and

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<sup>233</sup> For Soviet reforms, see Haas, "The United States and the End of the Cold War"; Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 481-521; McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*, 33-60; Ronald J. Hill, "The CPSU: From Monolith to Pluralist?," *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 217-235; John Gooding, "Gorbachev and Democracy," *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 2 (April 1990): 195-231; Aryeh L. Unger, "The Travails of Intra-Party Democracy in the Soviet Union: The Elections to the 19th Conference of the CPSU," *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 329-354; Brendan Kiernan and Joseph Aistrup, "The 1989 Elections to the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow," *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 6 (January 1991): 1049-1064; Vladimir N. Brovkin, "The Making of Elections to the Congress of People's Deputies (CPD) in March 1989," *Russian Review* 49, no. 4 (October 1990): 417-442.

the election of the CPD that Soviet reforms would be more than ephemeral, American policymakers should acknowledge in their internal deliberations that the Soviet Union looked increasingly liberal and its foreign policy increasingly driven by democratic processes. In sum, even when pursuing Moderate Predation, American strategists should 1) acknowledge Gorbachev's reforms, 2) monitor and debate the implications of the internal changes for Soviet policy, and 3) justify their strategy by reference to the nature of Soviet regime type.

*iii. Distinguishing between Similar Predictions*

Still, there is the problem of distinguishing between Democratic Peace predictions and Realist Decline Theory when U.S. strategists debate the expected effect of American strategy on Soviet internal politics. American policymakers might expect U.S. predation to influence Soviet domestic politics by empowering hardliners, threatening Gorbachev's hold on power, imperiling Soviet efforts to reach a rapprochement with the U.S., and thus boomerang to affect American security. In this situation, both Democratic Peace Theory and Realist Decline Theory expect American policymakers to worry about the consequences of American predation on Soviet internal politics, leading to problems in adjudicating between the theories.

I rely on a simple rule to resolve this problem. When American policymakers worry about the effects of American strategy on Soviet internal politics because it will empower Soviet hardliners and end Soviet efforts to *democratize*, I treat U.S. concerns as evidence in support of Democratic Peace Theory. This approach takes Democratic Peace Theory at face value: because the theory argues democracies are peaceful and cooperative whereas non-democracies are threatening and hostile, evidence that policymakers are worried about ending Soviet internal reforms that would otherwise change the nature of the state confirms democratic peace arguments. Conversely, when strategists worry that U.S. policy will lead to a conservative backlash and increase the risk that the USSR will *employ force* that might threaten the United States, this is evidence in support of Realist Decline Theory. This follows from Realist Decline Theory's focus on the costs of Soviet internal balancing. In essence, distinguishing between the predictions hinges on the logic undergirding U.S. policy. Rationales that focus on the consequences for the Soviet system support the Democratic Peace, while rationales that focus on Soviet military and the prospects of force being used against the United States support my argument.

B. Institutional Theory

*i. Coding Institutional Presence*

The United States and Soviet Union were not embedded in the same institutions at the start of 1989. Aside from the toothless Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE),<sup>234</sup> the U.S. and USSR maintained separate alliance networks and espoused different visions of world order. Instead, scholars highlighting the influence of international institutions point to institution-like features of U.S.-Soviet relations that shaped American foreign policy. The most important of these was the United States' integration into NATO that, although the USSR was not party to it, generated effects similar to what would happen if the U.S. and USSR were bound in the same organizations. NATO was decisive because, as Ikenberry describes, its "norms of unanimity [. . .] made an aggressive policy by one country difficult to pursue" and

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<sup>234</sup> Even institutionalist scholars agree the CSCE was a weak institution; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Introduction," in *After the Cold War / International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991*, ed. Joseph S. Nye, Stanley Hoffmann, and Robert O. Keohane (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

prevented the United States from taking advantage Soviet weaknesses in Eastern Europe.<sup>235</sup> Thus, by working through NATO, “the United States and the Western allies were successful in signaling restraint to the Soviet leadership,” indicating that Soviet “retrenchment would not be exploited and [Soviet] fundamental interests would not be jeopardized.”<sup>236</sup> In turn, credible Western assurances helped Gorbachev overcome domestic opposition to reducing the Soviet presence in Europe. Nye and Keohane make a related argument, suggesting that NATO helped the United States justify its continued presence in Europe and sustained part of the political status quo amidst the dislocations of 1989-1990. Although they do not say as such, their analysis implies that the resulting stability in Western Europe provided a focal point around which U.S. and Soviet expectations over the future converged and made diplomatic negotiations that much easier.<sup>237</sup>

ii. *Predictions*

Thus, although only the United States was institutionally embedded in 1989, Institutional Theory suggests this was sufficient to generate some of the benefits associated with mutual institutional binding. The theory makes three core predictions about American strategy in 1989. First, the United States should pursue a strategy of Moderate Support. Bound by NATO, the United States should be prevented from pursuing predation by allies worried that predation would trigger a crisis with the Soviet Union.<sup>238</sup> Similarly, worried about losing its own allies at a time when the Soviet threat providing NATO’s *raison d’être* was waning, the United States should avoid further weakening the USSR and giving its allies reasons to loosen their commitment to NATO. Combined, allied limits to American actions and fears of allied defection should cause the United States to do nothing to further weaken the Soviet Union by adopting Moderate Support.

Second, the United States should use NATO as the primary means of negotiating with the USSR. We should see American policymakers coordinating and clearing their diplomatic and military policies with their NATO allies, while working through NATO organizations when negotiating with the USSR as diplomatic and military crises occur. Conversely, evidence that the United States is trying to avoid being influenced by the NATO allies and bucking the preferences of its NATO allies is strong evidence against institutional arguments.

Finally, we expect American policymakers to emphasize the restraining effects of international institutions in their internal deliberations. We should see policymakers discussing the importance of keeping NATO together by moderating American policy when its allies exert pressure. Along similar lines, we expect policymakers to argue that if it were not for NATO influence, then the United States would have pursued a different course. In the process, they

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<sup>235</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 219–220; see also Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The International Sources of Soviet Change,” *International Security* 16, no. 3 (Winter 1991): 84–88, 108–109; Deudney and Ikenberry, “The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement”; Celeste A. Wallander and Jane E. Prokop, “Soviet Security Strategies Toward Europe: After the Wall, with Their Backs Up Against It,” in *After the Cold War: International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991*, ed. Robert Owen Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>236</sup> Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “Pushing and Pulling: The Western System, Nuclear Weapons and Soviet Change,” *International Politics* 48, no. 4–5 (July 2011): 517.

<sup>237</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, “The United States and International Institutions in Europe After the Cold War,” in *After the Cold War / International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991*, ed. Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, and Stanley Hoffmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. 105–106, 120–122; also Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The End of the Cold War After 20 Years: Reconsiderations, Retrospectives and Revisions,” *International Politics* 48, no. 4–5 (July 2011): 514–516.

<sup>238</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 220–221.

may also acknowledge the tradeoff suggested by institutionalist logics, namely, that by keeping NATO together, they are being forced to buttress Soviet power and capabilities. In short, we should see policymakers grappling with the effects of institutional binding as maintaining NATO solidarity requires American policymakers to acknowledge and accommodate the preferences of its allies by avoiding challenges to the Soviet Union.

## V. American Policy and Soviet Decline in 1989

### A. The Strategic Context

The Bush Administration came into office at a time when the Soviet Union, despite its mounting weaknesses, was on the diplomatic offensive. Having engaged the second Reagan Administration in carving out a series of nuclear arms control proposals and a diplomatic rapprochement by signing the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and making headway on a Strategic Arms Reduction (START) talks, the Soviet Union seemed to be making a virtue out of necessity. By trading military reductions the USSR would had to make for Western concessions in kind, American policymakers feared Gorbachev would undermine Western efforts to balance the USSR.<sup>239</sup> This was dangerous. The USSR was expected to remain “the dominant military power on the Eurasian landmass” and the principal threat to Western Europe.<sup>240</sup> Moreover, it remained unclear whether Gorbachev was sincerely interested in ending the Cold War, or simply sought a breathing space to revitalize Soviet fortunes before renewing competition.<sup>241</sup> And, even if Gorbachev sought cooperation, there was no guarantee that his successors would be benign.<sup>242</sup> In short, the USSR was declining, but it still threatened the United States.

To prevent the USSR from using weakness to its advantage, Bush and his advisors sought to maintain Western efforts to balance the USSR.<sup>243</sup> These efforts were necessary for three reasons. First, Western unity helped ensure the USSR could not recover from its decline. Short of a domestic revolution, the only way the USSR could revitalize its fortunes was to trade arms reductions and diplomatic concessions for Western goodwill that might translate into economic assistance.<sup>244</sup> The United States looked to deny the USSR this opening.<sup>245</sup> Second, the policies ensured the United States remained active in European politics and available as a balancer of last resort if the Soviet threat increased in the future.<sup>246</sup> Finally, they helped ensure that the U.S. was prepared “to capitalize on the changes underway in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.”<sup>247</sup>

### B. Military Policy: The CFE Talks, Moderate Predation, and Rationales

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<sup>239</sup> James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995), 70.

<sup>240</sup> Brent Scowcroft to The President, “The NATO Summit,” 20 March 1989, Kanter Files, CF00779, “NATO Summit – May 1989,” GBPL.

<sup>241</sup> Beschloss and Talbott, *Highest Levels*, 17. Also, Author interview with Brent Scowcroft, 3 August 2011; Author Interview with Philip Zelikow, 18 August 2011; Author NSC official, 17 July 2012.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 22, 25, 99.

<sup>243</sup> James Baker, “Proposed Agenda for Meeting with the President,” 8 March 1989, Box 115, Folder 6, BP.

<sup>244</sup> See the cable from Ambassador Jack Matlock in Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas S. Blanton, and V. M. Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), Doc. 45.

<sup>245</sup> “JAB personal notes from 2/10-2/17/89 NATO Trip,” 10 February 1989, Box 108, Folder 2, BP.

<sup>246</sup> Interview with Scowcroft. Zelikow offered in an April 1989 memo that the United States must be prepared “to maintain US ground and air forces, and a needed nuclear deterrent, in Europe so long as a Soviet military threat exists;” see Philip Zelikow to Robert Gates, “NATO Summit,” 13 April 1989, Kanter Files, CF00779, “NATO Summit – May 1989,” GBPL.

<sup>247</sup> Scowcroft, “Your Trip to Europe.”

i. *Early Military Concerns*

This Janus-faced interpretation of the Soviet challenge colored the American approach to the U.S.-Soviet military competition. The aforementioned nuclear arms deals, although a symbol of political accord, seemed to threaten NATO military strategy. Because the INF treaty eliminated ground-launched nuclear missiles ranges between 500 and 5500 kilometers, it removed one rung on the nuclear escalatory ladder and required stronger conventional forces to maintain a credible deterrent. This was problematic, however, given a stagnant U.S. defense budget and pressure for further cuts.<sup>248</sup> Alliance relations added an additional hurdle, as domestic politics in West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany, or FRG) generated pressure to reduce U.S. short-range nuclear forces (SNF) on top of the INF cuts. If SNF were reduced, however, then NATO risked “denuclearizing” itself.<sup>249</sup> Combined, policymakers worried that the USSR could mobilize domestic opinion in the U.S. and FRG to obtain a political opening to revitalize its fortunes. Without U.S. attention, a self-fulfilling cycle might emerge in which arms reductions begot arms reductions, NATO was hollowed out, and the USSR was left militarily dominant in Europe despite its decline.<sup>250</sup>

American concerns illustrate the logic of Realist Decline Theory. Despite the changing distribution of power, the declining Soviet Union was still viewed as the principal threat to the rising United States and needed to be contained. My argument also expects a state confronted with a declining but military robust great power in bipolarity will balance the decliner in order to 1) deny it the opportunity from threatening the rising and 2) seek to gradually establish military dominance. As I describe in greater detail below, these are borne out.

ii. *Conventional Arms Control*

To avoid competitive disarmament, the U.S. decided to make conventional force reductions via the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations scheduled for March 1989 a priority, while slowing nuclear negotiations.<sup>251</sup> If Soviet conventional forces were reduced, then the United States would neither need to increase conventional forces nor worry about NATO denuclearization.<sup>252</sup> Rather than the pell-mell reductions American strategists feared, trading U.S. cuts for Soviet cuts would allow for strategic reductions.

Gorbachev’s 7 December 1988 UN speech upset American plans. As noted earlier, Gorbachev’s speech announced a large drawdown of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe. Six divisions, 50,000 soldiers, 5000 tanks, and equipment necessary to sustain an offensive such as bridge building equipment would be withdrawn, while the remaining forces reoriented to emphasize defensive operations. Yet, despite Gorbachev’s assurances to that the Soviet withdrawals were made in good faith, the proposal worried the United States. Bush and his advisors saw the proposal as a ploy to increase domestic pressure on the United States to disarm while still leaving the USSR with quantitative superiority. Additionally, Gorbachev’s proposal went beyond the 5 percent reduction in forces the U.S. intended to float at the CFE talks,

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<sup>248</sup> “JAB personal notes from 2/6/89 mtg w/POTUS & Others, WDC,” 6 February 1989, Box 108, Folder 2, BP.

<sup>249</sup> “JAB notes from 4/24/89 mtg w/FRG FM Genscher & DM Stoltenberg,” 24 April 1989, Box 108, Folder 4, BP. Denuclearization refers to the separation of NATO conventional forces from a full-range of U.S. nuclear assets providing a nuclear umbrella.

<sup>250</sup> Miller Center Interview with Robert M. Gates, 22–23; Baker, *Politics*, 70–71, 92; George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 43. These concerns only make sense if policymakers held a paper tiger/feckless ally view of international relations.

<sup>251</sup> Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows* (Simon and Schuster, 2007), 462; Interview with Richard B. Cheney, interview by University of Virginia Miller Center, March 16, 2000, 103.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Zelikow.

meaning the U.S. would have found itself pressing for higher limits on stationed forces than the Soviets actually held!<sup>253</sup> The United States might then be seen dragging its feet, be compelled to precipitously respond to Soviet proposals, and reduce U.S. forces below parity.

Once the CFE talks began, Bush and his advisors therefore sought to use the negotiations to test Soviet intentions and see if they could instead lock-in U.S. military advantages.<sup>254</sup> This corresponds with Realist Decline Theory's prediction that a rising state in a bipolar system will probe how far a declining state can be pressed without triggering a hostile reaction.

As preparatory talks began, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze floated the idea of focusing the talks 1) "on reducing "the most destabilizing kinds and categories of arms, such as attack combat airplanes [. . .] tanks, combat helicopters" and other equipment; 2) capping NATO and Pact forces 10-15 below the lowest levels held by either alliance; 3) creating a limited armaments zone between the two alliance; and 4) negotiations on naval and nuclear forces.<sup>255</sup> Although the Soviet proposal was asymmetric and meant the Pact would reduce quantitatively more than NATO, inclusion of aircraft, helicopters, naval forces, and nuclear assets, and the proposal of a demilitarized zone (which meant the FRG) seemed geared towards weakening NATO.<sup>256</sup>

### iii. *Cautiously Seeking Advantages and Rationale*

In response, the United States considered three counteroffers. The first, advanced by Baker, proposed eliminating all tanks from Europe on the grounds that tanks were needed for offensive operations and their elimination would stabilize Europe. The second, offered by the Defense Department, essentially played for time, arguing that the United States should do little to respond to Soviet offers and let the negotiations slowly progress. This proposal assumed that time was on the United States' side and the Soviets would eventually make concessions conducive to U.S. security if the West simply held firm. Meanwhile, a third option designed by the NSC proposed eliminating all American and Soviet ground forces from Europe. This plan was intended to challenge Soviet control over Eastern Europe, as Scowcroft calculated that NATO without American ground forces would still function, but the East European members of the Pact would defect if Soviet forces left. Unlike the other proposals therefore, the NSC approach was meant to directly shift the military balance in the United States' favor.<sup>257</sup>

All three options were rejected.<sup>258</sup> The "no tanks" idea was never seriously considered. The Defense Department proposal was out of step with Bush's desire to seize the initiative from the Soviets, while the military argued that the NSC plan would leave Western Europe vulnerable if Eastern Europe did not leave the Pact as hoped.<sup>259</sup> What emerged instead was a middle course designed to probe Soviet vulnerabilities and the USSR's willingness to make military concessions to the United States. Leaving naval and nuclear weapons off the table, the plan proposed moderate limits on tanks and armored personnel carriers, a 15 percent cut in combat

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<sup>253</sup> Richard Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order: The Origins and Consequences of the CFE Treaty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 47–48.

<sup>254</sup> The CFE talks were orchestrated between the two alliances, with force limits applying to the two blocs as a whole. As the largest contributors to their respective alliances, bloc limits would mostly affect the United States and USSR.

<sup>255</sup> Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order*, 48.

<sup>256</sup> "Reaction to Shevardnadze Speech [at Ministerial Meeting in Vienna on CFE]," March 1989, Box 108, Folder 3, BP.

<sup>257</sup> Gates, *From the Shadows*, 461–462.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>259</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 43–45.



aircraft and helicopters, and capping *U.S. and Soviet* forces at 275,000 troops each (10 percent below U.S. levels). Not only would these personnel cuts only apply to the U.S. and USSR, thereby leaving NATO with an overall manpower advantage, but the reductions were starkly asymmetric. As Bush wrote to his foreign counterparts when ready to reveal the U.S. plan in May, although the cuts “would represent approximately 20 percent of U.S. ground and air combat power in the theater,”<sup>260</sup> a 275,000 limit would also “require the Soviets to reduce their forces in Eastern Europe by 325,000.”<sup>261</sup>

Thus, in exchange for limited cuts on the American side, the Soviets would reduce their presence in Eastern Europe by over 50 percent. As the United States structured its forces for qualitative supremacy versus the Pact’s quantitative supremacy, the result would leave the United States in a stronger position. Most directly, it would virtually preclude a Soviet offensive against Western Europe.<sup>262</sup> Equally important was the proposal’s utility as a test of Soviet desperation. As Scowcroft offered in May, the American plan takes “advantage of Gorbachev’s latest moves and then go[es] beyond them [. . .] It urges cuts in Soviet forces stationed in Eastern Europe beyond the level Gorbachev is currently willing to accept [. . .] Most of all, your proposal dramatizes what should be evident: the United States does want a less militarized Europe.” In other words, not only would the proposal establish whether the U.S.-Soviet competition was “entering a new, promising phase” in which the U.S. could set the policy agenda, but if carried out might help end the division of Europe on American terms. Conversely, it was also a way of keeping NATO together at a time when the West hoped “to capitalize on the changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.”<sup>263</sup> This behavior and the underlying logic match Realist Decline Theory predictions: at a time when the USSR was powerful but weakening, the United States tried to test Soviet limits and shift the distribution of power in its favor using cautious means.<sup>264</sup>

Bush’s proposal became the cornerstone of NATO’s CFE approach following the May 1989 NATO Summit. Equally important, it helped deflect West German pressure to continue nuclear reductions by mobilizing support for deferring nuclear negotiations until a CFE agreement was in sight. With the NATO plan in place, the formal CFE negotiations began that summer. Shortly thereafter, the 1989 East European revolutions made the CFE talks a dead letter. With states in Eastern Europe moving to leave the Pact, Soviet military power was reduced independent of an arms control agreement. Hence, instead of a forum to obtain Soviet concessions, CFE became secondary to the diplomatic game of Soviet retrenchment. I return to these issues below.

iv. *Assessment: Military Policy*

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<sup>260</sup> The overall cut represented 10 percent of U.S. forces, or roughly 30,000 troops. Because the U.S. kept about half its personnel in combat units and the other half in support functions, however, the Administration could recast the proposal as a “more respectable” 20 percent reduction in *combat* power; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 74.

<sup>261</sup> Arnold Kanter and Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, “NATO Summit CFE Proposal – President Letters,” 24 May 1989 and accompanying paper and letters to the President, Kanter Files, CF00779, “NATO Summit – May 1989,” GBPL.

<sup>262</sup> One NSC official acknowledged the different American and Soviet force structures but denied that the United States sought military advantages. This may be true, but it seems odd that American officials, recognizing that Soviet strength came from numbers and American strength from quality, pushed proposals that would only affected the former. It is true that the CFE proposals would not prevent the USSR from defending Eastern Europe.

<sup>263</sup> Scowcroft, “Participation in the NATO Summit,” 25 May 1989; also “JAB notes from 5/15/89 re: possible initiatives for NATO summit,” Box 108, Folder 5, BP.

<sup>264</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 54, 128–130.

Overall, U.S. military policy offers strong evidence for Realist Decline Theory, but limited support for either Democratic Peace Theory or Institutionalist Theory. As my argument predicts, the United States sought stability in U.S.-Soviet military relations while denying the Soviet Union opportunities to arrest its decline. Military policy was integral to this approach. The Bush Administration pursued a Goldilocks solution to the military problems at the time by maintaining pressure on the USSR, avoiding initiatives that were obvious ploys to Soviet security, and pressing for concessions that would move the military balance in the United States' favor. Moderate Predation was evident in the asymmetric proposals floated by the United States in the CFE talks, as the United States offered limited military concessions in return for disproportionately large Soviet cuts. The goal, as internal documents reveal, was to shift the military balance in the U.S. favor, while hopefully generating greater payoffs over time as East European states were given opportunities to leave the Warsaw Pact.

On the other hand, intense means such as calling for wholesale troop withdrawals were avoided as policymakers were leery of Soviet intentions and worried about remaining Soviet capabilities. This matches the prediction that the United States will both continue balancing the USSR to ensure its own security while avoiding steps that might directly threaten the USSR at a time when Soviet posture remained robust. On balance, the U.S. tried to hold the military line in the short-run while beginning a process that might eventually translate into a significant U.S. military advantage. Conversely, and as my theory predicts, supportive endeavors such as symmetric arms control agreements, acceptance of Soviet proposals, and allowing the USSR to retain the strategic initiative were either ignored or rejected. Overall, the U.S. attempted to maximize power at the USSR's expense, but to do so cautiously and prudently. As Baker aptly notes in his memoirs, American policy sought "the kind of political effect we were looking for, while not endangering us militarily."<sup>265</sup>

In contrast, there is only limited evidence for Democratic Peace Theory and no evidence backing Institutionalist Theory. Democratic Peace Theory correctly predicts that the United States pursued Moderate Predation. However, the rationales for American strategy had little to do with the nature of Soviet domestic institutions. In reviewing hundreds of documents, there is no evidence policymakers shaped military policy in response to the status of the Soviet regime or due to Gorbachev's institutional reforms. In interviews, officials similarly argued that regardless of Gorbachev's domestic reforms, the United States needed to shift the military balance in its favor because there was no way of guaranteeing future Soviet leaders would be committed to reforming Soviet society and cooperating with the United States. Framed differently, not only did the United States discount evidence of Soviet democratization, but the underlying logic behind conventional arms control centered on the desirability of changing the military balance in the U.S. favor to hedge against an uncertain future. Thus, while Democratic Peace Theory correctly predicts the type of U.S. strategy, it has problems explaining the underlying rationale.

Institutionalist Theory, on the other hand, fails this test. As noted, Institutionalist Theory predicts that the United States should adopt Moderate Support due to the influence of NATO and constraints imposed by U.S. allies. Just the opposite occurred. First, the United States pursued a Moderate Predation strategy as the U.S. sought to use asymmetric arms control agreements to make relative gains at the USSR's expense. There is no evidence the United States ever thought of supporting Soviet proposals to limit East-West military competition. Rather, U.S. backing was limited to proposals that would lock in American advantages.

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<sup>265</sup> Baker, *Politics*, 93.

Second, the United States either ignored institutional pressures for a less predatory course or worked around institutions entirely. On one level, American worries that the USSR would be able to play NATO allies against one another to lower military competition prompted the United States to try to keep NATO together by pressuring its allies to continue balancing the USSR. At the same time, pressure from NATO allies to pursue additional arms control talks (such as the German push for nuclear reductions) were resisted: far from becoming more supportive due to allied pressure, the United States pursued predation despite intra-alliance opposition. The history also shows the United States formulating its CFE proposal independent of its allies, and only informing them of the U.S. position afterwards. Thus, rather than open itself up to allied pressure as Institutional Theory predicts, the United States worked outside of NATO channels to determine its position, before introducing the plan to its allies when ready.<sup>266</sup> If anything, the United States used NATO as an accessory to predation it was going to pursue one way or another than as a mechanism for formulating and restraining its ambitions. Far from helping the U.S. and USSR reach a cooperative agreement, arms control talks were hostage to broader U.S. calculations of the Soviet threat and distribution of power.

### C. Diplomatic Policy: Rumbblings in Eastern Europe and the Search for Stability

#### i. *Overview*

Conventional force reductions were important because they were expected to shift the military balance in the United States' favor and produce political dividends in Eastern Europe. By the time of the May CFE proposals, however, it was increasingly clear that the political benefits in Eastern Europe were being overtaken by events as political unrest grew in Poland and Hungary, before spreading to East Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. By the fall of 1989, Poland and Hungary were led by non-Communist governments while the East German government was tottering. The American response to these changes also showcases the Moderate Predation strategy adopted by the United States and provides further evidence supporting Realist Decline Theory. This section discusses initial developments in Poland and Hungary, while the following section discusses events in East Germany in the fall of 1989.

#### ii. *Early Efforts to Managing Change*

The possibility of change in Eastern Europe was on the U.S radar screen from early 1989. Events in Poland and Hungary were the drivers, as the collapse of the Polish and Hungarian economies forced ruling Communist regimes to consider liberal reforms to spur economic growth and stabilize society. Problems in East Germany were a second but potentially more important issue, as declining Soviet power raised the possibility that the GDR and FRG might reunify and upset the European status quo. These developments raised the possibility that local unrest could turn violent and trigger a U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

Recognizing the risk, Bush authorized former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to explore a *modus vivendi* with the Soviets early in 1989.<sup>267</sup> As presented to the Soviet leadership on 16-18 January, the plan called for the United States to pledge to avoid encouraging unrest in Eastern Europe in return for a Soviet pledge to let the states liberalize and foreswear a crackdown. In effect, the Soviets would loosen their hold on the region while the United States agreed not to try to pull these states out of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>268</sup> Gorbachev was receptive, and so was the United States. Indeed, Baker went so far as to publicly praise the proposal as “worthy of

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<sup>266</sup> Gates, *From the Shadows*, 463-464.

<sup>267</sup> Beschloss and Talbot, *Highest Levels*, 13-18.

<sup>268</sup> Transcripts of Kissinger's conversations are in *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), Docs. 36 & 37.

consideration” reasoning that, “If progress did not continue to be made along the lines of Eastern Europe opening up [ . . . ] if there was a reversal, or if you had anarchy and a reaction by the Soviets [ . . . ] it would be much more appropriate in my view to look at the possibilities of the proposal.”<sup>269</sup> Although Kissinger’s plan failed, the fact that U.S. policymakers were willing to explore the plan suggests a serious desire to avoid a crisis with the USSR even at the expense of opportunities to rollback Soviet power.<sup>270</sup> This conscious effort to avoid maximizing power if doing so threatened one’s security with a militarily robust adversary is in line with Moderate Predation and Realist Decline Theory.

iii. *Cautiously Backing Reforms*

By spring, Polish and Hungarian reforms had advanced to a critical point. In February, Hungary endorsed the idea of a multiparty system and by March backed competitive and free elections.<sup>271</sup> Polish progress was even more dramatic, as “Roundtable” talks between the Polish government and the Solidarity opposition culminated in April in a series of agreements that 1) created a representative legislature; 2) promised free and fair elections; 3) legalized Solidarity; 4) inaugurated economic and legal reforms; and 5) created a Polish presidency (which, it was understood, would be filled by Communist leader Wojciech Jaruzelski).<sup>272</sup> Thereafter, the questions became: what, if anything, would the United States do to encourage Polish and Hungarian reforms, and how, if at all, would the United States use the changes to its advantage vis-à-vis the USSR? Given that the United States had bankrolled Solidarity in an effort to undermine the Warsaw Pact throughout the 1980s, these were no idle questions.

As Realist Decline Theory predicts, the United States demurred on the chance to intensely challenge the USSR in Poland and Hungary. The U.S. instead opted to pursue cautious change to slowly move Poland and Hungary out of the Soviet orbit while limiting the U.S. challenge to the Pact’s integrity. Specifically, the U.S. refused to trumpet the defeat of the Communist regimes, avoided providing extensive aid to reformers that might be interpreted as inserting U.S. influence into the region, and ultimately took steps to shore up Communist governments in order to reassure the Soviets. This was especially true for Poland, which, by virtue of Poland’s greater importance to the Warsaw Pact, attracted more attention than Hungary; accordingly, I focus most of the following analysis on Poland.

a. *Limited Public Support*

First, American policymakers resisted using the signing of the Roundtable agreement on 5 April to call for “a new beginning for all of Eastern Europe” in which Communist regimes would be replaced by liberal democracies and an end to the Cold War via the spread of freedom and democracy to the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>273</sup> Despite internal pressure for a public

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<sup>269</sup> Beschloss and Talbott, *Highest Levels*, 19–20; for claims of U.S. opposition, see Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 36. For Baker’s public praise, see Thomas L. Friedman, “Baker, Outlining World View, Assesses Plan for Soviet Bloc,” *New York Times*, 28 March 1989.

<sup>270</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 26–27.

<sup>271</sup> Rudolf L. Tökés, *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution: Economic Reform, Social Change and Political Succession* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 305–329.

<sup>272</sup> Wiktor Osiatynski, “The Roundtable Talks in Poland,” in *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*, ed. Jon Elster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 21–68; Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102–130.

<sup>273</sup> The White House debated among several versions of a statement with which to greet the Roundtable Accords. Blackwill and Rodman settled on the quoted version on 4 April; Robert Blackwill and Peter Rodman to Brent Scowcroft, “Presidential Pronouncements on Poland and Eastern Europe,” 4 April 1990 and accompanying statements, Rodman Files, CF00206, “Eastern Europe, 1989,” GBPL. For other versions labeled “Forward

statement to this effect, Bush issued a less grandiose announcement praising Poland for its “historic step towards pluralism and freedom which we hope will eventually take Poland far from totalitarianism and towards a better political and economic future.” This limited the American focus to Poland and separated change in the rest of the Pact from Polish developments.<sup>274</sup> Asked, for example, whether the Roundtable might be a model for elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Bush avoided endorsing the idea of further change within the Soviet sphere, arguing: “No two Eastern European countries are the same. [. . .] I would say that the roundtable development there in Poland is very positive, [. . .] But what it means to the other Eastern European countries, [. . .] I simply can't tell you.”<sup>275</sup> These themes repeated on 17 April when Bush outlined U.S. policy towards Eastern Europe writ large during a speech in Hamtramck, Michigan. Echoing his earlier remarks, Bush argued that “If Poland’s experiment succeeds, then other countries *may* follow [emphasis added]” and claimed, without specifics, that the United States dreamed “of the day when Eastern European peoples will be free to choose their system of government.” Rather than using Poland’s reforms as a way of pushing for greater change, Bush narrowly expressed hope for eventual reforms in Warsaw Pact states.<sup>276</sup> In sum, instead of using the Polish reforms to issue a broader challenge to Soviet authority, the United States avoided signs of meddling in Soviet allies.

#### b. Minimal Financial Aid

American circumspection also meant minimal financial support for Polish and Hungarian reforms. At a time when Poland needed \$1 billion to service its foreign debt and Solidarity sought \$10 billion to help Poland liberalize its economy, the United States avoided these commitments.<sup>277</sup> Instead, Bush promised a limited plan emphasizing rescheduling Poland’s debt, lowered tariffs on Polish goods, and loans for private businesses.<sup>278</sup> This approach continued while Polish and Hungarian reformers pressed for greater assistance in advance of Bush’s visit Hungary and Poland in July.<sup>279</sup> Before the trip, East European democratic leaders argued that the absence of Western support could breed popular frustration with liberalization’s failure to produce immediate economic benefits, and imperil the reform process. The United States ignored these efforts.<sup>280</sup> Irrespective of East European problems, there would not be “a new Marshall plan,” as Bush told Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.<sup>281</sup> Rather, Bush’s visit coincided with a limited plan for \$100 million (not \$10 billion) in direct U.S. aid for Poland and

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Leaning” and “Moderate,” see “Presidential Statement Supporting Democracy in Poland Option I: Forward Looking” and “Presidential Statement Supporting Democracy in Poland Option II: Moderate,” undated, Rice Files, CF00716, “Poland – Round Table,” GBPL.

<sup>274</sup> George Bush, “Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Polish Roundtable Accords,” 5 April 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16884&st=Poland&st1>.

<sup>275</sup> George Bush: “The President’s News Conference,” 7 April 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16894&st=Poland&st1>.

<sup>276</sup> George Bush, “Remarks to Citizens in Hamtramck, Michigan,” 17 April 1989, Public Papers of the President, GBPL, [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public\\_papers.php?id=326&year=1989&month=4](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=326&year=1989&month=4).

<sup>277</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 59–60. Also SecState to USMission NATO, “Political Committee Exchange on Poland,” 22 June 1989, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 34, NSA.

<sup>278</sup> George Bush, “Remarks to Citizens in Hamtramck, Michigan,” 17 April 1989, Public Papers of the President, GBPL, [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public\\_papers.php?id=326&year=1989&month=4](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=326&year=1989&month=4).

<sup>279</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 60–61.

<sup>280</sup> “Proposed Agenda for Meeting with the President,” 21 June 1989, Box 115, Folder 6, BP.

<sup>281</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada,” 6 July 1989.

World Bank loans of \$325 million; Hungary received a \$25 million grant.<sup>282</sup> Even in retrospect, Scowcroft labeled these measures “embarrassingly meager”<sup>283</sup> given what U.S. Ambassador John Davis called “the opportunity [. . .] to lead with concrete steps to reinforce our values and our interests.”<sup>284</sup> Equally important, Bush passed on pleas from Solidarity leader Lech Walesa to funnel U.S. aid to Poland through Solidarity. This effort would signal U.S. support for further reforms and give Solidarity a bargaining advantage in efforts to move Poland away from Communist rule, but also constitute American interference in Polish affairs. Bush, uncertain whether Walesa “understood all the details of what he was showing me” and having told Jaruzelski that he did not want to meddle in Eastern Europe, rebuffed Walesa.<sup>285</sup>

iv. *Slowly Removing Communists from Office*

Still, the clearest indicator of Moderate Predation and American concerns over the Soviet response emerged that summer as the United States debated how to address Poland’s onrushing political reforms. It was one thing to avoid beating one’s chest as reforms began. By Bush’s July visit, however, Poland was on the verge of toppling the Communist regime entirely.<sup>286</sup> Such a move would threaten Poland’s fidelity to the Warsaw Pact and upset the status quo.

In early June, free elections resulted in an overwhelming defeat for the Polish Communists as Solidarity won all but one of the available seats in the Polish legislature.<sup>287</sup> The results discredited the Polish Communist party and threw into doubt whether Jaruzelski could garner sufficient support to be elected Poland’s president. This threatened the stability of Poland’s reforms as participants in the Roundtable (including Soviet observers) assumed that Jaruzelski would serve as Poland’s president under the new system.<sup>288</sup> Moreover, elements of Solidarity were exacerbating the dilemma by calling for a Solidarity member to serve as prime minister and form a government, effectively taking control of Poland even if a Communist remained the titular head of state.<sup>289</sup>

If ever an opportunity to rollback Communist influence and Soviet dominance in Poland were to arise, this was it. All the United States had to do was call for both sides to acknowledge the results of Poland’s elections, encourage Jaruzelski’s retirement, and support calls for a decreased Communist role in government. Ambassador Davis’ 27 June cable hinted at the opportunity, noting that by encouraging Poland’s liberalization and calling for its “peaceful reintegration” with the rest of Europe, the U.S. would help create “a Poland which is achieving a

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<sup>282</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 399–400, note 48; Henry Kamm, “Bush Extends Support for Hungary and Offers Modest Aid,” *New York Times*, 13 July 1989; George Bush, “White House Fact Sheet on Proposed Assistance for Poland and Hungary,” 10 July 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17265>; Timothy J. McNulty, “Bush Plans Aid for Hungary,” *Chicago Tribune*, 13 July 1989.

<sup>283</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 114.

<sup>284</sup> Amembassy Warsaw to SecState, “Poland Looks to President Bush,” 27 June 1989, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 34, NSA.

<sup>285</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 121–122. For the Jaruzelski conversation, see Memorandum of Conversation, “Bilateral Meeting with Wojciech Jaruzelski, Chairman of Poland,” 10 July 1989.

<sup>286</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 60.

<sup>287</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 70. Also Amembassy Warsaw to SecState, “Election ’89: Solidarity’s Coming Victory: Big or Too Big?” 2 June 1989, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 34, NSA.

<sup>288</sup> Amembassy Warsaw to SecState, “How to Elect Jaruzelski Without Voting for Him, and Will He Run?” 23 June 1989, online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB42/>.

<sup>289</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 74.



greater degree of independence from the USSR and which is very unlikely ever to become an adversary”<sup>290</sup>.

In fact, the United States did the opposite and refused to push the Communist leadership from power. Even before Bush’s trip, Ambassador Davis explained to Solidarity members how they could (and perhaps should) simply be absent the day a vote on president was taken, thus guaranteeing Jaruzelski the two-thirds votes necessary to be elected President.<sup>291</sup> Not only is this effort counterintuitive when considering what the U.S. might have done if it wanted to challenge the Soviet presence in Poland, but the fact that the United States was Solidarity’s primary backer throughout the 1980s makes the U.S. choice even starker: the U.S. government effectively told a democratic movement it had nurtured to vote their opponents into office! These efforts continued during Bush’s July visit. Meeting with Jaruzelski, for instance, Bush urged Jaruzelski to run for the presidency while worrying that, “his refusal to run might inadvertently lead to serious instability.” He repeated this point when meeting with French President Francois Mitterrand shortly afterwards.<sup>292</sup> Bush also stressed American support for the status quo, averring that, “he would do nothing to complicate the difficult and delicate job that Poland and Jaruzelski face [ . . . ] he would avoid rhetoric which would complicate the situation [ . . . and] noted that the United States would contribute positively to the reforms while stopping short of interference.” Above all, the United States pledged not use the changes in Poland “to place strains on the Soviet alliance.”<sup>293</sup> By the time Bush departed, he had underscored American support for cautious change that would not threaten the Pact’s integrity.<sup>294</sup>

Eight days later, Jaruzelski was elected president, with Solidarity members either missing the vote or abstaining as per Davis’ suggestions.<sup>295</sup> Unfortunately, this only triggered a second crisis as the Polish Communist Party proved unable to create a ruling coalition and Solidarity leaders maneuvered to form a non-Communist government.<sup>296</sup> By mid-August, tension was rising as Solidarity refused to include Communists in their proposed government. Although the situation soon resolved, the United States again showed that it was willing to buttress the status quo rather than push for change. Most notably, responding to a Communist complaint that 1) Solidarity was refusing to meet with the Communist leadership and 2) being encouraged by the U.S. in these efforts, Baker cabled Davis to encourage Solidarity to cooperate with the Communist party and “keep all lines of communication open.”<sup>297</sup> This helped resolve the standoff. By the end of August, Poland was led by Jaruzelski as President of Poland, Solidarity member Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister, and had a coalition government including both Solidarity and the Communist party.<sup>298</sup> Where it seemed Polish Communists were being evicted that spring, American efforts helped broker deals that left Polish Communists better off than

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<sup>290</sup> Amembassy Warsaw, “Looks to President Bush.”

<sup>291</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 70–71; see also Amembassy, “How to Elect.”

<sup>292</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 117. Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Francois Mitterrand, President of France,” 13 July 1989.

<sup>293</sup> Memcon, “Meeting with Jaruzelski.”

<sup>294</sup> Similar themes were raised in Hungary; see Memorandum of Conversation, “Private Meeting with Bruno Straub, President of Hungary,” 11 July 1989.

<sup>295</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 73–74. Also Amembassy Warsaw to SecState, “New Prime Minister May Fail to Form a Government; Will Walesa Try Next?” 14 August 1989, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 34, NSA.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 74–75.

<sup>297</sup> Amembassy Warsaw to SecState, “Conversation with General Kiszczak,” 11 August 1989, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB42/Doc6.pdf>; SecState to Amembassy Warsaw, “Solidarity-Government Dialogue,” 12 August 1989, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB42/Doc7.pdf>.

<sup>298</sup> Domber, “Skepticism and Stability,” 75.

would otherwise have been the case. In the process, and as Bush's July comments showed, the United States reinforced Polish-Soviet ties rather than maximizing American power.

v. *Rationales for Moderate Predation in Poland and Hungary*

In short, there is strong evidence that the United States pursued Moderate Predation as American policymakers confronted the prospect of massive changes in the Soviet alliance system. The question is why. In particular, if Realist Decline Theory is correct, we should find evidence that American policymakers 1) recognized that weakening the Soviet hold on Poland and Hungary would advance U.S. security, but 2) worried that doing so might trigger Soviet intervention and a crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations. In contrast, if Institutional Theory is correct, we should see American allies pressuring the United States to avoid roiling the European status quo by intensely preying on the Soviets, while Democratic Peace Theory predicts predation was a way of ending the non-democratic influence of the USSR in Eastern Europe.

a. Benefits of Predation

On balance, the evidence supports Realist Decline Theory. First, as expected, Polish and Hungarian reforms were seen as a way of weakening Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe and producing a net security gain for the United States.<sup>299</sup> As Scowcroft later argued, the United States sought to “give preferential treatment to those satellites which were the most vigorous in undertaking internal political and economic reforms [i.e., Poland and Hungary]” because “this would further encourage the governments of Eastern Europe toward reform with the hope of *reaching our long-term goal of freeing the region as a whole* [emphasis added]” from Soviet control. Put another way, encouraging East European reforms was a way of “getting Soviet troops reduced or removed” at a time when U.S. and Soviet forces still confronted one another in Central Europe.<sup>300</sup> By March 1989, this view solidified into recognition that the changes in Poland and Hungary meant, “the region had become a potential weak link in the solidarity of the Soviet bloc.”<sup>301</sup> Encouraging Polish and Hungarian reforms would therefore advance U.S. security by walking back Soviet power. Hutchings captures this thinking in his memoirs, writing:

Eastern Europe was what [the Cold War] was all about. The Cold War was [ . . . ] the product of Soviet conduct, above all Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and forward deployment of more than half a million Soviet forces in the heart of Europe. The Cold War began in Eastern Europe, and it was there that it had to end [ . . . ] “Eastern Europe” was thus shorthand for several related objectives: self-determination in the region, Soviet military withdrawal from the heart of Europe, a shift toward more cooperative international behavior, and above all an end to a worldview that demanded a ring of “satellite” states on key Soviet borders.

The American focus on “internal liberalization” in Poland and Hungary was thus the initial salvo in an effort to test the integrity of the Soviet bloc.<sup>302</sup> If successful, it was possible that the division of Europe would end and “the Soviet army of occupation” go home.<sup>303</sup> This effort might also, as Robert Gates has noted, “have an influence in the Soviet Union itself” by increasing pressure on Gorbachev to liberalize, but even this issue was sublimated by the more

<sup>299</sup> Email correspondence with NSC Official, April 2013.

<sup>300</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 38-43; Miller Center Interview with Robert M. Gates, 24.

<sup>301</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 40.

<sup>302</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 36-37.

<sup>303</sup> Gates, *From the Shadows*, 464; also Scowcroft, “Scope Paper – NATO Summit.



pressing desirability of shifting the military balance against the USSR.<sup>304</sup> Simply put, Poland and Hungary could catalyze a broad challenge to Soviet influence over its satellite states and undermine its alliance network.<sup>305</sup>

b. Costs of Soviet Internal Balancing

However, the debates over Poland and Hungary also show American policymakers worried that intense U.S. means to this end could trigger a crisis, up to and including the Soviet use of force. This again matches what my theory predicts. As early as February, Bush critiqued plans to “influence the situation in Eastern Europe,” worrying that events “might turn violent and get out of hand” by generating “an internal crackdown [. . .] or a Soviet backlash.”<sup>306</sup> The problem, as Scowcroft noted, was that it was impossible to assess where Soviet redlines fell.<sup>307</sup> American aggrandizement therefore risked triggering intervention akin to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, all of which led to crises and tension in U.S.-Soviet relations.<sup>308</sup> Additionally, intervention might end Soviet liberalization and precipitate renewed Soviet-American competition; as Matlock cabled from Moscow, a “Soviet decision to intervene militarily to put down disorders in Eastern Europe would of course mean the end of reform in the Soviet Union” at a time when “the potential [military] threat to the West” remained unchanged.<sup>309</sup>

Thus, as the United States responded to the Roundtable Agreement, policymakers sought to avoid antagonizing the USSR by steering “events in productive directions, but at a speed Moscow could accept.”<sup>310</sup> Speaking with West Berlin Mayor Walter Momper in April, for instance, Bush emphasized that the approach presented in Hamtramck was intended to “have no anti-Soviet cast to its policies.”<sup>311</sup> Similarly, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs told a gathering of NATO leaders shortly after the Roundtable accords that “we recognize the risks of instability and have no interest in encouraging it.”<sup>312</sup> And, as East European reforms proceeded, the U.S. ensured that its public rhetoric “didn’t threaten the Soviet Union, [. . .] didn’t say [to the Eastern Europeans] that it’s them [the Soviets] or us;” the goal was to avoid being “too bombastic.”<sup>313</sup>

These concerns became more pronounced during Bush’s July trip, partly driven by tacit Soviet warnings.<sup>314</sup> As Bush prepared to depart, Gorbachev hinted that challenges Soviet authority by seeking the overthrow of Communist regimes would be “a course toward

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<sup>304</sup> Miller Center Interview with Robert M. Gates, 24; Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 37.

<sup>305</sup> This perspective was confirmed in emails with a former NSC official in April 2013.

<sup>306</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 39. Also “JAB personal notes from 2/10/89 mtg w/POTUS & Canada PM Mulrone, Ottawa, Canada,” Box 108, Folder 2, BP.

<sup>307</sup> Miller Center Interview with Brent Scowcroft, interview by University of Virginia Miller Center, November 12, 1999, 51.

<sup>308</sup> George Bush, “Comprehensive Review of U.S.-Soviet Relations,” 15 February 1989, online at: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr3.pdf>.

<sup>309</sup> Savranskaya, Blanton, and Zubok, *Masterpieces of History*, Doc. 45.

<sup>310</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 52. Also “JAB notes from 5/15/89 re: possible initiatives for NATO summit,” 15 May 1989, Box 108, Folder 5, BP.

<sup>311</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “The President’s Meeting with Berlin Governing Mayor Walter Momper,” 19 April 1989.

<sup>312</sup> USMission USNATO to SecState, “Presentation by DAS Simon at April 13 NAC on Poland,” 14 April 1989, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 35, NSA.

<sup>313</sup> Interview with NSC official, 12 July 2012.

<sup>314</sup> Interview with NSC official, 12 July 2012; Author Interview with Raymond Seitz, 27 October 2011.

confrontation, if not worse.”<sup>315</sup> Kohl had carried a similar message to Bush a few weeks earlier, noting that Gorbachev “does not want destabilization in Europe, because this would mean disruption in the USSR as well” and supported ongoing processes in the region.<sup>316</sup> This suggested the Soviets preferred slow-going change and might be unable to tolerate more radical steps. More pointedly, Davis cabled from Warsaw that if Solidarity won a resounding victory in the upcoming Polish elections (as occurred) “military responses could not be ruled out,” thereby risking violence, calls to leave the Pact, and pressure for Soviet intervention.<sup>317</sup>

Even without these warnings, East European reforms worried American policymakers. As my argument predicts, U.S. policymakers recognized that they could not know whether Soviet tolerance would last and where Soviet redlines fell. As Hutchings recounts, “the most that could be safely assumed was that Moscow welcomed democratic changes in principle, but remained wary about them in practice.”<sup>318</sup> The question became “would the Soviets move militarily [. . .] and if that happened [. . .] whether that would cause the kind of repression we had seen in Eastern Europe before.”<sup>319</sup> As Scowcroft emphasized:

Let's take a particular case, like Poland [. . .] President Bush visited Poland in 1989, and we were very careful not to have any big public events because what we feared...I remember when Nixon went there and there were almost riots. That's the last thing we wanted, because what we didn't want was either Gorbachev to have to turn hard, or the [. . .] hardliners in the Kremlin kicking out Gorbachev. So we wanted the pace of events to be underneath their radar screen. And don't accelerate. Keep them at a pace that will not force a reaction by the Soviets. Of course, we didn't know what that pace was. But that was our goal.<sup>320</sup>

At a time when the Soviets were retrenching, the last thing the United States wanted to do was give the Soviets reason to change course. “You don’t want,” as Bush announced in June, “to over exhort; you don't want to over promise; you don't want to rally people to levels of political activity that might cause repression.” Ultimately, the United States recognized that it had “tremendous differences with the Soviet Union” that required U.S. policy to be “guided by a certain sense of caution.”<sup>321</sup>

### c. Linking Costs and Benefits to Strategy

To this end, the United States redoubled efforts to reassure the USSR by downplaying U.S. interest in European reforms, avoiding interference in the internal affairs of Pact members, and foregoing calls for radical domestic changes. Again, this logic best matches the expectations of Realist Decline Theory. Speaking to reporters before the July trip, Bush emphasized that “the last thing we ought to do is appear to be dictating and fine-tuning the political processes in these

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<sup>315</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 115.

<sup>316</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Telephone Call from Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 15 June 1989.

<sup>317</sup> Amembassy Warsaw “Big or Too Big?”

<sup>318</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 60–61.

<sup>319</sup> Interview with Seitz, 27 October 2011.

<sup>320</sup> Interview with Scowcroft, 3 August 2011. Seitz similarly argued that Poland was moving in a direction that “could cause trouble, could be a challenge to the Soviet Union, and therefore NATO” by risking a Soviet intervention that would precipitate a general collapse in U.S.-Soviet relations and end reforms in the region; Interview with Seitz, 27 October 2011.

<sup>321</sup> George Bush, “The President's News Conference,” 27 June 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17216>.

countries. I have a respect [. . .] for the internal affairs of another country.”<sup>322</sup> There points were raised in press conferences throughout June and July, as members of the Administration praised Soviet tolerance and emphasized the United States did not wish to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries.<sup>323</sup> Policymakers also used private meetings with foreign counterparts to assess Soviet reactions and underscored American circumspection. Meeting with Jaruzelski, for example, Bush asked whether Gorbachev worried that the United States sought to evict Soviet forces from the region. When the Polish leader responded affirmatively, Bush reiterated that, “he had not mentioned the troop withdrawals to be more contentious,” and would not “stick a finger” in Gorbachev’s eye.”<sup>324</sup>

Nor was this just show for leaders in the Pact. Meeting with Mitterrand after the July trip, Bush offered that a “crackdown [in Poland] would bring chaos, which would lead to intervention.”<sup>325</sup> Rather, he believed “Jaruzelski was probably the best candidate” to lead Poland since he could broker the necessary deals to avert violence. And during the August standoff over the composition of Poland’s government, U.S. policy was again driven by consideration of the Soviet reaction. As Scowcroft argued, “Moscow still had large forces in Eastern Europe and we did not want to embarrass the Soviet Union with Soviet freedom at stake. Our public posture was therefore very restrained [. . . saying] only that the President ‘would encourage’ the formation of a non-Communist government.”<sup>326</sup>

vi. *Assessment: Change in Poland and Hungary*

On balance, the outcome and logic of American policy in Poland and Hungary support Realist Decline Theory. As my argument predicts, the United States adopted Moderate Predation in order to undercut Soviet power, yet was simultaneously constrained by concerns of a dangerous and problematic Soviet counter-reaction if intense means were used towards this end. American behavior is all the more striking in light of 1) the decline in Soviet power writ large, 2) the reduction of Soviet offensive military capabilities following Gorbachev’s 1988 UN speech, and 3) Solidarity’s successes in Poland; given these trends, the United States seemingly had the purview to adopt a more predatory strategy. Instead, American policymakers discounted Soviet statements and evidence of changing Soviet military doctrine to focus on residual Soviet military strength and the consequences for U.S.-Soviet relations if that power were used to arrest change in Eastern Europe. Although American strategy looked to take advantage of cracks in the Soviet bloc, intense means of doing so were avoided due to worries that the Soviets would use remaining capabilities to internally balance and penalize American predation. Not only could the USSR stage a crackdown, but doing so might lead to a crisis, escalation, and inadvertent war between the United States and USSR; over the longer term, it might also lead to a remilitarization of the U.S.-Soviet contest. To avoid these costs, American policymakers enacted a policy that limited the intensity with which the U.S. undercut Soviet power and made gains at the Soviet expense. While still seeking to roll back Soviet power and gain at Soviet weaknesses, the U.S. preferred to let these gains occur slowly so as to avoid provoking the USSR. This behavior and the rationales offered are what Realist Decline Theory predicts a rising United States will do when facing a declining, but militarily robust, Soviet Union in bipolar Europe.

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<sup>322</sup> George Bush, “The President’s News Conference With Journalists From the Economic Summit Countries,” 6 July 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17246>.

<sup>323</sup> Press conferences are online by *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>.

<sup>324</sup> Memcon, Jaruzelski, 10 July. Bush likely expected Jaruzelski to relay his comments to Gorbachev.

<sup>325</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Francois Mitterrand, President of France,” 13 July 1989, 2.

<sup>326</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 137.

In contrast, there is virtually no evidence in support of Institutionalist Theory. Again, Institutionalist Theory predicts 1) a Moderate Support strategy emerge in response to the restraining influence of NATO allies, while 2) American policymakers recognize that NATO unity required the U.S. to forego power maximizing behavior when pressured by its allies. Neither prediction pans out. Not only did the United States prey upon the USSR rather than pursue support, but a review of the academic literature, memoirs and documentary record, shows American diplomatic policy was just that – American. There is no evidence the interests of U.S. allies either accounted for or determined U.S. policy. As with military policy, American diplomatic policy was formulated in-house and independent of NATO.

Finally, the diplomatic game over Poland and Hungary provides only limited evidence for Democratic Peace Theory. As the theory predicts, the United States adopted Moderate Predation. Moreover, policymakers occasionally spoke and justified policies as if the logic of Democratic Peace Theory was at hand. Gates' argument that evicting the Soviets from Eastern Europe could have positive spillover effects on Soviet reforms is emblematic. Overall, however, Democratic Peace Theory is at best an incomplete explanation for U.S. diplomatic policy towards Poland and Hungary in 1989. First, although American policymakers occasionally spoke as if they hoped the changes in Eastern Europe would positively affect Soviet reforms, efforts to weaken the Soviet hold on Poland and Hungary were also founded on concern that Gorbachev's reforms would not last. Thus, even while monitoring Soviet reforms, the U.S. acted on the desire to shift in the military balance in its favor while it had the opportunity. In this, American predation was founded on a desire to establish a stronger position for a future round of competition with the USSR; the desire to avoid damaging and if possible helping Gorbachev at home was driven more by a desire to maintain the opportunity to prey on the USSR while it could than on any sincere desire to help the USSR democratize as an end unto itself. Moreover, American policy on a day-to-day basis seems to have focused much more on the state of U.S.-Soviet strategic competition than on any particular interest in the state of Soviet domestic politics. The stability of the Soviet regime and Gorbachev's reforms may have lurked in the background, but the evidence presented above shows a far greater interest in the overall military and strategic competition with the USSR than with the Soviet domestic game. This accords better with Realist Decline Theory than Democratic Peace Theory.

#### D. Diplomatic Policy: Managing German Reunification, Fall 1989

##### i. *Overview*

By September, Poland and Hungary had stabilized. Now, however, the stability of East Germany came into question, thereby raising the possibility of a push for German reunification. Reunification was a double-edged sword for the United States. On the one hand, NATO members had long been formally committed to reunification, though in practice, major NATO members including Britain and France were opposed to this possibility and sought to deny or delay the outcome as long as possible.<sup>327</sup> At the same time, eliminating the Soviet presence in the GDR would be a major setback to Soviet military power and the USSR's ability to threaten Western Europe. On the other hand, the GDR constituted the "jewel of in the [Soviet] imperial

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<sup>327</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 795–797; Thomas Blanton and Svetlana Savranskaya, "Thatcher's Foreign Policy 'Failure,'" *Foreign Policy*, April 9, 2013, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/09/i\\_met\\_with\\_unambiguous\\_failure\\_thatcher\\_gorbachev\\_germany](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/09/i_met_with_unambiguous_failure_thatcher_gorbachev_germany); Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War and German Unification* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

“crown” and the cornerstone of the USSR’s alliance system. The USSR would therefore be acutely sensitive to signs of predation.<sup>328</sup>

With both large costs and benefits, Realist Decline Theory predicts the United States should err on the side of caution by adopting Moderate Predation. Evidence that the Soviets are disinclined to let Germany reunify should be taken seriously and the means used to challenge the GDR’s independence kept cautious. In contrast, Democratic Peace Arguments suggest that the United States will pursue Moderate Predation, but do so with one eye fixed on predation’s effects on Soviet internal politics: signs that American policies are weakening Soviet liberalization will limit the intensity of U.S. predation. Meanwhile, Institutionalist Theory predicts Moderate Support as the United States responds to the pressures of NATO allies and its own incentive to keep NATO together in the face of a diminishing Soviet threat to “reassure” the USSR and avoid trying to pull the GDR out of the Soviet orbit (thereby destroying the Warsaw Pact).

ii. *Early Reunification Debates*

German reunification was on the American foreign policy agenda from early 1989. By March, the NSC argued that, “the top priority for American foreign policy in Europe should be the fate of the Federal Republic of Germany [FRG]” in part because “the Germans suffer the most from Europe’s divisions.” Although the United States could not “promise immediate political reunification,” it could still “offer some promise of change.”<sup>329</sup> By the May 1989 NATO, this translated into rhetorical backing for reunification without substantive steps to make reunification a reality. Indeed, Scowcroft advised Bush to be “careful not to get out in front of [West Germany] in calling for German reunification, since Germans inside and outside the government strongly feel that a high profile position may compromise the careful, incremental movement that is already underway.”<sup>330</sup>

American goals, however, were largely defensive. As Gorbachev scored public relations victories, talk of reunification was a way of bolstering the FRG’s commitment to NATO. Notes prepared for Baker before the NATO Summit make the point, arguing that “there’s no doubt the issue [reunification] is coming back. The real question is whether Gorbachev will grab it first (or else the Germans will grab it) [. . .] We need to move out ahead in a way that establishes a Western anchor for this process.”<sup>331</sup> The NSC came to similar conclusions, recommending that Bush prevent the FRG from pursuing “détente [. . .] devoid of a security dimension” while “encouraging “trends that will further cement Bonn’s Western ties” in order to neutralize reunification as a possible Soviet weapon.<sup>332</sup>

By September, however, East European developments placed this effort under duress. That month, the Hungarian government began dismantling border checkpoints separating it from neutral Austria. This allowed East Germans, legally barred from emigrating, to slip over the Hungarian-Austrian border and make their way to Western Europe. Thousands of East Germans utilized this route, generating a crisis within the Pact as GDR leader Erich Honecker demanded Hungarian authorities close the border crossings and the Hungarian government refused.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Seitz, “The Future of Germany.”

<sup>329</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 44–45.

<sup>330</sup> Scowcroft, “Participation in the NATO Summit.”

<sup>331</sup> “JAB notes from 5/15/89 re: possible initiatives for NATO summit,” 15 May 1989, Box 108, Folder 5, BP.

<sup>332</sup> Brent Scowcroft to the President, “Dealing with the Germans,” 7 August 1989, Zelikow Files, CF01354, “November 1989 [German Reunification,” GBPL.

<sup>333</sup> Scowcroft, “Participation in the NATO Summit,” 2-3. American caution was encouraged by American allies such as France, leaders of which were ambivalent about reunification and preferred not to have the matter discussed. See George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf, 1998), 77–78.



Pressure subsequently mounted in the GDR for reforms akin to those in Poland. As domestic troubles increased, Honecker tried to convince Gorbachev to support a crackdown. Gorbachev refused, and Soviet forces remained in their barracks as political unrest escalated.<sup>334</sup>

The Soviet refusal pulled the “lynch pin [sic]” out of the GDR situation.<sup>335</sup> Protests escalated and the political crisis deepened. Egon Krenz replaced Honecker and began a series of domestic reforms.<sup>336</sup> These reforms had barely begun, however, when a GDR spokesman’s confusion over new travel regulations led to the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989.<sup>337</sup> Immediately, the question became whether the opening of the Berlin Wall presaged moves towards German reunification and, if so, on what terms.

iii. *Initial American Strategy: Minimize Change*

American policymakers constantly assessed U.S. objectives and options in the run-up to 9 November. Reflecting the spring debates, many policymakers did not want the United States to change course: cautious and minimal support for eventual reunification was preferred in order to “avoid the turmoil that would be attendant with German reunification.”<sup>338</sup> A major State Department report in mid-October underscored the continuity, arguing “our overriding German objective is the maintenance of a democratic FRG, firmly tied to the West [. . .] Publicly, we should continue to express our support for reunification [. . .] without getting out in front of mainstream West German leaders.” Bush’s public statements followed this advice. Speaking with reporters in September, for example, Bush acknowledged that “I think there is in some quarters a feeling [. . .that] a reunified Germany would be detrimental to the peace of Europe [. . .] I don’t accept that at all.”<sup>339</sup> He repeated these points in an interview with the *New York Times* on 24 October.<sup>340</sup> In any case, American options for changing the status quo were limited by the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. As the State Department report concluded, Soviet leaders appeared willing to “use force to prevent the collapse of a Communist East German State,” and would “insist upon a fully separate GDR, with undisturbed political and security links to Moscow” even if the GDR government collapsed.<sup>341</sup> The CIA was more explicit, arguing that reunification could only happen through a combination of Western cooperation, GDR liberalization, and “Soviet acquiescence.”<sup>342</sup> None of these conditions were plausible at the time.

iv. *Supporting Self-Determination, Avoiding Reunification*

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<sup>334</sup> Analyses of the GDR-Soviet back and forth can be found in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 31–34; for Gorbachev’s efforts to encourage the GDR to reform rather than launch a crackdown, see *Masterpieces of History*, Doc. 88.

<sup>335</sup> Scowcroft, Interview with Oberdorfer, 1.

<sup>336</sup> Sarotte, *1989*, 35.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 35–47.

<sup>338</sup> Miller Center Interview with Brent Scowcroft, 81; Gates, *From the Shadows*, 483.

<sup>339</sup> George Bush, “The President’s News Conference in Helena, Montana,” 18 September 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17538>. Robert Gates, who accompanied Bush on the trip, argues this was “the first time US policy toward reunification was articulated by the President;” Miller Center Interview with Robert M. Gates, 31–32.

<sup>340</sup> Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 94. See the conversation with Kohl in Memorandum of Conversation, “Telephone Call from Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 23 October 1989.

<sup>341</sup> Seitz, “Future of Germany.”

<sup>342</sup> CIA, “German Reunification: What Would Have to Happen?” 11 October 1989, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA.

The events of 9 November only reinforced the U.S. preference for Moderate Predation. The weeks following the opening of the Wall saw the United States take few steps to push reunification and several efforts to slow change. Speaking with Mulroney shortly after the Wall opened, Bush asked the Canadian leader to tell Gorbachev that, "I [Bush] am feeling a lot of domestic political pressure to stand on the Berlin Wall and 'beat my chest'. I have avoided doing anything like this because I have wanted to hold down the emotions here in the U.S. so as to have a good atmosphere" in U.S.-Soviet relations. In effect, Bush tried to reassure Gorbachev of the priority placed on a stable U.S.-Soviet relationship rather than efforts to take advantage of the GDR situation.<sup>343</sup>

Internal assessments of U.S. options in the aftermath of 9 November underscored these points. The first such study on 11 November argued the United States could either 1) let the West Germans set the pace of events and move towards reunification, 2) back a Four Power<sup>344</sup> intervention to "regulate the process," or 3) emphasize the principle of German self-determination.<sup>345</sup> As Zelikow and Rice report, Bush was "advised to choose a passive policy" and endorse the third option.<sup>346</sup> The logic was spelled out in a lengthier study completed before the 2-3 December 1989 Malta Summit between U.S. and Soviet leaders. Written by a senior interagency group, the report identified three U.S. strategic priorities surrounding the reunification debate.<sup>347</sup> First, the U.S. needed "to assure that the political, economic, and security ties which link the FRG to its Western partners be maintained". Second, it needed to promote "economic reform and democratization within the GDR." Finally, the U.S. needed to ensure "the continued process of reform throughout the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union" and "that whatever new relationship develops between the two German states occurs peacefully."

The United States could thus countenance a range of outcomes vis-à-vis Germany, running from maintenance of two separate states to reunification; it was too early to settle upon a single outcome. Procedurally, however, the U.S. needed to decide whether to 1) support a Four Power initiative to control the situation; 2) defer to events on the ground and the FRG; or 3) emphasize German self-determination. Of the three, the first approach would be most conducive to Soviet security, but would "legitimize a Soviet role and veto" when trends were moving in the United States' favor.<sup>348</sup> Indeed, the United States had already rejected a Soviet call on 10 November for Four Power talks to help prevent "unforeseeable consequences" from arising and spiraling out of control.<sup>349</sup> The second approach would be most problematic for the Soviets by excluding them from the decision-making process. The third approach, however, was acceptable as it neither accelerated nor slowed the course of events, while allowing the United States to argue that "if the German people seek unity through peaceful means [ . . . ] we believe Germany's

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<sup>343</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, "Telephone Conversation with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada," 17 November 1989.

<sup>344</sup> The Four Powers refer to the alliance of the U.S., USSR, UK, and France that occupied Germany after World War Two. The four states still had formal oversight over German foreign and domestic affairs in 1989.

<sup>345</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 404, n32.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>347</sup> Robert Hutchings to Brent Scowcroft, "The German Question," 20 November 1989, and "Handling the German Question at Malta and Beyond," Rice Files, "Malta Summit (Preparation) December 1989 [1]," GBPL.

<sup>348</sup> This echoed a State Department recommendation that the U.S. should avoid "Four Power intervention [ . . . to] avoid a Soviet veto"; Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 405, n32.

<sup>349</sup> Sarotte, 1989, 66-67. The U.S. was sufficiently concerned with the Soviet warning, however, that it authorized discussions between the Soviet and American Ambassadors; James A. Baker III, "Memorandum for the President," 13 November 1989, Scowcroft Files, 91116, "German Unification (November 1989)," GBPL.

neighbors, including the Soviet Union, need not be concerned by such a prospect.” The United States went with the third option.

As my argument predicts, the U.S. looked to cautiously challenge the USSR. On one level, it preyed on the USSR by avoiding Four Power talks and denying the USSR opportunities to sustain its presence in the GDR. Yet by the same token, the U.S. avoided encouraging reunification, upsetting the status quo, and directly challenge the core Soviet security interest in Europe. American policymakers were content with 1) letting the Soviet situation decay over time and 2) ensuring the Soviets could not salvage their position while 3) avoiding intensely revisionist steps.

v. *Early Rationales*

There was a stark, security-driven rationale for U.S. policy: as Realist Decline Theory predicts, the United States was worried over a possible Soviet military crackdown and therefore reluctant to push change in the GDR. With the fate of the GDR the central Soviet security concern, American policymakers were driven by fear of a Soviet backlash if the United States pushed reunification too hard. At a time when the Soviets could forcefully stop change in the GDR, and coupled with Soviet warnings that reunification threatened to destroy “the post-war realities of Europe,” American concerns are precisely what my theory predicts: the rising state in a bipolar system was kept in check by fear of war with the decliner.<sup>350</sup>

Two days before the Wall opened, Scowcroft received a copy of an interagency study entitled “GDR Crisis Contingencies.” The report warned that, “in the event of severe internal unrest in the GDR, our overriding objective should be to prevent a Soviet military intervention, which could and probably would reverse the positive course of East-West relations for many years to come. More than that, it would raise the risk of direct U.S.-Soviet military confrontation” as Soviet intervention in the GDR was “among the World War III scenarios for which U.S. and NATO planners have been preparing for decades.”<sup>351</sup> Reflecting this logic, Bush was reluctant to embrace developments in the GDR, reasoning that “I had to anticipate Gorbachev’s reaction – and that of his opponents [ . . . ] this was not the time to gloat about what many in the West would interpret as a defeat for Gorbachev [ . . . ] my mind kept racing over a possible Soviet crackdown.” As the Soviets were suffering a political defeat, Bush avoided actions that might force the USSR’s hand and militarize the situation.<sup>352</sup> This echoed Scowcroft’s reasoning, as “thus far [Gorbachev] had accepted the changes in Eastern Europe and overcome resistance to them among his military and the [CPSU]. Our question was whether he would, or could sustain the loss of East Germany” as “the reflexive reaction of [Gorbachev’s political opposition] would be to fight reunification tooth and nail to protect the remnants of the Soviet security bulwark in Eastern Europe.”<sup>353</sup> Thus, on the same day Bush asked Mulroney to carry a reassuring message to Gorbachev, he explained to Kohl that the U.S. sought to “stay calm” because “The euphoric excitement in the U.S. runs the risk of forcing unforeseen action in the USSR or the GDR that would be very bad.”<sup>354</sup>

vi. *Slouching Towards Reunification: The Search for Soviet Assurances & Rationales*

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<sup>350</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 94–95.

<sup>351</sup> “GDR Crisis Contingencies,” 6 November 1989, 7 November 1989, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL. This perspective was reinforced in conversations with former policymakers, particularly Seitz, Dobbins, Hutchings, and Scowcroft.

<sup>352</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 148–149.

<sup>353</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 190.

<sup>354</sup> Memcon, Kohl, 17 November 1989.



Nor was Moderate Predation just show. Events in late November and early December demonstrated that the United States limited efforts to prey on the USSR even as other options were available. This first became clear in the run-up to the Malta Summit of 2-3 December.

Only five days before the Summit began, Kohl surprised policymakers by announcing a “Ten Point Plan” to reunify Germany.<sup>355</sup> Kohl’s plan was the first to outline a path to reunification, but came as a shock to the United States. Kohl both failed to forewarn the U.S. even as his plan made no mention of NATO, suggesting an FRG willingness to ignore the U.S. and negotiate with the Soviets as FRG interests dictated.<sup>356</sup> Additionally, it was difficult to know how the USSR would react to reunification formally appearing on the policy agenda. Kohl’s initiative presented the U.S. with a dilemma: should it endorse its ally’s initiative and take a more assertive stance on reunification, or distance itself from Kohl’s effort?

As Realist Decline Theory suggests, the United States used limited means and refused to back the FRG until reassured that the Soviets would not react violently if the United States changed course. This effort and American concerns are clear given developments between announcement of the Ten Point Plan on 28 November, and Bush’s endorsement of the plan during a meeting with Kohl on 3 December. As Scowcroft argues, the 3 December meeting constituted “the decisive step” in U.S. backing for a reunification, as the United States blessed Kohl’s reunification scheme.<sup>357</sup> Why, however, did the United States delay six days before supporting Kohl? After all, there were at least six opportunities between 28 November and 3 December for the United States to back the FRG, including a conversation between Bush and Kohl on 29 November,<sup>358</sup> Bush’s press conference immediately after the call;<sup>359</sup> Baker’s press briefing on 29 November;<sup>360</sup> a cable from Baker on 30 November outlining the approach State Department personnel should take when briefing allies on U.S. policy;<sup>361</sup> an interview by Baker on the morning of 3 December;<sup>362</sup> and a joint press conference by Bush and Gorbachev on the

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<sup>355</sup> Sarotte, 1989, 72–75.

<sup>356</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 196–197. Kohl had consulted with Soviet officials before announcing the plan, suggesting the FRG was willing to operate outside NATO as needed; see Brent Scowcroft to The President, “Scope Paper – Your Bilateral with Chancellor Kohl,” 29 November 1989, Scowcroft Files, 91116, “German Unification (November 1989),” GBPL. This interpretation challenges Elbe and Kiessler, who argue that Bush, “exhibited little [. . . anxiety that] the Russians could lure the United States’ most important European ally by playing the ‘German card.’” Frank Elbe and Richard Kiessler, *A Round Table with Sharp Corners: The Diplomatic Path to German Unity* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1996), 56.

<sup>357</sup> Miller Center Interview with Brent Scowcroft, 82.

<sup>358</sup> The transcript of the Bush-Kohl conversation remains classified. However, Bush’s talking points have been declassified and provide insight. As staffers wrote in the cover memo, the points were designed to be “philosophical in substance as much as possible.” They recommended Bush reiterate that he intended to tell Gorbachev that the United States “had no blueprint or timetable for German reunification,” meaning the U.S. had not yet endorsed Kohl’s proposal.

<sup>359</sup> Bush spoke with reporters after his call with Kohl. Rather than endorse the plan, however, he simply observed that he and Kohl spoke “following his suggestions on the German question,” felt “comfortable,” and thought that “we’re on track;” George Bush, “Interview with Members of the White House Press Corps,” 29 November 1989, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17880&st=Kohl&st1=>.

<sup>360</sup> Federal News Service, “From the White House,” 29 November 1989.

<sup>361</sup> SecState to All NATO Capitals, “Pre-Brief for Allies on Malta Meeting,” 30 November 1989, electronic copy available at NSA.

<sup>362</sup> “Notes from 12/3/89 interview on “Face the Nation,” Valleta, Malta,” Box 108, Folder 12, BP.

afternoon of 3 December.<sup>363</sup> Each time, however, American officials refused to endorse the Ten Point Plan. Only during the meeting with Kohl on the evening of 3 December did American policy change. Why the delay and subsequent change?

Central to the 3 December endorsement were *Soviet* assurances during the Malta Summit that they were not inclined to suppress change in Eastern Europe, and would not see American support for reunification as a threat. As Realist Decline Theory predicts, the run-up to the Summit saw American leaders worried that moves towards reunification would be beyond the limits of Soviet tolerance and trigger a crackdown, military crisis, and the return of U.S.-Soviet competition.<sup>364</sup> The 7 November “GDR Crisis Contingencies” memo was the most explicit, but the NSC also addressed the issue to argue that “destabilizing developments in Germany could represent a threat” to “the continued process of reform” in the USSR<sup>365</sup> and empower conservatives ready to “fight reunification tooth and nail to protect the remnants of the Soviet security bulwark in Eastern Europe.”<sup>366</sup> Thus, the United States needed to “continually reassure [the Soviet Union] that we are not seeking to destabilize the situation in the GDR or the Warsaw Pact.”<sup>367</sup> More directly, the CIA concluded on 27 November that pressure for reform in the GDR could result in “anti-Soviet violence might occur that might force [Gorbachev] to intervene militarily.”<sup>368</sup> And after the release of Kohl’s plan, Scowcroft forwarded Bush a memorandum warning that Gorbachev opposed reunification because it would “rip the heart out of the Soviet security system.” To that end, Gorbachev would use all diplomatic options to prevent reunification, and could “still use force to stop unwelcome events” even if doing so discredited perestroika. The American assessment was straightforward: the Soviet Union’s “unequivocal” demand was the continuation of “political realities of the postwar era, namely, the existence of two German states.”<sup>369</sup> Gorbachev himself warned Bush against reunification, stating, “People have died eating unripened fruit.”<sup>370</sup> As the U.S. prepared for Malta, therefore, one of its primary goals was to stress to Gorbachev “our interest in reform through peaceful, democratic process [sic], and to remind Gorbachev that a violent crackdown (in Eastern Europe as well as the USSR) would inevitably harm our relations.”<sup>371</sup> In short, the United States fixated on the dangers of the Soviet use of force either independently or resulting from Gorbachev’s displacement. Notably, although American policymakers focused on the state of Soviet domestic politics as Democratic Peace Theory would argue, the overwhelmingly concern on the possible

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<sup>363</sup> George Bush, “Remarks of the President and Soviet Chairman Gorbachev and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Malta,” 3 December 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17900&st=Kohl&st1=>.

<sup>364</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 154–155, 190–191. As Baker’s 30 November cable to NATO noted: “We believe perestroika’s success is in the U.S. interest. Given the interrelationship between Soviet domestic and foreign policy, this meeting [Malta] will provide an opportunity to hear Gorbachev’s views of the work of the Supreme Soviet, the development of a legal system and objectives for the next Party congress.” At the same time, the U.S. needed to “make clear that a violent crackdown will represent not only a major setback for perestroika, but would inevitably harm the U.S.-Soviet relationship;” SecState, “Pre-Brief.”

<sup>365</sup> Hutchings, “Handling the German Question.”

<sup>366</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 190.

<sup>367</sup> Hutchings, “Handling the German Question.”

<sup>368</sup> CIA, “The German Question and Soviet Policy,” 27 November 1989, 18-19.

<sup>369</sup> Brent Scowcroft to The President, “The Soviets and the German Question,” 29 November 1989, Scowcroft Files, 91116, “German Unification (November 1989),” GBPL.

<sup>370</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Working Dinner with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney,” 29 November 1989.

<sup>371</sup> James A. Baker III to The President, “Your December Meeting with Gorbachev,” 29 November 1989, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB298/Document%206.pdf>.

Soviet use of force *irrespective* of whether Gorbachev or one of his opponents ruled the Soviet Union aligns more closely Realist Decline Theory.

Gorbachev's actions at Malta, however, calmed American apprehensions. In meetings on 2-3 December, Gorbachev and Bush jostled over change in Eastern Europe and German reunification. Although Gorbachev critiqued Kohl for being "in too much of a hurry on the German question," he also affirmed that, "peaceful change is the way. Our position is non-interference."<sup>372</sup> In further discussions, Gorbachev expressed displeasure at the prospect of reunification but also asserted that "the times we live in are of great responsibility," suggesting the Soviets would themselves be reticent to forcibly stop German developments.<sup>373</sup> As he ultimately argued, "our view is that we should do everything within the Helsinki context," referring to the Helsinki Accords banning change in European borders through force.<sup>374</sup> Collectively, the Malta Summit signaled Soviet recognition that the use of force would be disastrous for U.S.-Soviet relations.

The talks immediately affected U.S. policy. Meeting Kohl after the Malta Summit, Bush hinted at the changing American assessment of the risks of a crackdown, telling Kohl, "Gorbachev's chief problem is uncertainty. I don't want to say he went 'ballistic' about [reunification] – he was just uneasy. We need a formulation which doesn't scare him, but moves forward." Gone were fears of automatic violence voiced before the Summit, replaced by a more limited acknowledgment that the Soviets were "uneasy." American policy now changed as Bush told Kohl that the United States would support reunification and the Ten Point Plan.<sup>375</sup> Although the U.S. and its allies still needed to "avoid things which would make the situation impossible for Gorbachev" before "the Soviet divisions [in Eastern Europe] pull back," the United States would now work with the FRG to push the Soviets out of Germany.<sup>376</sup> This was the decisive shift in U.S. policy, as speeches by Bush and Baker over the next week affirmed the U.S. and FRG would work side-by-side against the USSR.<sup>377</sup>

The decision to side with Kohl was critical.<sup>378</sup> By 3 December, the USSR was not along in opposing reunification as France and Britain echoed Soviet calls to avoid German unity and maintain two German states. In backing Kohl, Bush thereby challenged both the Soviet Union and bucked the influence of American allies; even sustained allied opposition to reunification voiced during a NATO heads of state meeting on 4-5 December was unable to alter the American position.<sup>379</sup> This underlines the importance of the 3 December decision. Given opposition to reunification from many quarters, the United States could have reasonably rejected Kohl's plan. American policymakers had a strong argument that the risks of reunification outweighed the benefits, and the West Germans would have to accept closer ties with a still-independent GDR. As many West Germans themselves did not expect reunification within their

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<sup>372</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "First Restricted Bilateral Session with Chairman Gorbachev of the Soviet Union," 2 December 1989, Kanter Files, C00769, "Malta Summit – December 89," GBPL.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Second Expanded Bilateral," 3 December 1989, Rice Files, "Summit at Malta December 1989: Malta Memcons [1]," GBPL.

<sup>375</sup> For a differing account of the U.S. shift, see Sarotte, 1989, 79.

<sup>376</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Meeting with Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany," 3 December 1989.

<sup>377</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 133; Federal News Service, "From the White House," 29 November 1989; "President's Afternoon Intervention on the Future of Europe," Kanter Files, CF00770, "Summit (Malta) – November 1989 [5]," GBPL.

<sup>378</sup> Moens, "American Diplomacy and German Unification," 53–57.

<sup>379</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 133–134.

lifetimes, this still could have been sold as a gain for Germany and a milestone on the road to reunification. That American policymakers rejected this approach suggests the predatory nature of U.S. strategy.

vii. *Last Grasps of Soviet Military Power: Post-Malta Policy and Rationales*

Almost immediately, Soviet opposition to reunification spiked. Despite the Malta assurances, the USSR railed against reunification on 4-6 December and emphasized the need to preserve both the Pact and NATO (and thus two German states).<sup>380</sup> Gorbachev's critique was pointed, telling FRG Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, "Perhaps [Kohl] thinks that his melody, the melody of the march, is already playing, and he is marching to it."<sup>381</sup> More worrisome, Soviet military forces in East Germany were placed on alert on 7 and 8 December. Although the alert came amidst political protests in the GDR, American officials "could not exclude the possibility that they might be preparatory to a Soviet-led effort to impose martial law and restore Communist rule" that would trigger "an international crisis."<sup>382</sup>

The next day, the Soviet Union again proposed a Four Power meeting to address German development. Reflecting the nascent anti-reunification coalition, Britain and France seconded the Soviet proposal. Most interesting, however, the United States also agreed to Four Power talks. This was a striking turn. Despite the 3 December agreement with Kohl, the United States threw the FRG under the proverbial bus. It also meant a change in U.S. policy "settled since mid-November, against invoking Four Power intervention to regulate German internal developments."<sup>383</sup> As noted above, American policymakers had previously rejected Soviet calls for Four Power talks; why now agree to a meeting? After all, Franco-British-Soviet cooperation meant the Soviets might have a way to preserve their ally. Why the change in U.S. policy?

The change in U.S. policy is puzzling for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory. At the time, there was no spike in opposition to Gorbachev or threat to Gorbachev's reforms. Similarly, the Four Power talks were an option available throughout 1989, yet the U.S. had previously refused to accede to Soviet pressure to utilize the institution. Realist Decline Theory, however, offers a possibility. Given Soviet invectives at the time, I predict U.S. policymakers to agree to the talks as a way of assuaging Soviet concerns and reducing the risk of Soviet intervention. In other words, there should be a security motivation for the American shift. At the same time, bipolar competition means the United States should try to prevent the USSR from using Four Power talks from asserting control over reunification. The U.S. will therefore try to sabotage the nascent Franco-British-Russian coalition and prevent the talks from helping the USSR to regain control over East European developments.

Both predictions are borne out. As Bush and Scowcroft acknowledge in their memoir, American concerns over Soviet military action determined the U.S. position on Four Power talks:

Our inclination was to decline outright [. . .] The Soviets, however, insisted that there could be violence in the GDR, in which case they "would be obliged to use

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 134–137; *Masterpieces of History*, Docs. 113 & 114.; Hans Dietrich Genscher, *Rebuilding a House Divided: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany's Reunification*, 1st ed (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), 312–317.

<sup>381</sup> Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 136.

<sup>382</sup> Quotes from Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 101; Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 198.

<sup>383</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 140.

force.” We were sufficiently concerned about what they might do that we were not prepared to be obdurate about a meeting.<sup>384</sup>

In other words, the United States consented to the meeting to avoid a Soviet crackdown and its attendant risks.<sup>385</sup> Again reflecting the Goldilocks position sought by the United States, Baker told reporters that, “reunification was not just a German issue but one to be decided in consultation with Bonn's NATO allies, its neighbors and the Soviet Union.”<sup>386</sup>

Yet even if the United States was willing to assuage Soviet concerns when the situation appeared hairy, the Soviets could not be allowed to block reunification. American policymakers recognized that Franco-British-Soviet cooperation was the Soviet Union’s best option short of force to ensure Germany’s continued division. As the NSC offered before Malta, “Moscow’s most likely diplomatic approach is to try and blunt the impact of change in the GDR by solidifying international support for two German states. Betting that there is little true enthusiasm for German reunification in the West – particularly in France and Britain – the Soviets would take every opportunity to stabilize the existing system of alliances.”<sup>387</sup> Because the Four Powers retained an internationally recognized right to oversee German developments, Franco-Soviet-British cooperation risked isolating the United States and letting the USSR control events in Germany.

In response, the United States tried to prevent the Soviets from using Four Power diplomacy to buttress their strategic position.<sup>388</sup> After Gorbachev issued the call for Four Power talks, the U.S. worked to limit the scope of the meeting. Baker successfully lobbied the British and French to focus the meeting on developments in Berlin as opposed to Germany writ large, thus preventing the Soviets from stymying American and FRG steps towards reunification.<sup>389</sup> When the Four Powers met on 12 December, therefore, Moscow’s opportunities were already constrained by U.S. action.

*viii. U.S. Strategy Dilemmas at the End of 1989*

By late December, the diplomatic dance over reunification led the NSC to recommend the United States “slow down artfully the unification process this year and bring some order and predictability to it – for our sake as well as Gorbachev’s.” As Hutchings and Blackwill wrote, the prospect of rapid reunification would force the Soviets into a corner:

Gorbachev clearly would not support a peace settlement that would ratify a united Germany in NATO. Whether stated openly or not, his aim would be the reunification of Germany under conditions of neutrality and substantial demilitarization. The new Germany Gorbachev would have in mind could remain in the European Community but not NATO [. . .] In private communication with you, Gorbachev could make it clear that his political survival, and that of the democratization process in the USSR, was at stake. This arrangement, he might stress, was Moscow’s last and best offer. With the FRG and GDR leaderships, Gorbachev might state or imply that the alternative was Soviet military intervention in the GDR to reimpose firm control, with all that meant for the future of Germany and East-West relations.

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<sup>384</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 202.

<sup>385</sup> Baker, *Politics*, 171.

<sup>386</sup> Thomas Friedman, “Upheaval in the East; Baker Says Unification Isn’t Just a German Issue,” *New York Times*, 12 December 1989.

<sup>387</sup> Scowcroft, “The Soviets and the German Question.”

<sup>388</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 140.

<sup>389</sup> Sarotte, *1989*, 80–81.

Slowing the process was a way of preventing Gorbachev from facing these choices. In doing so, it would also prevent the FRG from having to choose between reunification and NATO membership, as American officials were not confident the FRG would sacrifice the former for the latter, and worried this would allow the Soviets to salvage their position. Although Scowcroft rejected the NSC proposal, no new American push for reunification immediately followed. As Realist Decline Theory expects, Moderate Predation left the United States focused on exploiting cracks in the Soviet alliance network, but doing so without imperiling U.S.-Soviet relations writ large.<sup>390</sup>

As 1989 drew to a close, American policy towards the Soviet Union was wrapped up in the debates over German reunification. Having begun the year trying to prevent the Soviets from seizing the German Question, the United States ended the year seeking to cautiously end GDR independence and “rip the heart out of the Soviet security system.” Predation was alive and well. Still, the United States remained sensitive to Soviet concerns as predation was limited to what policymakers felt the Soviets could tolerate. Meanwhile, suggestions that the USSR might use force led the United States to walk back its policies and reassure the USSR. American strategy focused on weakening the USSR in Eastern Europe, but doing so prudently and with the utmost effort to avoid directly threatening Soviet security.

Scowcroft recognized this duality, writing to Bush in late December that, “increasingly because of the German problem, the Soviets are pushing – successfully – for the widest possible diplomatic engagement in Europe”.<sup>391</sup> Although the United States wanted to reduce Soviet power, it was unclear how it could do so when the Soviets retained the military capacity to block or penalize American action. Kohl’s Ten Point Plan envisioned the GDR surviving long enough to join a confederation with the FRG en route to a unified state, and the U.S. had plans in the works to provide aid to East Germany in order to help it linger on.<sup>392</sup> With the Soviets opposing reunification, however, American policy risked “shoring up [Gorbachev’s] long term objectives in Europe”: it was possible American efforts to revise the status quo without antagonizing the Soviets might give the Soviets leverage over American policy such that the U.S. would end up allowing the Soviets to remain in Eastern Europe.<sup>393</sup> Although United States wanted to maximize power at the USSR’s expense, it remained unclear how far it could or would go for the privilege.

*ix. Security via Rollback*

One outstanding question remains: why did the United States side with the FRG in the debates over German reunification at all? Having shown that the Bush Administration acted cautiously for fear of triggering a crisis, why did the U.S. embrace reunification at all? If Realist Decline Theory is correct, we expect American policymakers to temper worries of a Soviet crackdown with arguments that pushing reunification was a way of advancing U.S. security by rolling back Soviet power and advancing American security. In contrast, Democratic Peace

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<sup>390</sup> Robert Hutchings to Brent Scowcroft, “Responding to a Soviet Call for a Peace Conference” and accompanying memorandum to The President, undated, Hutchings Files, CF01414, “German Reunification 2+4,” GBPL. For dating, see Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 383, n56.

<sup>391</sup> Scowcroft, “Diplomacy for a New Europe.”

<sup>392</sup> Robert Hutchings, “PCC On U.S.-GDR Relations,” 11 January 1990, Hutchings Files, CF01414, “German Reunification 2+4,” GBPL.

<sup>393</sup> Harvey Sicherman to Dennis Ross, “Disquieting Signs in U.S. Policy,” 4 January 1990, Box 176, Folder 9, BP; Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, “1990,” 19 January 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

Theory suggests the United States will prey on the USSR because of worries about the threatening nature of the Soviet regime while monitoring the state of Soviet domestic politics; because Institutional Theory predicted the United States to pursue Moderate Support, it does not offer hypotheses about the rationale behind U.S. predation and I exclude it from this discussion. On balance, the results support Realist Decline Theory.

On the one hand, the fall of the Berlin Wall and pressure for reunification presented an opportunity for the United States to reduce the Soviet threat. Because the GDR represented the “crown jewel” of the Soviet empire, reunification would undermine the integrity of the Warsaw Pact and hinder the USSR’s ability to sustain its military and political threat to Western Europe. So long as reunification did not also mean a reunified Germany outside NATO, the United States would find itself able to influence European affairs free from the constraints imposed by the other superpower. Hutchings makes the point well, arguing that from “the perspective of core interests, we [. . .] had much to gain from the prospect of a strong, democratic, and united Germany”.<sup>394</sup> Another NSC official made a similar argument in an interview, proposing that the American decision to push reunification was a conscious choice to take advantage of the fact that the United States had won the Cold War. The only way for the Soviets to retain influence in Eastern Europe without a crackdown was for the United States not to exploit the collapsing Soviet position. This was a step policymakers were unwilling to take.<sup>395</sup>

Indeed, helping the USSR retain its presence in Eastern Europe never even occurred to senior officials. Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the State Department argued the United States needed to prepare for “dramatic changes in East Germany which literally could alter the map of Europe” and “ensure that our current policies on the issue of reunification [. . .] maximize our longer term leverage.” If this occurred, the United States should capitalize on the situation by preserving Germany’s ties to NATO while pushing reunification.<sup>396</sup> Significantly, reunifying Germany while preserving its links to NATO would mean that the perennial Cold War debate over German alignment would be resolved in the United States’ favor. As then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs James Dobbins argued, “it was up to [the Soviets] to protect their interests [. . .] we didn’t have to negotiate with ourselves on their behalf.” Instead, “there was an opportunity” to make “fundamental geopolitical changes” in the United States’ favor.<sup>397</sup> At the end of the day, rollback via reunification presented a window for the United States to eliminate the Soviet threat to Western Europe on propitious terms.<sup>398</sup> As the United States looked at the issue, it proceeded from the conviction, “that the German Question is best answered on Western terms.”<sup>399</sup>

Democratic Peace Theory, in contrast, does not fare as well. On the one hand, the United States certainly pursued predation while occasionally worrying about the effects predation would have on Gorbachev’s hold on power and “the continued progress of reform” in the USSR and Eastern Europe. This matches a core democratic peace argument. However, the balance of discussions focused foremost on the strategic advantages of weakening the Soviet hold in Europe, rather than on how this would affect Soviet domestic politics or prospects for democratization.

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<sup>394</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 97. Hutchings reaffirmed this perspective in interviews with the author.

<sup>395</sup> Interview, NSC Official, 12 July 2012. Another NSC official argued, “I didn’t think the Cold War regime in Europe was a fundamentally sound and stable condition,” such that pursuing reunification and ending the division of Europe was a way of bringing stability by transforming the “regime.” Interview with Zelikow, 18 August 2011.

<sup>396</sup> Seitz, “Future of Germany.”

<sup>397</sup> Interview with Dobbins, 14 November 2011.

<sup>398</sup> This perspective was emphasized by multiple NSC and State Department officials.

<sup>399</sup> Hutchings, “Responding to Calls,”

Nor does there seem to have been discussion one way or another of whether preying upon the Soviet Union was advantageous for the sake of improving the security of Western democracies against the non-democratic threat posed by the USSR. Admittedly, it could be the case that the notion of the USSR as a threat *because* it was non-democratic was so ingrained that policymakers simply did not need to state the logic in these terms; still, the available evidence shows policymakers thinking in purely power-security terms without any reference to Soviet domestic politics or regime type in any form. Although not definitive, these results accord better with Realist Decline Theory than Democratic Peace Theory.

x. *Assessment: German Reunification, Fall 1989*

Overall, Realist Decline Theory performs well in explaining U.S. policy vis-à-vis the USSR in the early debates over German reunification. As expected, there is significant evidence that Moderate Predation emerged out of an effort to undercut Soviet power without triggering violence and the Soviet use of force. Indeed, the oft-voiced concerns over whether Gorbachev could tolerate American efforts to promote change in East Germany are telling: at every step of the way, American policymakers looked over their shoulders to ensure that efforts to undercut Soviet control over its premier European ally would not generate blowback for the United States. And as predicted, American policy inched forward as policymakers concluded they might be able to press the Soviets a bit harder, but retreated as necessary when the Soviet threat of force appeared to be in the offing. Ultimately, Realist Decline Theory provides a good tool to explain the course, logic, and outcome of American policy vis-à-vis the USSR in the early debates over German reunification,

Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory, however, do not fare as well. The case provides limited support for Democratic Peace Theory. As the theory predicts, the United States pursued Moderate Predation on the German issue. In the process, American policymakers occasionally monitored Soviet internal politics and debated how U.S. policy would affect the stability of the Soviet regime. Overall, however, evidence for the theory is less than clear-cut. Although American policymakers occasionally considered Soviet domestic politics when shaping their policies, the more consistent calculation emphasized the desirability of taking advantage of Soviet weakness irrespective of what the nature of the Soviet regime entailed. Moreover, aside from the period immediately surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall, American concerns over the state of the Soviet government seem to have faded away as policymakers emphasized the desirability of exploiting Soviet weaknesses because the United States had a window of opportunity to do so; after an initial period of evaluation, there is no evidence that American policymakers paid attention to the nature of the Soviet regime or its ongoing internal battles when shaping U.S. policy. Finally, the ups and downs in the U.S. effort to prey on Soviet weakness in East Germany (epitomized by the pre- and post-Malta debates over backing the Ten Point Plan) are difficult to explain using Democratic Peace Theory, as they were driven by a straightforward calculation of whether the USSR, acting like any great power, would defend its ally. Because of these divergences from what the theory predicts, I code the episode as offering mixed support for Democratic Peace Theory.

Institutionalist Theory, on the other hand, fails the test. The theory predicted the United States would enact a Moderate Support strategy due predominately to pressure from American allies. This was patently not the case. Moderate Predation, rather than Moderate Support, emerged as the United States strove to take advantage of Soviet weakness. More importantly, the process by which the United States went about preying on the USSR contradicts institutionalist logic: although subject to allied pressure to reign in American goals and means



(most notably at the NATO meeting following the Malta Summit), the United States resisted this pressure. Instead, the United States sided with the FRG, the only one of its allies seeking to undercut Soviet security, in further weakening the USSR. In effect, the United States bucked allied efforts to restrain its strategy rather than accede to it. In sum, the outcome and process of U.S. policy over East Germany contradict institutionalist expectations.

## **VI. Summary and Conclusions**

### **A. Summarizing the Results**

Overall, Realist Decline Theory provides a more powerful explanation of American strategy towards the Soviet Union in 1989 than its competitors. As noted, given bipolar decline where the USSR retains a robust military posture, my argument makes three core predictions about American policy. First, the United States should adopt a predatory strategy. Given the opportunity to try and shift the distribution of power in its favor by undercutting the USSR, it should do so. That said, American strategy should be only moderately predatory and marked by a “go slow” logic and the use of cautious means that probe but do not test Soviet tolerance for change. Second, signs of Soviet opposition to American policies should lead the United States to reassure the Soviet Union and limit signs of predation; put differently, concerns over Soviet internal balancing and of a war with the USSR should lead to American circumspection. Finally, American policymakers should emphasize the desirability of making gains at the Soviet expense, but also underscore their reluctance to do so at the risk of fostering Soviet internal balancing either via Soviet revisionism or a Soviet revival.

All three predictions are borne out. In both military and diplomatic policy, American strategists sought to reduce the Soviet threat to the United States by weakening the Soviet Union. Both CFE talks and policy towards change in Eastern Europe were thus designed to undercut the Soviet foothold in the region and limit the challenge posed to the United States. Successful CFE negotiations, as noted, would undercut the Soviet military threat to Western Europe and could encourage political change in the Soviet sphere. Prying Poland and Hungary from the Soviet grasp would undermine the integrity of the Warsaw Pact, serve as a catalyst for further change in the region, and might even prevent the Soviet Union from staging military forces on or through these states. Above all, supporting change in the GDR and eventually backing German reunification were ways of tearing the heart out of the Warsaw Pact: ending the existence of two separate German states would generate immense pressure on the USSR to withdraw from Eastern Europe. If reunification could then be obtained on Western terms, American victory in the Cold War would be even starker by 1) integrating the whole of Germany into American alliance system, 2) asserting American dominance over Western and Central Europe, and 3) directly reversing the major Soviet security gain from the Second World War, namely, the projection of Soviet power and influence into Central Europe. Given the early Cold War crises that resulted from the back and forth between the U.S. and USSR over Germany’s alignment, this result would be a clear-cut American victory and unparalleled Soviet defeat.

The inverse is also true. American policymakers gave little or no thought to supporting the Soviet Union and preserving its military power or presence in Eastern Europe. Not only did the United States take advantage of apparent weaknesses in the Soviet position but the United States systematically rejected or neutered Soviet proposals that might translate into a strong or continued Soviet presence in Europe. Thus, Soviet CFE proposals were rejected, policymakers never considered *not* challenging Soviet influence in Poland and Hungary, and the decision to back reunification was made despite a recognized Soviet preference for a two-state solution. The

Germany situation is also instructive as Soviet efforts to buttress their position by engaging in Four Power negotiation were either opposed or subverted by American action. Ultimately, the United States hunted the Soviet bear.

Still, there were limits to American efforts as the United States pursued Moderate Predation. To summarize the preceding, American military policy was designed to cautiously shift the military balance in the United States' favor rather than intensely challenging Soviet military power. Similarly, instead of encouraging rapid change in Poland and Hungary, American policy looked to cautiously back change in those countries to permit long-term political reforms and gradually remove the Soviet footprint. To this end, the U.S. encouraged the Poles to adopt positions that avoided outright challenges to Poland's fidelity to the Pact and limited efforts to push extensive reforms that might be seen to threaten the Soviet alliance network. Above all, when confronted with events in the GDR, the initial American preference was to do little to accelerate change and instead simply try to avoid a Soviet crackdown. Although this eventually morphed into American backing for reunification, the United States 1) refused to endorse the process until it was clear a more assertive American stance would not trigger a U.S.-Soviet crisis, and 2) remained highly attentive to Soviet security concerns even afterwards. In short, American strategy throughout 1989 was geared towards cautious predation.

Finally, there is strong, if mixed, evidence that the rationales for American policy accord with Realist Decline Theory. Baldly stated, the United States favored cautiously preying upon the USSR to avoid Soviet internal balancing. With military policy, the American preference was to use the CFE talks to reduce the Soviet military presence and lock in a strengthened American military position in Europe. On the other hand, taking a more ambitious stance in conventional arms control and calling for a complete Soviet and American military retrenchment from Europe was unacceptable because it might allow the USSR to establish military dominance on the continent if the USSR recovered. As expected, American policy was driven in large part by concerns over Soviet balancing and future Soviet behavior and capabilities. That said, a second rationale voiced in the CFE negotiations is somewhat at odds with Realist Decline Theory: as noted earlier, part of the logic behind U.S. policy was a worry that if the United States was not seen responding to Gorbachev's peace initiatives, then the USSR might be able to trade military reductions for Western concessions that might also facilitate a Soviet revival. In other words, rather than *limiting* the degree of U.S. predation, the concern with Soviet internal balancing also led the United States to engage in the CFE talks in order to *prevent* the USSR from using CFE to aid their recovery. This concern is not fully in agreement with my argument.

Nevertheless, the mixed evidence in military affairs is offset by overwhelming evidence that Moderate Predation in Eastern Europe was driven by a desire to avert Soviet revisionism. As American policymakers contemplated change in Poland, Hungary, and East Germany, there was a constant tension between the logic of predation and the desire to avoid antagonizing the USSR. The solution was to err on the side of caution. As demonstrated, American policymakers selected policies they believed would exceed Soviet forbearance, reassured the USSR as necessary, and only moved forward when they believed the USSR would tolerate a more assertive American stance. Meanwhile, indications that the United States was approaching a Soviet red line led to efforts to walk back American policy. This was clearest in the summer debates over retaining Jaruzelski as Polish President and ensuring Communist participation in the Polish government, the effort to avoid pushing reunification after the Berlin Wall opened, and the December decision to bow in the direction of Four Power talks as the prospect of an intervention mounted. As expected, given the robust Soviet military posture, American behavior

set into a pattern of cautiously attempting to make relative gains at the Soviet expense, but circumscribing even these efforts when they appeared to cause a crisis with the USSR. In the choice between power maximization and security maximization, the United States pursued the former when possible but accepted the latter as necessary. On balance, the logic behind U.S. behavior seems strongly in line with Realist Decline Theory.

Other theories do not fare as well. As shown, the case provides only limited evidence for Democratic Peace Theory. Democratic peace arguments made three core predictions about the case. First, the United States should pursue a Moderate Predation strategy. Second, American policymakers should justify the resultant strategy in terms of the benefits of weakening an expressly *non-democratic* rival. Finally, American policymakers should carefully monitor the reforms in the USSR while shaping and altering American in response to Soviet developments. The strongest evidence for Democratic Peace Theory comes from the outcome of the case, as the United States indeed pursued Moderate Predation. Additional evidence comes from the fact that policymakers occasionally spoke of the advantages of pushing Gorbachev towards a fuller embrace of democracy and, immediately after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, emphasized the desirability of not weakening Gorbachev's hand at home. The weight of evidence, however, still shows American policymakers preying upon Soviet weaknesses for the sake of reducing the Soviet military threat to the United States. On balance, American policymakers shaped American strategy in response to the Soviet threat to the United States in pure military-strategic terms, and emphasized the desirability of weakening the USSR as a *great power* challenger to the United States, rather than a non-democratic challenger to the United States. Moreover, U.S. strategy was insensitive to internal reforms in the USSR as American policymakers decided on Moderate Predation before the viability of Gorbachev's reforms became clear, and sustained the strategy regardless of oscillations in Soviet domestic politics and institutions. Overall, the case provides mixed and limited evidence for democratic peace precepts; Realist Decline Theory offers a stronger explanation.

Finally, Institutionalist Theory fails the case. At no point in the debates over military policy, change in Poland and Hungary, or change in East Germany, did the United States pursue a Moderate Support strategy. More importantly, the United States proved willing every step of the way to buck the influence of its NATO partners and operate outside of NATO constructs when doing so would help undercut Soviet power and security. Simply put, American policymakers neither responded nor worked through institutional mechanisms. Realist Decline Theory proves a stronger explanation.

#### B. Conclusion: Looking Forward

The United States adopted a strategy of Moderate Predation in 1989. As Soviet decline began to tell, American policymakers sought to walk the fine line between rolling up the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, and encouraging the USSR to use its remaining capabilities to internally balance against American predation. This strategy proved resilient even in the face of changes to Soviet military doctrine, internal reforms in the USSR, and even the pressure from NATO allies. As the next chapter shows, however, it would not survive one final change: the collapse of Soviet military posture in the winter of 1990. Once Soviet decline became a rout and Soviet military posture shifted from robust to weak, American predation increased. The United States sought to use cautious means to eliminate the USSR as a great power in 1989, but once the threat of Soviet internal balancing was removed, the United States went for the geopolitical jugular.

**Chapter Four:**  
**Soviet Decline and American Strategy, Part II:**  
**Extreme Predation in 1990**

**I. Introduction**

Chapter Three presented the first test of Realist Decline Theory against its competitors by examining American strategy towards the declining Soviet Union in 1989. I demonstrated that my argument both explains the case and offers more analytic traction than alternate explanations drawn from Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory. The results lend support to the notion that a repaired version of realism can be used as a theory of foreign policy and explain the relationship between rising and declining great powers.

This chapter continues testing Realist Decline Theory by looking at American strategy towards the USSR in 1990. As noted in the preceding chapter, the case revolves around a central puzzle: why, having adopted Moderate Support in 1989, did the United States shift to Extreme Predation in 1990? As in the late-1989 debates, American strategy mainly involved the outcome of German reunification and thus the fate of the Soviet alliance system, political influence, and military reach in Europe. In contrast to the cautious diplomatic and military policies adopted to manage change in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the circumspection shown when Soviet opposition spiked, 1990 saw the United States 1) adopt maximalist diplomatic and military positions seeking to integrate the whole of reunified Germany into NATO, and 2) disregard signs of Soviet opposition to this effort. Simply put, American strategy fixed on preying on Soviet weakness to the greatest extent possible, achieving outright victory in the Cold War by integrating all of Germany's economic and military potential into the American orbit, blocking Soviet efforts to salvage their position, and obtaining "U.S. preeminence" by getting the Soviets out of Germany and moving the United States in.<sup>400</sup>

Extreme Predation is all the more puzzling given conventional historiography and political science interpretations of U.S.-Soviet relations during the German reunification process. In the most-cited historical study, Zelikow and Rice present German reunification as a story of successful Soviet-American cooperation. The United States, in this view, helped assuage Soviet concerns over the future of a reunified Germany, and the Soviet Union gracefully accepted the loss of East Germany and Germany's reunification within NATO.<sup>401</sup> This benign interpretation of Soviet-American relations dominates the political science literature as well, as is particularly prominent in democratic peace and institutionalist arguments. Haas, for example, argues that Gorbachev's effort to liberalize the Soviet system, partly by building democratic institutions, helped engender trust and cooperation between the United States and USSR from 1989 onward, suggesting the United States adopted a strategy of Moderate Support.<sup>402</sup> Institutional scholars, particularly Ikenberry and Deudney, are even more explicit.<sup>403</sup> In this view, the institutionalized character of the American order, aided by the creation of ad hoc institutions to manage the

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<sup>400</sup> Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence."

<sup>401</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 366–370.

<sup>402</sup> Haas, "The United States and the End of the Cold War."

<sup>403</sup> Deudney and Ikenberry, "The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement"; Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 228–230; Robert B. Zoellick, "An Architecture of U.S. Strategy After the Cold War," in *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey Legro (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 26–43.

German reunification process, helped the United States understand Soviet security concerns vis-à-vis reunification, moderate American demands in response to Soviet concerns, and pursue a supportive rapprochement with the declining Soviet Union. The argument presented in this chapter challenges each of these perspectives by showing that American policymakers shaped American strategy to exploit Soviet weaknesses, offered the USSR no quarter once the Soviet military threat was off the table, and reunified Germany in NATO to incorporate a period of American hegemony in Europe.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds in four parts. Following this introduction, I code the variables central to Realist Decline Theory and derive predictions. Next, I code the variables for the alternate explanations and deduce a series of rival hypotheses; please note that, having elaborated on the coding of the variables in the preceding chapter, I eschew a lengthy discussion to emphasize only the variables that changed between the start of 1989 and 1990. Third, I review American diplomatic and military policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in 1990 in the context of German reunification, tracking hypotheses, assessing predictions, and summarizing the evidence along the way. Finally, I summarize the results and preview the following chapters.

## II. Realist Decline Theory: Coding & Predictions

### A. Polarity: Bipolar

The polarity of the international system did not change between 1989 and 1990. Although the United States continued to gain on the Soviet Union in relative terms, the system remained bipolar (Table 4.1) as the United States and USSR continued to far outpace other states in Europe in overall capabilities. Indeed, there was even a chance that Gorbachev's reforms might eventually help the Soviet Union begin to recover from its ongoing economic problems. Drawing on these resources, the Soviet and American militaries remained the largest and most diverse in Europe. Even after the Soviet military cutbacks announced in 1988-1989 and the ongoing arms control talks, the USSR and United States remained the preeminent military actors on the continent.<sup>404</sup>

**Table 4.1: Identifying the European Great Powers, 1990<sup>405</sup>**

Great Powers			Other States (for illustration)		
<u>State</u>	<u>Share of European GDP</u>	<u>Share of Strongest State (USA)</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Share of European GDP</u>	<u>Share of Strongest State (USA)</u>
USA	40.1	100	United Kingdom	6.5	16.3
USSR	13.8	34.4	France	7.1	17.7
			West Germany	6.6-8.8	16.5-22.0

Finally, both the American and Soviet alliance networks remained officially intact. Despite American concerns that the Soviet peace offensive and debates over German reunification might undermine Western unity, NATO began the year a solid foundation for American power projection into Europe. On the Soviet side, meanwhile, the Warsaw Pact clearly ended the year in a state of flux. Not only had Poland and Hungary continued to liberalize, but November and December 1989 saw the collapse of Communist governments in

<sup>404</sup> Figures available via International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1989-1990* (London: IISS, 1990).

<sup>405</sup> Author calculations, from Maddison dataset.

Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria while East Germany faced mounting pressure on the Communist regime.<sup>406</sup> By the start of 1990, non-Communist governments held power in the majority of Warsaw Pact member states, and East Germany was moving towards liberalization as the reformist Hans Modrow replaced the conservative Krenz as GDR Prime Minister.<sup>407</sup> Amidst these changes, however, none of the states officially ended their relationship with the Warsaw Pact and USSR. As shown with Poland, the prospect of a Soviet client leaving the Pact was believed to be a likely trigger for a Soviet intervention. As a result, no Soviet client formally renounced ties to the Pact even amidst the unrest in Eastern Europe and the Pact remained officially together.<sup>408</sup> As I show in the following section, however, formal adherence to the Pact did not prevent significant changes to the Soviet military position in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### B. Military Posture: Weak

Unlike polarity, Soviet posture underwent a profound shift in the winter of 1990 as it shifted from Robust to Weak. This change had three elements. First, the political changes in Eastern Europe raised the bar for a Soviet-led military crackdown. Although the available documentary record is sparse, it is reasonable to conclude that the result of the East European revolutions was a situation in which Soviet forces would need to suppress highly mobilized populations throughout the region in order to retain pro-Soviet, Communist governments. Doing so would be significantly more difficult than stopping political reforms in just one country, as 1) non-Soviet forces could not be relied upon to help in the operations, 2) local security forces might actively oppose Soviet moves, 3) local populations would likely rally to the non-Communist regime's defense, and 4) forces would be scarce as Soviet assets would be tied down throughout the region as opposed to just one or two countries. Collectively, political change on the ground undercut the USSR's ability to stage a crackdown.

Second, and closely related to the preceding, the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe threatened the Pact's conventional military position. With political changes underway in Eastern Europe, the USSR could no longer count on other members of the Warsaw

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<sup>406</sup> Standard works on the political changes in Europe include Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern* (New York: Random House, 1990); Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Jacques Lévesque, "The East European Revolutions of 1989," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 311–332; Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1993); Jon Elster, ed., *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism, Constitutionalism in Eastern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989*; Konstantin Pleshakov, *There Is No Freedom Without Bread!: 1989 and the Civil War That Brought down Communism*, 1st ed (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009); Domber, "Skepticism and Stability"; Arend Lijphart, "Democratization and Constitutional Choices in Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Poland 1989-91," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4, no. 2 (April 1, 1992): 207–223; Angela Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Renée De Nevers, *Comrades No More: The Seeds of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); Koslowski and Kratochwil, "Understanding Change"; Mark Kramer, "The Demise of the Soviet Bloc," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 9 (2011): 1535–1590; Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions Within the Soviet Union (Part I)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 4 (2003): 178–256; Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions Within the Soviet Union (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 1, 2004): 3–64.

<sup>407</sup> Sarotte, *1989*; Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 144–160.

<sup>408</sup> See, for instance, the proclamations of fidelity to the Pact by member states in October and November 1989 in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle?: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Central European University Press, 2005), 655–664.

Pact to fight against the United States and NATO.<sup>409</sup> Moreover, given that a Pact-NATO confrontation might involve serious damage to Eastern Europe, Moscow presumably could not rely on members of the Pact to allow Soviet personnel and material to transit to the front lines in times of war. Hence, Soviet lines of communication and supply were now in doubt.<sup>410</sup>

Above all, key members of the Warsaw Pact began to negotiate for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Pact member territory. As early as mid-November 1989, the new Hungarian government expressed interest in “accelerat[ing] the speed of Soviet troops withdrawal” announced as part of the 1988 Soviet military reductions.<sup>411</sup> However, withdrawal plans moved into high gear when the Soviets announced in mid-December that all Soviet troops stationed abroad would be withdrawn “by the year 2000”.<sup>412</sup> Sensing an opportunity, Hungarian and Czechoslovak leaders instead called for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from their territory by the end of 1990 and the Pact’s transformation into a purely “political” organization.<sup>413</sup> Strikingly, where previous moves by Soviet allies to withdraw from the Pact’s military arrangements resulted in Soviet intervention, the Soviets agreed to negotiate. By late January, official negotiations began for a Soviet withdrawal within two to five years.<sup>414</sup> Around the same time, Polish leaders copied their Czechoslovak and Hungarian counterparts and similarly pressed for a Soviet removal. Although Soviet withdrawal from Poland would separate the USSR from East Germany, strand the main body of Soviet forces in East Europe in the GDR, and require any campaign against the West to begin from Soviet home territory, Soviet policymakers again agreed to negotiate.<sup>415</sup> The process culminated in mid-March when Hungary and Czechoslovakia signed agreements for a Soviet withdrawal by the end of 1991; Poland reached a similar agreement in the fall.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Memcon, Kohl, 3 December 1989.

<sup>410</sup> NIC, *The Direction of Change in the Warsaw Pact*, April 1990, NIC M90-10002, 10.

<sup>411</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS), “Horn Compares Reforms in USSR, Hungary,” 19 November 1989.

<sup>412</sup> Reuters, “Soviets Say Cutback In Military Spending Will Be 8.2% in '90,” *New York Times*, 16 December 1989; Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with President Francois of France,” 16 December 1989.

<sup>413</sup> Alan Riding, “Hungary Seeks Withdrawal Of Soviet Forces in Two Years,” *New York Times*, 19 January 1990; FBIS, “Dobrovsky: Soviet Troop Withdrawal in 1990,” 9 January 1990; FBIS, “Officials on Temelin, Soviet Withdrawal, Germans,” 11 January 1990; FBIS, “Nemeth on CEMA Reform, Kaifu Visit,” 13 January 1990; FBIS, “Dienstbier Ends Visit, Gives News Conference,” 15 January 1990; FBIS, “Calfa Discusses Economy, Soviet Withdrawal,” 27-28 January 1990;

<sup>414</sup> Mastny and Byrne, *Cardboard Castle*, 666-667. Also FBIS, “Horn on Soviet Troop Withdrawal Talks,” 2 February 1990; FBIS, “USSR Favors European Troop Withdrawal in 5 Years,” 30 January 1990.

<sup>415</sup> The withdrawal from Poland was complicated by Poland’s desire to use the prospect of a lingering Soviet troop presence to obtain a border treaty from the FRG. Nevertheless, unofficial talks began on 12 February. Joanna A. Gorska, *Dealing with a Juggernaut: Analyzing Poland’s Policy Toward Russia, 1989-2009* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), chap. 2. Also FBIS, “Walesa Demands Soviet Troop Withdrawal,” 18 January 1990; FBIS, “Jaruzelski Supports Soviet Troop Withdrawal,” 13 February 1990; FBIS, “Spokesman Details Jaruzelski Stand on Germany,” 13 February 1990; FBIS, “Mazowiecki News Conference,” 21 February 1990.

<sup>416</sup> Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 413; Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe’s Military Order*, 55-57; Sarotte, 1989, 263, n62; on the Hungarian negotiations, see Csaba Bekes, “Back to Europe: The International Background of the Political Transition in Hungary, 1988-1990,” in *The Roundtable Talks of 1989: The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy: Analysis and Documents*, ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001). Gorska, *Dealing with a Juggernaut*, chap. 2. Separate from the official troop negotiations, however, a Soviet-American agreement on 13 February to limit deployments in Central Europe to 195,000 troops each meant the Soviet Union would withdraw “a couple hundred thousand” troops from the GDR and Poland; see Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS), “Moiseyev Comments on Reduction of Troops,” 14 February 1990.



Combined, the weak Soviet posture in Eastern Europe altered the situation facing the United States. First, the absence of Soviet control over states in Eastern Europe virtually proscribed a Soviet conventional attack against NATO. Without secure lines of communication and with Soviet troops beating a fast retreat from Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union would be unable to launch or sustain an attack across the inter-German border. That is, not only would 1) the Soviet Union be unable to reinforce forward deployed forces in the GDR to successfully break through NATO defenses, but 2) any Soviet attack would first have to fight its way from Soviet territory across Eastern Europe (akin to World War Two), thereby giving the West significant time to mobilize and strengthen defenses. As a result, the Soviet Union's offensive combat power in Eastern Europe was virtually eliminated by the changes of early 1990 and the Soviet Union's ability to respond to American predation by launching "World War Three" was severely limited. In short, the Soviet Union's weak posture virtually eliminated the possibility of the USSR responding to predation with a conventional attack against the West that threatened American security.

Second, the risk of a crisis or inadvertent war emerging from a Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe was reduced. Previously, and as noted in the prior chapter, a Soviet crackdown in Eastern Europe risked triggering a crisis between the United States and Soviet Union: the United States might misperceive a Soviet crackdown as the precursor to an attack, while the USSR might face preventive war motivations if it believed the West was interfering in the domestic affairs of its allies. Now, with the barriers to a Soviet crackdown growing and Soviet forces retreating from the region, these risks were reduced. On the one hand, the fact that the Soviet Union might be hard pressed to subdue change in their client states meant that it was unlikely the Soviets would also be able to launch an attack. Hence, the risk of the United States misperceiving a crackdown as a precursor to a war was limited. On the Soviet side, meanwhile, opposition to the Soviet military presence, insecure lines of communication, and troop withdrawals meant that the Soviet capacity to escalate was reduced. Even if preventive war motivations were present, and even if the Soviet Union perceived (rightly or wrongly) Western intervention in the affairs of its allies, its ability to take military steps to oppose Western action was limited.

### C. Predictions

Given bipolarity and a weak Soviet posture, I predict the United States will adopt a strategy of Extreme Predation. This strategy carries several observable implications. First, the goal of American strategy will be on weakening the Soviet Union and improving the United States' relative position at the Soviet Union's expense. Second, because the Soviet Union's weak posture means the USSR cannot threaten costly internal balancing, the United States will use intense means to prey upon the USSR. Thus, where in 1989 the United States tried to prey on the USSR without antagonizing or appearing to threaten the USSR, now the United States will take advantage of every political and military opportunity to weaken the USSR and strengthen the United States' hand; in essence, the United States will try to revise the status quo in Europe as without any regard for Soviet concerns using any and all means at its disposal. Diplomatically, this means the United States will attempt to actively isolate the Soviet Union and foster an anti-Soviet coalition to prevent the USSR from "breaking out" of its weakened position. Militarily, meanwhile, we expect the United States to seek military superiority over the United States by stripping the Soviet Union of allies and rolling back Soviet military power, to limit the USSR's ability to wage war, threaten, or coerce the United States.

As part of the transition from Moderate to Extreme Predation, I predict American policymakers will monitor the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe. Policymakers will watch for signs that Soviet posture is weakening by monitoring the size, quality, and freedom of maneuver of Soviet forces. Recognition that Soviet forces are under duress and in the process of withdrawing will be the signal for the start of Extreme Predation. In response, American policymakers will revise the prior assumption that intensely predatory means will imperil United States security and conclude the time is now right for American opportunism. Extreme Predation will follow from this conclusion.

Once this conclusion is reached, I expect American demands and pressure on the Soviet Union to constantly escalate. In the absence of a Soviet military able to punish American predation, American policymakers will see no need to limit the ends and means of American strategy. Thus, Soviet concessions and signs of weakness will be met with additional American demands and efforts to further adumbrate Soviet capabilities. In the process, American policymakers will disregard Soviet opposition to American actions: where Soviet warnings in 1989 that the United States was approaching a Soviet redline prompted the U.S. to scale back its actions and reassure the USSR, now American policymakers will no longer treat Soviet warnings as credible, ignore Soviet complaints, and continue the offending action. In effect, I expect American policymakers to not only take advantage of every sign of Soviet weakness to improve the United States' relative standing, but actively try to create new opportunities to gain at the USSR's expense at a time when the USSR cannot penalize American actions. Hence, if confronted with a choice between 1) immediately increasing American relative power but risking Soviet opposition, or 2) foregoing immediate gains but ensuring the USSR weakens over time, the U.S. should pursue the first option. Simply put, with American relative advantages growing and the Soviet Union's ability to impose costs on the United States eliminated, the U.S. has both reason and opportunity to pursue maximalist positions regardless of Soviet opposition.

Finally, and as before, we also expect clear rationales offered for U.S. behavior. Realist Decline Theory proposes that a rising state in bipolarity will prey on its declining rival to eliminate potential threats to its security. All that prevents the riser from doing so is the prospect of internal balancing by the decliner. However, with the Soviet Union holding a weak posture, the cost of Soviet balancing is obviated. Thus, in their private analyses, policymakers will justify intense predation of the USSR as a way of 1) creating unfettered American dominance on the continent, and 2) taking advantage of the opportunity created by Soviet weakness. Simply put, American policymakers should acknowledge the advantages of pushing the USSR out of Eastern Europe and express enthusiasm at the prospect of doing so while facing ineffective Soviet opposition. By extension, they will also underscore the need to prevent the USSR from salvaging its position in Europe by denying it political and military opportunities to recover from its problems. The prospect of the Soviet Union doing so will be seen as a challenge to incipient American dominance in Europe, the American victory in the Cold War, and thus a problem to be opposed with the full-range of American diplomatic and military capabilities. On balance, American policymakers will be striving for outright victory over the USSR and will not allow the Soviet Union to upset American plans.

### **III. Alternate Explanations**

The predictions from Realist Decline Theory differ from those offered by both Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory. In this section, I code regime type and

identify relevant international institutions while deriving predictions from each competing explanation.

### C. Democratic Peace Theory

#### iv. Coding Regime Type

The United States remained a democracy in 1990, with a Polity score of 10.<sup>417</sup> Meanwhile, although the Soviet Union was not a democracy in 1990, it was in the process of rapidly liberalizing. Where, Polity assigned it a democracy score of 1 in 1989, it scored a 3 in 1990 as Gorbachev's domestic reforms took root. Indeed, despite conservative opposition, 1989 saw Gorbachev sustain his drive to liberalize the Soviet system as the Congress of People's Deputies took office, Soviet political competitions continued, and freedom of speech mounted. While the Soviet Union was not yet a democracy, it was well on its way as the reforms begun in 1988-1989 took hold and deepened. As Mark Haas concludes, "the institutional checks and balances on governmental power that were in place in the Soviet Union by 1989 would make highly confrontational foreign policies very difficult for any one group of Soviet leaders to realize."<sup>418</sup>

#### v. Predictions from Democratic Peace Theory

It is difficult to say what Democratic Peace Theory predicts of American strategy in 1990. On one hand, because the USSR was still not fully democratic in 1990, the theory suggests a rising democratic United States should continue preying upon a declining, non-democratic USSR. On the other hand, Mark Haas, in the most systematic test of democratic peace arguments as an account of American strategy at Cold War's end, concludes that Soviet democratization efforts were central to the United States' decision to pursue cooperative relations with the Soviet Union; as Haas puts it, Soviet domestic reform "helps explain Bush's strategy of negotiating with Gorbachev. The president predominantly tried to settle various outstanding Cold War disputes by trying to reassure the Soviets rather than coercing them with America's power superiority."<sup>419</sup> Thus, even though the USSR was not a democracy in 1990, scholars working in the democratic peace tradition imply the United States adopted Moderate Support as Gorbachev's reforms strengthened and deepened in 1990. This divergence between what a strict reading of Democratic Peace Theory seems to predict and what scholars in the democratic peace literature argue points to an underlying ambiguity in the political science literature.

On balance, it seems that Haas is correct and Democratic Peace Theory predicts a Moderate Support strategy. Even if the USSR was not fully democratic in 1990, it had taken major strides in that direction and maintained these efforts in the face of significant domestic opposition. The fact that the USSR's Polity score went from 0 in 1988 to 3 in 1990 is a testament to changes that constrained the autocratic powers of the Communist Party, forced the Soviet leadership to pay increasing attention to the will of the people, and meant that any future Soviet leader would be unable to rule by fiat; if anything, the Polity score likely understates the changes in the USSR.<sup>420</sup> Moreover, although it might be possible for the United States to discount the Soviet democratization effort in 1989, the logic of Democratic Peace Theory implies that Gorbachev's continued support for democratic change throughout the dislocations of 1989 should be recognized by the U.S. and cause a change in American strategy away from Moderate Predation and towards some kind of supportive strategy; otherwise, the theory loses much of its

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<sup>417</sup> Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr, *Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012*.

<sup>418</sup> Haas, "The United States and the End of the Cold War," 173.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Haas, "The United States and the End of the Cold War," 161-170; Beschloss and Talbott, *Highest Levels*, 20-22.

ability to explain the consequences of domestic regime change. Thus, Democratic Peace Theory suggests a relatively rising United States should try to sustain and deepen the Soviet reform process by cooperating with the declining USSR. To do so, it should offer the Soviet Union limited economic and military assistance, while de-escalating military competition with the USSR and engaging in symmetric arms control in order to limit the American threat to Soviet security. The United States may also offer the Soviet Union token political backing when the USSR tries to retain influence in Europe, for example, rhetorically backing Soviet efforts to retain a foothold in Eastern Europe. In short, Moderate Support for a declining USSR will see the U.S. use limited means to preserve the USSR as an increasingly democratic great power.

By extension, American policymakers will emphasize Soviet reforms when justifying American strategy. Where Realist Decline Theory expects the primary driver of American policy will be the security benefits accruing from eliminating the USSR as a competitor at a time of Soviet military weakness, Democratic Peace Theory suggests policymakers will underscore the advantages of helping the Soviet Union stabilize and continue its domestic reforms by cooperating in ending the Cold War. Conversely, policymakers will also discuss the problems that would result if Soviet reforms were undone and thus underscore the need to help Gorbachev by supporting the USSR. This logic also implies that indications that American policy is causing problems for Soviet reforms will lead the United States to change course and try to preserve Soviet liberalization: signs that American policy is making it less likely Soviet domestic reforms will succeed will lead American decision-makers to move away from the offending actions. As before, American strategists should 1) acknowledge Gorbachev's reforms, 2) monitor and debate the implications of the internal changes for Soviet policy, and 3) justify their strategy by reference to the desirability of ensuring Soviet regime type continues along a democratic path.

#### D. Institutional Theory

##### i. *Coding Institutional Presence*

A major change in the U.S.-Soviet institutional relationship occurred in 1990. Although the two states were not embedded in the same institutions at the beginning of the year, the winter of 1990 saw the two sides create an ad hoc institution known as the "Two Plus Four" talks to manage the process and security consequences of German reunification.<sup>421</sup> Resulting from Anglo-American-FRG consultations in early February, the Two Plus Four talks (referring to the "two" Germanies and the "four" allied powers from World War Two) ostensibly created a forum for the states involved in reunification to resolve outstanding security issues as reunification advanced.<sup>422</sup> At least in theory, the talks thus provided a forum in which the United States and USSR were bound to one another, could exchange information, and bargain as changes in Europe proceeded. In particular, Ikenberry flags the institution's role in providing the USSR "voice opportunities" to press the United States and its allies for assurances that Soviet security interests would be preserved and respected.<sup>423</sup> By creating the first institution embedding the U.S. and USSR, the Two Plus Four significantly increased the degree of institutional binding linking the United States and Soviet Union per the standards of Institutional Theory. Coming

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<sup>421</sup> Policymakers sometimes referred to these as the Six Power talks; the terms are interchangeable. Please also note that I use the terms Two Plus Four "talks" and Two Plus Four "process" as synonyms.

<sup>422</sup> Pond, *Beyond the Wall*, 176–182; Patrick Salmon, Keith Hamilton, and Stephen Twigge, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 3, Volume 7: German Reunification, 1989-1990* (New York: Routledge, 2010), chap.

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<sup>423</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 224.

on top of the United States' integration into NATO, the Two Plus Four added another major constraint to American strategy at Cold War's end.

ii. *Predictions*

With United States and Soviet Union now embedded in the same institution and with the United States still bound by NATO, Institutional Theory suggests the United States should pursue Moderate Support.<sup>424</sup> Due to its NATO ties, the United States should still be prevented from preying on the USSR by allies 1) concerned that predation might trigger a crisis with the Soviet Union, and 2) worried that predation resulting in a reunified Germany will threaten their own security.<sup>425</sup> More important, however, are Soviet voice opportunities and U.S.-Soviet institutional binding created by the Two Plus Four. Because the U.S. was bound to the USSR in an institution that gave the USSR opportunities to communicate its preferences to the U.S., the United States is expected to acknowledge and respond to Soviet demands by adopting policies making "the final settlement [on Germany] more acceptable" to the Soviets. The goal here is to sustain U.S.-Soviet cooperation and rapprochement by sustaining the Two Plus Four process and using it to improve U.S.-Soviet relations over the long-term. Combined, pressures on the United States by NATO allies such as Britain and France, coupled with Soviet opportunities to use the multilateral format of the Two Plus Four to press for American concessions, will produce an "overall Western policy toward Moscow that [is] more conciliatory than confrontational" and show the Soviets "that their concerns about unification would be addressed."<sup>426</sup>

By extension, the United States should use the Two Plus Four as the primary mechanism for negotiating German reunification and the future of Europe with the USSR. We should see American policymakers coordinating, bargaining, and managing the USSR primarily through Two Plus Four meetings and mechanisms. Policymakers, in effect, will take the Two Plus Four seriously and try to utilize it as the primary venue for assessing Soviet interests, meeting Soviet demands, and assuaging Soviet concerns; this follows from the notion that institutions provide negotiating venues and information-transmission mechanisms that help states peacefully manage change in the international system. Thus, we should see American policy changing in response to Soviet concerns made clear through the Two Plus Four process as American policymakers receive new information about Soviet interests and concerns.<sup>427</sup> Put differently, if Two Plus Four helped the United States conciliate the USSR, then we should see the United States adopting goals and utilizing different means in response to Soviet demands communicated through the Two Plus Four to best assuage Soviet concerns.<sup>428</sup> On the other hand, evidence that the United States is trying to avoid being influenced by the Two Plus Four, ignoring Soviet preferences communicated through Two Plus Four mechanisms, and bucking the restraining influence of the other states in the Two Plus Four (or NATO) is disconfirming evidence for institutionalist arguments.

Finally, we expect American policymakers to emphasize the restraining effects of international institutions such as NATO on U.S. policy in their internal deliberations, as well as discuss the importance of meeting Soviet concerns and conciliating the USSR via the Two Plus

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<sup>424</sup> Deudney and Ikenberry, "The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement," 42, 47; Deudney and Ikenberry, "Pushing and Pulling," 516–517. Because the U.S. and USSR were not bound together before Soviet decline began, we do not expect the Extreme Support that Institutional Theory predicts can result from long-standing, binding mechanisms – the ad hoc nature of the institutions here cuts against their power to affect U.S. strategy.

<sup>425</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 220–221.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 223; Dennis Ross, *Statecraft* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007), 41.

<sup>427</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 229–230.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 230–231.

Four process. On the former, we expect policymakers to underscore the importance of maintaining NATO unity by acceding to the moderating influence of its allies when states such as Britain and France exert “moderating” pressure.<sup>429</sup> On the latter, policymakers should emphasize the importance of keeping the Soviet Union engaged in the reunification process to legitimate the result and discuss the need to offer the USSR sufficient concessions to obtain this outcome. In doing so, policymakers are also expected to acknowledge the implicit tradeoff suggested by institutionalist logics, namely, that by working through the Two Plus Four, the United States is buttressing Soviet power in a way that would not exist absent the institution.<sup>430</sup> Overall, we should see policymakers grappling with the effects of institutions as American policymakers accommodate Soviet preferences and acknowledge that the United States’ ability to maximize power at the USSR’s expense is prohibited due to institutional binding.

#### **IV. American Strategy and Soviet Decline in 1990: Extreme Predation**

##### **A. Background: Overview of U.S. Strategy**

Moderate Predation dominated American strategy in 1989. By the end of January 1990, however, American policy changed gears and shifted towards Extreme Predation. The strategic change occurred as Soviet military power crumbled and Soviet posture in Eastern Europe shifted from robust to weak. This shift had two consequences for the United States. First, it freed U.S. policymakers from fearing the consequences of Soviet opposition if American policy became intensely predatory. Even if the Soviets wanted to oppose U.S. actions, they could no longer effectively do so. Second, it isolated the United States and Europe from domestic changes in the Soviet Union. As we have seen, one of the major constraints on American policy was the fear that an overly aggressive policy vis-à-vis Eastern Europe would result in Gorbachev’s removal from office and a Soviet crackdown. Now, with Soviet military power in retreat, the reassertion of hardline rule in the USSR would carry fewer consequences for the United States as the USSR could not renew Cold War military competition in the near future even if it wanted. With the fear of war and military tensions adumbrated, American policymakers could intensely prey on Soviet interests. As I show below, given the exigencies of a bipolar competition, American policy was propelled by a desire to hedge against a future Soviet recovery while incorporating U.S. hegemony in Europe.

One caveat is in order. Unlike 1989, where U.S. policy towards the USSR was a multifaceted enterprise involving separate military and diplomatic tracks, American policy towards the USSR in 1990 was defined by the U.S.-Soviet debates over German reunification.<sup>431</sup> Because these debates fused together diplomatic and military issues, I analyze U.S. strategy towards the USSR by looking at the ins and outs of the German reunification debates. This is not to minimize other U.S.-Soviet debates in 1990, but rather to acknowledge, as one NSC staff member argued, that issues surrounding CFE, START, and fostering new international institutions were means to reinforce the deals surrounding German reunification.<sup>432</sup> Although this breaks with the prior analytic structure, the discussions surrounding German reunification

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 223, 227–229.

<sup>430</sup> Zoellick, “Two Plus Four: The Lessons of German Unification,” 21; Deudney and Ikenberry, “The International Sources of Soviet Change,” 108–109.

<sup>431</sup> An anecdote underlines the point. A colleague of Robert Blackwill told the author that while Blackwill was the senior NSC staff member responsible for Soviet affairs, he would get up every morning in this period and ask “How can I help Germany reunify?” The story is telling: here was the senior agent of the U.S. government responsible for the entirety of U.S.-Soviet affairs defining his job in terms of German reunification.

<sup>432</sup> Interview, NSC Staff Member, March 2013.

retain enough shared features with my coding scheme and analytic framework that it is still possible to code U.S. strategy and assess its underlying motives. Future work, however, should attempt a finer grained assessment.

## B. Accelerating Reunification

### i. *Dilemmas Early in 1990*

As 1990 began, American policy towards the USSR and German reunification was stuck in a halfway house. Since the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November, American policy had moved towards a cautious embrace of reunification in order to prey on Soviet weaknesses. Soviet opposition, however, appeared to stymie more intense predation. As the events following the Malta Summit showed, the United States could not take advantage of the GDR collapse without risking a Soviet backlash, the risk of which gave American policymakers pause. Moreover, the tacit Soviet position on what might make reunification acceptable – namely, a neutralized and demilitarized Germany that could not threaten its neighbors, with reunification accompanied by changes in Germany’s links with NATO – threatened American interests as it weaken the U.S. alliance system and undercut the American presence in Europe.<sup>433</sup> And to top things off, Britain and France remained uncomfortable with the prospect of reunification.<sup>434</sup> Combined, the Franco-British-Soviet positions meant that a coalition that could support either the continued existence of the two German states or a lengthy reunification process was a possibility.

In contrast, the FRG pushed for an even speedier reunification than previously imagined. Continued political and economic unrest in the GDR encouraged Kohl in mid-December to seek ways of accelerating the timetable initially envisioned in the Ten Point Plan and quickly create a reunified state.<sup>435</sup> The first step was pushing for early elections in the GDR that would presumably return a pro-reunification government. From there, the FRG would pursue reunification “as fast as the international traffic would bear.”<sup>436</sup> By late January, this process was in full swing as GDR elections were moved up from May to March.

The diverging international positions left the United States in another bind and triggered a reassessment of American policy.<sup>437</sup> On the table were three options. First, the United States could try to sustain Moderate Predation. This might be difficult, but it might also successfully carve out a middle ground to slow the Germans down and somewhat appease the Soviets, British, and French. Second, the United States could shift course and, recognizing ongoing international opposition and Kohl’s greater assertiveness, agree to Franco-British-Soviet demands that reunification be significantly slowed or halted. Finally, the United States could make common cause with the FRG, speed up reunification, and accelerate the destruction of the USSR’s main European ally.

### ii. *Shifting to Extreme Predation*

As Realist Decline Theory predicts in a bipolar contest with a declining state holding a weak military posture, the United States chose the third path and pursued Extreme Predation.

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<sup>433</sup> Interview with NSC Official, 12 July 2012; CIA, “Analysis of Shevardnadze’s Seven Questions on German Unification,” 29 December 1989, Hutchings Files, CF01414, “German Reunification,” GBPL.

<sup>434</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with President Francois of France,” 16 December 1989; Brent Scowcroft to The President, “Scope Paper: Your Meeting with President Mitterand on December 16, 1989 at St. Martin,” 15 December 1989, Scowcroft Files, 91116, “German Unification (December 1989),” GBPL; Sarotte, 1989, 100.

<sup>435</sup> Sarotte, 1989, esp. 85, 99–100.

<sup>436</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 159.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 159–160; Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 107–108.



The strategy was driven by the desirability of rolling back Soviet power and denying the Soviets an opportunity to sustain the position in Eastern Europe. Having expressed interest in December in slowing reunification, U.S. strategists now resolved to speed up the process. A late January memorandum from Hutchings and Blackwill is illustrative, arguing that, “Whatever Bonn’s formal position, it is clear that it wants reunification to happen fast, not slowly, and around an increasingly detailed blueprint. We should not oppose but rather support these goals.”<sup>438</sup> Conversely, trying to slow the process or siding with the Franco-British-Soviet coalition risked isolating the FRG. In turn, FRG isolation would increase the attractiveness of a bilateral Soviet-German deal and allow Gorbachev to press Kohl for “a substantially demilitarized Germany under conditions of neutrality, or at least of a Germany out of NATO.”<sup>439</sup> Such an outcome would challenge NATO unity and limit the American ability to coerce concessions from the USSR at a moment of Soviet weakness.<sup>440</sup> Instead, American policymakers concluded that it was better to work with the FRG, limit Soviet options to pressure an isolated FRG, and undercut the Soviet alliance network. This is in line with Realist Decline Theory’s expectation that a rising state in a bipolar contest will prey on a declining great power in order to establish unipolarity and eliminate the decliner as a threat.

Yet why, having worried in December that reunification would exceed Soviet tolerances and threaten the stability of U.S.-Soviet relations, did the United States decide to not just endorse reunification but accelerate the process? As my argument predicts, the shift in U.S. strategy occurred because American policymakers came to see Soviet military posture as weak rather than robust, thus leading policymakers to discount the costs of intense predation. Although late January saw Hutchings and Blackwill flag the possibility that the Soviets might seek a bilateral FRG-USSR deal as the last option “short of a military intervention” – suggesting the Soviets could still stage a crackdown – others in the NSC had already concluded that the Soviet use of force was a dead letter.<sup>441</sup> Most importantly, as the United States contemplated accelerating reunification, Blackwill tasked Rice with assessing what the Soviets would do if the United States “hit the accelerator.” Her reply on 23 January is instructive: “I believe [. . .] that the Soviets would not even threaten the Germans. Within six months, if events continue as they are going, no one would believe them anyway.”<sup>442</sup>

Within a few days, even this assessment was phased out. By 1 February, reports arrived of mounting domestic opposition to Gorbachev and “rumors” that Gorbachev was resigning from the Soviet leadership. There was at least some chance that his conservative opponents might take control of the Soviet state. Yet where the U.S. worried throughout the fall that a different Soviet leader might use force in Eastern Europe, the NSC now concluded that, “the Soviet Union is probably unable to reextend [sic] its tentacles into Eastern Europe”. In this new situation, the best course for American policy was different than the position even in December: “Turmoil in

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<sup>438</sup> Robert L. Hutchings to Brent Scowcroft, “Your Breakfast with Kissinger: Managing the German Question,” 26 January 1989, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>439</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 159–160; Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 108.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.* Scowcroft and another NSC official also emphasized the need to hedge against a possible Soviet revival in the future; Interview with Scowcroft, 3 August 2011; Interview with NSC official, 17 July 2012.

<sup>441</sup> Hutchings, “Breakfast with Kissinger.” A similar passage from a 30 January document omits the reference to the threat of intervention; Brent Scowcroft to The President, “A Strategy for German Unification,” 30 January 1990, NSC PA Files, Doc. No. 9000922, GBPL. Thanks go to Zachary Roberts for assistance in obtaining the 30 January document.

<sup>442</sup> Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 160, 417 n19. Note that the staff of the HW Bush Presidential Library has been unable to find this memorandum.

Moscow [. . .] argues powerfully for moving forward quickly on resolving the German question and concluding CFE. The quicker the new European order is in place, the more effective will be the quarantine of Eastern Europe from the probable collapse of perestroika.”<sup>443</sup>

### C. Creating an Exclusive Process: Diplomatic Isolation and Extreme Predation

From late January onward, American policy settled onto Extreme Predation: American strategists moved to intensely prey on Soviet vulnerabilities and disregarded Soviet opposition by seeking to reunify Germany and place the reunified state in NATO. This process began in early February as the Administration, having decided to support rapid reunification in NATO, had to decide how this result would come about. In this section, I review the ways in which the United States enacted Extreme Predation by isolating the USSR in the diplomatic process; subsequently, I review the extremely predatory terms under which the U.S. backed reunification.

#### *i. Early Options*

Given continuing political fragmentation in the GDR, by late January Soviet leaders no longer appeared to be opposing reunification. With the U.S. and FRG committed to reunification, attention shifted from whether Germany should reunify to the terms under which reunification would occur. This was the most important issue for the United States. With Soviet troops “fast being pushed out of the region,” only clever diplomacy could salvage the Soviet political and military presence in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>444</sup> In turn, whether the Soviets could pull off this gambit affected American diplomatic strategy, as the choice of process would determine whether the various actors (particularly the USSR) would see their demands met at the bargaining table.<sup>445</sup>

At the time, three options were available for negotiating German reunification. First, the Soviets continued to press for a Four Power agreement on German reunification. This approach, as noted, was undesirable from the American perspective because it would give the Soviets a veto over German reunification if the results did not meet Soviet demands. The second option, espoused by the FRG, was bilateral FRG-GDR talks. This approach would formally exclude the USSR from the process, but might in practice provide a sop to the USSR. Given Soviet interests in and formal oversight over the GDR and the fact that many FRG politicians seemed inclined to grant concessions to the USSR (such as the demilitarization of former GDR territory) if the Soviets allowed a speedy reunification, American analysts saw a possibility that a bilateral FRG-GDR process would be accompanied by a bilateral FRG-USSR deal on Germany’s future security arrangements. As the NSC concluded, this approach risked “a growing danger of unilateral or preemptive West German concession on the future of a unified Germany. Even NATO membership may be negotiable.”<sup>446</sup>

Finally, the Soviets might call a pan-European peace conference under the auspices of the CSCE.<sup>447</sup> A pan-European peace conference was also risky for the United States as it would maximize the number of players in the negotiating room and the range of issue up for discussion. The USSR might then capitalize on fears of a reunified Germany voiced in Britain, France, Poland, and elsewhere, and give the Soviets leverage in obtaining a “substantially demilitarized Germany under conditions of neutrality or at least of a Germany out of NATO.”<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Condoleezza Rice for Brent Scowcroft, “Showdown in Moscow?” 1 February 1990, Rice Files, CF00719, “USSR – Gorbachev,” GBPL.

<sup>444</sup> Hutchings, “Breakfast with Kissinger.”

<sup>445</sup> Interview, NSC Official, 12 July 2012.

<sup>446</sup> Scowcroft, “Strategy for German Unification.”

<sup>447</sup> Scowcroft, “Strategy for German Unification.”

<sup>448</sup> Hutchings, “Breakfast with Kissinger” and Scowcroft, “Strategy for German Unification.”

Faced with similar choices in the fall between isolating the USSR from the reunification process or coordinating with and reassuring the USSR to ensure the Soviets did not feel threatened, American policymakers erred on the side of coordination and reassurance. Now, the United States again faced similar choices: it could either 1) permit formal Soviet oversight over the reunification process and reassure the USSR, or 2) formally exclude the USSR from the process. Which way would the United States swing?

*In fact, American policymakers rejected all of these options as overly conducive to Soviet interests and injurious to American opportunism.* Breaking with prior efforts to temper predation and avoid antagonizing the USSR, American policymakers took the lead in pushing a speedy reunification and effectively isolating the Soviets from the negotiating process. For all intents, American policymakers led the way in organizing an anti-Soviet coalition.

ii. *Isolating the USSR: Structuring the Two Plus Four Talks*

This effort began the last week of January as U.S. strategists formulated plans for what became known as the “Two Plus Four” talks for managing the reunification process. As designed by the United States, the “two” (meaning East and West Germany) would negotiate with the express purpose of unifying the country, while the “four” (meaning the four allied powers from World War Two) certified the results. First developed by the State Department, the plan was proposed to Genscher at the start of February. After Genscher’s approval, it was then vetted with Soviet leaders, and subsequently approved by British, French, East German, and other members of the international community on 13 February.<sup>449</sup> By the middle of the month, a new international institution was in place to manage German reunification.<sup>450</sup> As I show below, however, the Two Plus Four was a strategic legerdemain by the United States: created with the ostensible goal of helping the players see their strategic aims met at the bargaining table, the talks were designed to ensure the Soviets left Germany as directly and with as few concessions to Soviet security as possible.

Making this argument provides a particularly hard test of Realist Decline Theory against Institutional Theory. A number of institutionalist scholars, as well as participants in the talks, praise the Two Plus Four process for offering the USSR “voice opportunities” to communicate Soviet interests to Western leaders, and helping the United States and its allies to credibly address to Soviet concerns. The resulting back-and-forth nominally produced Soviet acceptance of a reunified Germany inside of NATO.<sup>451</sup> In this view, Two Plus Four was created and utilized by American policymakers as a way of “signaling restraint” to the USSR and meeting at least some Soviet security concerns.<sup>452</sup> In contrast, if, as my theory expects, a potential unipole will

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<sup>449</sup> Pond, *Beyond the Wall*, 178–182.

<sup>450</sup> Ikenberry cites the Two Plus Four talks in several places as evidence that the institutional and highly permeated character of Western order helped reassure the Soviets. In his work, he also quotes James Baker referring to the Two Plus Four process as a “quasi-institutional arrangement.” I therefore take institutional arguments at face value and accept the Two Plus Four as an institution. Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 228–231, 246.

<sup>451</sup> Ikenberry is the most vocal; see *ibid.*, 238–241. see also; Zoellick, “Two Plus Four: The Lessons of German Unification”; Frank Elbe, “The Diplomatic Path to German Unity,” *Bulletin on the German Historical Institute* 46 (Spring 2010): 33–44; Zelikow and Rice, as well as Hutchings, also suggest the Two Plus Four process helped assuage Soviet concerns and contributed to a speedy reunification; Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, esp. 366–367; Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 137–140; For a contrasting view, see Robert D. Blackwill, “German Unification and American Diplomacy,” *Aussenpolitik* 45, no. 1 (1994): 211–225.

<sup>452</sup> Deudney and Ikenberry, “The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement,” 47; Deudney and Ikenberry, “Pushing and Pulling,” 347. Deudney and Ikenberry point to the liberal character of the West, of which Western institutions are a key facet, in helping reassure the Soviets that their security needs would be met. Although not specifically

maximize power at a declining state's expense when the declining state can no longer defend itself, then we expect to find the Two Plus Four talks created not to give the USSR voice opportunities that the United States would respond to, but to limit Soviet influence *just* to voice opportunities that policymakers could ignore. In the absence of a Soviet coercive threat, we expect American policymakers to design the talks to isolate the process from Soviet pressure while maximizing American control over the outcome.

Internal documents and discussions strongly support Realist Decline Theory and contradict institutionalist arguments. The empirical record shows that the United States created and worked through the Two Plus Four not to accommodate Soviet concerns, but rather to insulate the process from the USSR as much as possible. Although Baker assured Soviet leaders in his February talks that the Two Plus Four process reflected a desire to “take into account Germany's neighbors” and avoid an American “unilateral advantage in this process,” private discussions reveal a substantially different logic.<sup>453</sup> Speaking with Kohl on 13 February, for example, Bush and Kohl agreed that the process could not begin until after East German elections returned a pro-reunification GDR government. Otherwise, as Bush put it, earlier Two Plus Four talks “would open the way for any of the Four to cause mischief” by giving the Soviets a partner in the discussions to lobby for Western concessions to the USSR.<sup>454</sup> The NSC elaborated on the point a few days later, proposing the United States “should try to delay any real discussion of security arrangements in [the Two Plus Four] until the GDR is so weak that the Six, in fact, dissolves into Five as Germany unites.” Put differently, the United States would wait until the Soviets, faced with the dissolution of their ally, had no way of opposing reunification on whatever terms the United States desired. Furthermore, because the goal was to limit “the degree to which [the process] threatens our interests,” the United States needed to “keep the focus of the Six Power talks as limited as possible – dealing only with the legal issues related to the end of Four Power rights, the consequences of the absorption of the GDR into the FRG, and the issue of what becomes of [NATO] forces on the territory of Germany's eastern half.” Soviet pressure to widen the talks to cover “Germany's membership in NATO,” on the other hand, would be resisted by playing to American strengths, namely: “the GDR's imminent collapse,” Kohl's desire to keep Germany in NATO, and “Moscow's lack of real leverage.”<sup>455</sup>

The State Department reached even balder conclusions.<sup>456</sup> Notably, a briefing paper for Baker's initial consultations with Bush on how the Two Plus Four process would operate explained that, “given the process of unification, the task for the 4 powers is to manage the

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focused on the Two Plus Four talks, the notion that the Soviets were reassured in part by the institutional character of the West while Germany reunified suggests the Two Plus Four talks were important to Western reassurance.

<sup>453</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Secretary Baker, President Gorbachev, Eduard Shevardnadze,” 9 February 1990, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA. See also Memorandum of Conversation (Second One-on-One), “Secretary Baker, Eduard Shevardnadze,” 9 February 1990, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA.

<sup>454</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Telephone Call to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 13 February 1990 (3 PM conversation).

<sup>455</sup> Brent Scowcroft to The President, “Preparing for the Six Power German Peace Conference,” no date [cover sheet gives 14 February 1990], Rice Files, CF00716, “German Unification,” GBPL; Condoleezza Rice to Brent Scowcroft, “Preparing for the German Peace Conference” 14 February 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>456</sup> The NSC and State Department skirmished over the purpose of the talks. The NSC wanted to limit their scope and purpose; some in the State Department wanted them to be a real negotiating venue. As the Two Plus Four talks went forward, it became clear that the NSC approach had won and the Two Plus Four were neutered. Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 193–194. Also Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, “State Department Papers on Two Plus Four Talks,” 23 February 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

dissolution of their rights and to obtain an expression of secure borders of Germany. The six [sic] should not make decisions as a group.” Although the talks might include discussion of issues such as NATO membership and German military forces, underlying this discussion would be recognition “that the ultimate authority to make decisions rests with the sovereign German state” and whatever FRG-US deals were reached outside the Two Plus Four forum; Two Plus Four itself was immaterial. “For example,” the paper continued, “we want to take the position Germany will be free to retain its NATO membership, but we can also discuss with the Soviets the merits of this membership.” In other words, the U.S. could attempt to justify its decision to the Soviets in the Two Plus Four, but American goals would be pursued and interests advanced irrespective of Soviet feedback.<sup>457</sup> A subsequent report for Baker was clearer still. Against concerns that the Two Plus Four might lead to discussion of security issues such as NATO membership, Zoellick argued that, “because Two Plus Four is a discussion, not a negotiation, the others can raise what they want to raise. We are not committed to responding at all if we don’t want to [emphasis in original].” The “bottom line” was that the talks committed the United States to discuss “[only] those things we want to talk about.”<sup>458</sup>

Equally important was what would happen if the USSR tried to press for Western concessions by limiting Germany’s relationship with NATO. In this scenario, “the process [gives] us additional support (the UK and France) on keeping a united Germany in NATO [emphasis in original].”<sup>459</sup> It would also diminish the risk of Gorbachev successfully limiting the FRG’s link to NATO: because the USSR would “have more leverage to make this case bilaterally,” negotiating through Two Plus Four would minimize Soviet opportunities to obtain the results it sought by affording the U.S. oversight of the process and the ability to rally the FRG, Britain, and France against Soviet moves. Ultimately, Two Plus Four might help Gorbachev deflect domestic opposition by claiming the USSR was working with the West in “managing the German issue,” but it provided the USSR “little real control” over the process.<sup>460</sup>

iii. *Forging an Anti-Soviet Coalition*

American efforts to isolate the Soviet Union went beyond structuring the Two plus Four to isolate the USSR and included efforts to isolate the USSR diplomatically within the talks. This again contradicts Institutional Theory arguments that the Two Plus Four bred American support for the USSR, and also casts doubt on Democratic Peace arguments that the United States pursued a Moderate Support strategy. Instead, the results buttress Realist Decline Theory predictions that a rising United States will intensely prey on the USSR at every available opportunity. Having decided that the best use of the Two Plus Four was to isolate the USSR, the U.S. used a meeting with Kohl on 24-25 February to obtain FRG agreement to the diplomatic plan. This was a critical step, as Kohl had yet to explicitly endorse keeping a reunified Germany fully in NATO and might still be open to a bilateral FRG-Soviet deal.<sup>461</sup> To this end, the United

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<sup>457</sup> James Baker, “Proposed Agenda for Meeting with the President,” 16 February 1990, Box 115, Folder 7, BP.

<sup>458</sup> Robert Zoellick to James Baker, “Two Plus Four: Advantages, Possible Concerns, and Rebuttal Points,” 21 February 1990, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA. The report lacks an author, but citation information can be found in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 431, n28.

<sup>459</sup> Zoellick, “Two Plus Four.”

<sup>460</sup> Aside from the items cited above, see Blackwill, “State Department;” Draft Cable (annotated by Blackwill), “Two Plus Four Consultations,” 6 March 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [2],” GBPL; Philip Zelikow to Brent Scowcroft, “Discussions with State on Plans for Two Plus Four Meeting on March 14,” 9 March 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [2],” GBPL.

<sup>461</sup> Sarotte, *1989*, 121. Brent Scowcroft, “Meetings with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl,” 24 February 1990, Hutchings Files, CF01414, “German Reunification [1],” GBPL; Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, “The

States pursued what Scowcroft termed “two key goals” for the meeting, namely: 1) “a Kohl commitment to firm German membership in NATO, including continued integration of German forces in the NATO command,” and 2) “agreement on how to manage the Two Plus Four negotiations on Germany to minimize Soviet ability [sic] to weaken Germany’s membership in NATO.”<sup>462</sup>

Bush was equally clear during the actual meeting. As he told Kohl early on, the United States did not want “the Soviets to use this mechanism as an instrument to force you to create the Germany they might want.” The key, therefore, was American-German agreement that a reunified Germany was to remain in NATO, fully integrated with the command structure. The U.S. and FRG could then pressure the Soviets to accept the offer as constituted in Washington and Bonn.<sup>463</sup> On the other hand, if the U.S. and Germany accepted Soviet calls for “an [early] engagement in Two Plus Four talks,” then talks might well “stimulate the Soviets to interfere” in the reunification process.<sup>464</sup> Kohl concurred, agreeing on the need to both keep Germany fully in NATO and to prevent the Soviets from pressing for early Two Plus Four talks that might allow the Soviets to influence the terms of reunification.

Underlying the discussion was a belief that if the U.S. and FRG circled the wagons against the USSR, then a speedy reunification on Western terms was very likely. The notion was not a multi-year reunification process, but rather aiming to “finish the Two Plus Four this year” irrespective of Soviet opposition.<sup>465</sup> After all, the GDR elections were expected to produce a pro-reunification government, such that reunification on whatever terms the FRG sought was going to happen fast. Once the Americans signed the FRG up to the U.S. agenda, Soviet attempts to use the Two Plus Four talks to place conditions on the process would simply cause the Soviets to find themselves opposing a unified Germany wedded to maintaining its NATO ties and backed by the United States. Either the USSR would play along with the United States and Germany, or it would find its position overrun by onrushing events.

Thus, what emerged from the 24-25 February meeting was agreement on a coordinated U.S.-FRG strategy towards rapid German reunification in NATO and with countervailing offers from the USSR rejected out of hand.<sup>466</sup> This basic agreement came to shape the U.S. approach to the Two Plus Four. Throughout March and April, the USSR pressed for the start of Two Plus Four negotiations at the Ministerial level to address the issues surrounding German reunification. Yet not only did the United States reject calls for a Ministerial meeting, but when lower-level officials met, the United States coordinated with the FRG, UK, and France beforehand to ensure that the meetings solely discussed the “procedure” of the talks rather than the substance of German reunification.<sup>467</sup> Efforts to coordinate beforehand with American allies became more important over time. By meeting with the FRG, Britain, and France before dealing with Soviet officials, American policymakers were able to present the USSR with a series of fait accompli

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Beginnings of the Big Game,” 7 February 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>462</sup> Scowcroft, “Meetings with Kohl.”

<sup>463</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 211–212.

<sup>464</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 24 February 1990.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 214–215.

<sup>467</sup> Philip Zelikow to Brent Scowcroft, “Discussions with State on Plans for Two Plus Four Meeting on March 14,” 9 March 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [2],” GBPL.

that blunted Soviet efforts to break out of their diplomatic isolation.<sup>468</sup> Coordination also ensured that U.S. preferences dominated the discussions. Bush outlined this plan to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in April, explaining, “I understand that the Two Plus Four will next be discussing their agenda. This is a very important subject, and I want to be sure you and I are seeing this in the same way. Before each Two Plus Four session, we should carefully make sure that our two countries, French, and the FRG, have identical positions.” After all, “We think the Two Plus Four should concentrate on how to give the existing Four Power rights and responsibilities Berlin and Germany as a whole, so that a united Germany can be fully sovereign like other European states;” in contrast, “the Soviets will want to use the Two Plus Four to interfere with Germany's sovereign rights and hosting Western forces the current FRG.” Organized Western action was the best way to blunt Soviet efforts and isolate the USSR.<sup>469</sup>

This approach continued even as the U.S. and FRG finally agreed to a Ministerial meeting in early May, six weeks after the GDR elections returned a pro-reunification leadership. To ensure the USSR could not even attempt to influence the terms of reunification, U.S. and FRG officials concluded, as Zelikow and Rice offer, “that Moscow had to be convinced, beyond any doubt, that the Soviet Union was isolated diplomatically” and “to achieve this isolation, Western solidarity had to be complete.”<sup>470</sup> There was also a coercive element to this approach, because if the Soviets tried to break out of their isolation and oppose the U.S.-FRG effort, the U.S. and FRG stood ready to ensure that there “would be a deterioration in the smooth, stable relations so essential to the benign international environment in which the Soviet leaders could concentrate on domestic reform.”<sup>471</sup> Simply put, if the USSR attempted to oppose the American party line, then the United States would renew Cold War-style competition at a time when the Soviet leadership counted on a relaxed international environment.<sup>472</sup>

#### *iv. Limiting the Mandate*

Following from American efforts to isolate the USSR in the diplomatic game of German reunification was American opposition to broadening the Two Plus Four mandate to cover a wider array of security issues.<sup>473</sup> This matches Realist Decline Theory's predictions that the United States will limit opportunities for the USSR to recover from its weakness, while contradicting institutionalist and democratic peace claims that the United States will accommodate and try to support Soviet concerns. As far back as February, the United States sought to limit the Two Plus Four mandate to simply “work[ing] out the details of giving up Four Power rights and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole, not the issue of Germany's

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<sup>468</sup> Robert Zoellick to Secretary Baker re Quad Meeting Discussion of German Unification and Two-plus-Four,” undated [sometime on or around 14 March], Rice Files, CF00721, “2+4 Germany #3 [2],” GBPL; George, “Tightrope.”

<sup>469</sup> Memcon, “Meeting with Thatcher,” 13 April. See also Bush's conversations with Kohl and Mitterand on 18 and 19 April, respectively, for additional discussion of the need for coordination.

<sup>470</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 246.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.* For a related discussion, see B.P. Hall, “Security Issues in the Two-Plus-Four,” 5 April 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [2],” GBPL.

<sup>472</sup> At this point, Gorbachev faced increasing domestic opposition from conservatives and military leaders. The Soviet economy was also tanking, leading Shevardnadze and Gorbachev to seek foreign aid. Thus, with Gorbachev under duress at home and the USSR on the economic skids in general, American leaders had military, political, and economic levers they could pull if Soviet opposition mounted; Bush-Kohl conversation on 24 February; “Memcon from 3/14/90 mtg with USSR Financial Minister Pavlov,” 14 March 1990, Box 108, Folder 15, BP; Sarotte, *1989*, 102.

<sup>473</sup> Harvey Sicherman to Dennis Ross and Robert Zoellick, “Our European Strategy: Next Steps,” 12 March 1990, Box 176, Folder 14, BP.



full membership in NATO.”<sup>474</sup> Despite Soviet pressure, the American position did not change; this conforms to the realist prediction that the United States will ignore Soviet opposition to intense predation given the absence of a Soviet military threat. By 12 March, American policymakers resolved that the Two Plus Four mandate should be constrained: the talks could decide matters related to relinquishing Four Power rights and could also consider the shape of German border, but would otherwise be circumscribed.<sup>475</sup> As Table 4.2 illustrates, the security issues that the Soviets might want to address (for example, the relationship of reunified Germany to NATO, the fate of military forces on GDR territory, and the size and shape of the German military) could at best be discussed in the forum. Decisions on these issues, however, would all be made outside of the Two Plus Four.<sup>476</sup> Hence, the more the USSR tried to work through the Two Plus Four process, the more it would be wasting its time and the more United States could advance its interests in other forums. This belies the institutionalist prediction that the Two Plus Four caused the United States to assuage Soviet concerns. Ultimately, American opposition to a broader mandate was such that the U.S. even sought to prevent discussion of the FRG-NATO relationship in the Two Plus Four. As Bush notably told Thatcher in mid-April, “We need to be as clear as we can about the things the Two Plus Four should not decide” such as “Germany’s membership in NATO.”<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> “Points to be Made for Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister Thatcher of the United Kingdom,” no date [content indicates on or before the 24 February meeting with Kohl], Scowcroft Files, 91116, “German Unification (February-March 1990),” GBPL.

<sup>475</sup> At the time, Poland was worried that Germany might try to re-acquire historically German territory ceded to Poland at the end of World War Two. Ensuring that disputes relating to the territorial changes in 1944-1945 would not morph into a row in the new Europe was therefore a hot-button issue. The issue had a bizarre quality to it, however, as Kohl was willing to publicly renounce German claims to Polish territory, the Poles protested a bit too much, and the Americans seemed overly interested in rapidly settling the matter. In retrospect, the debate appears to be related to the Soviet effort to retain a foothold in Europe. If the border issue remained unresolved, then the USSR might be able to play off Polish fears of Germany to entice the Poles into retaining a Soviet military presence on their territory. As odd as it sounds, some Polish officials expressed interest in such a deal (perhaps as a way of pressuring the U.S. and FRG to resolve the matter).

<sup>476</sup> Philip Zelikow to Brent Scowcroft, “The Two Plus Four Agenda,” 12 March 1990, NSC PA Files, Doc. No. 9001938, GBPL. Again, I am indebted to Zachary Roberts for providing this document. See also the State Department papers prepared at this time, especially Roger George to Dennis Ross and Bob Zoellick, “The Two-Plus-Four Tightrope,” 12 March 1990, Rice Files, CF00712, “2+4 Germany #3 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>477</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain,” 13 April 1990. This followed an interagency recommendation that the United States work with the FRG, Britain and France to ensure that “the Soviets do not make a Two-Plus-Four consensus on the security parameters of a united Germany a quid pro quo for agreement to a peace settlement”; B.P. Hall, “Security Issues in the Two-Plus-Four,” 5 April 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [2],” GBPL.

**Table 4.2: The Two Plus Four Mandate: March 1990**<sup>478</sup>

Issue	Role of Two Plus Four Talks
Four Power Rights, including Berlin	Could Decide Issue
Borders	Could Decide Issue
NATO Relationship to GDR Territory	Could Not Address Issue
Soviet Troops in GDR	Could Discuss Issue
Nuclear Weapons in FRG	Could Not Address Issue
Germany Alliance Membership	Could Not Address Issue
Prohibition on German Nuclear/Chemical/Biological Weapons (NBC)	Could Discuss Issue
Size of German Army	Could Not Address Issue
German Forces in GDR Territory	Could Discuss Issue

Also informative are the results of a private meeting between Baker and Shevardnadze the night before the Two Plus Four Ministerial meeting in May. Shevardnadze argued that Two Plus Four should be a “decision-making body” that took its time to address “complex issues” such as the development of pan-European security institutions and arms control. Baker, in response, countered that the U.S. saw the talks as a “steering group” predominately geared towards discussing the security consequences of German reunification; the only topics that could be decided were those related to Four Power rights and borders.<sup>479</sup> At the moment when the Soviets sought to use the Two Plus Four talks in the manner they were ostensibly designed, American policymakers rejected the Soviet effort.<sup>480</sup> However, this was simply the culmination of an American effort to isolate the USSR in place since February. In an apt summary, Policy Planning staffer Harvey Sicherman argued it was better “to call two plus four the ‘two by four’ because it represents in fact a lever to insert a united Germany in NATO *whether the Soviets like it not* [emphasis added].”<sup>481</sup> By the time the USSR agreed to the terms of reunification in July, the USSR had been stymied for half a year in using diplomacy to pursue any other course.

v. *Assessment: Diplomatic Policy*

Overall, American diplomatic policy offers significant evidence in support of Realist Decline Theory. As my theory uniquely predicts, the United States adopted Extreme Predation after coming to the conclusion that the USSR could not defend Eastern Europe following the events of late 1989 and early 1990. It did so by structuring the diplomatic negotiations over German reunification to deny the USSR the opportunity to salvage influence in East Germany while fostering an anti-Soviet coalition that maintained Soviet isolation within the talks. At the same time, the United States rejected repeated Soviet efforts to broaden the mandate of the Two Plus Four discussions in ways conducive to Soviet power and security. Simply put, the United States used the institutions nominally created to reassure and assuage Soviet concerns as an iron glove with which to wield an iron fist. In this, American policymakers remained fixed on the desirability of moving the Soviets out of East Germany and oriented all American diplomatic

<sup>478</sup> Adapted from Zelikow, “Two Plus Four Agenda.”

<sup>479</sup> Baker, *Politics*, 245–246. Also USDel Secretary in Germany to SecState in DC & White House, “Memorandum for the President: My Meeting with Shevardnadze,” 4 May 1990, available online at <http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/CollsSearch.asp>.

<sup>480</sup> Robert Zoellick to Secretary Baker, “Background on Two-Plus-Four for Namibia Meeting,” 16 March 1990, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA.

<sup>481</sup> Sicherman “Our European Strategy.”

efforts to pursue this objective regardless of the costs; Soviet opposition to this goal and the intense means used in the pursuit thereof made not a dent in American strategy. Considering Soviet opposition to Moderate Predation in the fall of 1989 led American strategists to walk back American policy and reassure the Soviets when Soviet opposition spiked, the intense American pursuit of a weaker USSR matches what my theory predicts when the declining pole of a bipolar system holds a weak posture. On balance, Realist Decline Theory provides an apt account of U.S. diplomatic policy.

Conversely, and although the evidence is less clear-cut, the results do not support Democratic Peace Theory. First, American diplomatic policy was predatory rather than supportive. Rather than try to help the USSR and respond to Gorbachev's reforms of the Soviet system, American policy fixed on walking the USSR out of Eastern Europe irrespective of changes to the Soviet domestic system. Second, there is only limited evidence that American strategists paid attention to the state of Soviet domestic politics. Although policymakers occasionally opined that the Two Plus Four process might give Gorbachev a prop to use against domestic critics, this argument appears secondary to hard-headed calculations of U.S. security and military power. Instead, the balance of internal deliberations shows the United States focused on improving American security by undercutting the security position in Europe rather than anything having to do with Soviet domestic politics. This also matches a common-sense counterfactual: if the United States was primarily concerned with protecting Gorbachev against domestic critics and ensuring the success of Soviet reforms, then American policymakers should have avoided preying upon the Soviets and isolating them in the diplomatic process to deprive Gorbachev's critics of ammunition in the first place! As it stands, the outcome of U.S. diplomatic policy and the underlying logic do not match Democratic Peace Theory predictions.

Finally, the results cast serious doubt on institutionalist arguments. As formulated by Ikenberry and others, Institutional Theory predicts the United States should adopt a Moderate Support strategy. Driven by allied pressure and bound to the USSR in the Two Plus Four, the United States is expected to emphasize the desirability of helping meet Soviet security demands while responding to Soviet security concerns raised in the Two Plus Four process; ultimately, the Two Plus Four itself is expected to become a self-fulfilling cycle as the USSR and US use the institution to breed cooperation and support, leading to a mutual stake in the status quo and further rapprochement. As shown above, however, the United States worked to avoid these outcomes. Not only did the possibility of allied pressure drive the United States to structure the Two Plus Four to *avoid* a possible Anglo-Franco-Soviet coalition, but the United States sided with the one ally (West Germany) seeking the most predatory outcome vis-à-vis the USSR. Having done so, American policymakers further worked 1) to block Soviet efforts to use the Two Plus Four as a forum to actually negotiate the security issues surrounding German reunification, and 2) to delay the start of Two Plus Four negotiations so as to weaken the Soviet hand. And where necessary, American strategists emphasized the desirability of channeling security issues outside the Two Plus Four framework to ensure the USSR could not influence the results. Above all, policymakers were willing to sidestep or ignore Soviet opposition to the USSR's isolation even when communicated through the Two Plus Four channel. These are hardly the outcomes one expects if the institutions provided the USSR "voice opportunities" and encouraged the United States to reassure the USSR. Ultimately, neither the outcome nor process of U.S. diplomatic policy accords with Institutional Theory.

D. “You Haven’t Seen a Leveraged Buy-Out Until You See This One”: Extreme Predation and American Military Dominance<sup>482</sup>

i. *Overview*

Aside from the diplomatic process, the United States also ensured that the terms of German reunification offered the Soviet Union no opportunity to salvage their position in Eastern Europe. This process helped establish U.S. military dominance. The preceding discussion highlighted the American effort to insulate the Soviet Union and neuter the Two Plus Four talks to increase the chances that a reunified Germany remained in NATO and the bulk of Europe’s war-making potential fell into the American camp. If, however, Realist Decline Theory is correct, then we should also find that the United States 1) rejected alternate Soviet formulations that might protect Soviet security and power, and 2) expanded the scope of American ambitions as Soviet posture shifted.

This is another hard test of Realist Decline Theory against Institutional Theory in particular. As noted, institutionalist scholars argue that the United States responded to Soviet “voice opportunities” created by the Two Plus Four and adopted positions conducive to the maintenance of Soviet power and security. Although I found little evidence above that the U.S. designed the diplomatic process to give or respond to Soviet voice opportunities, it may still be the case that the United States responded to those Soviet demands that emerged in the negotiations and that this reassured Soviet decision-makers. If so, then we should find evidence that the United States agreed to meet Soviet demands voiced in the Two Plus Four, made concessions to Soviet concerns, and that the U.S. and Soviet bargaining positions converged during the course of the talks. Conversely, if Realist Decline Theory is correct, then we expect to find the United States both refusing to concede to Soviet interests, and increasing American demands now that the United States could not be balanced by the Soviet Union. Finally, if Democratic Peace Theory is accurate, then we should find the United States trying to support the USSR while emphasizing the increasingly democratic nature of the Soviet Union in the process.

ii. *Escalating Means and Ends*

a. Keeping NATO Alive

American leaders came into the discussions over German reunification with one irreducible objective: keep the FRG in NATO. Whether that meant a reunified Germany in NATO or the continued division of the country, this objective remained a constant in American calculations. Thus, just as the State Department proposed in October 1989 that, “our overriding objective is the maintenance of a democratic FRG, firmly tied to the West,” so did the NSC propose in February 1990 that “the principal objective of the United States is a united Germany fully in NATO, subordinating its forces to the integrated NATO military command.”<sup>483</sup> Continued West German fidelity to NATO was the sine qua non of American military policy as Soviet power tottered. Outside of this objective, however, American goals remained ill-defined.<sup>484</sup>

Resolving this ambiguity while protecting the FRG-NATO link was crucial. Because the FRG remained NATO’s linchpin, setting the terms of reunification would affect the American

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<sup>482</sup> The quote is Baker’s in marginalia from Zoellick, “Two Plus Four.”

<sup>483</sup> Seitz, “Future of Germany;” Scowcroft, “Meeting with Kohl.”

<sup>484</sup> Zelikow and Rice note that at the end of January, the United States was still debating “what outcomes for NATO were acceptable?” Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 165. See also Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, “Message to Kohl,” 8 February 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL, and Baker’s comments in the 25 February memcon with Kohl.

military presence in Europe. Bush had already used his State of the Union address to propose lower CFE manpower limits of 195,000 troops each for the U.S. and USSR in an effort to “lock in” the Soviet troop withdrawals from Eastern Europe.<sup>485</sup> This proposal was heavily asymmetric, as Soviet forces would be capped at nearly 360,000 troops below their pre-negotiation level, while U.S. forces would drop by less than 100,000.<sup>486</sup> Because the U.S. proposal also excluded 30,000 U.S. troops in Britain, CFE would give the United States quantitative as well as qualitative superiority in Europe (235,000 U.S. troops, versus 195,000 Soviet).<sup>487</sup>

Much would therefore depend on the terms of reunification. If the U.S. could ensure a reunified Germany remained firmly in NATO with no limits on the NATO military presence in the reunified state, then the United States military edge might be assured. Conversely, if the Soviet pulled the FRG out of NATO or established “some weaker form of association for Germany with NATO,” then the USSR could prevent an outright American victory in the Cold War. As the NSC offered in mid-February, under such conditions, the Soviets “might figure that it would be long before pressures from the Germans and within the U.S. Congress would force the size of the American presence [in Europe] down and eventually out as well.”<sup>488</sup> Ensuring that reunification protected West Germany’s membership in NATO was therefore critical to protecting the looming American military edge. Reflecting the fluid situation, Scowcroft had the NSC detail a range of possible security outcomes from German reunification. As rank ordered from the perspective of U.S. security on 5 February (Table 4.3), these varied from a “neutral/nonaligned/demilitarized Germany” that was out of not just NATO but also the European Commission (EC) (the worst option), to “Germany in NATO” in which “forward defense extends to the Oder-Neisse [i.e., the German-Polish border]” and “U.S. nuclear weapons remain” (the best option).<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Telephone Conversation with President Mitterand of France,” 27 January 1990. For background, see Gates, *From the Shadows*, 486-487.

<sup>486</sup> Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order*, 61-63.

<sup>487</sup> Shevardnadze essentially agreed with Bush’s plan during the 13 February Ottawa Summit; Falkenrath, *Shaping*, 63-64; also “JAB Notes from 2/11-2/13/90 Open Skies Conf., Ottawa, Canada,” Box 108, Folder 14, BP.

<sup>488</sup> Scowcroft, “Six Power Peace Conference.”

<sup>489</sup> Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, “German Unity: Variations on the Theme,” 5 February 1990, Rice Files, CF00716, “German Unification,” GBPL.

**Table 4.3: Rank Ordered Range of Possible German Outcomes, 5 February<sup>490</sup>**

Option	Details
1) Germany in NATO	Forward defense and nuclear weapons remain.
2) Germany in NATO with GDR territory demilitarized	Otherwise as above.
3) Germany in NATO but outside military command (like France) * <sup>491</sup> “Beginning with this scenario, the current structure of transatlantic security begins to change fundamentally.”	Otherwise as above.
4) Germany in NATO but no U.S. nuclear weapons	
a) Current GDR territory militarized	
b) Current GDR territory demilitarized	
5) Germany in NATO, GDR Territory demilitarized, no U.S. forces	Allied conventional forces remain, U.S. nuclear guarantee continues.
6) Germany-U.S. bilateral security arrangements	
a) U.S. and Allied conventional forces remain	Germany out of NATO, no U.S. nuclear weapons, GDR territory demilitarized. Western European Union (WEU) remains.
b) Allied but no U.S. conventional forces remain	
c) No stationed forces	
7) German-French and -British bilateral security arrangements	
a) Stationed French and British conventional forces	No U.S.-German security relationship. WEU remains.
b) No stationed forces	
8) WEU	
a) Stationed French and British conventional forces	
b) No stationed forces	
9) European Defense Force	
a) All CSCE	No WEU.
b) European CSCE (no U.S., USSR, Canada)	
10) Neutral/aligned Germany	Aligned politically but not militarily with West. EC. No WEU. German forces severely constrained.
11) Neutral/nonaligned Germany	German forces severely constrained. EC. No WEU.
12) Neutral/nonaligned/demilitarized Germany	No military forces.

**b. Escalation Begins**

Over the month of February, the United States walked its demands up this menu of options. As Realist Decline Theory predicts, American predation escalated in the absence of a credible Soviet military deterrent. This is striking because at the start of the month, it seemed that the United States would face problems simply preventing the USSR from creating a neutral Germany. At the time, Soviet leaders demanded that a reunified Germany leave NATO, and West German leaders appeared willing to accommodate Soviet interests if it meant the Soviets would back reunification. As such, West German officials floated proposals for a neutral Germany, for the demilitarization of GDR territory following reunification, and even incorporating both the Pact and NATO into “new cooperative security structures.”<sup>491</sup> With domestic pressures mounting, Kohl appeared willing to accept a circumscribed FRG-NATO relationship. To American analysts, it seemed a real possibility that NATO might be weakened

<sup>490</sup> Blackwill, “Variations on the Theme.”

<sup>491</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 174–175.

by Soviet pressure in the course of German reunification. Thus, American officials scrambled to simply protect the FRG-NATO link.<sup>492</sup>

Within one week, however, American escalation began. In a change from the moderately predatory approach in 1989, American officials took the lead in pushing the FRG to ignore Soviet demands for German neutrality post-reunification while blocking plans that might limit reunified Germany's connection to NATO. Considering these plans 1) involved eliminating the cornerstone of Soviet security in Europe, 2) integrating the majority of Europe's war potential into the U.S. alliance system, and 3) that debates over these matters had triggered a series of U.S.-Soviet military crises in the early the Cold War, American efforts are indicative of the extremely predatory nature of U.S. strategy.<sup>493</sup>

This process started following meetings between American and FRG officials on 1-2 February. During these talks, American and German officials agreed on a modified version of a plan initially proposed by FRG Foreign Minister Genscher: German leaders pledged that "the new Germany would remain in NATO," while American leaders agreed that NATO would not expand into the former GDR.<sup>494</sup> All parties might have benefitted from this plan. Germany would reunify, the Soviets would be reassured by de facto keeping their former ally out of NATO military arrangements, and the U.S. would retain a strong connection Europe. In and of itself, this agreement thus seemed to meet the minimum American requirement for a reunification deal as reunified Germany remained in NATO and the military command minus GDR territory survived intact.<sup>495</sup>

With what seemed a viable proposal in hand, Baker left for talks with Soviet leaders on 7-9 February. During these discussions, Baker previewed the FRG-U.S. plan and promised that "there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction [. . .] to the east."<sup>496</sup> It was also possible that, "there will be in de-militarized Eastern part of Germany [sic]" and he could guarantee that, "there would be no NATO forces in the Eastern part of Germany."<sup>497</sup> Gorbachev responded favorably to Baker's proposals, allowing that expansion of the "zone of NATO" would be unacceptable to the USSR.<sup>498</sup> Although Gorbachev refused to agree to the deal at the time, the Baker-Gorbachev meeting seemed to produce a tentative quid pro quo: the Soviets could count on limits to NATO's political and military presence in the former GDR if they agreed to reunification within NATO writ large.<sup>499</sup> A path towards reunification appeared to be within reach.<sup>500</sup>

Almost as soon as the quid pro quo was on the table, however, the nascent deal came under attack. In Washington, the NSC challenged the idea of a de fanged former GDR existing outside NATO. In the NSC's assessment, all of reunified German territory should be in NATO and NATO jurisdiction extend eastward. Otherwise, a sizable portion of reunified Germany

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<sup>492</sup> Scowcroft, "Strategy for Unification."

<sup>493</sup> See again Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*.

<sup>494</sup> SecState, "Baker/Genscher Meeting;" Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 176. For a view that ignores the German concessions, see Elbe, "Diplomatic Path," 37.

<sup>495</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 176-177.

<sup>496</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Meeting w/USSR Pres. Gorbachev & FM Shevardnadze, Moscow, USSR," 9 February 1990, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA.

<sup>497</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Memcon from 2/9/90 meeting w/USSR FM Shevardnadze, Moscow, USSR," 9 February 1990, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, NSA.

<sup>498</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 183.

<sup>499</sup> Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2009): 39. I disagree with Kramer's interpretation of the Baker-Soviet meetings.

<sup>500</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 239-240.



would be militarily denuded and theoretically vulnerable to attack.<sup>501</sup> This represented the first escalation of the American position. Rather than just preserving the FRG link to NATO, the United States now demanded NATO jurisdiction cover the former GDR, and that some kind of NATO military presence exist on GDR territory. Facing NSC pressure, the best that Bush was now willing to offer was an undefined “special military status” for former GDR territory.<sup>502</sup> This change was conveyed to Baker in Moscow, who backed away from his prior position by announcing that, “you will have the GDR as part of [NATO] membership.”<sup>503</sup> Thus, at a time when the USSR still sought to keep Germany outside of NATO, the U.S. now demanded the whole reunified state enter the alliance in some form.<sup>504</sup>

c. American-West German Divergence: The U.S. Escalates, the FRG Follows

Unfortunately, the Baker-NSC debate opened a gap between the American and West German positions. Baker’s departure from Moscow coincided with Kohl’s arrival for talks with the Soviet leadership. Baker sent a letter to Kohl summarizing his initial agreement with Gorbachev before the White House sent Kohl a second letter with the revised, “special military status” offer. With confusion over the American position reigning, Kohl opted to pursue the first (Baker) proposal and promised Gorbachev that, “naturally NATO could not expand its territory to the current territory of the GDR.” As he had with Baker, Gorbachev seemed interested in the idea but would not formally commit. Instead, he asked whether Germany could “perhaps be nonaligned, like India.”<sup>505</sup> Kohl demurred, but left the no-expansion offer on the table.

By late February, therefore, American policymakers found their efforts to keep a reunified Germany in NATO had led to an unfortunate place. The Soviets remained opposed to reunification inside of NATO, seeking instead neutrality or non-alignment. Meanwhile, efforts to entice the Soviets into an agreement by allowing a special status for the GDR threatened to be the first step into loosening the link between Germany and NATO.<sup>506</sup> This was particularly worrisome given the breach in the American and West German positions, as the FRG supported the “no eastward expansion” pledge more amenable to Soviet security and the United States backed the “special military status” formulation that would move the former GDR into NATO.<sup>507</sup> Thus, either the United States would need to back down, meet the FRG position, and reassure the USSR, or it would have to pull the FRG towards its position and confront the USSR together.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> Brent Scowcroft to The President, “Message to Kohl,” 8 February 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>502</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 179-190; Sarotte, 1989, 120-125.

<sup>503</sup> Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 184.

<sup>504</sup> On 30 January, Blackwill forwarded Scowcroft a report arguing that all of Germany should be in NATO, but it took until mid-February for its recommendations to be acted upon; Scowcroft, “Strategy for German Reunification;” Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 418, n25.

<sup>505</sup> Quoted in Sarotte, 1989, 112-113.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>508</sup> Scowcroft, “Meetings with Chancellor Kohl.” It is worth noting that on 21 February, the State Department listed seven issues it believed the Soviet leadership would need before conceding German reunification. None of these affected the core American goal of pushing the Soviets out of Germany, keeping the Americans in the reunified country, and sustaining NATO. These issues were: 1) no NATO forces in the GDR, 2) a transitional period for Soviet troop withdrawals, 3) limits on German forces in the GDR, 4) no German possession of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, 5) resolution of German border issues, 6) reduction in the size of the German army, and 7) the promise of economic cooperation with the FRG. Of these issues, the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh only affected the FRG and would serve American interests (e.g., the U.S. did not want the FRG to acquire nuclear weapons). The second issue was a practical matter as the USSR could not absorb the returning troops too quickly. The first and third issues, meanwhile, would still leave the U.S. in a commanding position in Europe and ensure NATO’s ability

Faced with similar choices in 1989 between taking a more assertive stance against the USSR and moving ahead of German and Soviet leaders, or avoiding positions that might antagonize the USSR, American policymakers erred on the side of caution. Now, however, the United States did the opposite. As Realist Decline Theory predicts, a rising United States confronted with a weak USSR sought to intensely prey on the USSR by enlisting the FRG in the U.S. plan to expand NATO into the GDR irrespective of Soviet concerns. Equally striking, the United States pursued this policy even though other options were available as, aside from the FRG plan, Baker advocated letting Soviet troops stay in East Germany indefinitely as a way of meeting Soviet concerns.<sup>509</sup>

Nevertheless, when Bush met with Kohl on 24-25 February, American officials sought and obtained FRG agreement to a plan that went beyond even the “special military status” proposal.<sup>510</sup> This included 1) “full membership of a unified Germany in NATO, including participation in its military structures,” 2) the continued deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons on German territory, and 3) continued deployment of U.S. conventional forces in Germany.<sup>511</sup> The West Germans also agreed that NATO “jurisdiction” would extend to the former GDR, and that FRG troops would defend GDR territory; these steps killed the Genscher-Baker plan.<sup>512</sup> As for proposals for Soviet forces to remain in the GDR, Kohl and Bush agreed that, “It wouldn't work to have the Soviet group of forces in East Germany remain there indefinitely.” Instead, there would be a “transition” period during which Soviet forces would withdraw.<sup>513</sup> Subsequent discussions refined the deal – notably, U.S. short-range nuclear forces would be reduced, Germany would forego nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons, and the size of the German army would be capped – but the February meeting was the turning point in forging an intensely predatory American-West German front.<sup>514</sup>

Thus, having begun February struggling to keep Germany in NATO, the month ended with American policymakers having garnered German agreement to something just short of the best possible outcome for the United States.<sup>515</sup> Furthermore, and in contrast to Institutional

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to defend the reunified state up to the Polish border. In short, these concessions were not really concessions as they would leave the United States with its first-best option in Germany. I return to these themes below; Zoellick, “Two Plus Four.”

<sup>509</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, “Telephone Conversation with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada,” 24 February 1990.

<sup>510</sup> Scowcroft, “Meetings with Kohl.”

<sup>511</sup> Partial summaries are found in Philip Zelikow to Brent Scowcroft, “Talking Points for Presidential Calls to Foreign Leaders about His Meetings with Chancellor Kohl,” 26 February 1990 and “Points to be Made in Telephone Calls with Foreign Leaders,” Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [2],” GBPL. See also the Memorandums of Conversation with Kohl on 24 and 25 February.

<sup>512</sup> Memcon with Kohl, 25 February.

<sup>513</sup> Memcon with Kohl, 24 February.

<sup>514</sup> Philip Zelikow to Brent Scowcroft, “Options for Handling the Cancellation of the Follow-on-to-Lance Program,” 5 March 1990, Scowcroft Files, 91116, “German Unification (February-March 1990),” GBPL; Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 263; “JAB notes from 4/4/90 mtg. w/FRG FM Genscher @ Dept of State,” Box 108, Folder 16, BP.

<sup>515</sup> There is a good question as to how Kohl and the FRG were signed up to the American agenda so rapidly. Sarotte sees the West Germans as wedded to the American agenda even before the fall of the Wall; former policymakers including Zelikow, Rice, Hutchings, Baker, and Scowcroft see the outcome as the result of artful American diplomacy. Although beyond the scope of this study, I believe the answer has more to do with tacit American coercion. As shown, the United States was the one major player in Europe not opposed to German reunification. Thus, if West Germany hoped to reunify without triggering a major international crisis, West Germany needed to keep the United States happy. By throwing down a series of demands vis-à-vis the USSR, the United States

Theory, American escalation occurred despite Soviet opposition and allied efforts to obtain a more generous deal for the USSR, rather than because of any restraint on the American side. Unlike the months before and immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States took the lead in overturning the European status quo by pushing the GDR's integration into NATO and ensuring U.S. military dominance. Bush's remarks on the new U.S. position are instructive: "The Soviets are not in a position to dictate Germany's relationship with NATO. What worries me is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat."<sup>516</sup>

*iii. Blocking Soviet Counteroffensives*

Once this deal was decided upon, the Soviet Union was unable to alter the American agenda. Here, American behavior contradicts both Institutionalist Theory and Democratic Peace Theory, both of which predict the United States should be sensitive to Soviet opposition to American plans and modify U.S. strategy accordingly. Instead U.S. strategy matches best Realist Decline Theory's expectation that, with the decline of the bipolar rival at hand and the Soviets lacking the military wherewithal to balance, the United States will strive to prevent any effort that helps the Soviet Union protect its position in Eastern Europe while maximizing U.S. power.

Gorbachev challenged the U.S.-FRG strategy beginning a few days after Kohl's departure. In a lengthy phone call, Gorbachev pushed against Bush's claim that a reunified, democratic Germany would not threaten the USSR, arguing, "But then if that is so, if you believe a united Germany would not be a threat -- why do Western countries want to incorporate them into one alliance? If we find that this would negatively effect [sic] the Soviet Union, we would have to think long and hard about it."<sup>517</sup> In response, Bush simply noted that, "we believe a united Germany need not be an aggressive force or threat [. . . reunification in NATO was useful] to guard against uncertainty and instability."<sup>518</sup> With little subsequent movement by the United States to meet Soviet concerns,<sup>519</sup> Shevardnadze took an even more hardline stance in subsequent meetings with Baker. Now, the Soviet Union denounced the idea of a reunified Germany in NATO and called for the creation of a new, pan-European security institution to replace both NATO and the Pact that would presumably allow Soviet forces to remain in Eastern Europe or create a demilitarized Germany.<sup>520</sup> Baker, echoing Bush, remained noncommittal.

Soviet desperation for military and strategic concessions mounted that spring. Soviet domestic politics were polarizing as conservatives and reformers butted heads over the future political and economic system of the Soviet Union itself. In the process, Shevardnadze and Gorbachev came under increasing attack from within the Soviet government; it seemed that the

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essentially told West Germany what it would take to buy American agreement: the United States would support German reunification only under restrictive conditions that, by extension, ensured the United States would continue to dominant German security policy and limited the chance reunified Germany would act as an independent great power. Not coincidentally, this would preclude Germany from challenging future American dominance in Europe. In short, the United States and Germany struck a grand bargain, as the United States would allow Germany to reunify and Germany would sign up to the American security order. Zelikow and Rice (166) are right that "American preferences [could] not be forced on Bonn." However, they could be strongly encouraged.

<sup>516</sup> Memcon with Kohl, 24 February.

<sup>517</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, "Telephone Conversation with President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union," 28 February 1990.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> As noted above, this was the period in which the Soviets tried without success to begin Two Plus Four talks.

<sup>520</sup> USDel Secretary Namibia to SecState, "My Meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze," 20 March 1990, available online at <http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/CollsSearch.asp>; Baker, *Diplomacy*, 235.

Soviet leadership was being forced to adopt increasingly hardline positions as conservatives accused Gorbachev and his colleagues of compromising Soviet security.<sup>521</sup> Yet where similar indications in November-December that American policy was driving the Soviet leadership into a corner led the United States to reassure the USSR, now the United States maintained Extreme Predation. Although Shevardnadze and Gorbachev ended efforts to obtain a non-aligned Germany, repeated Soviet calls for 1) continued Four Power oversight of Germany after reunification, 2) a pan-European peace conference, and 3) Germany's admission to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, elicited no movement in the American position.<sup>522</sup> After one such back and forth in April, Baker recorded his sense of the difficulties created by Soviet domestic politics, noting that "In my three day Ministerial [with Shevardnadze . . .] progress was harder to come by than at previous ministerials." Reflecting skepticism over an improvement, he went on to remark "we've had better! We'll probably have worse."<sup>523</sup> Thus, when the Two Plus Four ministers finally met in early May and Shevardnadze again proposed retaining Four Power rights after German reunification and the creation of a new European security system, the American rejection fit into a broader policy in place that spring.<sup>524</sup> Shevardnadze also hinted at the conservative backlash, warning that "if others [e.g., the U.S.] attempt to put us into a restricted condition in matters of our security, then this will lead to a situation [ . . .] where the degree of our political flexibility is severely limited." Again, American policy did not budge.<sup>525</sup>

iv. *Adding Insult to Injury*

a. The Nine Assurances that Didn't Assure

Having blocked Soviet initiatives, the U.S. and FRG worked to sustain momentum for reunification and to pressure the USSR to recognize it had no option but to concede to Western demands.<sup>526</sup> Along the way, the United States continued to deny concessions to a Soviet Union whose position in Europe was in tatters and domestic scene was fragmenting.<sup>527</sup> This again suggests the extremely predatory nature of U.S. strategy: even with the Soviets beating a rapid retreat from Europe, a relatively rising United States continued to press its advantage.

The endgame began in mid-May. To catalyze Soviet movement towards the American position on Germany, Baker used a visit to Moscow to offer the Soviets "nine assurances" on the future of a reunified Germany in NATO (Table 4.4, left column). Scholars working within the institutionalist tradition see these assurances as "steps that the West would be willing to take to meet Soviet security concerns" that reflected both the U.S. willingness to meet Soviet concerns raised in the Two Plus Four and the American effort to sustain U.S.-Soviet cooperation within the negotiations.<sup>528</sup> In actuality, Baker and the State Department decided on six of the nine assurances as far back as February (tellingly referred to as a "leveraged buy-out" of the Soviet position) *before the Two Plus Four talks had begun*; the other three "assurances" came from

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<sup>521</sup> National Intelligence Council, "Primary Soviet Objectives for the Summit," 24 May 1990, Burns Files, CF01308, "POTUS Meeting with Gorbachev, May 31, 1990 – June 3, 1990 [1]," GBPL; also Bush and Scowcroft *World Transformed*, 275; Baker, "Memorandum for the President" 17 May.

<sup>522</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 244.

<sup>523</sup> "Talking Points on Ministerial For Cabinet Meeting," 9 April 1990, Box 108, Folder 16, BP.

<sup>524</sup> Baker, "My Meeting with Shevardnadze," 5 May 1990; Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 248-249.

<sup>525</sup> "Shevardnadze Intervention at Two-Plus-Four Ministerial, May 5, 1990," Zelikow Files, CF01354, "Files 436, Six Power Conference [1]," GBPL.

<sup>526</sup> As Baker put it, the USSR's concession to the American position was driven foremost by "the reality [that] German unification was imposing itself, and Moscow was being left behind;" Baker, *Diplomacy*, 253-254.

<sup>527</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 274-276.

<sup>528</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 230.

policy deliberations that winter (Table 4.4, right column). Thus, and contrary to institutionalist claims, the assurances did not concede any of the core issues sought by the Soviets that spring related to the future German relationship with NATO.<sup>529</sup> Unsurprisingly, Gorbachev dismissed Baker's effort and insisted that a final settlement "would have to say that Germany would not have the right to remain in NATO."<sup>530</sup>

**Table 4.4: Comparing the Nine Assurances to pre-Two Plus Four Plans**

Nine Assurances, May 1990 <sup>531</sup>	State Department Plan, mid-February (the "Leveraged Buy Out" Plan) <sup>532</sup>
1) Capping German Army size	"Bundeswehr reductions"
2) Accelerating SNF negotiations	<i>[not in State Dept. plan, but raised during Bush-Kohl February meeting]</i> <sup>533</sup>
3) German renunciation of NBC	"No German possession or production" of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons <sup>534</sup>
4) No NATO forces in GDR for transition period	"No NATO forces in the GDR"; "special provisions for German troops in the GDR"
5) Transition period for Soviet withdrawal	"delayed Soviet troop withdrawals from the GDR"
6) Transforming NATO politically	<i>[not in State Dept. plan, but raised by Baker in December; proposed by NSC in January; interagency plans begun in March]</i> <sup>535</sup>
7) Settling German borders	"legally binding commitments on borders"
8) Developing CSCE	<i>[not in State Dept. plan; Baker raised issue in December and January; interagency discussions begun in March]</i> <sup>536</sup>
9) Developing German-Soviet economic relations	"German economic benefits for the Soviets"

Bush therefore did not expect "a breakthrough" with Gorbachev as the Soviet leader visited in late May for the Washington Summit.<sup>537</sup> Though recognizing a positive meeting could boost Gorbachev against his domestic critics, this did not mean the United States would offer the

<sup>529</sup> Sarotte, 1989, 163-164.

<sup>530</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 274.

<sup>531</sup> Summarized from Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 250-251.

<sup>532</sup> Zoellick "Two Plus Four."

<sup>533</sup> Memcon with Kohl, 24 February.

<sup>534</sup> Baker pitched this point to Gorbachev during his 7-9 February visit.

<sup>535</sup> Baker raised the political transformation of NATO in a December 1989 speech; Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 142-143. As far back as 19 January, Blackwill had also argued, "We should get underway as soon as possible a NATO Wise Men's study on the future of the alliance, before events in Europe make such an effort beside the point;" Blackwill, "1990." On plans to "transform" NATO, see the documents enclosed under Reg Bartholomew, "Memorandum for the Thursday Group," 12 March 1990, Wilson Files, CF00293, "NATO - Future [1] [6]," GBPL. Notably, this meeting also took place before the first Two Plus Four Ministerial.

<sup>536</sup> James Baker, "Proposed Agenda for Meeting with the President," 24 January 1990, Box 115, Folder 7, BP; Bartholomew, "Memorandum for the Thursday Group" and attached.

<sup>537</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, "Telephone Call from Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany," 30 May 1990.

Soviets concessions on German reunification.<sup>538</sup> Thus, Bush again rejected a Soviet proposal for German neutrality by arguing, “NATO is the anchor of stability.” Baker’s efforts also went nowhere, as a restatement of the nine assurances led Gorbachev to repeat his own request for dual German membership in NATO and the Pact.<sup>539</sup> Instead, the major change resulting from the May discussions was a *Soviet* concession that reunified Germany had the right to choose its own alliance. This meant that a reunified Germany could choose to join NATO if it wanted and the USSR would not oppose the move.<sup>540</sup> In one swoop, the Soviets conceded the fundamental principle dividing the American and Soviet positions without any corresponding movement on the American side.

b. Denying Economic Aid

The Soviet concession was not just capitulation to American pressure, however. Although Western obstinacy played a role, Gorbachev’s move was also part of an effort to trade security concessions the USSR would likely have to eventually offer for Western economic aid. At the time, the Soviet leadership desperately sought foreign economic assistance to subsidize food imports and to help stabilize a Soviet economy in free-fall.<sup>541</sup> Kohl had previously told Bush the Soviets desired economic aid in return for their concessions on Germany, to which Bush pejoratively replied, “you’ve got deep pockets.”<sup>542</sup> The FRG did, and it provided the USSR substantial aid that winter. Now, Gorbachev looked to the United States to organize international assistance to the USSR as part of the Houston Economic Summit scheduled for early July.<sup>543</sup> In fact, two weeks before Gorbachev’s visit to Washington, Gorbachev sent a message to Bush, alerting him that the USSR would be requesting a \$15-20 billion loan to “tide [the USSR] over” during the transition to a market economy.<sup>544</sup> Therefore, if security issues topped the Soviet agenda, then economic concerns were bubbling just beneath the surface as American officials recognized the USSR sought to trade concessions on Germany for American help on the latter.

Yet despite Gorbachev’s effort to trade guns-for-butter, Bush pocketed the Soviet concessions on NATO without reciprocating economically. This behavior is particularly problematic for Democratic Peace Theory, as the U.S. eschewed steps that would help sustain Soviet liberalizing reforms and support Gorbachev’s political position. Moreover, by pocketing Soviet concessions without replying in kind, it contradicts the notion that democracies bargain in a “spirit of fairness.” However, the policy makes sense in light of Realist Decline Theory. As my argument predicts, the United States had no incentive to trade Soviet security concessions for Western economic assistance, particularly since this aid might be used to help the USSR recover

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<sup>538</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 277-279; Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, “Telephone Call from Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 30 May 1990.

<sup>539</sup> Svetlana Savranskaya and Thomas Blanton, *The Washington/Camp David Summit 1990: From the Secret Soviet, American, and German Files*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 320, Doc. 11, available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB320/>.

<sup>540</sup> Sarotte, *1989*, 167.

<sup>541</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 273, 276-277.

<sup>542</sup> Memcon with Kohl, 24 February; Sarotte, “Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence” discusses FRG aid to the USSR.

<sup>543</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 300. Baker’s notes from the meeting contain an extensive listing of economic issues; “JAB notes from 5/18/90 mtg. w/Pres. Gorbachev, The Kremlin, Moscow,” Box 176, Folder 14; see also NIC, “Primary Soviet Objectives;” Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, “Telephone Call from Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 30 May 1990.

<sup>544</sup> [No author], “Economic Aid for the USSR – The \$20 Billion Question,” 25 May 1990, Burns Files, CF01309, “Chron File: May 1990 - June 1990 [3],” GBPL.

and pose a threat in the future; in pursuing Extreme Predation, American policymakers disregarded anything that might buttress the Soviet position.

Therefore, even as Gorbachev wrote to Bush emphasizing the “rapprochement between East and West” and seeking “to talk about working out long-term agreements on large-scale credit and investment cooperation,” Bush prepared to reject the Soviet proposal.<sup>545</sup> Already in May he told Kohl that the prospect of large-scale aid was unacceptable due to a Soviet crackdown in the Baltics; in July, he argued that Soviet aid to Cuba made American assistance impossible.<sup>546</sup> When the Houston Summit convened, the United States thereby opposed French and German efforts to provide assistance to the Soviet Union. If anything, the United States attempted to use Western economic aid as a lever to further weaken the USSR. As Bush argued during the meeting, decisions on aid to the USSR would be influenced by “Soviet steps to reduce the proportion of their economic output devoted to the military” and “Soviet decisions to provide foreign aid to regimes that consistently act contrary to the objectives to the international community of states.”<sup>547</sup> In effect, the United States escalated again: with the Soviets having conceded on Germany in the hopes of garnering American economic support, Bush upped the ante to make support conditional on the Soviets cutting their military spending and ending assistance to their allies. By the time the Summit concluded, all the Soviets obtained was a promise of “observer” status in international economic organizations such as the IMF, pledges of “technical assistance” to help the USSR transition to a market economy, and the promise of a joint IMF-World Bank study on the state of the Soviet economy.<sup>548</sup>

v. *Endgame*

Having agreed that Germany could join NATO, with hopes of trading guns-for-butter dashed, and with the FRG and GDR moving closer together daily, Gorbachev settled the remaining issues. During a series of bilateral FRG-USSR meetings in July, Gorbachev tried to concede the remaining American and West German demands. A reunified Germany would be a fully sovereign nation and allowed to enter NATO provided there were a three-year transition period for Soviet forces to withdraw, and so long as “NATO military structures” did not extend to former GDR territory. Still, the West Germans pushed back. Rather than a permanent pledge against NATO expansion into the GDR, the FRG insisted this limit would only hold so long as Soviet troops remained; once Soviet forces were out, German forces allocated to NATO could come in and extend NATO defenses to the Polish border. Gorbachev agreed, the deal publicized, and 12 September set for a formal conference in which the Four Powers would relinquish their rights.<sup>549</sup>

Despite the deal, the United States was not done preying. As 12 September approached, NSC members moved to modify the West German-Soviet agreement. Although Gorbachev and

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<sup>545</sup> Translated letter from Gorbachev to Bush in Burns Files, CF01487, “GB-Gorbachev Correspondence [3],” GBPL.

<sup>546</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, “Telephone Call from Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany,” 30 May 1990; Memorandum of Conversation, “Bilateral Meeting with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl,” 9 July 1990.

<sup>547</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “First Main Plenary Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations,” 10 July 1990; “Aid to USSR,” 9 July 1990, Box 109, Folder 3, BP.

<sup>548</sup> Brent Scowcroft, “Points to be made on NATO and Economic Summits at Bipartisan Congressional Leadership Meeting, June [sic] 12, 1990,” 11 July 1990, Scowcroft Files, 91120, “SNF – July 1990,” GBPL.

<sup>549</sup> Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 137-139; Sarotte, *1989*, 177-186. In a testament to the exceptional deal, Rice forwarded the email reporting on the FRG-USSR deal to Scowcroft with the annotation, “Kohl did very well w/Gorbachev on this one [emphasis in original];” White House Situation Room, “Further Kohl Comment on Gorbachev Talks,” 16 July 1990, Gordon Files, CF01646, “[Helmut] Kohl – July 1990,” GBPL.

Kohl agreed FRG forces allocated to NATO could move into the GDR after Soviet troops withdrew, the United States now sought for forces from *any* NATO member to enter former GDR territory.<sup>550</sup> Furthermore, because many American artillery systems and aircraft were “dual use” systems (able to fire either conventional or nuclear rounds) Scowcroft pressed to allow dual-use systems on former East German territory. In return, the United States pledged, as Zelikow and Rice offer, “that they would not move their nuclear weapons east into the former GDR.”<sup>551</sup> With the date of the signing approaching, Soviet officials conceded the issues. The deal was done.<sup>552</sup>

For all the drama surrounding the withdrawal of the USSR from its keystone ally, the signing itself received scant notice. Less than one month after the July meeting between Gorbachev and Kohl settled the terms of German reunification, Iraq invaded Kuwait and touched off the 1990-1991 Gulf War. As the world’s attention turned to the Middle East, events in Europe moved to the backburner. The American focus was therefore elsewhere for the critical months of August 1990 – February 1991 as the Soviet Union, having retrenched from Europe as its relative capabilities declined, began to fragment internally. By the time the United States reengaged with European affairs, Soviet decline affected the internal stability of the USSR itself and compelled another shift in American strategy. I briefly return to this issue in Appendix C.

vi. *Assessment: Military Policy*

American military policy in 1990 again provides strong support for Realist Decline Theory while posing problems for democratic peace and institutionalist arguments. As Realist Decline Theory uniquely predicts, the United States adopted a strategy of Extreme Predation. By integrating a reunified Germany entirely into NATO, the United States ensured the destruction of the Soviet alliance system, guaranteed the United States could keep its military forces in Europe in the post-Cold War environment, and moved all the major military players in Europe (minus the USSR) into the American camp on American terms. In the process, one of the central concerns of the Cold War in Europe – namely, the terms under which Germany could reunify – was resolved entirely in the United States’ favor. As predicted when the USSR held a weak posture, the United States not only embraced the goal of eliminating the threat posed by the only other great power in the system, but used intense means to this end by organizing an anti-Soviet front to ensure the USSR could not obtain a better outcome for itself. Moreover, no Soviet opposition could block American efforts: in contrast to the situation in 1989, American policymakers discounted Soviet opposition when rolling up the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. This shift in the intensity of the means employed is precisely predicted by Realist Decline Theory, and provides strong confirming evidence.

In contrast, Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory do not fare well. On one level, both of the competing arguments predict the United States should have adopted a Moderate Support strategy; this was not the case. More importantly, the causal mechanisms postulated by the arguments were not met. Democratic Peace Theory takes a double hit. On the one hand, concerns that Soviet democratic reforms and Gorbachev’s leadership would be imperiled if the United States did not meet Soviet concerns over the future of Germany simply led American policymakers to continue preying on the USSR. Rather than respond to Soviet

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<sup>550</sup> Sarotte, 1989, 191; Robert Hutchings to Brent Scowcroft, “German Unification: New Problems at End-Game,” 27 August 1990, Hutchings Files, CF01414, “United Germany [2],” GBPL.

<sup>551</sup> Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 356. One can imagine the limited credibility this pledge likely had in Soviet eyes.

<sup>552</sup> Sarotte, 1989, 190-194.



demands and bargain in a “spirit of fairness,” the United States took advantage of Soviet weaknesses and Soviet concessions to sustain intense predation. Equally important, policymakers justified American strategy as a way of ensuring the Soviet Union, *regardless of who led the state or the nature of its regime*, would be unable to challenge American security either now or in the future. Policymakers indeed recognized that Gorbachev’s reforms were fundamentally transforming the Soviet regime – and decided the solution was to shift the strategic balance in the United States’ favor because 1) the reforms left the Soviet Union vulnerable, and 2) subsequent internal changes in the USSR might not leave the USSR as vulnerable. Extreme Predation, in other words, was pursued independent of the nature of the Soviet regime as intense efforts to weaken the USSR remained a constant despite changes in Soviet regime type, the possibility of Soviet reforms sticking, and worries these reforms might not last. On balance, U.S. strategists seem to have decided to pursue Extreme Predation, and then tried to justify the policy by referencing different aspects of the Soviet regime (e.g., its present composition, its future status) as needed.

Institutionalist Theory faces even more problems with the causal process. As noted, institutionalist arguments expect the United States to cooperate and support the Soviet Union due to 1) allied pressure, and 2) the desirability of responding to Soviet “voice opportunities” created by the Two Plus Four. None of these processes emerged. As discussed above, the United States took the lead in pulling its allies along in Extreme Predation. Rather than accept, e.g., West German plans for a reunification scheme that would keep the GDR partially out of NATO, the United States instead pressed the FRG to go along with American plans to integrate all of Germany into NATO and expand NATO military structures eastward. Far from being restrained by its allies, the United States made its allies ancillaries to Extreme Predation. Meanwhile, arguments that the Two Plus Four process bred American support for the USSR fail in multiple dimensions. Not only did the United States repeatedly deny or block Soviet demands communicated both within and outside of the Two Plus Four for a more limited NATO role in reunified Germany, but the terms that the United States were willing to offer (“the Nine Assurances”) were set before the Two Plus Four process even began. It is therefore difficult to claim that the institutions ostensibly used to manage German reunification affected American policy, as there is no evidence that American policy shifted following their establishment or in response to Soviet concerns raised therein. Rather, then United States set predatory goals and decided upon intense means independent of these structures and maintained these ends and means irrespective of Soviet pressure. Baldly stated, institutions had no effect on American military policy vis-à-vis German reunification and the USSR.

#### E. Rationale: Why Kick a Sick Bear?

Yet why, having ended 1989 pursuing Moderate Predation, did the United States adopt Extreme Predation in the winter and spring of 1990? What rationales did policymakers offer for American strategy in this period? Realist Decline Theory proposes that a declining state will be intensely preyed upon by a relatively rising great power in a bipolar environment when the declining state cannot secure its interests. Under these circumstances, the rising state’s goal is to maximize power at the declining state’s expense in order to reduce or eliminate great power threats to its security. Thus, the rising state will both 1) seek unipolarity and an environment free of other great power constraints, while 2) focusing on ensuring today’s weak declining state cannot pose a future threat. We therefore expect American policymakers to argue that U.S. predation is a way of creating security for the United States by hedging against a possible Soviet challenge in the future while incorporating the benefits of dominance in Europe. In the process,

because a weakly postured declining state is unable to defend its interests, the rising state can discount the possibility of security consequences resulting from its predation. Therefore, we also expect U.S. policymakers expressing ambivalence and a lack of concern if and when Soviet leaders oppose American actions.

Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory, on the other hand, make divergent arguments. For Democratic Peace Theory, what matters is the newly democratic nature of the Soviet regime and the sustainability of Gorbachev's reforms. Though the theory predicted a strategy of Moderate Support, its causal processes might still be confirmed if we see U.S. policymakers carefully 1) monitoring the state of Soviet democracy and 2) shaping American policy in response to whether the Soviet leadership seemed responsive to the democratic pressures postulated by democratic peace logic. For Institutionalist Theory, on the other hand, we expect to find evidence of U.S. policymakers arguing that the United States adopted the policies it did in order to 1) accommodate the preferences of NATO allies and 2) respond to Soviet pressures within the Two Plus Four process. Though the theory, like Democratic Peace Theory, predicted Moderate Support, we might still find confirming evidence if American policymakers believed they were taking steps to sustain and deepen institutionalized cooperation with the USSR.

In line with prior tests, the results provide strong support of Realist Decline Theory and relatively little evidence backing democratic peace or institutionalist arguments. Simply put, American policymakers focused primarily on the gains to American security that would accrue from maximizing American power at the Soviet Union's expense. Any effects this effort had on international institutions or Soviet domestic politics was secondary, while the American willingness to respond to regime or institutional pressures was purely ancillary to hard-headed power and security calculations.

*i. Security as Power*

Throughout the winter and spring of 1990, American policymakers saw a distinct possibility that the USSR, although it was weak today, might not be hapless in the future. There were particular concerns that with the Soviets being evicted from Eastern Europe, the Soviet military might begin "throwing its weight around" to influence Soviet foreign policy, or Gorbachev might otherwise "get thrown out" of office. Either situation cause a "real reversal" in Soviet foreign policy as the USSR tried to remilitarize its foreign policy and take a hardline stance against change in Europe by pouring its remaining resources into competing with the United States. Bush "got a glimpse" of what this might look like as opposition to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze mounted in the spring, and the results suggested a possible return of Cold War conditions sometime in the future.<sup>553</sup> The United States therefore needed to establish as dominant of a position as possible for a potential future U.S.-Soviet standoff by moving all of Germany into NATO.

Bush's conversation with British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd in January 1990 is illustrative. As Bush explained, the United States would work to "seize the opportunity to make things better for the world" by taking advantage of "change in Eastern Europe." This required, however, American efforts to remain in Europe since "there could be a reversal in the Soviet Union."<sup>554</sup> This would be problematic because, as Bush elaborated in February "Even if [. . .]

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<sup>553</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Meeting with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada," 11 April 1990. See also the 13 April discussion between Bush and Thatcher and the 19 April discussion with Mitterand.

<sup>554</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Meeting with Douglas Hurd, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom," 29 January 1990. These concern were confirmed in a series of interviews with former officials.

the Soviet Union withdraws all its troops from Eastern Europe, it will still remain far and away the most powerful single military power on the continent, backed by a credible deterrent.”<sup>555</sup> Baker made similar points, rejecting Soviet calls for a demilitarized Germany by telling Shevardnadze, “there is a concern that even if you pull your troops back behind the Soviet border, you will still be a major land power and demilitarization could be a mistake [for the West].”<sup>556</sup> Instead, placing a unified Germany in NATO would help ensure that “U.S. troops in Germany [. . .] backed by a credible deterrent [. . .] continue to preserve the security of the West.”<sup>557</sup> After all, Europe faced a period of “unpredictability” and, as Mulroney offered, “we could be back to where we were three years ago three years from now.” There was a need to “preserve stability” by walking the USSR out of the GDR and moving the entire reunified country fully into NATO.<sup>558</sup> Ultimately, at a time when the United States remained “concerned about the Soviets,” there remained a need to “keep a strong defense” by keeping the FRG in NATO and avoid demilitarizing any part of reunified German territory.<sup>559</sup> Otherwise, there would be a “break” in NATO defenses some future adversary (presumably the USSR) could exploit and create an “unstable situation for [the] future.”<sup>560</sup> Walking NATO into East Germany was a hedge against these risks.<sup>561</sup>

*ii. Seeking Dominance*

The inverse was also true, as American policymakers sought to push the Soviet Union out of Central and Eastern Europe in order to enjoy the benefits of a dominant position in Europe. This corresponds with one of the core process predictions of Realist Decline Theory. Already at the start of February, Rice argued that at a time when the USSR was unable to defend Eastern Europe, conflict between conservatives and liberals in the USSR “argues powerfully for moving forward quickly on resolving German question [. . .] The quicker the new European order is in place, the more effective will be the quarantine of Eastern Europe from the probable collapse of perestroika.”<sup>562</sup> In other words, the United States decided that its security would improve if it eliminated the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe and could thereby inure Europe from a Soviet threat; ironically, the U.S. was interested in doing so even before it was clear whether Gorbachev would remain in power and Soviet reforms stick.

The rest of the NSC and State Department reached similar conclusions. Even after Gorbachev survived the challenge to his leadership and perestroika, Sicherman argued in a memorandum that ultimately reached Baker that, “we can see already the outlines of the new Europe, with Germany inside NATO, a drastically reduced military problem and a revived ‘active buffer’ [i.e., Eastern Europe] between the Germans the Russians.” The memorandum went on to discuss that it was strongly in the U.S. interest to attain these ends by pressuring the USSR vis-à-vis German reunification and engaging the states of Eastern Europe to ensure these

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<sup>555</sup> George Bush, Letter to Kohl, 8 February, Blackwill Files, CF00182, “German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>556</sup> Baker, Memcon, Meeting with Shevardnadze, 9 February.

<sup>557</sup> Bush, Letter to Kohl, 8 February.

<sup>558</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, “Telephone Conversation with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada,” 24 February 1990.

<sup>559</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, “Telephone Conversation with Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom,” 24 February 1990.

<sup>560</sup> “JAB notes from 4/4/90 mtg. w/FRG FM Genschr @ Dept of State,” Box 108, Folder 16, BP.

<sup>561</sup> There were a mix of reasons, but security was among the most important; State Department official, Email Correspondence with Author, April 2013.

<sup>562</sup> Rice, “Showdown in Moscow?”

countries moved outside the Soviet orbit.<sup>563</sup> The same basic logic was reflected in Zoellick's aforementioned report on the Two Plus Four process, noting that the forum was attractive because it gave the Gorbachev "little real control" over the process or outcome of German reunification, while guaranteeing that the Soviets were in the United States' "tent" and subject to American pressure and oversight.<sup>564</sup> And while preparing for the late February meetings with Kohl, Scowcroft pushed Bush to pressure the FRG into accepting "a historic bargain: Kohl's pledge not to alter the form and substance of Germany's security commitments to NATO in exchange for a U.S. promise that the Two Plus Four process will not interfere with German unity." This bargain would help attain the objective of "a united Germany fully in NATO, subordinating its forces to the integrated NATO military command, willing to host American forces, and to maintain U.S. nuclear weapons on its soil" – in other words, a situation of American military dominance.<sup>565</sup> In such an environment, the United States would be able (as Blackwill and Scowcroft had argued a few weeks earlier) "to set the shape and character of a united Germany and of the *future structure of European security* [emphasis added]."<sup>566</sup>

On the other hand, this process needed to be shielded from Soviet interference and attempts to win at the bargaining table what the USSR had failed to obtain otherwise, namely, a reduced American presence in Europe. As noted throughout the preceding, the United States was most concerned that Soviet pressure would lead to an attenuated FRG-NATO relationship. If this occurred, then the United States would forfeit "the prime assets that have made the United States a postwar power and thus have a devastating effect on the U.S. ability to influence Europe in ways that protect our political, commercial, and strategy interests."<sup>567</sup> Compounding the problem were concerns that the combination of Soviet weakness and European fears of a reunified Germany would translate into European support for schemes that would demilitarize or neutralize Germany and pull it out of NATO. Unless the United States asserted itself, the FRG might therefore opt "for a weaker form of NATO association, perhaps withdrawing from the integrated military command." And if this occurred, NATO would be "finished as a viable security institution," American influence over European security would be severely circumscribed, and the Soviets would have managed to undercut American power in Europe despite Soviet weaknesses.<sup>568</sup> Preventing this situation, underlining the fact the United States had "won the Cold War," and blocking Soviet moves to salvage their security position by undercutting American power in Europe was therefore central to the American agenda.<sup>569</sup>

Ultimately, as Bush told Kohl, the United States could not let the Soviets "clutch victory from the jaws of defeat."<sup>570</sup> Sicherman put the logic well in a March memo, averring, "Having agreed at a weak moment to [German reunification], the Soviets subsequently recovered their nerve" and were trying to slow or shape the outcome. "Realistically," however, "the Soviets cannot hope for our (or German) cooperation such schemes unless we blunder or the Germans

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<sup>563</sup> Harvey Sicherman to Dennis Ross and Robert Zoellick, "Our European Strategy: Next Steps," 12 March 1990, Box 176, Folder 14, BP.

<sup>564</sup> Zoellick, "Two Plus Four."

<sup>565</sup> Scowcroft, "Meetings with Kohl."

<sup>566</sup> Scowcroft, "Strategy for German Reunification."

<sup>567</sup> Robert Blackwill to Brent Scowcroft, "The Beginning of the Big Game," 7 February 1990, Blackwill Files, CF00182, "German Reunification 11/89-6/90 [1]," GBPL.

<sup>568</sup> Scowcroft, "Meetings with Kohl;" Scowcroft, "German Peace Conference."

<sup>569</sup> Interview, NSC official, 12 July 2012.

<sup>570</sup> Memcon with Kohl, 24 February.

falter.” So long as the U.S. pressed reunification, the United States would end the Cold War in a dominant position.<sup>571</sup>

iii. *Soviet Military Power: Weak Soviet Posture as American Strategic Opportunity*

But why did the United States not fear the costs of exploiting Soviet weakness? After all, nearly 400,000 Soviet troops remained in East Germany, and as late as November and December, policymakers feared the consequences of a crackdown if the United States preyed upon the USSR too much. Because my argument emphasizes the costs that a rising state may face if a declining state internally balances using the military forces at its disposal, assessing whether the American assessment of the Soviet military threat shifted in this period and how this affected American strategy is a critical test of the internal logic of Realist Decline Theory. If the theory is correct, then the weak Soviet posture in place from January-February should be reflected in American calculations as policymakers discount the prospect of the Soviets actually using force in response to American predation: the prospect of the Soviet use of force should not be seen as credible. In other words, in response to questions such as “why didn't you worry about the security consequences of predation at this time,” we expect policymakers to respond, “because we didn't need to.”

Proving this point is difficult, as it requires policymakers to discuss their lack of concern for a possibility that was unlikely to occur. Nevertheless, policymakers occasionally hinted that they saw few military costs or consequences even if the Soviets opposed American moves. Although imperfect measures of U.S. rationales, two pieces of circumstantial evidence support the argument.

First, as policymakers debated the prospect of taking an extremely predatory stance vis-à-vis the USSR in the winter of 1990, strategists attempted to assess how the Soviets would respond to U.S. predation. Almost unanimously, they came to the conclusion that the Soviets could not oppose American behavior. As noted earlier, Rice offered the earliest reassessment of Soviet posture, concluding in late January that even if the United States accelerated reunification, “the Soviets would not even threaten the Germans. Within six months, if events continue as they are, no one would believe them anyway.” In other words, and as expected, policymakers argued that the United States could speed up reunification because the likelihood of the Soviets using force to forestall this situation was much reduced.<sup>572</sup> A few days later, Blackwill and Hutchings more directly argued that if USSR tried to oppose American plans to accelerate reunification, the United States should respond by reminding “Gorbachev that his troops are being fast pushed out of the region anyway.” The United States, in other words, had no reason to concern itself with Soviet opposition.<sup>573</sup>

By the start of February, Rice went even further than her prior analysis in arguing that because the Soviet Union was “unable to reextend its tentacles into East European [sic],” the United States could move to “quarantine” Eastern Europe from the USSR and help states in the region move out of the Soviet orbit.<sup>574</sup> By the end of February, Bush himself argued that the only way Soviet military forces could remain in the GDR was if the United States “acquiesce[s] in or advocate[s] Soviet troops remaining in Germany.” This would require the United States to pass on its own reunification-within-NATO agenda, something he would not do. In effect, Bush argued that the United States was not going to buttress Soviet power, and the Soviets lacked the

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<sup>571</sup> Sichertman, “European Strategy.”

<sup>572</sup> Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 160.

<sup>573</sup> Hutchings, “Breakfast with Kissinger.”

<sup>574</sup> Rice, “Showdown in Moscow?”

tools to convince the United States to move away from intense predation.<sup>575</sup> In a testament to the sense that the United States need not account for Soviet concerns when Soviet posture was weak, Scowcroft concluded his briefing for the 24-25 West German visit by offering:

In the final analysis, Soviet leverage to influence the fate of Germany is marginal, however much Moscow complains. Stalin and his successors set as their principal goal for European security in the postwar era the fractioning of the FRG's ties to NATO. Adeneauer said no. The West did not give in to Moscow's demands when the Soviets were strong; hopefully Kohl will agree at Camp David that we should certainly not do so now when the Soviet Union is weak.<sup>576</sup>

In short, at a time when Soviet posture was weak, the United States could choose to ignore Soviet demands and concerns as it saw fit.<sup>577</sup>

The second piece of evidence comes from internal American deliberations those times in the spring when the Soviets blustered and threatened consequences if the U.S. did not walk back its reunification policy. Three moments were particularly notable: a Baker-Shevardnadze meeting on 3 April, the first Two Plus Four Ministerial at the start of May, and a meeting between Baker and the Soviet leadership in mid-May.<sup>578</sup> At all three time, Soviet leaders appeared to oppose reunification and took what Blackwill called "very tough" positions.<sup>579</sup> Yet where similar bluster and swaggering in the fall and winter led to American concerns over a possible Soviet crackdown, intervention, or revitalization, now these concerns were absent.

After the 3 April meeting, for example, Baker reflected on the conversation by noting, "On Germany, I again stressed the European stability [. . .] virtually requires a united Germany in NATO. While the Soviets have not yet accepted this position, their position is evolving". Rather than emphasize any costs stemming from Soviet opposition, the American analysis emphasized Soviet movement towards the American position.<sup>580</sup> Similarly, after Shevardnadze railed against reunification under NATO in the Two Plus Four Ministerial and pushed for continued Four Power oversight of Germany post-reunification, Baker reported with equanimity that "the further we get in our discussions [. . .] the more difficult the issues become to resolve." Missing, in other words, was any sense of an impending crisis or need to walk back U.S. positions.<sup>581</sup> And when Gorbachev and Shevardnadze argued for German neutrality in mid-May, in Baker's view, "I felt they [the Soviet leaders] trusted us and the German leadership and oftentimes seemed on the verge of accepting Germany in NATO, only to have their political sense or historical memories pull them back."<sup>582</sup> In sum, even when the USSR vocally opposed U.S. policy, American policymakers either disregarded or never even considered the consequences resulting from Soviet opposition. This dynamic contrasts markedly with the experience in the fall, when U.S. policymakers repeatedly discussed the dangers that would accompany American involvement in Eastern Europe or East Germany. The disappearance of

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<sup>575</sup> Memcon with Mulroney, 24 February.

<sup>576</sup> Scowcroft, "Meetings with Kohl."

<sup>577</sup> Interviews with NSC staff members reinforced this perspective.

<sup>578</sup> Baker, *Diplomacy*, 239-252, and Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 268-276.

<sup>579</sup> Blackwill hand annotation dated 7 May 1990 on "Shevardnadze Intervention at Two-Plus-Four Ministerial," 5 May 1990, Zelikow Files, CF01354, "Six Power Conference [1]," GBPL.

<sup>580</sup> "Talking Points on Ministerial for Cabinet Meeting," 9 April 1990, Box 108, Folder 16, BP.

<sup>581</sup> Baker, *Diplomacy*, 242; also SecState to Amembassy Bonn, "Message to Foreign Minister Genscher," 9 May 1990, available online at <http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/CollsSearch.asp>.

<sup>582</sup> Baker, *Diplomacy*, 252.

such concerns and accompanying recognition that the Soviet Union lacked options to retaliate against the United States matches what my theory predicts American decision-makers should discuss when faced with a weakly postured Soviet Union.

*iv. Assessment: Rationales*

In sum, and although there is not perfect evidence available, the rationales offered for U.S. policy in 1990 track more with what Realist Decline Theory predicts than either of its competitors. First, and as Realist Decline Theory uniquely predicts, American policymakers saw German reunification as an opportunity to gain at the Soviet expense once Soviet posture shifted. At a time of Soviet weakness, American policymakers argued that the U.S. could and should take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Soviet collapse. Here, maximizing power at the Soviet expense was good both as an end unto itself – as a way of incorporating American unipolarity – and as a way of hedging in case of renewed competition with the USSR. Second, American policymakers sought to shield this process from Soviet interference. With the USSR holding a weak posture, only diplomatic negotiations would salvage the Soviet position and prevent the U.S. from enjoying the fruits of Cold War victory. So long as the United States did not “blunder” (as Sicherman put it) and accept Soviet demands, it could significantly circumscribe Soviet threat and be able to dominate Europe freed of other great power constraints. As Realist Decline Theory expects, a rising United States preyed upon a weakly postured USSR as a way of maximizing its own power and hedging against a Soviet return, all while denying the USSR opportunities to salvage its power and security.

Finally, and although the evidence is less voluminous, I argue there is sufficiently strong evidence that the United States took such extensive advantage of the USSR because policymakers actively recognized the USSR could not impose security costs upon the United States. As noted earlier, proving this point is difficult. Nevertheless, the available evidence shows Rice, Hutchings, Blackwill, Scowcroft, and others arguing that with Soviet military forces weak and retrenching, the USSR’s complaints could be ignored or sidestepped; Scowcroft’s argument that the Soviets could not be allowed to claim victory in the German reunification debate at a time when they were being pushed out of Eastern Europe is particularly telling. Likewise, American analyses when the Soviets did try to oppose American predation in the spring suggests virtually no American concern that the Soviets would or could use force in this effort, meaning that unless the United States inadvertently caved at the diplomatic table, Cold War victory would be within reach. This situation is the diametric opposite with the U.S. response in 1989, when similar whiffs of Soviet opprobrium triggered extended debates over how to reassure the USSR and walk back American demands. Overall, I argue this prediction is also confirmed in the case.

In contrast, there is at best limited evidence for democratic peace arguments. On one level, policymakers occasionally spoke as if they worried that the nascent Soviet democracy might be overturned in the near and undoubtedly paid attention to the state of Soviet domestic politics. Moreover, American strategists sometimes argued that the United States should try to make life as easy for Gorbachev as possible in the face of his domestic critics; this was clearest in Zoellick’s argument that the Two Plus Four helped give Gorbachev political cover against his domestic critics. However, the rationales offered for American strategy do not match Democratic Peace Theory more broadly. Specifically, American strategists argued the United States should prey on the USSR rather than support a fellow democracy. More importantly, these arguments did not vary even as Soviet domestic politics changed: strategists argued that the United States should take advantage of a weak Soviet Union because Gorbachev might be

displaced, and they argued the U.S. should take advantage of the USSR even after Gorbachev remained in office because U.S. security would improve. Moreover, despite recognizing that American predation was causing Soviet liberal reformers to face growing criticism at home, policymakers such as Baker and Scowcroft never proposed changing course; the benefits of placing “a united Germany fully in NATO” and ensuring U.S. preponderance in Europe were too stark to give up irrespective of what happened in the Soviet Union. In sum, despite some evidence that American strategists saw advantages to keeping Gorbachev in power and Soviet democracy moving forward, the broader thrust of American policy stressed the advantages of weakening the USSR. I therefore code this as only offering partial evidence in support of democratic peace logic.

Finally, there is virtually no evidence supporting Institutional Theory. The available documentary record not only suggests a hard-headed focus on the advantages of weakening the Soviet Union to ensure American dominance irrespective of Soviet opposition, but a desire to work around allied pressure and available institutions to avoid being tied down by the USSR. Indeed, just as Zoellick praised the Two Plus Four for denying the USSR “real control” over reunification, he also underscored the American intent to sidestep its putatively binding functions, arguing, “Two Plus Four is not an event or a formal negotiation [ . . . ] it is simply ‘a process of incremental consultations.’”<sup>583</sup> This suggests much of American policy was driven by desire to *avoid* being tied down by the Soviets in ways that could limit American predation, a point further suggested by Bush’s argument that the Soviets could not be allowed to “clutch victory from the jaws of defeat” and other NSC analyses in the winter and spring. And, as shown, American policymakers argued the United States could not give in to allied pressure to offer the Soviet Union a relatively better deal than would otherwise be the case because it would limit NATO and constrain the American presence in Europe. In short, rather than being limited by institutions or allied pressure, American policymakers consciously avoided acceding to allied pressure or working through institutions for fear they might prevent or limit American dominance as victory in the Cold War approached.

## V. Summary and Conclusion

### A. Summarizing the Evidence

Overall, American policy in 1990 provides strong evidence for Realist Decline Theory and very limited evidence for its democratic peace and institutionalist competitors. As noted earlier, my argument makes three core predictions about American strategy when faced with a declining USSR in a bipolar system where the USSR state holds a weak military posture. First, and as in 1989, the United States should adopt a predatory strategy. Given the opportunity to maximize power at the declining USSR’s expense, the United States should do so. However, and in contrast to 1989, the United States should pursue an Extremely Predatory strategy in which the United States uses intense means to weaken the USSR. That is, the United States will try to eliminate the USSR as a great power (overturning the European status quo in the process) even if doing so consumes substantial resources and involves political risks to the United States. In the process, signs of Soviet opposition to American policies should have no effect on U.S. policy: given the absence of a Soviet military able to impose costs for American predation, U.S. policymakers have no reason to scale back American objectives. Finally, American policymakers should emphasize the desirability of making gains at the Soviet expense while underscoring the USSR’s lack of political and military options.

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<sup>583</sup> Zoellick, “Two Plus Four.” Underlining is Baker’s.



As noted throughout the chapter, all three predictions are borne out. In the military and diplomatic debates surrounding German reunification, American strategists sought to rollback the Soviet Union. Whether it came to isolating the USSR diplomatically in the Two Plus Four talks or imposing ever-greater demands on the USSR on the military and political terms of German reunification, American policy was designed to undercut Soviet control over its cornerstone ally in Europe. This would have the effect of undermining the Warsaw Pact writ large. Moreover, in the process of killing the USSR's alliance system and walking back Soviet power to the Soviet-Polish border, the United States would be able to establish its own political and military dominance in Europe. By definition, this would give the United States the wherewithal to influence European politics free from the Soviet threat. In seeking German reunification on wholly Western terms, in other words, the United States pursued unipolarity and looked to maximize its relative power by significantly reducing the threat posed by the only other great power in the system.

The inverse is also true. As demonstrated above, policymakers not only refused to countenance a supportive approach to the USSR, but actively looked to prevent other states from adopting policies that 1) would assist the Soviet Union, and 2) could prevent the U.S. from preying on Soviet weaknesses. This is part and parcel with the extremely predatory strategy predicted by my argument: not only did the United States take advantage of every possible sign of Soviet weakness, but it pushed as hard as it could to obtain ever-greater Soviet concessions. In the language of military campaigns, American strategists looked to tear a hole in Soviet lines and exploit the opening by pushing ever harder for German reunification on terms ever-more conducive to American security (and pernicious to the Soviets' own). We thus find American policymakers not just moving the terms under which Germany could reunify further up the menu of options, but we also see policymakers refusing to 1) walk back these demands, despite 2) opposition from the USSR, and 3) coordinating with the FRG and other states in Europe to ensure the Soviet Union would not have opportunities to undermine this policy. Simply put, American policymakers, faced with a militarily weak declining adversary in a bipolar system, rapidly set out a series of maximalist demands that would irrevocably undercut the Soviet Union's strength in Europe, and undertook a series of diplomatic maneuvers that pressured the USSR to accept these demands by denying the USSR alternatives.

Finally, there is strong evidence that the rationales for American policy are in line with Realist Decline Theory. As shown, American policymakers justified preying on the USSR as a way of improving the United States' position at the USSR's expense and building a much stronger U.S. position in Europe. In doing so, policymakers expressly argued this would help the United States confront the USSR if Soviet power revived, while also establishing American dominance in Europe and ending the Cold War on purely American terms. In effect, policymakers recognized maximizing American power at the USSR's expense could bring about unipolarity, and they sought to encourage this outcome. In the process, the available evidence shows U.S. strategists arguing the United States could (and should) pursue this policy because of Soviet military weaknesses. Given the Soviet inability to defend Eastern Europe and threaten to penalize American predation, American decision-makers saw that they had a perhaps-fleeting window of opportunity to gain at the USSR's expense: if, as NSC staff members argued, the Soviet Union opposed American actions, then Gorbachev could just be reminded that his forces were being pushed out of Eastern Europe anyway, and the United States could do near as it pleased. While this strategy still required the United States to structure the diplomatic negotiations in order to prevent the USSR from using diplomacy to challenge American

objectives, American policy did not need to check itself for fear of the security consequences from Soviet opposition.

The competing explanations, on the other hand, receive substantially less support from the case. As before, Democratic Peace Theory receives limited backing from the record of U.S.-Soviet relations in this period. Democratic peace arguments made two core predictions about the case. First, the United States was expected to respond to the increasingly credible reforms in the USSR by adopting a strategy of Moderate Support. Second, it predicted that U.S. policymakers would monitor the state of Soviet reforms and justify the shift in American strategy (compared to that in 1989) by reference to the increasingly liberal USSR. Yet although the case shows American policymakers paid attention to the changes in the Soviet regime, neither the outcome of nor rationale for U.S. strategy in this period match democratic peace expectations. Not only did the United States pursue a strategy of Extreme Predation, but American policymakers expressly did so despite Gorbachev's reforms. The latter development is critical: American strategy remained extremely predatory irrespective of whether Gorbachev's reforms appeared to be taking hold, appeared to be under duress, or anything in between. As noted above, policymakers fixed on Extreme Predation and maintained this policy independent of anything Gorbachev did at home. On the whole, the case provides very limited (almost no) support for Democratic Peace Theory.

The case provides even less evidence for Institutionalist Theory, which fails a strong test: because institutionalist scholars hold up U.S.-Soviet relations in 1990 as the epitome of what binding institutions can do to improve great power politics, we expected to find abundant evidence for the outcome and processes identified by institutionalist arguments. This was not the case. As noted earlier, the theory predicted that the United States would adopt a strategy of Moderate Support, respond to pressure from NATO allies, and work with the USSR through the Two Plus Four process to address Soviet security concerns. None of these predictions were upheld. First, the United States pursued Extreme Predation. Second, it ignored allied efforts to offer the USSR a better deal during the reunification process than American policymakers felt appropriate and instead pressured NATO allies to accept American efforts to offer the USSR no opportunity to salvage any influence in Eastern Europe. Third, the United States structured the institutions nominally intended to manage reunification so as to isolate and block Soviet effort at retaining some control or influence in a reunified Germany. Finally, the United States avoided negotiating in any substantive sense through the same institutions for fear of being pressured to cut the USSR a better deal than the United States could obtain outside institutional forums. Simply put, the United States not only adopted a strategy that is the opposite of what Institutionalist Theory predicts, but transformed the structures that institutionalist theory claims restrained American ambitions into ancillaries to U.S. predation. On balance, Institutionalist Theory fails this test.

#### B. Conclusion

Combined, Chapters Three and Four demonstrated that Realist Decline Theory provides a powerful explanation for rising state strategy towards declining great powers. As shown by American strategy towards the declining Soviet Union in 1989-1990, the United States carefully calculated the costs and benefits of preying on the USSR, concluding that American security would be improved by pushing the USSR from the great power ranks. However, this strategy underwent a major shift between 1989 and 1990. In the first period, the United States used cautious means to weaken the USSR because the robust Soviet military threatened to impose large costs upon the United States if the U.S. preyed too intensely. Conversely, 1990 saw the

United States intensely prey on the USSR as Soviet posture shifted from robust to weak and created a window of opportunity for the United States to make significant power gains without fearing the costs of Soviet internal balancing. Overall, American strategy towards the USSR varied in the manner predicted by my argument, while the processes match what the theory predicts if the combination of system polarity and the declining state's military posture drive rising state behavior.

Having demonstrated that Realist Decline Theory outperforms competing explanations in bipolar systems, the next two chapters test my theory against decline in a multipolar system. I do this by examining American and Soviet strategy towards the declining United Kingdom in 1945-1949. Given change in the United Kingdom's military posture, variation in the type of ruling regime in the different countries, and different degrees to which the states were institutionally bound to one another, the postwar decline of the United Kingdom provides another good venue to test my arguments against competing accounts. The results, as I demonstrate in the following pages, provide additional evidence that Realist Decline Theory is a good explanation for rising state strategy towards declining great powers.

## Chapter Five:

### The Decline of the United Kingdom and Great Powers Relations, Part I:

#### Moderate Support in 1945-1946

##### I. Introduction

The preceding empirical chapters tested Realist Decline Theory against its institutionalist and democratic peace competitors by examining U.S.-Soviet relations during the late Cold War. After examining rising state-declining relations in a bipolar system, I found that Realist Decline Theory offers more explanatory power than alternate explanations. Faced with a declining Soviet Union in a bipolar system, a relatively rising United States preyed on the USSR and increased the degree of predation as the Soviet Union's ability to defend itself faltered. Rather than responding to shifts in Soviet domestic institutions or the influence of institutions, American policymakers fixed their eyes on the security implications of Soviet decline and shaped American policy in response to Soviet military capabilities.

The next two chapters continue testing my argument by evaluating a recent case of multipolar decline, namely, the postwar decline of the United Kingdom from the end of World War Two until Britain finally exited the great power ranks in 1949. To do so, I examine the strategies adopted by the relatively rising United States and, to a lesser extent, Soviet Union. I divide the case into two parts. The current chapter examines American and Soviet pursuit of Moderate Support in 1945-1946, while the following chapter focuses on the American shift to Extreme Support and the Soviet move to Extreme Predation in 1947-1949.

Like the Soviet case, Britain's decline is a good venue for evaluating Realist Decline Theory against alternate explanations. As I show, the United Kingdom's decline led to 1) changes in British military posture even as the United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom 2) differed in their regime type, and 3) were collectively embedded in a series of de facto institutions. Thus, the more we find American and Soviet policy moving in response to changes in British military posture rather than domestic political or institutional factors, the greater confidence we have in my argument. To this end, I derive and test separate predictions from the competing theories against the historical record.

##### A. The Puzzle

The empirical core of this chapter revolves around two historical puzzles coming out of American and Soviet behavior in 1945-1946. First, why did the United States do little to arrest Great Britain's decline at a time when American policymakers worried about possible Soviet domination in Europe and wanted a strong Britain to play a major role in postwar Europe? In other words, why did the United States pursue Moderate Support in 1945-1946? Scholars have long noted that postwar Anglo-American relations were initially fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity.<sup>584</sup> Simply put, the United States wanted a strong Britain, yet by reducing military cooperation, limiting economic assistance, and circumscribing diplomatic support, the United States did little to help Britain arrest its slide. American policies thereby left Britain increasingly unable to fulfill the role desired of it. American strategy was disintegrated: keeping Britain strong enough to balance the USSR required intensive American means to revitalize British fortunes, yet American policy focused on free-riding, buck-passing, and playing for time. What explains the United States' Moderate Support?

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<sup>584</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*; Anderson, *Cold War*.

The second puzzle involves Soviet policy in the immediate postwar period. Conventional wisdom treats the Soviet Union as a predatory state in early Cold War Europe, interested in exploiting British weakness and American disengagement to expand in the postwar power vacuum.<sup>585</sup> New research, however, challenges this perspective. With access to former Eastern bloc archives, recent scholarship increasingly suggests the Soviet Union was cautious and focused more on preserving Soviet gains from the war than on challenging British security and threatening British power. This meant that while the USSR sought to expand in parts of Europe, areas that were known to be central to British security were off limits; as former Soviet Foreign Secretary Maxim Litvinov, in a report prepared at Stalin's request, argued in early 1945, "the maximum sphere of influence for the Soviet Union can be defined as Finland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Slav countries of the Balkans, and also Turkey. The British sphere can certainly embrace Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, and Greece."<sup>586</sup> The USSR, in other words, was willing to leave Britain in control of Western Europe and thereby help preserve it as a European great power. Like the United States, the USSR also adopted a Moderate Support strategy in 1945-1946. I try to explain the source and logic of this behavior.

#### B. Problems with Existing Arguments and Contribution of Realist Decline Theory

Existing theories, as I show below, provide only partial explanations for American and Soviet behavior. With Britain and the United States liberal democracies and the Soviet Union anything but, Democratic Peace Theory expects 1) the United States to support the weakening United Kingdom, because of 2) worries of losing a fellow democracy in a hostile world, while 3) the USSR pursues predation. Although the theory correctly predicts American support, it cannot explain why the Soviet Union also avoided trying to weaken the United Kingdom. Additionally, American policy is far from a slam-dunk in favor of democratic peace arguments as there is significant evidence that joint Anglo-American democracy was of secondary importance to American strategy than hard-headed calculations about the distribution of power.

Institutionalist Theory confronts similar problems. Britain, the United States, and Soviet Union were not embedded as a group in formal, binding international institutions before Britain's decline. That said, there were de facto international institutions that seem to meet the standards used by scholars in other cases. First, Anglo-American wartime cooperation, involving joint economic and military planning with extensive bureaucratic integration, is probably as close any two states have ever found themselves bound to another's fortunes and is a good proxy for binding international institutions. Second, the approaching end of the war saw the United States, United Kingdom, and other states join together to create the Bretton Woods system of international economic institutions to revive and stabilize the global economy; although not focused on security affairs, the resulting International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) may have generated spillover effects by giving the United States a significant stake in Britain's success as a great power.<sup>587</sup> Finally, efforts to institutionalize wartime Anglo-American-Soviet ministerial meetings by creating the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) can be seen as a de facto institution on par with the Two Plus Four talks. Although CFM formed concurrent with Britain's decline and was therefore only

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<sup>585</sup> Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 22–37.

<sup>586</sup> Quoted in Alexei Filitov, "Problems of Post-War Reconstruction in Soviet Foreign Policy Conceptions During World War Two," in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, ed. Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 13.

<sup>587</sup> Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 172–191; G. John Ikenberry, "A World Economy Restored: Expert Consensus and the Anglo-American Postwar Settlement," *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 289–321.

weakly institutionalized, it offered a regular venue for the United States, USSR, and United Kingdom to negotiate diplomatic and military deals. Combined, de facto institutional presence suggests both the United States and USSR should pursue supportive strategies towards the United Kingdom.

As with Democratic Peace Theory, these predictions match the outcome of the case but miss much of the process. As I show below, American strategy was supportive despite American efforts to end or circumvent wartime Anglo-American integration, while American calculations had little to do with the benefits of sustaining Britain's role in extant institutions. The same is true for the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union adopted Moderate Support, it did so despite Soviet efforts to work around ad hoc institutions and for strategic reasons that had little to do with the desirability of sustaining Britain's institutional presence. Ultimately, Institutional Theory is at best an incomplete explanation.

In contrast, Realist Decline Theory provides a powerful tool to understand the case. As I show below, Britain declined in 1945-1946 while holding a robust military posture. Not only were British forces occupying Germany, but other troops were present in Greece, Italy, and Austria, and the Royal Air Force (RAF) maintained a strong bomber and fighter force in and around Europe. The combination of multipolar decline and Britain's robust posture left American and Soviet policymakers facing difficult decisions. First, there were downsides to preying on the United Kingdom as 1) Britain might internally balance (especially vis-à-vis the USSR), 2) one of the other great powers came to Britain's aid, and/or 3) Britain was lost as a future ally. At the same time, support was attractive as a way of 1) avoiding British balancing, 2) "bidding" for British friendship, and 3) avoiding pushing Great Britain into alignment with another major actor. Still, Britain's robust posture gave the United States and Soviet Union pause before acting on incentives for support. For the United States, Britain's robust posture meant the UK might entrap it into a war with the Soviet Union. For the Soviet Union, Britain's robust posture threatened Soviet security, while raising the risk that a misunderstanding between the two states might escalate; until the threat were reduced, the USSR had no reason to work too hard for British friendship and some reason to see how Britain's fortunes played out. In both cases, Moderate Support emerged as both great powers tried to preserve the United Kingdom as a possible ally and avoid costly balancing while avoiding intense means to these ends because of Britain's robust capabilities.

### C. Contribution of the Argument

The argument advanced in the next two chapters stands on its own as a contribution to Cold War historiography. On one level, there is an extensive literature examining Anglo-American relations during and immediately after the Second World War. This scholarship, however, tends to focus on economic relations between the United States and Britain, particularly emphasizing efforts to create a multilateral trading and financial system for the postwar world; military and security issues receive second billing.<sup>588</sup> In contrast, a second literature on the origins of Soviet-American rivalry is more focused on the security dynamics of

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<sup>588</sup> Randall Woods, *A Changing of the Guard: Anglo-American Relations, 1941-1946* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Richard N. Gardner, *Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy: Anglo-American Collaboration in the Reconstruction of Multilateral Trade* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1956); Ikenberry, "A World Economy Restored"; Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Gerard Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (April 1, 1982): 379-415.

the postwar system.<sup>589</sup> This work, however, only tangentially examines American and Soviet expectations surrounding Britain's role in postwar Europe and how changing expectations of the structure of the European system affected American and Soviet behavior. Both literatures, meanwhile, have struggled with only limited insight into Soviet strategic calculations.<sup>590</sup> This is understandable as Soviet records were unavailable until recently, but a burgeoning literature has made significant progress assessing Soviet strategy.<sup>591</sup> Yet because scholars are still grappling with the what of Soviet policy, Soviet policy has yet to be compared to and assessed in light of what we know of American strategy and the changing distribution of power. Collectively, existing research provides important insights into American and Soviet policy, but there remains the need to compare these behaviors in light of Britain's changing fortunes.

The two chapters addressing Britain's decline help fill this empirical hole. Drawing from secondary sources, memoirs, and American and British primary documents, I attempt to show that American and Soviet strategic calculations were similar immediately after the war when it came to managing Britain's role in the postwar distribution of power. Both states emphasized the security benefits that would come from a strong Britain while recognizing the substantial risks from weakening Britain any further. Although American and Soviet strategists had different reasons for this behavior, the effect was the same: both rising states were more alike in a core aspect of their foreign policies than is often realized. In turn, finding that both states were broadly supportive of the existing distribution of power in Europe poses problems for the post-revisionist synthesis on the origins of the Cold War. Rather than seeing wartime cooperation between the U.S., Britain, and USSR ending because of "Stalin's insistence on equating security with territory," my analysis suggests the Cold War was more the result of a security dilemma and spirals of insecurity.<sup>592</sup> Both the United States and USSR could accept multipolar Europe, but neither could tolerate the threat the other seemed to pose to the stability of this system. With Britain weakening, the United States feared losing Britain as an ally and bulwark against the USSR; the Soviet Union worried a weakening Britain would turn to the United States and an Anglo-American alliance isolate and threaten Soviet security. Ultimately, efforts to prevent these developments led to miscalculations, misperception, and spirals that helped spur the Cold War standoff as Britain fell down and from the great power ranks.

#### D. Outline of Chapter

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<sup>589</sup> Gaddis, *We Now Know*; John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>590</sup> David Reynolds, "The Origins of the Cold War: The European Dimension, 1944-1951," *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 2 (June 1985): 497-515; David Reynolds, "The 'Big Three' and the Division of Europe, 1945-48," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 1, no. 2 (1990): 111-136; For a partial exception, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 15-25.

<sup>591</sup> Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943 to 1956* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Vladimir O. Pechatnov, *The Big Three After World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking About Post-War Relations with the United States and Great Britain*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper 13, May 1995; Vladimir O. Pechatnov, "The Soviet Union and the World, 1944-1953," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1: Origins, 1945-1962*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, Cambridge Histories Online (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 90-11; Parrish, "USSR and Security Dilemma"; Filitov, "Problems"; Geoffrey Roberts, "Litvinov's Lost Peace, 1941-1946," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 23-54.

<sup>592</sup> Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 15.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds in six parts. Following the Introduction, I describe Britain's decline in the mid-1940s and present evidence that American and Soviet strategists recognized the trend. Next, I code the polarity of the system and British military posture in order to generate predictions from Realist Decline Theory. With these in hand, I then code the variables for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory and delineate a series of competing predictions. I subsequently test the various predictions against American policy in 1945-1946, before doing the same for Soviet strategy; along the way, I weigh and assess the evidence. Finally, I summarize the results and preview the following chapter.

## II. Identifying British Decline

Identifying the sources of Britain's decline is an academic cottage industry. Depending on one's definition of decline, scholars see British decline beginning in the mid-1800s, the late-1800s, the early 1900s, the interwar period, and various points after World War Two.<sup>593</sup> In fact, seeking a definitive start to Britain's decline is a chimera. Because power is relative, Britain's fortunes hinged on the success and failure of its peers. And because Europe was convulsed by conflicts through the middle of the twentieth century that saw some great powers victorious and others defeated, British relative power fluctuated. Thus, the country experienced several declines as well as several relative rises.

This chapter looks at Britain's relative decline immediately after World War Two. In my assessment, Britain's postwar decline marked the end of the United Kingdom as a great power. If the 1956 Suez Crisis, which many scholars see as the embodiment of the United Kingdom's fall from the great powers, emphasized Britain's losses since the interwar period, the power shift itself occurred in 1945-1949.<sup>594</sup> As I show, not only did British capabilities quickly wane in this period, but British security became hostage to the policies of the United States and Soviet Union.

Britain's fall was the immediate result of the Second World War. After holding roughly twenty percent of overall great power capabilities in the interwar period, Britain lost ground during and after the conflict (Graph 1). I focus on the postwar period for three reasons. First, the need to defeat Germany and Japan obscured Britain's growing problems during the war. Second, and relatedly, the drive for victory prevented the United States and USSR from focusing on the consequences of the changing distribution of power. Finally, and as the statistics outlined below show, Britain punched above its material weight in the conflict, producing a sizable proportion of allied material and supplying a large percentage of combat forces even after it approached economic and military exhaustion. This willingness to go the extra strategic mile boosted the sense of British power in the eyes of Soviet and American officials. As William Fox, who coined the term "super-power" in 1944 and included the United Kingdom in his original list, later explained, Britain's "leadership in the first years of the war - the years of United States neutrality, military weakness, and political immobilization - made it hard [. . .] to assign a lower postwar status to a gallant and fully mobilized Britain than to Johnny-come-lately United

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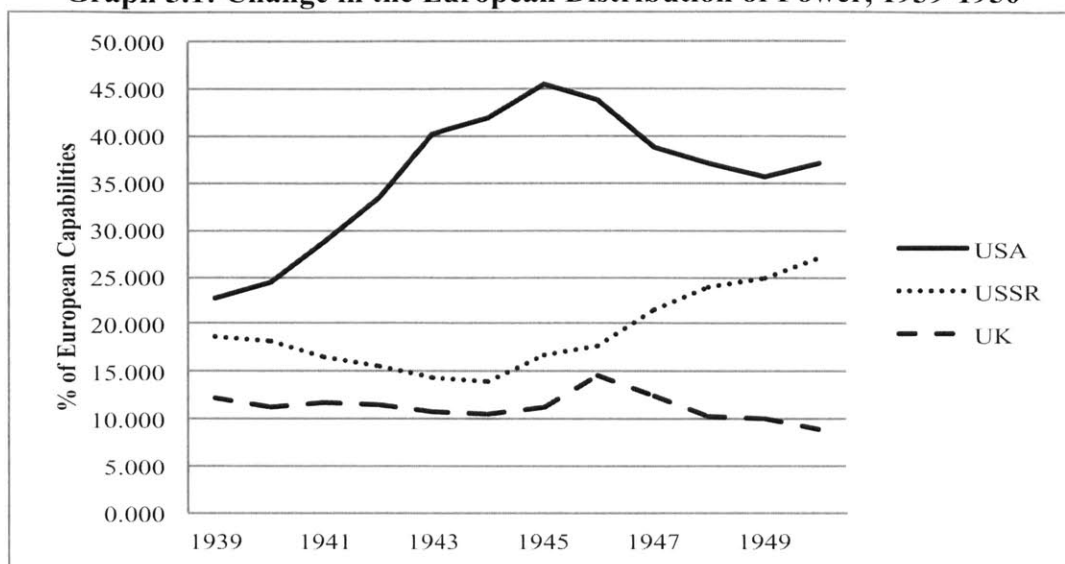
<sup>593</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*; Donald Cameron Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John Gooch, "The Weary Titan: Strategy and Policy in Great Britain, 1890-1918," in *The Making of Strategy*, ed. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Bernstein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); David Reynolds, "From World War to Cold War: The Wartime Alliance and Post-War Transitions, 1941-1947," *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 1 (March 2002): 212-213.

<sup>594</sup> For a review, see Kyle Elliot Haynes, "Decline and Devolution: The Sources of Strategic Military Retrenchment" (Ph.D., University of Virginia, 2012).



States.”<sup>595</sup> It was only after “the smoke of battle had cleared away,” that “it became obvious that only two powers were according each other first-ranking status.”<sup>596</sup>

**Graph 5.1: Change in the European Distribution of Power, 1939-1950**



Two factors drove Britain’s postwar decline. First, the conflict left Britain worse off than before the war in absolute terms.<sup>597</sup> As Hathaway argues, “having begun the war with a net creditor position of approximately £3500 million [approximately \$14 billion], Britain would end it as a debtor with liabilities of roughly £2000 million.”<sup>598</sup> To finance the debt while repairing converting the economy to a peacetime footing, Britain needed to raise revenue.<sup>599</sup> However, there were few options to obtain the necessary funds. Income from foreign investments fell as \$4.5 billion of overseas holdings were sold to finance the war.<sup>600</sup> British exports were only one-third the prewar volume and unlikely to recover in the near future as there was no money to pay for raw materials.<sup>601</sup> Moreover, even if goods could be produced, selling them abroad was problematic: few of Britain’s prewar trading partners could afford to buy British goods due to their own bankruptcy, while the United States could be supplied from U.S. sources.<sup>602</sup> At a time when exports needed to grow by fifty percent simply to pay for the prewar level of imports,

<sup>595</sup> William T.R. Fox, “The Superpowers Then and Now,” *International Journal* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 421; also William T.R. Fox, *The Super-powers: The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union* (New York: Harcourt, 1944).

<sup>596</sup> Fox, “The Superpowers Then and Now,” 417.

<sup>597</sup> William Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-2002* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 48.

<sup>598</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 25. British GDP was approximately £9.9 billion, or \$40 billion. British GDP from Bank of England, “The Centuries of Data,” <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/other/monetary/mpreadinglistf.aspx> (accessed April 2013).

<sup>599</sup> Alec Cairncross, *Years of Recovery: British Economic Policy 1945-51* (London: Methuen, 1985), 6–8.

<sup>600</sup> Author’s calculation from Ritchie Ovendale, *The English Speaking Alliance* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 18.

<sup>601</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 27.

<sup>602</sup> Ovendale, *Alliance*, 18.

Britain's prospects were bleak.<sup>603</sup> In short, Britain ended the war virtually bankrupt. Without economic revival, the country would have to limit spending to avoid economic collapse.

Second, the war stimulated the growth of American and Soviet capabilities. These changes forced a weakened Britain to confront growing international competitors. The United States emerged from the war in a dominant economic position. Already wealthier than the United Kingdom in 1939, the American economy nearly doubled during the war, even as the United States emerged as the world's largest creditor.<sup>604</sup> American industrial capacity also surged. Although the country only entered the war late in 1941, it produced more than three times the number of tanks and twice as many combat aircraft as the U.K.<sup>605</sup> Meanwhile, the American military grew to nearly twelve million soldiers and sailors by 1945, versus just over five million for Britain, surpassed Britain to become the premier naval power (Table 5.1), and ended the war as the only state with nuclear weapons.<sup>606</sup> If Britain after the war was weaker than when conflict began, the United States emerged stronger in both absolute and relative terms.

**Table 5.1: Naval Strength of the Great Powers (Total Combat Ships)<sup>607</sup>**

Year	UK	US	USSR
1938	286	348	176
1945	388	694	312

The war likewise sped development of Soviet capabilities.<sup>608</sup> Admittedly, the war devastated much of the USSR following the June 1941 German invasion. Precise wartime figures are unavailable, but scholars agree that war left the Soviet Union poorer and facing a daunting recovery.<sup>609</sup> However, aggregate wealth belies the wartime surge in capabilities.<sup>610</sup> Despite, for instance, losing much of its territory and population in the German attack, Soviet iron and steel

<sup>603</sup> John Maynard Keynes, "Our Overseas Financial Prospects," in Rohan Butler and M.E. Pelly, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 1, Volume 1: Conference at Potsdam, July-August* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1984), 27–37. (hereafter *DBPO* 1:1)

<sup>604</sup> R. Elberton Smith, *United States Army in World War II: The Army and Economic Organization* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Dept. of the Army, 1959), 1–7; Irving Brinton Holly, *United States Army in World War: Buying Aircraft: Material Procurement for the Army Air Forces* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Dept. of the Army, 1962), 555.

<sup>605</sup> Mark Harrison, "The Economics of World War II: An Overview," Working Paper (University of Warwick, 1998), 29, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/academic/harrison/public/ww2overview1998.pdf>; S. N. Broadberry, "Comparative Productivity Levels in Manufacturing Since the Industrial Revolution," *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 6, no. 1 (1995): 75.

<sup>606</sup> For overviews of American military performance in World War Two, see Kent Roberts Greenfield, *United States Army in World War II: The Organization of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Dept. of the Army, 1947); Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1963); Harrison, "Overview," 29.

<sup>607</sup> Totals include aircraft carriers (minus escort carriers), battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. Totals taken from M. Epstein, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook, 1939* (London: Macmillan, 1939), 46–50, 502, 1291.; M. Epstein, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook, 1946* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 52–55, 512, 1222. British totals exclude Dominion forces.

<sup>608</sup> Mark Harrison, "Resource Mobilization for World War II: The U.S.A., U.K., U.S.S.R., and Germany, 1938–1945," *Economic History Review* 41, no. 2 (May 1988): 184, 186.

<sup>609</sup> Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy*, 21–25; V. M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 2–4.

<sup>610</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 362–363.

production remained close to prewar levels during the conflict.<sup>611</sup> More tellingly, Soviet industrial potential was double the prewar figure by 1953, meaning the country emerged from the war strong enough to make good wartime damage and continue growing. In contrast, British industrial capacity grew by less than 50 percent.<sup>612</sup> Armaments production tells a similar story. By the end of the war, the USSR had produced more than twice as many tanks as the United Kingdom, twenty five percent more artillery pieces, and twenty percent more combat aircraft.<sup>613</sup> And before hostilities ended, the Soviet military had more than twice as many men under arms as Britain and developed sufficient military acumen to defeat the German Army (a task that had eluded Britain throughout the war).<sup>614</sup> Because the Soviet defeat of Germany also led to the projection of Soviet power into Central Europe, Victory in Europe Day left the United Kingdom facing a militarily dominant and economically surging Soviet Union.

British policymakers recognized the change in their country's fortunes.<sup>615</sup> Given the growth of British competitors and Britain's own problems, British officials from Churchill downward increasingly wondered "How could the British Commonwealth, as the third of the three Great Powers, match the power and influence which would be wielded after the war by Russia and the United States?"<sup>616</sup> Britain, the Foreign Office concluded, was "numerically the weakest and geographically the smaller of the three great powers." It therefore needed to increase its strength "not only diplomatically, but also [in] the economic and military spheres" to protect its interests and security in the postwar world.<sup>617</sup> Otherwise, Britain would become, in the words of one senior official, "Lepidus in the triumvirate with Mark Antony and Augustus."<sup>618</sup>

American and Soviet officials also recognized the change. As early as 1944, American strategists concluded that "the British Empire will emerge from the war having lost ground both economically and militarily [ . . . ] as a military power, the British Empire [ . . . ] will be in a lower category than the United States or Russia."<sup>619</sup> Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy underscored the point, telling Secretary of State Cordell Hull that, "several developments have combined to lessen [Britain's] relative military and economic strength and gravely impair, if not preclude, her ability to offer effective military opposition to Russia on the continent."<sup>620</sup> Soviet officials reached similar findings. Early Soviet planning for the postwar world, for instance, assumed that Britain would emerge from the war "impoverished and weakened."<sup>621</sup> Elaborating on the point in 1944-1945, former Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov that "The current war will result in a great disturbance of not only the European but the global balance of power, which will

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<sup>611</sup> Author's comparison of Soviet iron and steel production in 1940 to production in 1944 (the last full year of the war), from Correlates of War NMC Database.

<sup>612</sup> Paul Bairoch, "International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980," *Journal of European Economic History* 11 (Fall 1982): 299.

<sup>613</sup> Harrison, "Overview," 30.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>615</sup> Ovendale, *Alliance*, 6; Anderson, *Cold War*, chap. 2-3.

<sup>616</sup> Cabinet Office, "Review of the World Situation," 3 April 1945, CAB 65/50/2, National Archives (hereafter NA).

<sup>617</sup> Orme Sargent, "Stocktaking After VE-Day," 11 July 1945, *DBPO 1:1*, 182. Also Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 3-45.

<sup>618</sup> Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Orme Sargent, quoted in Anderson, *Cold War*, 84.

<sup>619</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944: Volume I, General* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 702, hereafter FRUS; also Woods, *Changing*, 256-257.

<sup>620</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Conference at Malta and Yalta* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1955), 265.

<sup>621</sup> Quoted in Pechatnov, *Big Three*, 5.

especially affect England” due particularly to surging American capabilities.<sup>622</sup> Simply put, the United Kingdom ended the war as a great power, but a weakening one.

### III. Realist Decline Theory: Coding the Independent Variables and Predictions

#### A. Balance of Power: Multipolar

Despite British weaknesses, Europe was a multipolar system following the war. Britain might be declining, but it was not dead and could still mobilize extensive resources that exceeded those of most other European actors. With Germany conquered and France recovering from wartime occupation, only the United Kingdom, United States, and Soviet Union had the necessary political, economic, and military organization to affect each-other’s security.

This argument differs from standard structural accounts depicting postwar Europe as a bipolar contest dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Although historians often note that the postwar world saw Britain playing a major role in European affairs, political scientists tend to gloss over significant British capabilities in the immediate postwar period that made Europe multipolar.<sup>623</sup> Waltz, for example, characterizes the postwar period as a bipolar system, while Ikenberry’s analysis of the post-1945 peace settlement focuses on the United States’ use of its “overwhelming” resources to integrate most of Western Europe into the American security order.<sup>624</sup> Yet although multipolarity quickly gave way to bipolarity, these works overstate the case. As Fox noted at the time, Britain still qualified as a great power: not only did Britain have capabilities developed before and during the Second World War, but Soviet wartime losses and the United States’ decision to 1) demobilize after 1945, and 2) divide its resources between Europe and Asia, left the European distribution of power less starkly weighted in the Soviet and American favor than often appreciated.<sup>625</sup> Recent work by Avey suggests the point, arguing that, “British capabilities alone approached Soviet capabilities immediately after the war.”<sup>626</sup> Although a bipolar system eventually developed, it did so only after Britain fell from the great power ranks.

Because Soviet GDP figures in this period are unreliable, I identify the European great powers beginning with the Correlates of War (COW) Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC). Because CINC scores are reported for all states in the international system, I modified the source data to derive just the relative capability shares held by independent states in Europe plus the United States.<sup>627</sup> Furthermore, although I begin the discussion of U.S. and Soviet policy from 1945, I am only able to code Britain’s decline from 1946 onward: because 1945 saw military demobilizations and industrial policies change as the war ended, the CINC scores for 1945 are imprecise. Given additional qualitative evidence of Britain’s relative losses once the

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<sup>622</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 12; also Roberts, “Lost Peace,” 40–45.

<sup>623</sup> Anthony Adamthwaite, “Britain and the World, 1945-1949: The View from the Foreign Office,” in *Power in Europe? Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany in a Postwar World, 1945-1950* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 9–25; Reynolds, “Division of Europe”; Jan Melissen and Bert Zeeman, “Britain and Western Europe, 1945-51: Opportunities Lost?,” *International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 81–95.

<sup>624</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1st ed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Ikenberry, *After Victory*, chap. 6; also Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, chap. 7.

<sup>625</sup> Fox, *The Super-powers*; for a sense of the American division of labor and demobilization, see John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, Department of the Army, 1952), 265–280, 301.

<sup>626</sup> Avey, “Confronting Soviet Power,” 159–164; Wohlforth, *Elusive Balance*, 65.

<sup>627</sup> I emphasize independent states: because Germany and Austria were occupied and could not play an independent role in great power politics, I exclude their capabilities from the calculation.

United States and USSR entered the war, I believe this is a minor issue and does not affect the results. In what follows, I use the European CINC scores as a baseline, before adding in additional metrics.

The CINC scores suggest the United States, the USSR, and the United Kingdom qualified as great powers after the war, as they held 1) at least ten percent of European aggregate capabilities, and 2) at least one-fourth the aggregate capabilities of the strongest state in the system (here, the United States). Table 5.2 shows the results. By 1946, the United States held approximately forty-four percent of all capabilities in Europe against eighteen percent for the Soviet Union and fifteen percent for the United Kingdom. Although Britain was the weakest of the three, it was nearly as strong as the Soviet Union and roughly one-third the size of the United States solely on points. Focusing on ratios of capabilities and comparing the United Kingdom to other states in Europe reinforces the point. While Britain was only one-third the size of the United States, it held nearly four times the capabilities of France and five times those of Italy. Thus, not only was Britain in a different league than the other states in Europe, but not even an alliance among the remaining states (excluding the United States and Soviet Union) could match British capabilities. Britain may not have been able to bring the same resources to bear as the USSR and U.S. in all circumstances, but it remained a major player.

**Table 5.2: Identifying the European Great Powers, 1946**

Great Powers			Other States (for illustration)		
State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)	State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)
USA	43.8	100	France	4.4	17.4
USSR	17.7	40.4	Italy	3.1	7.1
UK	14.7	33.6			

Economic and military figures from the war also suggest Europe's multipolar nature. Because war helps reveal the true distribution of power, focusing on statistics from an all-out conflict such as World War Two provides additional information about relative capabilities in the immediate postwar world. At the height of the war in 1943-1944, for instance, the United States spent approximately \$76 billion on combat munitions (e.g., tanks, small arms, ships, aircraft), the Soviet Union \$30 billion, and Britain approximately \$22 billion (Table 5.3). These figures produce nearly the same distribution of power as the CINC scores, with the United Kingdom holding approximately three-quarters the resources as the USSR and between one-fourth and one-third those of the United States.<sup>628</sup> Similarly, British aircraft production in 1943-1944 totaled approximately one-third the American and two-thirds the Soviet totals. In combat, meanwhile, Britain contributed approximately one-fourth the number of combat divisions as the United States (11 vs. 41) in northwest Europe by mid-1944, a majority of the amphibious equipment used to invade France<sup>629</sup>, and approximately one-third of all military personnel in the

<sup>628</sup> Including German production, Britain produced approximately fifteen percent of all combat munitions. For an overview of British production and mobilization during the war, see Central Statistical Office, *Fighting with Figures* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1995).

<sup>629</sup> Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *United States Army in World War II: Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Dept. of the Army, 1968), 214, 329, 837; Charles B.

Anglo-American forces on the continent in the 1944-1945 campaigns.<sup>630</sup>

**Table 5.3: Value of Combat Munitions (billions 1944 \$)<sup>631</sup>**

Year	UK	US	USSR
1942	9	20	11.5
1943	11	38	14
1944	11	42	16

**Table 5.4: Aircraft Production (in 1000s)<sup>632</sup>**

Year	UK	US	USSR
1939	7.9	5.9	10.3
1940	15	12.8	10.6
1941	20	26.2	15.7
1942	23.7	47.8	25.4
1943	26.2	85.9	34.9
1944	26.5	96.3	40.3
1945	12.1	49.8	20.9

**Table 5.5: Wartime Tank and Self-Propelled Gun Production (in 1000s)<sup>633</sup>**

Year	UK	US	USSR
1939	0.3	.	.
1940	1.4	.	.
1941	4.8	0.9	4.8
1942	8.6	27	24.4
1943	7.5	38.5	24.1
1944	4.6	20.5	29
1945	2.1	12.6	20.5

**Table 5.6: Combat Forces in Europe, 1944-1945<sup>634</sup>**

Date	Military Personnel in Europe		UK Forces as % of Total
	United States	United Kingdom	
October 31, 1944	1,401,165	771,267	37
May 31, 1945	2,639,377	907,553	26

MacDonald, *United States Army in World War II: The Last Offensive* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Dept. of the Army, 1973), 297.

<sup>630</sup> Forrest C. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II: The Supreme Command* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Dept. of the Army, 1954), 542-543, Tables 7, 9.

<sup>631</sup> Raymond W. Goldsmith, "The Power of Victory: Munitions Output in World War II," *Military Affairs* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1946): 75.

<sup>632</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 354.

<sup>633</sup> Harrison, "Overview," 30.

<sup>634</sup> Pogue, as cited.

Postwar political developments reinforced European multipolarity. By early 1946, American demobilization left the United Kingdom with the second largest army on the continent (Table 5.7). Although Britain, the USSR, and the United States were each limited in the degree to which they could generate combat power, the comparatively large size of the British force provided the nucleus for a significant postwar European presence.<sup>635</sup> More importantly, Britain ended the war working alongside the United States, USSR, and (later) France to occupy Germany.<sup>636</sup> Britain was thus guaranteed 1) a military base of operations in Europe, and 2) a seat at the table alongside the United States and Soviet Union as the three began organizing future European security arrangements and Germany's role therein. Furthermore, because the British occupation zone included the Ruhr Valley – the heart of German industrial potential – the United Kingdom controlled arguably *the* critical piece of real estate for any country interested in either reviving German power or ensuring Germany remained demilitarized.<sup>637</sup> Because determining Germany's future role in Europe would be a core issue of Soviet, American, and British postwar negotiations, European political geography reinforced Britain's centrality to European security affairs.

**Table 5.7: Forces Stationed in Europe, 1946-1947<sup>638</sup>**

Date	Forces in Europe		
	United States	United Kingdom	Soviet Union
June-July 1946	335,000	441,300	unk
winter 1946-1947	200,000	253,000	unk
June-July 1947	160,000	>220,000	1,665,000

Note: British and Soviet figures exclude air forces. Does not include forces based at home.

To be clear, I am not arguing that the United Kingdom was as strong as the United States or Soviet Union. Clearly, the U.S. and USSR were pulling away from the United Kingdom in the great power game. All three states, however, retained sufficient capabilities to affect one another's security and European politics writ large.<sup>639</sup>

<sup>635</sup> Cristann Gibson, "Patterns of Demobilization: The US and USSR After World War Two" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Denver, 1983), chap. 5; Matthew Evangelista, "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised," *International Security* 7, no. 3 (Winter 1982): 110–138; James F. Schnabel, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy 1945-1947* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1996), 98–104; Julian Lewis, *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence, 1942-47* (London: Routledge, 2002), xix–xciv.

<sup>636</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 3–65.

<sup>637</sup> Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany, and the Origins of the Cold War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990), 20.

<sup>638</sup> American figures from Sparrow, *Personnel Demobilization*, 321; European Command, *Occupation Forces in Europe Series: The First Year of Occupation* (Frankfurt am Main: Office of the Chief Historian, European Command, 1947), 160; Earl F. Ziemke, *U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, Department of the Army, 1975), 423; Soviet figures from Gibson, "Patterns of Demobilization," Table 3, 309. British figures estimated from Defence Committee, "Appendix 'A': Strength of Armed Forces at 30 June and 31 December 1946 as Comparison of Manpower Requirements," 15 February 1946, CAB 131/2; Defence Committee, "Size of the Army at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1946," 15 July 1946, CAB 131/3; Defence Committee, "The Strength of the Army, December 1946-March 1947," CAB 131/3. British figure for June-July 1947 estimated by subtracting withdrawal figures in Defence Committee, "Strength of the Armed Forces," 2 August 1947, CAB 131/4.

<sup>639</sup> By 1944-1945, Soviet planners desired that "the USSR to become sufficiently strong to fear no aggression in Europe and Asia, and so that no power or combination of powers [. . .] could event hint of such aggression." This

B. British Posture: Robust

Within multipolar Europe, Britain retained a robust military posture for the first two years after the war: it could secure its position in Central and Southern Europe while countering threats to the United Kingdom itself. The United Kingdom's robust posture had two components.<sup>640</sup> First, military forces were designed to maintain a British foothold in Europe (particularly Germany) while defending the air and sea lines of communication in and around the continent.<sup>641</sup> Second, Britain structured its military to deter potential opponents from threatening British security by delineating a defensive perimeter in Europe and preparing to wage a long war against aggressors if attacked. I deal with each component in turn.

First, Britain maintained a strong base of operations in Europe and ensured the lines of communication in and around Europe. Access to Germany and maintenance of the British Zone of Occupation was particularly important given Germany's location, industrial capacity, and population. To that end, Britain poured military resources into sustaining a large force of at least 4 divisions in Germany. These forces were joined by additional troops based in Austria, Italy, and Greece (Table 5.8).

**Table 5.8: British Land Forces in Europe, July 1946<sup>642</sup>**

Location	Force
<u>Germany</u>	
Armored Divisions	1.33
Infantry Divisions	2.33
Occupation Divisions	1
Armored Cav Regiments	5
<i>Personnel Total</i>	<i>126,800</i>
<u>Southeast Europe (Italy, Greece, Austria)</u>	
Armored Divisions	1
Infantry Divisions	3
Occupation Divisions	2
Armored Regiments	2
<i>Personnel Total</i>	<i>137,250</i>

These forces protected Britain against two threats. With Germany occupied and the USSR exhausted, British policymakers saw little chance of another great power war in the immediate future.<sup>643</sup> Instead, proximate threats came from domestic challenges in war-torn Europe. First

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period was estimated to take at least 10 years. Considering that Britain was the only other organized military force in Europe or Asia in 1945, Soviet plans suggest that the UK could still harm the USSR; Filitov, "Problems," 6–8.

<sup>640</sup> Most of the following is derived from Julian Lewis' work on postwar British strategy. Lewis' volume is virtually a day-by-day guide to strategy debates during and immediately after the war based upon extensive archival research. It remains the standard volume for postwar British defence policy. Lewis, *Changing Direction*.

<sup>641</sup> See analysis in Defence Committee, "Draft White Paper on Defence" and annex, 13 February 1946, CAB 131/2; Defence Committee, "Minutes of a Meeting Held at No. 10 Downing Street on Monday, 15 April 1946," CAB 131/1. Hereafter, I refer to Defence Committee Meeting Minutes as DC, MM, with date as noted; records of the entire Cabinet listed as CAB, MM.

<sup>642</sup> Defence Committee, "Size of the Army at 31st December 1946," 15 July 1946 CAB 131/3. July 1946 was chosen as an illustrative point late in the 1945-1946 period.

<sup>643</sup> Chiefs of Staff, "Memorandum on the Size of the Armed Forces," 13 February 1946, CAB 131/2.



was the prospect of a rapid German recovery and the return of German militarism as had occurred after 1918. Maintenance of a large garrison in Germany obviated this problem. The second risk was that a hostile power (most likely the USSR) might gain influence in strategically vital areas of Europe by moving into a power vacuum or by backing local proxy groups that would seize power. Particularly important was retaining control of Germany, Italy, and Greece, as Soviet influence in the whole of Germany would decisively shift the distribution of power in the USSR's favor, while the loss of Italy and Greece would threaten the Mediterranean lines of communication. By keeping sizable forces in these areas and using them to suppress local movements, Britain ensured that vital areas would not fall into the hands of hostile actors.

The second aspect of Britain's robust posture resulted from preparations to fight a long war against great power aggressors. Although no direct great power challenge seemed likely in the near-term, British planners could not foreclose the risk in the future. To hedge against this possibility, the British military focused on preparing its remaining air, sea, and land forces to serve as the nucleus for the larger forces that would be mobilized following the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>644</sup> Aside from the forces deployed to Europe, British planners focused on developing the technology, personnel, and organizations that would enable the country to fight another world war.<sup>645</sup> To that end, British war plans called for standing forces in Europe to defend as long as possible as far forward as possible before withdrawing to the British home islands as necessary.<sup>646</sup> In the interim, air power based around the Mediterranean and from the United Kingdom would attrite an opponent's industrial and military base as best it could, while Britain and its allies mobilized for a lengthy conflict.<sup>647</sup> Britain might not be able to defeat the USSR or a revived Germany on its own, but it could threaten punishment such that foreign leaders would think twice before aggressing. In essence, Britain's postwar military functioned as a deterrent: standing forces would delineate a defensive perimeter and serve as a tripwire, while the country's resources mobilized for a drawn-out struggle.<sup>648</sup>

British posture posed problems for both the Soviet Union and the United States. These were starkest for the Soviet Union. Because British and Soviet forces were in close contact, a mishap could lead to miscalculation and a new war. Not only would the USSR be forced to confront British air attacks on the Soviet Union, but a war threatened American intervention and nuclear attacks against the Soviet homeland.<sup>649</sup> Furthermore, it might prevent the USSR from consolidating its position in Eastern Europe and the western districts of the USSR itself at a time when the Soviet Union faced local insurgencies opposed to Communist rule.<sup>650</sup> Hence, any diversion of Soviet forces from internal security or a British effort to support local groups threatened Soviet security.

Second, and relatedly, British crackdowns on local political movements might cause

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<sup>644</sup> See, e.g., DC, MM 8 March 1946.

<sup>645</sup> Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 257. To this end, Britain introduced a peacetime draft in mid-1946.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*, 172. Also Chiefs of Staff, "Strategic Position of the British Commonwealth," 2 April 1946, CAB 131/2.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 257–276, 325.

<sup>648</sup> DC, MM 5 April 1946; Defence Committee, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs," 13 March 1946, CAB 131/2.

<sup>649</sup> On worries over Anglo-American balancing against the USSR, see Pechatnov, "Soviet Union," 94–95; for nuclear worries, see D. Holloway, "Entering the Nuclear Arms Race: The Soviet Decision to Build the Atomic Bomb, 1939–45," *Social Studies of Science* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 183–184.

<sup>650</sup> Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Lindsey O'Rourke, "Secrecy and Security: U.S.-Orchestrated Regime Change During the Cold War" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2013), 156–157; Evangelista, "Stalin's Army," 116.

rivalry and conflict. By 1944-1945, the British military was already helping the Greek government suppress Communist insurgents, and there was no reason British forces elsewhere in Europe could not do the same.<sup>651</sup> Although British actions would prevent local governments from falling under the sway of a hostile power, they also carried risks for the USSR. First, because the United Kingdom might blame the USSR for local insurgencies, Britain might retaliate against perceived Soviet aggrandizement.<sup>652</sup> Although a British attack on the USSR was implausible, Britain could still take hardline positions against the USSR in Germany while aiding anti-Soviet groups in Eastern Europe. British actions would then set the stage for a Soviet retaliation and an Anglo-Soviet crisis. At the same time, British action against local Communists supported might engage Soviet prestige and credibility, and lead the USSR to take military action on their behalf.

Britain's posture also threatened the United States, albeit in a different manner from the USSR. On one level, American planners were both wedded to preventing any one state from dominating Europe akin to Nazi Germany. They did not, however, want to maintain a large U.S. military presence in Europe for this privilege, with Roosevelt announcing that American troops would be gone from Europe "within two years." British military efforts threatened to undo these plans. Given Britain's robust posture, the risk of escalation, rivalry, and/or war with the Soviet Union was high. Yet because British forces were strong enough to deter aggression but not strong enough to defeat a dedicated attack, an Anglo-Soviet contest risked seeing the USSR overrunning continental Europe. This, in turn, would require American intervention, undoing efforts to keep Europe out of any one state's control and America out of Europe. So long as Britain retained a robust posture, the United States risked being chain-ganged into conflicts it did not want.

### C. Predictions

Given Britain's robust posture in a multipolar system, I predict that both the United States and Soviet Union will pursue a strategy of Moderate Support. Several observable implications follow. First, both the United States and Soviet Union will try to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power. Irrespective of British concerns to the contrary, both the US and USSR should try to avoid pushing the United Kingdom from the great power ranks by passing on opportunities to pick off British interests, undercutting British capabilities, and limiting threats to British security. However, given the United Kingdom's robust posture, cautious and prudent means will be employed. Thus, efforts to protect the United Kingdom will be limited to generic statements of political, military, and diplomatic support, moderate economic assistance, and efforts to reduce the decliner's defensive burden by de-escalating arms races rather than advancing alliance offers. By extension, American and Soviet policymakers will constantly seek signs of British weakness, and attempt to avoid steps that might cause further problems – we expect consistent efforts to monitor Britain's health as a great power. In essence, both the U.S. and USSR will try to avoid making life any harder for the United Kingdom at a time when it is already on the geopolitical ropes, but not do much to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power at significant cost or risk.

Furthermore, we expect policymakers to offer clear rationales for American and Soviet behavior. At Realist Decline Theory's core is an argument that rising states in multipolarity 1)

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<sup>651</sup> Stephen G. Xydis, "America, Britain, and the USSR in the Greek Arena, 1944-1947," *Political Science Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter 1963): 581-596.

<sup>652</sup> British policymakers, for instance, saw the Greek insurgency as a Soviet bid for influence; Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary*, 337-340.

fear being balanced, and 2) try to avoid isolation if balancing occurs. Combined, these mechanisms create an incentive to support the decliner and avoid the costs of predation. Thus, strategists in both the Soviet Union and United States should emphasize these tradeoffs: they are expected to discuss their recognition that support is a way of retaining alliance options while also avoiding the costs of internal balancing (by the United Kingdom) and external balancing (if the United Kingdom attracts other great power allies). However, policymakers will also recognize the dangers of coming to Britain's aid so long as the Britain holds a robust military posture. In private discussion and analyses, they will justify avoiding intense means of support out of 1) worries of the decliner's own ability to counterbalance, and 2) worries of entrapment and chain-ganging. Indeed, the desirability of avoiding entrapment and British chain-ganging may be particularly important, as it implies Soviet and American policymakers may adopt Moderate Support for the signal it sends to the other side: if either the United States or USSR were to intensely support a robust declining Britain, then the other rising power may fear its impending isolation and begin counterbalancing.

By extension, American and Soviet policymakers will monitor Britain for signs its posture is changing from robust to weak. Evidence of such a shift will cause American and Soviet policymakers to alter their strategies and use intense means to aid the United Kingdom. Strategists will also justify intense support on the grounds that 1) Britain might be lost as a future ally, and 2) worries that other great powers might expand at a very weak Britain's expense and become a significant threat.

Finally, evidence that Britain is beginning to internally or externally balance will lead to efforts to reassure the United Kingdom. On one level, American and Soviet policies may inadvertently weaken Britain and appear predatory. This may lead Britain to balance against the source of the problem, potentially confronting the United States with an Anglo-Soviet grouping or the Soviet Union with an Anglo-American grouping. At the same time, Britain may try to use its remaining resources to confront the source of the problem, potentially triggering diplomatic standoffs and military crises. Both the United States and USSR should be on the lookout for this behavior and try to stop it by ending the offending policies. In effect, evidence that Soviet or American action is causing Britain to balance will lead to changes in American or Soviet strategy that reassure Britain and preserve Britain as a potential ally by "bidding" for British quiescence.

#### **IV. Alternate Explanations**

Realist Decline Theory's predictions differ from those advanced by Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory. Here, I code the independent variables and derive predictions from both arguments in sequence.

##### **E. Democratic Peace Theory**

###### *i. Coding Regime Type*

Both the United States and United Kingdom were democracies at the end of the Second World War. Polity assigns both states a democracy score of 10, indicating fully democratic institutions. This matches popular conceptions of the United States and United Kingdom as the world's leading democracies at the start of the Cold War. Indeed, the two were arguably the only Western democracies to survive the rise of Communism in the 1910s, rise of Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, and the travails of the Second World War intact. Having weathered these storms without changing their governing regimes (evidenced by stable Polity scores for the preceding decade), I accept the Polity scores and code both states as democracies.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was a non-democracy. Polity assigns it a democracy score of 0, indicating no democratic institutions, civil liberties, or leader accountability; this score was also stable over the preceding decade. This matches basic intuitions about the nature of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. As often reported, Stalin went to great lengths to eliminate potential opponents to his leadership at the head of the Communist Party.<sup>653</sup> Coming on top of the suppression of non-Communist parties after the Russian Revolution, Stalin's purges left the USSR devoid of political opposition. Stalin effectively ran the state as a personalized autocracy, and the system was sufficiently stable that Stalin's rule remained intact despite wartime dislocations. With the Communist Party entrenched and Stalin dominant, I code the USSR as a non-democracy.<sup>654</sup>

ii. *Predictions*

Under these conditions, Democratic Peace Theory makes divergent predictions for the United States and Soviet Union vis-à-vis the United Kingdom. First, the United States is expected to adopt a Moderate Support strategy. The United States is expected to want to preserve a fellow democracy against the non-democratic threat posed by the Soviet Union. I predict American policymakers will justify aid to the United Kingdom in these terms, underscoring the attraction of protecting a fellow democracy against a rising non-democratic challenge; conversely, U.S. strategists will underline the dangers of Britain falling to non-democratic forces and the United States standing alone as a democratic bastion if U.S. support is not forthcoming.

In the process of providing this aid, we also expect Anglo-American negotiations to be conducted smoothly. There should be few misunderstandings between the two sides as common democratic institutions make it easy for policymakers in both states to assess the distribution of power and for the United States to recognize Britain's need for U.S. support. Moreover, because democracy facilitates bargaining in a "spirit of fairness," we expect the two sides to reach a mutually-acceptable bargain, with few recriminations or accusations of cheating along the way. Above all, we expect to see widespread backing for support of the United Kingdom within the United States as a wide swath of citizens and decision-makers recognize that support for the United Kingdom is in the United States' democratic best interest – there ought to be a fairly strong consensus that the common democratic heritage compels the United States to assist the United Kingdom at a time of weakness.

In contrast, the theory predicts Moderate Predation will emerge between the Soviet Union and United Kingdom. Due to the different regime types between the two states, all the factors predicted to cause American support for the United Kingdom will push the Soviet Union in the other direction. Thus, Anglo-Soviet relations will be marked by misunderstanding and miscommunication as the two sides misinterpret each-other's interests and power. The result will be Anglo-Soviet rivalry. This, in turn, will lead the Soviet Union to see an advantage in weakening the United Kingdom in order to reduce the British threat to the Soviet Union and advance Soviet security. Missing, in other words, will be the ease of bargaining, communication, and incentives to preserve the United Kingdom as a strong great power expected in the Anglo-American dyad. There should therefore be a progressive breakdown in Anglo-Soviet relations, and the Soviet Union watch for signs of British weakness in order to advance the Communist cause and weaken the leading democratic state in Western Europe; insofar as we can get inside

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<sup>653</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

<sup>654</sup> A good primer is Yoram Gorzki and Oleg Vital'evich Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin And the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Soviet decision-making, we expect Soviet policymakers to justify and rationalize Soviet policy in these terms. Conversely, there should be few signs of Soviet interest in helping the United Kingdom survive as a democratic great power. Indeed, signs that the Soviet Union is interested in cooperating with the United Kingdom and ignoring the divergent nature of the British regime is problematic for Democratic Peace Theory and offers disconfirming evidence.

#### F. Institutional Theory

##### i. Coding Institutional Presence

The United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom were not jointly embedded in the same highly developed international institutions before Britain began to decline. However, three bilateral or de facto institutions may plausibly be treated as substitutes.

First, Anglo-American wartime collaboration may be seen as a bilateral institution that was as close as two states have ever been to mutual institutional binding. Beginning in 1941, the United States and United Kingdom established a bevy of bilateral mechanisms to coordinate the war effort. On the military side, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Combined Munitions Assignment Board, Combined Planning Staff, Combined Military Transportation Committee, and Combined Intelligence Committee oversaw allied military strategy and mobilization.<sup>655</sup> The boards had offices in London and Washington staffed by senior officers empowered to make decisions on core military topics. The military boards were joined by civilian institutions to oversee economic mobilization, including the Combined Production and Resources Board, Combined Raw Materials Board, and Combined Food Board; the Combined Policy Committee, meanwhile, would help develop nuclear technology and weapons.<sup>656</sup> As a group, the combined boards saw the United States and United Kingdom surrender decision-making powers to organizations outside of either's unilateral control. Given the depth of institutional coordination and bilateral decision-making procedures in a high-stakes wartime environment, I treat the combined boards as a de facto institution binding that should influence American strategy after 1945.

Second, scholars such as Ikenberry and Ruggie see international financial institutions established by the 1944 Bretton Woods conference as core elements of the "liberal order" created by the United States towards the end of the war.<sup>657</sup> While the Soviet Union remained outside these institutions, and although they focused on ensuring free trade by promoting international currency convertibility, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) are seen to have played a critical role in postwar

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<sup>655</sup> David Joseph Rigby, "The Combined Chiefs of Staff and Anglo-American strategic coordination in World War II" (Ph.D., Brandeis University, 1997), chap. 2; Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume 1: Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 251–257; United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1968), 210–217.

<sup>656</sup> J. J. Llewellyn, "Machinery of Wartime Cooperation Between the British Commonwealth and the United States," *World Affairs* 106, no. 3 (September 1943): 157–163; Eric Ipsden, *The Combined Food Board: A Study in Wartime International Planning* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), 49–50; Alfred Goldberg, "The Atomic Origins of the British Nuclear Deterrent," *International Affairs* 40, no. 3 (July 1964): 412–413. Also Franklin Roosevelt, "Memoranda on Combined Production and Resources Board and Combined Food Board," 9 June 1942, online by Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16268>.

<sup>657</sup> Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change"; Ikenberry, "A World Economy Restored"; Bruce Russett and John R. Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Trade and International Organization* (New York: Norton, 2001), 21.

European security affairs. As Ikenberry describes, Bretton Woods institutions helped create what Truman called an “economic peace” among the great powers in which “conflicts would be captured and domesticated in an iron cage of multilateral rules, standards, safeguards, and dispute resolution procedures.” By fostering economic interdependence and providing a forum for political leaders to meet in a multilateral setting, the institutions helped “manage economic and political change” and laid the foundation for deeper forms of cooperation in the future.<sup>658</sup> And although the IMF and IBRD were only starting up in the mid-1940s, their formation required significant expenditures of time and political capital by American policymakers. Combined, the IMF and IBRD presumably gave the United States a stake in the institutions’ success and bound the United States to Britain’s ability to participate therein.

Finally, the United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union agreed to institutionalize regular meetings of their respective foreign ministers via a “Council of Foreign Ministers” (CFM). CFM represented an effort to perpetuate wartime consultation and coordination. The Yalta Summit Protocol emphasized the formal nature of the commitment, declaring that, “permanent machinery should be set up for regular consultation between the three Foreign Secretaries. They will, therefore, meet [ . . . ] about every three or four months”.<sup>659</sup> Headquartered in London, CFM’s immediate task was to draw up peace treaties with Germany and the other European Axis powers. However, the subsequent Potsdam Protocol also allowed that “Other matters may from time to time be referred to the Council by agreement between the Member Governments.”<sup>660</sup> Taken together, the Potsdam and Yalta Protocols suggest American, British, and Soviet policymakers envisioned a formal mechanism by which the three could meet and resolve disputes in a cooperative manner. In this, the CFM process was as institutionalized as the Two Plus Four talks discussed earlier. Because leading institutionalist scholars consider Two Plus Four to have produced effects akin to what we would see in a more institutionalized setting by facilitating the flow of information, extending the shadow of the future, and providing a forum for negotiation, I likewise consider the CFM a *de facto* institution.

As a group, Anglo-American bilateral cooperation, Western financial institution building, and Anglo-American-Soviet efforts to perpetuate wartime collaboration indicate that each of the great powers in 1945 had some kind of institutional links to one another. To be clear, these institutions were relatively weak, were only partially operational before Britain began to decline, and only loosely meet the criteria suggested by Ikenberry and others. However, because Institutional Theory itself suggests *ad hoc* and *de facto* institutions of the type here can produce many of the effects of more formal institutions, I argue these institutions should generate benefits akin to what even more binding institutions would yield. Put differently, if American membership in NATO and the Two Plus Four talks were, per institutionalist arguments, sufficient to generate American cooperation and restraint in the face of Soviet decline, then wartime collaboration, institutionalized ministerial summits, and international financial institutions should produce at least as much benign rising state behavior.

#### *ii. Predictions*

Given these conditions, Institutional Theory predicts both the United States and Soviet Union will pursue strategies of Moderate Support. Bound to the United Kingdom through

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<sup>658</sup> Ikenberry, “Woodrow Wilson, The Bush Administration, and the Future of Liberal Internationalism,” 16–17; also Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 184–191.

<sup>659</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Yalta*, 1580–1581.

<sup>660</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), Volume II* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 614–616.

several different mechanisms, both states are expected to see the status quo as worth preserving and try to sustain institutionalized cooperation. However, they are also likely to see this dynamic as threatened by growing British weakness. Thus, policymakers in both the U.S. and USSR will respond by providing diplomatic support and military aid to the United Kingdom with the express purpose of helping preserve the institutional status quo. In the process, they should utilize extant international institutions. In the American case, the availability of the combined boards, Bretton Woods institutions, and CFM provide several pathways to channel support and signal an interest in preserving the United Kingdom; we expect to see American policymakers readily working through these institutions to aid the United Kingdom, while bargaining over the terms of American assistance through these venues. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was only bound to the United Kingdom via the CFM. However, because the CFM was created with the express purpose of sustaining wartime cooperation, it should readily serve to breed Soviet support and engagement with the United Kingdom. Therefore, we should find Soviet policymakers turning to the CFM as the prime venue to negotiate the terms of Soviet assistance and support for British interests, while simultaneously helping the Soviet Union understand the precise nature of British problems and the steps the USSR could take to buttress British power.

Above all, in the process of coming to Britain's aid, American and Soviet strategists should emphasize the utility of institutions in understanding and responding to British problems. That is, if institutions provide the functional advantages claimed, then we should find policymakers underscoring the attractiveness of working through institutional mechanisms and the benefits thereof. Simultaneously, strategists should discuss how the information and insights provided by institutional channels helped them better cooperate and support the United Kingdom. This also implies they should discuss their worries of a breakdown in institutional cooperation if support for the United Kingdom were not forthcoming- in other words, senior decision-makers are expected to emphasize the attractiveness of the institutional status quo and their worries that the status quo might be undone if Britain were not supported. Overall, American and Soviet strategists are expected to recognize the advantages of sustaining great power cooperation via extant international institutions, emphasize the problems that would result if institutions were to collapse, and therefore adopt and a Moderate Support strategy.

## **V. American Strategy and British Decline, 1945-1946**

This section begins the analysis of rising and declining state relations in multipolar settings. It does so by assessing the course and outcome of American strategy towards the United Kingdom in 1945-1946 and weighing the results against predictions from the competing theories. The following section continues the analysis by assessing Soviet strategy.

### **A. An Overview of American Strategy: Moderate Support**

As predicted by all three theories, the United States adopted a Moderate Support strategy towards the United Kingdom from 1945 to 1946. American policymakers sought to keep Britain a great power, but avoided intensive means to this end. On balance, however, I find more support for Realist Decline Theory than Democratic Peace Theory or Institutionalist Theory, as American policy was driven more by the desire to 1) keep Britain strong while 2) avoid exposing the United States to the problems that could result from too close of an association with a military robust United Kingdom, than 3) anything related to common regime type or institutional binding. This is clear from the constituent parts of the strategy.

The early postwar period saw the United States disassociate itself from tight wartime cooperation with the United Kingdom. This behavior is somewhat puzzling for Democratic

Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory: absent a change in regime type or failure of extant institutions, we do not ex ante expect the United States to reduce the level of support to the United Kingdom at a time of British weakness. Nevertheless, this is exactly what the United States did. American policymakers looked to foster a postwar system in which the United Kingdom and USSR were primarily responsible for European security while the United States either dissociated itself from European politics or stood on the sidelines to adjudicate disputes between the two. This approach required the United States to maintain cooperative relations with both the British and the Soviets. The United States therefore avoided British efforts to enlist the United States in an Anglo-American alliance and reduced the size of its commitment to Europe in an effort to buck-pass and free-ride on British largesse. Equally important, British efforts to obtain American aid in reconstructing the British economy fell on partially deaf ears: America was willing to provide limited loans to Britain, but not enough to revive the British economy.

Realist Decline Theory's explanatory power is clear given the causal processes underlying American strategy. First, the multipolar nature of Europe meant the United States saw the United Kingdom as a useful potential ally in both containing Germany and hedging against the Soviet Union. American policymakers therefore argued Britain could not be allowed to fall from the great power ranks. At the same time, Britain's robust military posture meant U.S. strategists saw little need to come to Britain's aid. Britain appeared capable of handling its own security against near-term threats from the Soviet Union, even as American officials worried that Britain was attempting to chain-gang the United States into a commitment to Europe the United States did not seek. The resulting distrust and uncertainty, added to the fact that intense American support for the United Kingdom might antagonize the Soviet Union, hindered more intensive forms of U.S. assistance.

#### B. The Strategic Context of British Decline

World War Two altered the strategic map of Europe. By the end of the war, Europe's two offshore powers (the United States and United Kingdom) faced an indefinite commitment to the continent due to the occupation of Germany. Equally important, the Soviet Union was ensconced in Central-Eastern Europe. With Germany conquered and France devastated, the end of the war left a power vacuum in Europe that created opportunities for great power cooperation and rivalry.

This situation lent itself to complex strategic calculations. On one level, the United States, United Kingdom, and USSR were determined to prevent a German resurgence that could again threaten European security.<sup>661</sup> However, the fact that the Soviets, Americans, and British each controlled a portion of Germany also meant that unless the German issue was handled cooperatively, each could end up threatening and threatened by the others. First, if great power cooperation broke down and any of the three established sole control over Germany, then that state would be able to mobilize Germany's substantial economic and military potential for its own political purposes. Second, if great power cooperation broke down and Germany was divided, then at least two of the great powers could find themselves engaged in a sustained

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<sup>661</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, chap. 1; James McAllister, *No Exit: America and the German Problem, 1943-1954* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), chap. 2.



rivalry in the heart of Europe.<sup>662</sup> Combined, there was significant room for miscalculation, and mismanagement in great power relations.

In this fluid environment, British policymakers focused on preventing any one state from dominating the continent. With Germany occupied, the Soviet Union seemed the most likely source of problems.<sup>663</sup> However, because the USSR was absolutely stronger than the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom would be hard-pressed to offset Soviet capabilities. Left to its own devices, Britain would need to commit an increasingly large share of increasingly scarce capabilities to occupying Germany, denying German resources to the USSR, and balancing Soviet adventurism elsewhere.<sup>664</sup> While viable in the short-term, the strategy courted long-term disaster as it promised an exhausting Anglo-Soviet rivalry that the weakening United Kingdom could not sustain.<sup>665</sup>

British policymakers therefore sought a firm American commitment to postwar Europe and American support for the United Kingdom.<sup>666</sup> Churchill was focused on this issue from mid-1943, telling colleagues that, “Germany is finished, though it may take some time to clean up the mess. The real problem now is Russia. I can’t get the Americans to see it.”<sup>667</sup> With American backing, the United Kingdom would gain an ally to balance possible Soviet aggrandizement while helping prevent Germany’s re-emergence.<sup>668</sup> Equally important, American aid could be used to revive the British economy, reconstruct Western Europe, and ultimately reconstitute a continental balance of power that would give Britain strategic flexibility.<sup>669</sup> The United States appeared the surest route to guarantee British security.<sup>670</sup>

### C. Diplomatic Policy: A British Dream Deferred

American strategists were having none of Britain’s plans. Rather than accept British calls for intensive American aid to Britain, the United States initially tried to distance itself from Europe and limit American diplomatic, military, and economic support for the United Kingdom. In short, it pursued Moderate Support. The American approach assumed that Britain, although declining and facing acute economic problems, would quickly recover from wartime damage to function as one of the three poles in postwar Europe.<sup>671</sup> This section examines the diplomatic and economic side of the Anglo-American relationship, before turning to the military relationship in the next section.

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<sup>662</sup> These problems are discussed in detail in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*. Also John Baylis, “British Wartime Thinking About a Post-War European Security Group,” *Review of International Studies* 9, no. 4 (October 1983): 273–278.

<sup>663</sup> Geoffrey Warner, “From Ally to Enemy: Britain’s Relations with the Soviet Union, 1941–1948,” in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–53*, ed. Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 297–300.

<sup>664</sup> McAllister, *No Exit*, 46; Geoffrey Warner, “Ally to Enemy,” 32–34. Also, WM (45) 48, 20 April 1945.

<sup>665</sup> Anderson, *Cold War*, 11–12; Michael Dobbs, *Six Months in 1945: FDR, Stalin, Churchill, and Truman—from World War to Cold War* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 47–48.

<sup>666</sup> John L. Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 17–18.

<sup>667</sup> Anderson, *Cold War*, 16.

<sup>668</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 154–181.

<sup>669</sup> On British plans for postwar Europe, see John Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949* (Kent, OH.: Kent State University Press, 1993), 14–36; Deighton, *Impossible Peace*, 21–24.

<sup>670</sup> Anderson, *Cold War*, 84–85.

<sup>671</sup> Avey, “Confronting Soviet Power,” 162; Theodore Wilson and Richard McKinzie, Oral History Interview with Dean Acheson, June 30, 1971, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/acheson.htm#5>.

As the war in Europe ran down, the United States tried to dissociate itself from the continent while relying on the USSR and United Kingdom to maintain European security. American plans laid down before the 1945 Yalta and Potsdam conferences envisioned a spheres of influence settlement for Europe.<sup>672</sup> Eastern Europe would fall into the Soviet orbit, while Western Europe remained an Anglo-American domain.<sup>673</sup> Germany, meanwhile, would be divided in order to avoid great power discord over the future shape of the German state.<sup>674</sup> Division would be particularly useful in preventing an Anglo-Soviet rivalry at a time when, per the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), “the greatest likelihood of eventual conflict between Britain and Russia would seem to grow out of either nation [ . . . ] seeking to attach to herself parts of Europe to the disadvantage and possible danger of her potential adversary.”<sup>675</sup> It would also help dampen Soviet concerns of an Anglo-American front directed against the USSR that might breed discord and mistrust between the wartime partners.<sup>676</sup>

In theory, a spheres of influence settlement was conducive to British power and security.<sup>677</sup> By giving the Soviets free rein in the East while keeping part of Germany and Western Europe out of the Soviet camp, the likelihood of Anglo-Soviet rivalry would be diminished and the British need to balance the USSR reduced. Nevertheless, the specifics of the American plan posed problems for the United Kingdom. British policymakers wanted the Anglo-American sphere of influence to be more American than Anglo and warned of “grave dangers which would arise with the withdrawal of American troops from Europe.”<sup>678</sup> American policymakers, however, planned for the sphere to be more Anglo than American. From 1943 onward, the Roosevelt Administration resisted British plans to commit American power to postwar Europe. In Roosevelt’s ideal, the “Four Policemen” (meaning the three great powers plus China) would instead be responsible for security within their respective areas of operation. Britain would thus have primary responsibility for Western Europe:

“In as much as the United States is approximately 3,500 miles removed from Europe, it is not its natural task to bear the postwar burden of re-constituting France, Italy and the Balkans. This is properly the task of Great Britain which is far more vitally interested than is the United States. The United States will be only too glad to retire all its military forces from Europe as soon as this is feasible.”<sup>679</sup>

American air and naval forces might come to Europe’s assistance in a pinch, but in general “England and the Soviet Union would have to handle the land armies in the event of any future threat to the peace.”<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Mark S. Sheetz, “Exit Strategies: American Grand Designs for Postwar European Security,” *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (1999): 18.

<sup>673</sup> Woods, *Changing*, 256.

<sup>674</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 20–33.

<sup>675</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), Volume I* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 264.

<sup>676</sup> Ovendale, *Alliance*, 10–13.

<sup>677</sup> John L. Gaddis, “Spheres of Influence: The United States and Europe, 1945–1949,” in *The Long Peace* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 50.

<sup>678</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Potsdam I*, 69.

<sup>679</sup> Quoted in Sheetz, “Exit Strategies,” 18.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

To make a break with Europe, the United States needed Soviet support for a spheres of influence solution. Gaining Soviet support, in turn, required resolving the future of Germany and avoiding the perception of an Anglo-American front directed against the USSR.<sup>681</sup> As the United States pursued these goals in 1945, it eschewed a coordinated strategy with the United Kingdom; notably, the effort to distance the United States from a closely integrated, democratic ally is the opposite of what both Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory predict. Before both Yalta and Potsdam, for example, American policymakers refused to meet with their British counterparts to agree on joint Anglo-American positions to use against the Soviets.<sup>682</sup> Equally important, the substance of the negotiations often saw the United States cooperate with the Soviets more than the United Kingdom and kept “Britain from establishing any arrangement that would protect its vital interests.”<sup>683</sup> At Yalta, for instance, the United States went along with Soviet efforts to set a figure on German reparations (\$20 billion overall, with \$10 billion for the USSR) rather than accept British efforts to leave the matter for later negotiation pending the revival of the postwar European economy.<sup>684</sup> Potsdam similarly saw the United States and Soviet Union negotiate reparations without the British before presenting Britain with “take it or leave it proposals.”<sup>685</sup> Summarizing the drift in Anglo-American relations in 1945, Ambassador Joseph Davies concluded that British leaders were “basically more concerned over preserving England’s position in Europe than in preserving [great power] Peace,” sought to use American power for that purpose, and were therefore opposed to American efforts to distance themselves from European affairs.<sup>686</sup>

However, efforts to distance the United States from the United Kingdom did not mean the United States ignored and isolated Britain. Indicative of Moderate Support, the United States also looked to limit further losses to British power. First, American backing for a spheres of influence solution put the Soviets on notice: any hostile designs they might have on Western Europe (and thus British power and security) would be met with American opposition. This corresponds with my theory’s prediction that the United States will back the United Kingdom for fear of aggrandizement by other relatively rising states. Secretary of State James Byrnes, who presented the most detailed spheres of influence solution at Potsdam, underlined the point when agreeing with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov’s query whether a plan to divide Germany meant “each country would have a free hand in their own zones and would act entirely independently of the others.”<sup>687</sup> A “free hand” in the respective spheres cut both ways.<sup>688</sup> By signing the Soviets up for a spheres solution, the United States established its interest in the fate of Western Europe and signaled it would not tolerate Soviet action in the Western orbit that, by definition, would threaten Britain. Furthermore, by pushing to divide Europe into separate camps, the United States reduced the likelihood that the Western powers would find themselves in a rivalry with the USSR. This, in turn, would limit the risk of Britain exhausting itself balancing the USSR following an American withdrawal.

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<sup>681</sup> Reynolds, “Division of Europe,” 117–122.

<sup>682</sup> Anderson, *Cold War*, 28–32; Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 157–159.

<sup>683</sup> Woods, *Changing*, 259.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, 258–259.

<sup>685</sup> Deighton, *Impossible Peace*, 32–34.

<sup>686</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Potsdam I*, 77.

<sup>687</sup> Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 26. For Germany’s division as a prelude to Europe’s division, see 31.

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–34.

American officials also moved over the course of 1945-1946 towards helping Britain reconstruct its economy. To be clear, this policy developed in fits and starts. In the immediate weeks after the war, American policies were actually partially responsible for British economic dilemma as the United States cancelled Lend-Lease assistance following Japan's August 1945 surrender over substantial British opposition; at a basic level, the American decision to ignore input from and terminate cooperation with a democratic ally embedded in the same institutions is puzzling from the perspective of democratic peace and institutionalist arguments. At the time, American policymakers justified the move on the grounds that Lend-Lease was designed to help the United Kingdom participate in the war effort.<sup>689</sup> Nevertheless, the move contravened Anglo-American wartime agreements to continue assistance into the postwar period to subsidize 1) the occupation of Germany, and 2) help the British economy get back on its feet.<sup>690</sup> In cancelling Lend-Lease, British reconversion plans were left in the lurch and British policymakers confronted a worsening balance of payments problem.

Still, plans for a British-dominated sphere required Britain to remain strong enough to take the lead in Western Europe.<sup>691</sup> As Realist Decline Theory predicts, once it became clear that American policy was hurting Britain, American policymakers moved to assist Britain's recovery and led to Anglo-American talks for a postwar British aid package.<sup>692</sup> The talks and final deal reflected the United States' Moderate Support strategy. British officials arrived in Washington in September 1945 seeking a \$6 billion grant to defray \$14 billion in debt and an expected deficit of \$5.3 billion in 1946-1948 alone.<sup>693</sup> Arguing that its indebtedness stemmed from having prosecuted the war without respite for six years, the UK wanted the United States to repay British wartime resolve with postwar assistance.<sup>694</sup> American officials, on the other hand, desired Britain's recovery, but believed that Britain was exaggerating the extent of its economic problems. They worried that unqualified American aid would allow Britain to delay making the pound convertible into dollars ("sterling-dollar convertibility") to the detriment of the Bretton Woods agreements; this disagreement over the basic facts of the situation is in tension with Institutional Theory, which predicts Anglo-American institutional channels should provide significant information that would help facilitate American support for the United Kingdom.<sup>695</sup> American officials therefore insisted on narrower terms. Instead of a \$6 billion grant, the most the United States was initially willing to offer was a \$3 billion loan at commercial rates with an added rider that Britain make its currency convertible from mid-1947.<sup>696</sup> Britain, in turn, protested that 1) \$4 billion was the minimum needed for short-term reconstruction, and 2) sterling convertibility would lead to a run on the pound and exacerbate British financial problems.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, 1945: Year of Decisions*, Doubleday edition (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1955), 476.

<sup>690</sup> George C. Herring, "The United States and British Bankruptcy, 1944-1945: Responsibilities Deferred," *Political Science Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (June 1971): 265-267.

<sup>691</sup> Leffler, *Preponderance*, 61; Woods, *Changing*, 304.

<sup>692</sup> For U.S. perceptions of Britain's postwar potential, see United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: Volume VI, The British Commonwealth, the Far East* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 36-40.

<sup>693</sup> Woods, *Changing*, 342. See also Lord Keynes, "Our Overseas Financial Prospects," 14 August 1945, *DBPO 1:3*, 27-37.

<sup>694</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 188.

<sup>695</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1987), 133.

<sup>696</sup> Woods, *Changing*, 341-342; Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 194-195.

<sup>697</sup> Truman, *Memoirs 1945*, 479.

Faced with this standoff, American officials moderated their positions.<sup>698</sup> They still insisted on sterling convertibility and a loan. However, the terms of the loan came much closer to Britain's initial request. Rather than treat the loan as a commercial transaction, the United States offered a \$3.75 billion loan at two percent interest repayable over 50 years. Interest would also be deferred for five years.<sup>699</sup> These were generous terms from the American perspective: the interest rate was below market, and the amount of the loan greater than the initial U.S. offer.<sup>700</sup> Equally important, the loan allowed Britain to suspend interest payments in years when it suffered a trade deficit. Thus, unless British trade grew and the economy recovered, Britain would effectively receive the grant it initially demanded.<sup>701</sup> On balance, the United States split the difference between its initial position and Britain's. Seeking to help the British economy without substantial cost or risk to American objectives, the United States eventually backed positions that tried to protect the British economy from any further harm.<sup>702</sup>

Moderate Support continued into 1946 even as tensions mounted between the Soviets on one side and the United States-United Kingdom on the other.<sup>703</sup> Amidst rising Soviet-Western antagonism, Britain's economic problems worsened. By the spring of 1946, British policymakers were looking to save money by reducing Britain's foreign footprint. The only major savings could be found in Germany, where maintaining the British Occupation Zone cost £80 million per year in non-military expenses alone.<sup>704</sup> British officials therefore decided in May to seek American backing in fusing the French, British, and American zones of occupation into a single administrative unit. Ideally, fusion would 1) reduce British costs, and 2) help Germany recover so that the occupation would cost less. American support was crucial because only the "full and continued financial and military support of the United States" would enable the Western zones to function as the single economic and administrative unit intended.<sup>705</sup>

Nevertheless, the United States refused the British approach through the spring.<sup>706</sup> Although fusing the Western zones was a logical outgrowth of the spheres of influence strategy, American backing would cause a break in Soviet-American relations and prevent the United States from withdrawing from the continent.<sup>707</sup> As we expect from Realist Decline Theory, the United States avoided assisting Great Britain when doing so threatened relations with the Soviet Union. Only in July 1946, after the failure of the Paris CFM meeting convinced the United States that the USSR was unlikely to facilitate a speedy American exit from Europe, did the United States shift towards the British position. Speaking to the assembled British, French, and Soviet foreign ministers at the CFM, Byrnes offered to join the American zone with any other.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> For growing U.S. recognition of British problem, see United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Commonwealth*, 141–142.

<sup>699</sup> Truman offers a concise discussion of internal American deliberations on these points; Truman, *Memoirs 1945*, 479–480.

<sup>700</sup> American policymakers responsible for the Anglo-American negotiations outlined these points in an 11 October meeting; see United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Commonwealth*, 145–149.

<sup>701</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 196.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, 198, 230–231.

<sup>703</sup> An excellent overview is found in Deighton, *Impossible Peace*, 54–102.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 55; Robert W. Carden, "Before Bizonia: Britain's Economic Dilemma in Germany, 1945–46," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 3 (July 1979): 535–555. For comparison, the entire defense budget was approximately £500 million; CAB MM, 18 February 1946, CAB 128/6.

<sup>705</sup> Deighton, *Impossible Peace*, 74–75.

<sup>706</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 258–259.

<sup>707</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 46.

<sup>708</sup> Deighton, *Impossible Peace*, 96–97.

Britain jumped at the offer, but even this did not translate into intense American support. Instead, the resulting negotiations saw the United States hold to a strict interpretation of joint responsibilities and refuse to assume more than 50 percent of the combined costs of the Anglo-American occupation zone. Despite British protestations that the occupation was eating into British dollar reserves – including the \$3.75 billion loan – American officials refused to budge. Hence, and as Hathaway observes, “the benefits which the fusion brought Great Britain were [. . .] little more than the fortuitous byproduct of an action taken largely for other reasons.”<sup>709</sup> There was still no consistent American interest in backing the United Kingdom.

Nor did additional Soviet-American antagonism reorient Anglo-American relations. As Trachtenberg observes, 1946 was the year in which the Cold War began to take shape.<sup>710</sup> Particularly important were perceived Soviet threats to Greece, Turkey, and Iran, as the resulting crises convinced American policymakers of Soviet hostility and the impossibility of Soviet-American cooperation.<sup>711</sup> However, Soviet threats were even more direct challenges to Great Britain, as Iran, Turkey, and Greece were regarded as British protectorates and critical to Britain’s postwar security:<sup>712</sup> British influence in Greece and Turkey anchored British military power in the Mediterranean, while Iran was the world’s (and Britain’s) major oil supplier.<sup>713</sup> The American response to the crises is therefore demonstrative of U.S. policy towards the United Kingdom writ large.<sup>714</sup>

Reviews of the crises can be found in a number of sources.<sup>715</sup> For the sake of brevity, I focus on overall American behavior across the cases. In each crisis, Britain warned the United States of a perceived Soviet threat to British interests. In contrast to the predicted ease of information sharing and cooperation within institutionalized relationships and among democratic dyads, my research suggests American officials initially questioned the threat or delayed responding; only in the face of substantial British pressure did the United States come to agree with British positions and pressure the Soviets to stop their activities.<sup>716</sup> Some American actions, such as the joint Anglo-American demarche demanding Soviet withdrawal from Iran, were coordinated with the United Kingdom.<sup>717</sup> Others, including the deployment of naval forces in a

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<sup>709</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 259.

<sup>710</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 35, 55.

<sup>711</sup> Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 194–200; Gaddis, “Turning Point.”

<sup>712</sup> Owendale, *Alliance*, 36.

<sup>713</sup> Leffler, *Preponderance*, 73–81; United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946: Volume VII, The Near East and Africa* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 857–858.

<sup>714</sup> Iran and, perhaps, Turkey are outside of Europe. However, both countries played a critical role in British security in and around Europe. First, Turkey helped ensure the sea lines of communication in the Eastern Mediterranean. Second, due to aircraft limitations of the time, the best bases for launching strategic bombers against the USSR were in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. Turkey and Iran guarded the approaches to these bases, and were thus needed to ensure Britain could effectively deploy long-range air power as per its deterrent strategy; see Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 252–55, 273–274.

<sup>715</sup> See, inter alia, Xydis, “Greck Arena”; Eduard Mark, “The War Scare of 1946 and Its Consequences,” *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 3 (1997): 383–415; Richard Pfau, “Containment in Iran, 1946: The Shift to an Active Policy,” *Diplomatic History* 1, no. 4 (October 1977): 359–372; John L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War: 1941–1947* (Columbia University Press, 1972), 309–311; Ritchie Owendale, “Britain, the U.S.A., and the European Cold War, 1945–8,” *History* 67, no. 220 (1982): 217–236.

<sup>716</sup> Owendale, *Alliance*, 36–48; also H. J. Yasamee and K.A. Hamilton, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 1, Volume 7: Iran, Cold War and World Organisation* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1995), 141–143.

<sup>717</sup> Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 237.

show of support for Turkey, were unilateral moves.<sup>718</sup> Regardless, British policymakers welcomed indications of American political backing and pushed to translate episodic support into a permanent Anglo-American alliance and to have the United States take up British responsibilities in protecting the areas.<sup>719</sup> Yet through the end of 1946, American officials refused an explicit statement of support for the United Kingdom and of commitment to defend British security.<sup>720</sup> Even as the United States began considering additional aid to Greece and Turkey in the face of continued Soviet pressure, American officials concluded that “it seems preferable for Great Britain to assume the obligation of providing military equipment and munitions whenever necessary” to both.<sup>721</sup> The United States, in other words, would only act if the United Kingdom proved unable to do so. The American effort to buck-pass and the failure of ready cooperation despite mutual democracy and an institutionalized relationship is more in line with Realist Decline Theory than Democratic Peace Theory or Institutionalist Theory.

#### D. Military Policy

American military policy paralleled diplomatic policy. To sustain a spheres of influence strategy, American wartime diplomacy committed the United States to a rapid withdrawal from Europe after the end of the war. After Roosevelt’s death, Truman embraced this approach.<sup>722</sup> Initially, the United States sought a rapid withdrawal to free-up units for the fight against Japan. After Japan’s defeat, however, U.S. retrenchment accelerated to meet public demands for conversion to a peacetime footing and effort to avoid entrapment to avoid entrapment with a perfidious, imperial United Kingdom; notably, the notion of the United Kingdom as untrustworthy and not fully democratic contradicts democratic peace predictions.<sup>723</sup> The resulting drawdown of American forces was therefore even more rapid than initially planned. Where the United States had nearly 3.1 million troops in Europe in spring 1945, it had 335,000 troops in theater one year later, while those that remained were in a low state of readiness.<sup>724</sup>

The American withdrawal occurred despite British opposition. British leaders viewed maintenance of American military forces in Europe as the best way of deterring Soviet threats to Europe and preventing Britain from engaging in a potentially futile effort at balancing the Soviets.<sup>725</sup> American strategists disagreed. Not only did American policymakers question the necessity of balancing the USSR, but if a fight came, then American military strategy was premised on a modified version of its strategy in World War Two.<sup>726</sup> As Ross details, through

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<sup>718</sup> Ovendale, *Alliance*, 41.

<sup>719</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*, 236–239, 246–249; Yasamee and Hamilton, *DBPO 1:7*, 102–105, 165–169; H. J. Yasamee and M.E. Pelly, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 1, Volume 6: Eastern Europe August 1945 - April 1946* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1991), 305–312, 345–353.

<sup>720</sup> Peter Boyle, “The British Foreign Office View of Soviet-American Relations, 1945–46,” *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 3 (1979): 317; Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 300–301. Even Gaddis, who sees more continuity than change in American policy from 1946-1947, acknowledges that the scope of the American commitment to Europe (and thus Britain) expanded only after late 1946; see Gaddis, “Turning Point.”

<sup>721</sup> This quote is taken from a memorandum on Turkey, but mirrors the sentiment for Greece; United States Department of State, *FRUS 1946: Near East*, 244, 896.

<sup>722</sup> Sheetz, “Exit Strategies,” 18; Dobbs, *Six Months*, 47.

<sup>723</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, chap. 6.

<sup>724</sup> Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans: 1945-1950* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1996), 11; Gibson, “Patterns of Demobilization,” 82; Sparrow, *Personnel Demobilization*, 321.

<sup>725</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*, 124–125; United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Potsdam I*, 67–78.

<sup>726</sup> On expectations of Anglo-American-Soviet cooperation, see State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, “Basis for the Formulation of a U.S. Military Policy,” 19 September 1945, in Thomas Etzold and John L. Gaddis, eds., *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 40.

1946 U.S. planners believed that any great power war would begin with a fight between Britain and the Soviet Union.<sup>727</sup> In Europe, British forces and available West European units would delay Soviet troops as long as possible. This would end in Soviet forces overrunning the continent, but would give Britain a window to mobilize.<sup>728</sup> In the Middle East, meanwhile, British units would stage a fighting retreat before lengthy Soviet supply lines forced a halt. It was only at this point, after Britain absorbed the immediate Soviet attack, American air and naval forces would deploy to Britain's aid. In particular, U.S. air power would stage from bases in Britain, Iran, and Egypt to strike at Soviet industrial and military targets. This would eventually attrite Soviet strength and, if needed, pave the way for an amphibious assault on the Soviet Union itself to force a capitulation.<sup>729</sup> Until this point, however, the United States would remain outside Europe.

Contrary to what Institutional Theory expects for a highly institutionalized Anglo-American relationship, Britain occupied an uneasy place in U.S. war plans. Instead, it better matches one of the core predictions of Realist Decline Theory, namely, that the United States will try to avoid an automatic commitment to the United Kingdom so long as Britain retains a robust posture. First, rather than sustain an Anglo-American military alliance that would automatically commit the United States to help Britain, American strategy remained opaque on whether the U.S. would intervene in a timely manner to actively defend Britain and West European security. This approach left Britain to bear the initial Soviet attack.<sup>730</sup> Moreover, with Western Europe conquered and assigned to Soviet control, Britain would be subject to Soviet air attacks and confront the prospect of even more damage to the British Isles than had occurred in the 1939-1945.<sup>731</sup> Second, although the United States might intervene at some point, Britain could not be confident over the level or timing of the U.S. commitment.<sup>732</sup> This might allow the USSR a window to gain at Britain's expense (if it could coerce Britain or achieve victory before the U.S. intervened), and required British strategists to act as if the United States might not get involved.<sup>733</sup> Finally, because American intervention might be contingent on Britain making a good showing against the Soviets, British policymakers felt compelled to 1) keep Soviet forces out of Western Europe for as long as possible, and 2) preserve air bases in the Middle East that could strike the Soviet Union.<sup>734</sup> Collectively, American strategy left Britain on the horns of a dilemma: not strong enough to defeat the USSR in battle, it nevertheless needed to balance intensely to deter the USSR short of war and hold out long enough to garner American support if hostilities erupted. At a time of British weakness, American military strategy therefore did just enough to offer Britain some hope for the future without reducing Britain's military burden.

Three other American decisions in 1945-1946 suggest American Moderate Support for Britain and buttress Realist Decline Theory. First, the United States significantly reduced the activities of the combined boards following Germany's surrender, and effectively terminated

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<sup>727</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 31.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, .

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-33, 55-57.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 29.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, 10; Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 279-284.

<sup>732</sup> Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 285-86.

<sup>733</sup> This was a concern into 1947; Ovendale, *Alliance*, 67-70.

<sup>734</sup> See, e.g., Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 172, 275.



joint military coordination altogether after Japan's surrender.<sup>735</sup> This decision contradicts a core institutionalist insight, namely, that once the United States and United Kingdom are institutionally bound to one another, they should try to sustain the status quo. Just the opposite occurred. British efforts to restart military coordination were rejected as American military planners told their British counterparts that "Matters relating to post-war armies are [. . .] not susceptible to combined military commitments. Any arrangements which the British wish to make on these subjects are beyond the purview of the United States Chiefs of Staff and should be taken up on the governmental level."<sup>736</sup>

The decision to reduce Anglo-American cooperation was a strategic move by American policymakers to avoid the appearance of Anglo-American front against the USSR.<sup>737</sup> This follows Realist Decline Theory's prediction that rising states will avoid intensive means of support if doing so threatens to isolate, antagonize, and cause a rivalry or war with another great power. In practice, escalating Soviet-American antagonism over Greece, Turkey, and Iran in late 1945-1946 compelled U.S. military planners to reach out to their British counterparts and restart staff talks.<sup>738</sup> However, these activities occurred in secret and appear to have been an independent decision by the U.S. Joint Chiefs not sanctioned by Truman and his advisors.<sup>739</sup> As such, it remained opaque the extent to which the United States was committed to preventing other states from pressuring Britain and trying to gain at the United Kingdom's expense.<sup>740</sup> Ultimately, it was only in the midst of the Greek and Turkish crises in late 1946 that Truman agreed to a British proposal to restart Anglo-American military planning.<sup>741</sup> Yet even then, "there was no commitment by the United States to come to Britain's assistance if war broke out."<sup>742</sup> On balance, the waxing and waning of Anglo-American military planning is indicative of Moderate Support and Realist Decline Theory: by limiting the Anglo-American military relationship even at a working level, the United States limited the degree to which Britain could depend on the United States, the extent to which the United States was committed to protecting Britain, and the risk of offending the USSR.

Second, as the United States acquired overseas military bases after the Second World War, it avoided bases in and around Europe. Despite pushing for basing rights and access to facilities in South America, the Pacific, Africa, the Persian Gulf, and the subcontinent, the nearest American bases to Europe were planned for Iceland.<sup>743</sup> By virtue of this system, the United States would not find itself automatically committed to a fight in Europe and could decide whether to come to Britain's defense. The dilemma posed by the ambiguous American

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<sup>735</sup> The Combined Chiefs of Staff was not formally ended, but it ceased to function as a planning and coordinating body; Bullock, *Bevin*, 124; Elisabeth Barker, *The British Between the Superpowers, 1945-50* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 54-55. Thanks also to Mark Stoler for help clarifying this point.

<sup>736</sup> Quote from an American Chiefs of Staff planning paper for the Potsdam Conference; see Office, U.S. Secretary of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Papers and Minutes of the Terminal Conference, July 1945* (Washington, 1945), 95, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/utills/getfile/collection/p4013coll8/id/3692/filename/3702.pdf>.

<sup>737</sup> Barker, *Between*, 15.

<sup>738</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 264-265.

<sup>739</sup> R. Bullen and M.E. Pelly, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series 1, Volume 4: Britain and America: Atomic Energy Bases, and Food 12 December 1945-31 July 1946* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1987), 93-96.

<sup>740</sup> Barker, *Between*, 55.

<sup>741</sup> Anderson, *Cold War*, 139-140; Ovendale, *Alliance*, 46.

<sup>742</sup> Baylis, *Pragmatism*, 82.

<sup>743</sup> Elliott V. Converse III, *Circling the Earth: United States Plans for a Postwar Overseas Military Base System, 1942-1948* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2005), 107, 113, 135-136.

commitment to Britain continued as British planners could not count on American assistance, weakening deterrence. American behavior thus poses problems for Democratic Peace Theory because it left a fellow democracy vulnerable to coercion by a non-democratic Soviet Union. It also contradicts Institutional Theory's expectation that embedded rising states will avoid passing the military buck to a declining state that leave a declining state increasingly weak, vulnerable, and thus susceptible to incentives for defection.

Finally, the United States moved in 1945-1946 to limit British access to nuclear weapons and nuclear technology. At a time when nuclear weapons and technology were regarded as the scientific and technological frontier, American efforts to limit British access to the resource epitomizes Moderate Support: rather than use the most intensive means to support Britain, the United States avoided a costly commitment.

American nuclear policy in 1945-1946 was a change from wartime arrangements. Previously, Britain and the United States collaborated in developing nuclear technologies and the first nuclear weapons, and used the combined boards to help coordinate their activities.<sup>744</sup> Collaboration culminated in a 1943 agreement that, "Full collaboration between the United States and the British Government in developing [nuclear technology] for military and commercial purposes shall continue after the defeat of Japan unless and until terminated by joint agreement."<sup>745</sup> Immediately after Japan's surrender, however, Truman imposed a moratorium on sharing nuclear information with foreign countries, including Britain, arguing that, "it was important to retain the advantage which possession of the bomb has given us."<sup>746</sup> Seeking the expected full-partnership, Attlee insisted on a meeting with Truman to resolve the issue. Meeting in November 1945, the two sides reached an agreement pledging "full and effective cooperation in the field of atomic energy" and promised to continue wartime technological boards to develop nuclear knowledge.<sup>747</sup> In practice, however, the November agreement had little effect on American policy: the United States was willing to share "basic scientific principles" that were well known to scientists, while denying "practical know-how" in developing nuclear technology and weapons.<sup>748</sup> By mid-1946, even this cooperation faltered as remaining members of the Combined Planning Committee "reported difficulties in getting scientific and technical information from the Americans."<sup>749</sup> Subsequent passage of the 1946 McMahon Act, which classified all nuclear technical information as a "born secret," punctuated the end of Anglo-American nuclear sharing.<sup>750</sup> These results contradict institutionalist arguments suggesting that the high levels of Anglo-American institutionalization should sustain military cooperation postwar; they also pose problems for democratic peace predictions suggesting the United States and United Kingdom should bargain in a "spirit of fairness" – meaning, the United States is not expected to renege on wartime nuclear deals. They confirm, however, Realist Decline Theory in showing that rising states avoid intensive support with declining states that retain a robust posture.

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<sup>744</sup> Barker, *Between*, 27–28; John Baylis, "Exchanging Nuclear Secrets: Laying the Foundations of the Anglo-American Nuclear Relationship," *Diplomatic History* 25, no. 1 (January 2001): 35.

<sup>745</sup> Quoted in Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 213.

<sup>746</sup> Truman, *Memoirs 1945*, 524; Raymond Dawson and Richard Rosecrance, "Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance," *World Politics* 19, no. 1 (October 1966): 22.

<sup>747</sup> Truman, *Memoirs 1945*, 544.

<sup>748</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 214; Anderson, *Cold War*, 97.

<sup>749</sup> Barker, *Between*, 53; Goldberg, "The Atomic Origins of the British Nuclear Deterrent," 413.

<sup>750</sup> Barker, *Between*, 76.

American policy posed problems for Britain. British policymakers had counted on nuclear weapons to offset Soviet manpower and industrial advantages.<sup>751</sup> Furthermore, at a time when nuclear weapons were the cutting edge of science and technology, nuclear cooperation was expected to be an entry into deeper Anglo-American military and political cooperation.<sup>752</sup> With nuclear cooperation at a standstill, both options were stymied. Instead, Britain began to pursue an independent nuclear program starting in late 1945-1946, using what resources it spare to acquire nuclear weapons even though the “task would both much longer and more costly” absent American collaboration.<sup>753</sup> As predicted by my theory, a Moderate Support strategy emerged that saw limited degrees of American nuclear cooperation with the United Kingdom alongside efforts to avoid deeper forms of collaboration.<sup>754</sup>

#### E. Rationales

American policymakers offered two sets of arguments in support of their Moderate Support strategy. The first argument was made most prominently in the debates over the British loan and held that the United States needed to support Britain to give life to the Bretton Woods institutions, ensure the IMF's viability, and revive global trade. This reasoning corresponds with Institutionalist Theory's prediction that policymakers will support a declining state to ensure the viability of multilateral institutions, and was most prominent among members of the State and Treasury Departments in 1945-1946. Assistant Secretary of State Will Clayton, who played a critical role in generating support for a loan to Britain, summarized this perspective in a note to Treasury Secretary Fred Vinson, arguing that “the British financial problem is [. . .] the greatest present barrier to rapid progress towards free multilateral payments and [. . .] the ultimate success of our economic foreign program.”<sup>755</sup> Hence, as he later wrote, “the main purpose [of aid . . .] is to ensure that the loan brings about the maximum development of trade on a non-discriminatory basis” by fostering economic multilateralism via Bretton Woods.<sup>756</sup> Truman subscribed to this logic as well, writing in his memoirs that peace and prosperity “were best served by the elimination of artificial barriers to trade” and the best means to this end was for the United States “to provide financial assistance for two or three years of transition” to economic multilateralism.<sup>757</sup> This required the United States to give sufficient aid that Britain would be able to participate in Bretton Woods, but not so much that Britain could take American aid, recover its financial position, and then shirk on implementing the Bretton Woods accords.<sup>758</sup> Aid to Britain, as Leffler writes, was a way of “weaning [Britain] to a multilateral world order”.<sup>759</sup>

However, the need to create and sustain international institutions was a minor consideration. More important were U.S. security calculations and the desire to 1) preserve the United Kingdom as a potential ally in Europe without 2) finding itself chain-ganged into a conflict with the Soviet Union. This follows Realist Decline Theory's predictions that multipolarity breeds support out of the need to preserve future alliance options, while also

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<sup>751</sup> Anderson, *Cold War*, 78–79; Bullock, *Bevin*, 188.

<sup>752</sup> Barker, *Between*, 28.

<sup>753</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 215.

<sup>754</sup> S. J. Ball, “Military Nuclear Relations Between the United States and Great Britain Under the Terms of the McMahon Act, 1946-1958,” *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (June 1995): 439–454.

<sup>755</sup> Fredrick Dobney and Will Clayton, *Selected Papers of Will Clayton*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 147.

<sup>756</sup> Quoted in Woods, *Changing*, 358.

<sup>757</sup> Truman, *Memoirs 1945*, 478, 480; also Achenson, *Present at the Creation*, 132–133.

<sup>758</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Commonwealth*, 145–147.

<sup>759</sup> Leffler, *Preponderance*, 63.

causing the rising state to wait for the changing distribution of power to erode a decliner's ability to threaten the riser's security. Moreover, and as my argument predicts, policymakers were aware of and framed their arguments in reference to these tradeoffs.

Even as the financial deal with Britain was forming, Acheson justified aid to Britain by noting that the cancellation of Lend-Lease, "knocked the financial bottom out of the whole allied military position." At a time when the situation in Europe remained unsettled, it would have been better to continue Lend-Lease until Britain could assess its postwar requirements and convert to a peacetime economic and military footing; Britain needed American aid to help stabilize postwar Europe.<sup>760</sup> George Kennan similarly concluded, in Woods' description, that, "Moscow was counting on an economic struggle between the United States and United Kingdom to weaken the capitalist world." In response, State Department officials began to argue that financial aid to Britain was necessary to rebut the Soviet plan and prevent "an even more adventurist policy by Moscow."<sup>761</sup> Members of Congress were blunter still, with Representative Christian Herter explaining to Clayton that "economic arguments in favor of the loan are on the whole much less convincing...than the feeling that the loan may serve us in good stead in holding up [. . .] a nation whom we may need badly as a friend because of impending Russian troubles."<sup>762</sup> Ultimately, American aid would both help Britain organize the Western sphere and tied Britain over until the point where it could resume a leading role in European politics.<sup>763</sup>

The security logic for supporting Britain was equally clear outside of the loan negotiations. In the run-up to the Potsdam conference, Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy argued that a war between the USSR and Britain would result in the Soviet conquest of Europe. This would be unacceptable to the United States and would require efforts to "defend Britain."<sup>764</sup> By 1946, The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC, forerunner of the National Security Council) was even clearer, offering, "if Soviet Russia is to be denied the hegemony of Europe, the United Kingdom must continue in existence as the principal power in Western Europe economically and militarily. The U.S. should therefore explore its relationship with Great Britain" and provide assistance as necessary "within the framework of the United Nations."<sup>765</sup> Leahy, refining his earlier views, also warned that "defeat or disintegration of the British Empire would eliminate from Eurasia the last bulwark of resistance between the United States and Soviet expansion" and required the United States to prevent further losses to British power. Leahy's argument was later codified in U.S. plans.<sup>766</sup> Ultimately, a classified 1945 study by a group of international relations scholars captured the argument well. Despite Britain's decline, it was a "necessity to support the British position in Europe" precisely because "every accretion in British [. . .] strength reduces the burden on the United States in the postwar period" and maximizes the assistance Britain could provide in a future war against either Germany or the

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<sup>760</sup> Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 122.

<sup>761</sup> Woods, *Changing*, 378.

<sup>762</sup> Quoted in Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 245. House Speaker Sam Rayburn made an identical argument; Woods, *Changing*, 358.

<sup>763</sup> Avey, "Confronting Soviet Power," 162; Gaddis, *Origins*, 342–343.

<sup>764</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Potsdam I*, 265.

<sup>765</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946: Volume I, General* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 1170. At the time, the United Nations in the process of standing up.

<sup>766</sup> Quoted in Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 307; Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), 264.

USSR. Thus, “a decision to regard the continued existence, prosperity, and strength of an independent, democratic, and friendly Great Britain” was “a vital interest to be defended.”<sup>767</sup>

However, too much support for Britain was problematic. As Realist Decline Theory predicts, U.S. policymakers worried that intense American support for a militarily robust Britain would antagonize the USSR and chain-gang the United States into a sustained rivalry with the Soviet Union. Not only would this risk involving the United States in an unwanted war, but it would stymie plans to withdraw from Europe and help keep the peace by adjudicating between Soviet and United Kingdom. Leahy’s 1945 analysis of Anglo-American-Soviet relations is instructive. While arguing that the United States should “exert its utmost efforts [. . .] to promote a spirit of mutual cooperation between Britain, Russia, and ourselves,” the analysis ends with a stark warning:

The greatest likelihood of eventual conflict between Britain and Russia would seem to grow out of either nation initiating attempts to build up its strength, by seeking to attach to herself parts of Europe to the disadvantage [. . .] of her potential adversary. Having regard to the inherent suspicions of the Russians, to present Russia with any agreement on such matter between the British and ourselves, prior to consultation with Russia, might well result in a train of events leading to the situation we most wish to avoid [i.e., a collapse in Soviet-American relations].<sup>768</sup>

In short, the United States needed to avoid intensely supporting for fear of appearing to foment an Anglo-American axis targeting the Soviet Union.

Leahy was not alone in making this argument. Before Potsdam, Ambassador Davies warned Truman that British policymakers were trying to mobilize “American manpower and resources to sustain Britain’s ‘lead’ in Europe.” Unless the United States desired a break in Soviet-American relations, the United States needed to avoid following the British line.<sup>769</sup> And later in 1946, former Vice President and Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace counseled that the U.S. “must not let British balance of power manipulations determine whether and when the United States gets into war” with the USSR.<sup>770</sup> The United States would back Britain, but it needed to do so cautiously lest support for Britain spoil Soviet-American relations.

Nor did a rising Soviet threat itself drive America into Britain’s arms. Even as Soviet-American relations worsened in 1945-1946, analysts ranging from State Department bureaucrats to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal to presidential advisor Harry Hopkins warned Truman against “British balance of power machinations in Europe and [. . . Britain’s] obvious desire to enlist American might in the creation of a solid bloc opposing the Russians.”<sup>771</sup> Even if, as analysts began to fear from mid-1946 onward, the USSR was committed to expanding its power where and when it could, an overly intense American commitment would deepen Soviet-American hostility and draw the United States into an Anglo-Soviet contest that would poorly serve American interests. At a time when Britain retained sufficient capabilities to deter Soviet predation, it was important for the United States not to commit itself to a course of action that

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<sup>767</sup> Frederick S. Dunn et al., *A Security policy for Postwar America*, March 8, 1945, Rockefeller Archive Center, Rockefeller Foundation, projects, RG 1.1, series 200.S, box 417, folder 4948. Thanks go to David Ekbladh for supplying the document. On its subsequent classification, see Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 227-230.

<sup>768</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1945: Potsdam 1*, 265.

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>770</sup> Quoted in Anderson, *Cold War*, 153.

<sup>771</sup> Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership*, 137; Watt, *John Bull*, 104-105.

would exacerbate Soviet-American problems and propel the United States permanently into Europe. Towards this end, the State Department recommended in April 1946 against “a blank check of American support [. . .] for every interest of the British Empire.” Instead, American support for Britain should occur “only in respect of areas and interests [. . .] vital to the maintenance of the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth of nations as a great power” and be limited to moderate economic and political backing, with military assistance to be provided only “as necessary.”<sup>772</sup> Otherwise, and as the 1945 scholars study argued, “where British diplomatic activity menaces Soviet-American relations, the divergence of British and American policies should be made clear”: the United States would not tether its cart to the British horse if doing so threatened Soviet-American relations.<sup>773</sup>

#### F. Assessment

American strategy towards the United Kingdom in 1945-1946 provides evidence for all three theories examined in this project. Overall, however, Realist Decline Theory outperforms its competitors. On the one hand, Democratic Peace Theory, Institutional Theory, and Realist Decline Theory each correctly predicted the United States would adopt a Moderate Support strategy that saw the United States use cautious means to buttress Great Britain as a great power. As shown, this strategy encompassed limited economic and military assistance, as well as generic signs of American diplomatic support that stopped short of an Anglo-American alliance. Additionally, and as the above pattern suggests, American support for the United Kingdom was episodic – rather than consistent American support for Britain, American engagement and cooperation with the declining United Kingdom was spotty as British officials often had to cajole, entice, and implore their American counterparts to come to Britain’s assistance. Even then, this effort failed to engender the substantial economic assistance, military backing, and nuclear cooperation British strategists (and some American officials) concluded Britain needed to remain a great power in the postwar system. Overall, the United States was willing to help Britain, but not at significant material or political cost to the United States.

However, the course and logic of American strategy provides evidence against institutionalist and democratic peace arguments while offering much additional evidence in support of my theory. Institutional Theory has difficulty explaining why American support for the United Kingdom emerged *despite* the drawdown of Anglo-American institutionalized cooperation. At a basic level, Institutional Theory sees institutions as self-sustaining mechanisms to sustain great power cooperation amidst changes in the distribution of power. As shown, however, the United States eliminated many of the Anglo-American combined boards that were the primary basis of Anglo-American institutionalized cooperation after the end of the war. Afterwards, the United States either worked around or sidelined those that remained by refusing to coordinate military plans through the Combined Chiefs of Staff or share nuclear technology as called for in wartime agreements through joint technical boards.

Nor do institutions seem to have provided the two sides significant information about the distribution of power and helped the two parties negotiate. Despite the institutionalized wartime relationship and the postwar creation of the Bretton Woods institutions, Anglo-American economic cooperation was stymied by debates over the strength of the British economy and the credibility of British claims to weakness. Indeed, it was only as worries over what a weak Britain would mean for British security that policymakers overcame reluctance to backstop Britain’s economy. If anything, American worries that Britain was trying to avoid embracing the

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<sup>772</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1946: General*, 1170.

<sup>773</sup> Dunn, *Security Policy*, 10. Also Woods, *Changing*, 358; Ovendale, “European Cold War.”

Bretton Woods regimes led the United States to limit support for Britain, stymie the negotiating process, and drive hard bargains to ensure Britain had no choice but to embrace American policies. And as tensions mounted with the Soviet Union in 1945-1946, American policymakers denied British requests to coordinate policies and take a firm stance against the Soviet Union, despite Anglo-American binding via the CFM. In short, there is little evidence that American policy towards the United Kingdom was either driven by or filtered through the institutions that might have bred American support for the declining United Kingdom.

Democratic Peace Theory faces similar problems. Democratic Peace Theory predicted the United States and United Kingdom would readily reach an understanding in which the United States supported British security and protected British power: thanks to the transparency of democratic regimes, Britain should have easily been able to signal its power and interests to the United States, while the United States quickly responded to preserve a fellow democracy. Due to the common set of liberal values and norms shared by democracies, the theory also expected widespread popular and political backing in the United States for supporting Britain. None of these predictions were borne out. On one level, Anglo-American bargaining over American economic and military assistance was fraught with misunderstanding and misperception. In both economic and military negotiations, American officials remained suspicious of British motivations and, in the economic arena, believed British policymakers were overstating their weaknesses. This discord meant that the United States was leery of supporting Britain and did so only under duress: economic aid only emerged when it appeared British weakness would hinder American security, while the limited military cooperation witnessed only developed as crises with the USSR erupted in 1946. Ultimately, Anglo-American discord left British policymakers feeling the United States was overly stringy with its embrace of British interests, while American policymakers felt British demands were excessive. The transparent interactions, community of interests, and easy bargaining that are supposed to mark democratic relations are missing.

Realist Decline Theory, on the other hand, performs well. As noted, it correctly predicts the outcome, namely, a strategy of Moderate Support. More importantly, it captures both the logic undergirding American behavior and the suspicions underlying Anglo-American relations.

As the theory predicts, American strategists wanted to preserve Great Britain as a great power. This goal was intimately connected with American plans to withdraw from the continent as expeditiously as possible and thus to rely upon Britain to take the lead in managing West European security. To obtain this end, the United States provided Britain with limited economic aid via the Anglo-American loan, revised or avoided actions (such as the cancellation of Lend-Lease) that obviously undercut British power, and committed American military power on an ad hoc basis to protect British security when another state appeared on the verge of gaining at the USSR's expense. And as it became clear that American withdrawal plans might not be enough to sustain cooperation among the wartime allies, American policymakers came to recognize that protecting Britain was necessary to keep Britain as a potential ally against the Soviet Union in case of another war. It was also believed necessary to keep Britain out of the Soviet camp lest the USSR have free rein to dominate Europe. Thus, the United States sought to prop up British capabilities.

Nevertheless, the United States was unwilling to use intense means in pursuit of this goal. As my theory predicts, the United Kingdom's robust military posture left American policymakers worried that too close of an association with the United Kingdom would threaten and antagonize the Soviet Union by appearing to form an Anglo-American front against the USSR. This might lead to rivalry, war, and hinder efforts to limit the American role in Europe.

Equally important, intense support might give rise to perverse British incentives as the United Kingdom used American backing to protect the remnants of the British Empire, or took an overly-assertive stance against the USSR on the belief that Britain had a blank check of support against the USSR. At a time when Britain was militarily strong enough to deter but not defeat the USSR, and given the American desire to avoid a World War Three, avoiding sustained and intense American backing seemed the best way to limit and/or rein in British ambitions. Thus, with the United Kingdom seeking an intense American commitment and the United States looking to avoid this responsibility, Anglo-American relations were subject to significantly more tension and ambivalence than is often appreciated. Overall, concerned with Soviet sensitivities and recognizing that a firm American commitment to a militarily robust United Kingdom could rebound to the United States' disadvantage, American strategists looked to square the circle by using cautious means to protect the United Kingdom. Both the outcome and process match my argument.

## **VI. Soviet Strategy and British Decline**

The preceding section provided evidence that Realist Decline Theory outperforms competing accounts in explaining American strategy towards the United Kingdom in 1945-1946. This section continues testing my argument by assessing its claims against alternate explanations vis-à-vis Anglo-Soviet relations. Given the divergence in Anglo-Soviet regime type, this is a particularly hard test for Democratic Peace Theory against my argument. Due to the limited array of sources on Soviet policy, however, I break with the prior analytic structure by treating diplomatic policy, military policy, and rationales together rather than individually.

### **A. Soviet Strategy: Moderate Support**

The early Cold War is often portrayed as a Soviet-American clash borne of Soviet aggrandizement. Seeking to expand its power, the Soviet Union ostensibly threatened Western Europe, challenged Southeastern Europe, and initiated military crises looking to improve the Soviet position. This view dominated traditional historiography and is equally prominent in post-revisionist syntheses.<sup>774</sup>

However, two decades of access to Soviet and former Eastern Bloc archives suggests the popular view of Soviet aggrandizement needs reassessment. Although any judgments are preliminary due to the limited set of English-language documents and studies, my analysis suggests that the Soviet Union acted with a large degree of restraint and with a substantial interest in sustaining great power cooperation in the early postwar period. As a result, its policy towards the United Kingdom mirrors that of the United States: the Soviet Union adopted a Moderate Support strategy that 1) prevented the United Kingdom from growing weaker, 2) passed on opportunities to grow its power at the United Kingdom's expense, but 3) acted cautiously towards these goals. In diplomatic affairs, the Soviet Union went along with Anglo-American plans to divide Germany into spheres of influence. The Soviet leadership also upheld wartime agreements to divide Southeastern Europe into British and Soviet spheres of influence and reined in the activities of the European communist parties. Militarily, meanwhile, the Soviet Union appears to have been most interested in consolidating its hold on Eastern Europe while demobilizing its military, rather than posing a military threat to the United Kingdom. All in all, the USSR both avoided steps that complicated Britain's situation and adhered to military and political agreements that promised to preserve the status quo in Europe. There is no doubt that

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<sup>774</sup> Representative is Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 15–25.



British policymakers worried about the Soviet challenge, but new research suggests this was not for want of Soviet efforts to the contrary.

## B. Strategy and Arguments

### i. *Postwar Plans*

Postwar Soviet policy towards Britain was presented in a series of analyses over the course of 1944 through early 1945. At Stalin's instruction, former Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, Andrei Gromyko, and Ivan Maisky developed a series of studies to guide postwar Soviet relations with the other members of the wartime alliance.<sup>775</sup> The final reports, delivered before the February 1945 Yalta Conference, envisioned an opportunity for Anglo-Soviet cooperation in postwar Europe for expressly the reasons Realist Decline Theory predicts. First, both states had a common interest in preventing Germany's resurgence and the threat of another war. If Germany remained the focus, then the USSR, United Kingdom, and United States could sustain wartime cooperation and smoothly manage European security affairs.<sup>776</sup> However, it was also possible that the United States, as a rising and "dynamic imperialist" power, would prey upon the declining Britain before going after the USSR.<sup>777</sup> This situation would end great power cooperation, but also gave Britain and the Soviet Union a common interest in preserving one another to balance the United States. As my theory predicts, Soviet policymakers thus argued that the prospective German and American threats meant that, "it will be to the USSR's interest to keep Britain as a strong power".<sup>778</sup>

To do so, Soviet analysts recommended dividing Europe into Soviet and British spheres of interest. Under this solution, the USSR would control "Finland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Slav countries of the Balkans, and also Turkey" while Britain dominated "Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, and Greece;" Germany, Italy, Denmark, and Italy would be a neutral zone.<sup>779</sup> Except for Sweden and Turkey, where the Soviets allowed they might have to "compromise" on their objectives, the Soviet sphere only encompassed areas Soviet forces currently occupied. This suggests Soviet leaders neither planned for expansion, nor saw expansion as strategically necessary. The British sphere, meanwhile, encompassed nearly the whole of Western Europe deemed crucial to British security.<sup>780</sup> What would emerge, as Pechatnov concludes, was "an Anglo-Soviet strategic condominium in Europe."

### ii. *Backing a Spheres of Influence Solution*

Soviet behavior followed these guidelines. Pleshakov and Zubok, who are otherwise critical of Soviet behavior, observe that "at no point did Stalin's demands and ambitions in 1945-1946 exceed the maximum zone of responsibility discussed by Litvinov and Maisky [. . .] in some cases, Stalin's moves in the international arena were more modest in scope."<sup>781</sup> First, Stalin agreed to a November 1944 British proposal to divide Southeastern Europe into Soviet and British sphere of influence, with Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria assigned to the USSR, Greece

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<sup>775</sup> Silvio Pons, "In the Aftermath of the Age of Wars: The Impact of World War II on Soviet Foreign Policy," in *Russia in the Age of Wars*, ed. Silvio Pons and Andrea Romano (Milan: Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 2000), 281; Vojtech Mastny, "Soviet Plans for Postwar Europe," in *The Failure of Peace in Europe, 1943-48*, ed. Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 63.

<sup>776</sup> Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 29-35; Parrish, "USSR and Security Dilemma," 119-132.

<sup>777</sup> Pechatnov, *Big Three*, 4.

<sup>778</sup> Quoted in Filitov, "Problems," 12.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>780</sup> Pons, "Aftermath," 300.

<sup>781</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin's Cold War*, 38.

given to the United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia under joint control.<sup>782</sup> Yugoslavia's subsequent liberation by Communist partisans vitiated the joint influence proposal, but the Soviet Union adhered to the agreement in Greece.<sup>783</sup> Notably, Stalin repeatedly denied aid to Greek Communists waging an insurgency against the Greek government while criticizing the Greek Communist effort, telling one colleague in January 1945: "I advised not starting this fighting in Greece [. . .] They were evidently counting on the Red Army's coming down to the Aegean. We cannot do that [. . .] The Greeks have acted foolishly."<sup>784</sup> Moreover, once Stalin discovered that Yugoslavia was the primary backer of Greek communist forces, he pressured Yugoslav leaders to end the assistance, remarking it was "necessary to be circumspect in relation to foreign policy questions [. . .] it is necessary to avoid big demands on neighboring countries."<sup>785</sup>

Second, and in contrast to the Anglo-Soviet discord predicted by Democratic Peace Theory, the USSR embraced steps to buttress Great Britain's position in Western Europe. As noted earlier, the Soviet Union agreed to early American plans to divide Germany into Soviet and Western sections. Although a divided Germany modified Litvinov's plan to keep Germany neutral between Soviet and British spheres, the idea of dividing the country so both states remained focused on the common German threat and maintained influence in the country followed the spirit of the 1944-1945 plan. Later, as Trachtenberg shows, the spheres of influence plan collapsed when the Soviet Union would not agree to Anglo-American pressure to moderate Soviet reparations demands and allow Germany's economic revival.<sup>786</sup> This is true, but it is important to note that the issues over which the Soviets fell out with the U.S. and Britain – Germany's economic revival and reparations – revised the initial Soviet-U.S.-U.K. deal on Germany proposed by Byrnes and violated the reparations agreement reached at Yalta. The Soviets only objected when it appeared the Western powers 1) would backtrack from long-standing arrangements to help the USSR gain reparations from Germany for wartime damage, and 2) try to avoid a spheres of influence arrangement and thus threaten to integrate Germany into the Western orbit.<sup>787</sup>

Even then, the Soviet response was restrained. First, and as Institutional Theory predicts, Soviet leaders expressed interest in sustaining Anglo-American-Soviet consultations via the CFM despite criticizing the new Anglo-American policies.<sup>788</sup> Second, and more importantly, the Soviet response to growing great power tensions was to consolidate control in its zone of occupation,<sup>789</sup> while soft peddling evidence of Anglo-American-Soviet discord.<sup>790</sup> Missing, in

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<sup>782</sup> Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 217–225; for context, see Bruno Arcidiacono, "Great Britain, the Balkans, and the Division of Europe, 1943-1945," in *The Failure of Peace in Europe, 1943-48*, ed. Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 97–98.

<sup>783</sup> Even then, Stalin advised Tito not to proclaim a provisional government as the United States and Britain would not recognize it, and the Soviets would not support it; Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 235.

<sup>784</sup> Quoted in Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 221; also Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 25–26.

<sup>785</sup> Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe: The Emergence and Development of East-West Conflict, 1939-1953* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 52; quote from Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 235.

<sup>786</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 40–55.

<sup>787</sup> Wettig, *Cold War in Europe*, 102–103.

<sup>788</sup> John Gimbel, *The Origins of the Marshall Plan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 97–140; Geoffrey Roberts, *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2011), 110–113.

<sup>789</sup> Wolfgang Mueller, "Soviet Policy, Political Parties, and the Preparation for Communist Takeovers in Hungary, Germany, and Austria, 1944-1946," *East European Politics & Societies* 24, no. 1 (February 2010): 90–115.

<sup>790</sup> Wettig, *Cold War in Europe*, 106–108; Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 53.

other words, were 1) efforts to organize political opposition to the United States and Britain in the Western occupation zones that would make Anglo-American occupation efforts that much more difficult, and 2) rhetorical challenges to the British and American political positions. Simply put, the Soviets stayed in their zone and tried to avoid a rivalry with the United States and United Kingdom.<sup>791</sup> On balance, it appears the Soviet Union was willing to cooperate by dividing Germany in order to neutralize it and unwilling to challenge British (or American) control. This suggests a Moderate Support strategy for the reasons Realist Decline Theory presents: the USSR accepted deals that would avoid challenges to British security that might force Britain to balance and, as tensions mounted, avoided trying to weaken Britain's control over its section of Germany. On the other hand, this policy is again in contrast to the predatory strategy Democratic Peace Theory predicts should emerge between a rising non-democracy and a declining democracy.

Third, Stalin limited Soviet interference in West European states assigned to the British sphere of influence. Before 1939, Communist parties were active in many West European states. With Communist activities ostensibly directed by the Soviet Union via the Communist International (Comintern), Western leaders feared Communist-led insurrections, worried about growing Soviet influence if these parties gained power at the ballot box, and so took steps to suppress Communist activities. During the war, however, Stalin disbanded the Comintern and refused throughout 1945-1946 to restart its activities.<sup>792</sup> Meanwhile, Stalin supported British and American efforts to reconstitute stable governments in Western Europe. Communist opposition to the Germans during the war left Communist parties, particularly in France and Italy, with significant popular support, such that their opposition could upset postwar West European politics. Stalin avoided this outcome.<sup>793</sup> Beginning in late 1944, the USSR both discouraged Communist parties in France and Italy from opposing Anglo-American efforts, and encouraged local Communist movements to work with other political parties in stabilizing postwar West European politics. Moreover, Soviet pressure for local Communist collaboration continued throughout 1945-1946 despite growing opposition from local Communist leaders and complaints that the USSR was squandering opportunities to undermine British and American influence in Western Europe.<sup>794</sup> Indeed, the USSR attached such importance to this strategy that Stalin eventually criticized the French Communist party for, as Eduard Mark details, "having too confrontational an attitude toward potential allies."<sup>795</sup> The logic, as Pons describes in the Italian case, matches what Realist Decline Theory predicts far more than either institutionalist or democratic peace claims: "A moderate approach by the Italian Communist Party was seen as the best way to preserve a balance of power between the Soviet Union and Great Britain." In short, Stalin dampened Communist party activities as a way of signaling an interest in cooperation with Britain and, by extension, avoid driving the United Kingdom out of the Soviet camp and into American arms.<sup>796</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 93-110.

<sup>792</sup> Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 168-169; Wettig, *Cold War in Europe*, 53, 139.

<sup>793</sup> For Communist popularity, see Donald Sassoon, "The Rise and Fall of West European Communism 1939-48," *Contemporary European History* 1, no. 2 (July 1992): 155-157.

<sup>794</sup> For details, particularly on the Italian case, see Silvio Pons, "Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 13; Sassoon, "West European Communism," 160-161.

<sup>795</sup> Eduard Mark, *Revolution by Degrees Stalin's National-Front Strategy for Europe, 1941-1947*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper 31, February 2001, 35; see also Wettig, *Cold War in Europe*, 31-38.

<sup>796</sup> Pons, "Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe," 9.

To be clear, many scholars surmise that Soviet support for Communist participation in West European governing coalitions was designed to lay the foundation for a long-term Communist takeover.<sup>797</sup> This is a possibility, and Soviet instructions to West European Communists certainly emphasized this goal. However, if a long-term takeover was the Soviet objective, then the strategy of pushing local Communist groups to support ruling regimes seems an odd choice.<sup>798</sup> By helping rebuild postwar societies, the French and Italian parties in particular 1) helped non-Communist parties gain prominence, 2) passed on opportunities to parlay wartime successes into postwar influence by serving as a kingmaker in postwar governments, and 3) helped ensure France and Italy remained in the Western orbit at a time of peak Communist strength. At a minimum, the evidence shows the Soviet Union passing on chances to weaken the British position in Europe by pulling states vital to British security into the Soviet orbit. On the whole, I consider this evidence of Moderate Support for the United Kingdom, as the USSR consciously took steps to avoid worsening British security in Western Europe and adopted positions that facilitated the reconstitution of states critical to British economic and military well-being. Furthermore, considering this policy 1) began before United Kingdom and USSR institutionalized postwar cooperation after Yalta, and 2) continued despite different Anglo-Soviet regime types, this behavior diverges from both democratic peace and institutionalist predictions.

iii. *Reducing Military Competition*

Fourth, Soviet military policy also seems to have been designed to limit the threat posed to Western Europe and thus the extent with which Britain needed to balance the USSR. This behavior again poses a problem for democratic peace arguments, as the Soviet Union was more cooperative and supportive than Democratic Peace Theory predicts. To be clear, Britain correctly recognized that the growth of Soviet military capabilities during the war, coupled with Germany's defeat, left the Soviet Union the largest military power in Europe. As a result, British policymakers developed military plans to balance a possible Soviet military threat.<sup>799</sup> Yet within the structural confines of the postwar period, my research suggests Soviet military policy was far less threatening than appreciated. On one level, and in keeping with the spheres of influence strategy, Soviet forces withdrew from areas assigned to the British or neutral sphere, and even removed forces from areas allocated to the Soviet sphere (including Finland, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria).<sup>800</sup> At the same time, demobilization reduced the size of the Soviet military from 11.3 million personnel at the end of the European war, to 7.5 million by December 1945 and 3 million by mid-1946.<sup>801</sup> Moreover, although the Soviet Union retained a significant force in and around Europe, many of the remaining 25-30 divisions in Eastern Europe and 60 divisions in the western USSR were not combat ready.<sup>802</sup> Many were in the process of converting into garrison or "cadred" units maintained at less than full-strength, while the release of combat veterans undermined the combat potential of remaining forces.<sup>803</sup> Combat potential was also reduced by

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<sup>797</sup> Mark, *Revolution by Degree*; Wettig, *Cold War in Europe*; Douglas J. Macdonald, "Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War: Challenging Realism, Refuting Revisionism," *International Security* 20, no. 3 (Winter 1995): 152-188; Geoffrey Roberts, "Ideology, Calculation, and Improvisation: Spheres of Influence and Soviet Foreign Policy 1939-1945," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1999): 655-673.

<sup>798</sup> Reynolds has a good review of the contrasting interpretations Reynolds, "Division of Europe," 115-116.

<sup>799</sup> Lewis, *Changing Direction*.

<sup>800</sup> Gibson, "Patterns of Demobilization," 209.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*, 200, 213.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-211; Evangelista, "Stalin's Army," 112-114.

political and economic conditions on the ground, as many of the troops found themselves suppressing local insurgencies, engaged in reconstruction project, and forced to administer occupied German.<sup>804</sup> By 1946, Soviet forces were barely adequate for occupation and garrison duties, let alone able to stage an attack against Western Europe.<sup>805</sup>

Reflecting the Soviet decision to limit combat forces in Eastern Europe, recent research by Evangelista, Mastny, Kennedy-Pipe, and Karber and Combs, suggests Soviet strategy in 1945-1946 was geared towards defensive operations in the event of war. Mastny's views are instructive, concluding that "the weight of the fragmentary evidence lends support to [Soviet strategy's] defensive rather than offensive character."<sup>806</sup> On the one hand, more than half of the Soviet tank force in Germany was garrisoned at about one-third strength in late 1945-1946.<sup>807</sup> A large portion of Soviet combat power would therefore be unable to undertake offensive operations without a substantial reinforcement effort. Furthermore, units in the future East Germany were deployed in "small dispersed compounds for peacetime policing" rather than grouped in large formations for high-intensity combat.<sup>808</sup> Above all, Soviet operational plans delineated in November 1946 called for Soviet forces to deploy in three defensive belts 50, 100, and 150 kilometers from the (future) inter-German border in the event of war.<sup>809</sup> In short, having just pushed the German army over 1000 miles across Eastern and Central Europe, the Soviet Union turned around and configured itself (as Evangelista writes) "for defensive operations, rather than the quick march to the English Channel" feared.<sup>810</sup> This is not to say that moves towards a defensive force and a significant demobilization were solely driven by a desire to avoid weakening Britain. However, at a time when Britain was on the ropes, Soviet military choices meant the United Kingdom did not face a worsening military situation, and in some sense posed a more limited threat than otherwise would have been the case. This is precisely what one expects of a Moderate Support strategy.

iv. *Crises? What Crises?*

Fifth, it is important to recognize the limited nature of Soviet pressure on Turkey and Iran during the "crises" with both countries in 1945-1946. As noted above, both countries were important to British security because they guarded the approaches to British air bases in the Middle East that provided the best means to strike the Soviet homeland. In 1945-1946, both countries admittedly came under Soviet pressure. In Iran, the USSR violated an agreement whereby British and Soviet forces stationed in the country to protect wartime supply lines would withdraw by 5 March 1946.<sup>811</sup> In Turkey, meanwhile, the USSR demanded Turkey allow the USSR a military base on the Turkish Straits.<sup>812</sup> British and American analysts alike saw both moves as a Soviet threat to the British position in the Middle East. If true, this would seem to

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<sup>804</sup> Evangelista, "Stalin's Army," 125-132.

<sup>805</sup> Gibson, "Patterns of Demobilization," 214-215.

<sup>806</sup> Vojtech Mastny, "Imaging War in Europe: Soviet Strategic Planning," in *War Plans and Alliances in Europe: Threat Perceptions in the East and West* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 17.

<sup>807</sup> Phillip A. Karber and Jerald A. Combs, "The United States, NATO, and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe: Military Estimates and Policy Options, 1945-1963," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 413.

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>809</sup> Matthew Evangelista, "The 'Soviet Threat': Intentions, Capabilities, and Context," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 444; see also Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 85-86.

<sup>810</sup> Evangelista, "Soviet Threat," 444.

<sup>811</sup> Eduard M. Mark, "Allied Relations in Iran, 1941-1947: The Origins of a Cold War Crisis," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 59, no. 1 (October 1975): 51-63; Gaddis, *Origins*, 309-312.

<sup>812</sup> Melvyn Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 4 (March 1985): 807-825; Gaddis, *Origins*, 336-337.

confirm Democratic Peace Theory's expectation of predation between a rising, non-democratic USSR and declining, democratic United Kingdom.

Both events, however, seem to have been misinterpreted by Western analysts. Despite Western concerns, the Soviet Union withdrew forces from Iran in May 1946 once Iranian leaders signed an agreement allowing the USSR to drill for oil in northern Iran.<sup>813</sup> Aside from the rapidity with which the crisis resolved, that the Soviet Union was apparently driven by a desire to access Iranian oil is ironic: Britain, as well as the United States, desired bases in the Middle East and feared Soviet encroachment because the bases allowed Western air forces to target Soviet oil fields in the Caucasus. Thus, an argument can be made that the British threat to Soviet oil is what compelled the USSR to pressure Iran for access to Iranian oil, which in turn triggered British fears of a Soviet threat. Instead of Soviet aggrandizement, the 1946 Iran crisis may have stemmed from an Anglo-Soviet security dilemma.<sup>814</sup> This seems to disconfirm democratic peace predictions and buttress the Moderate Support coding in line with Realist Decline Theory.

The Turkish crisis falls into a similar category. Soviet pressure on Turkey brought the United Kingdom, United States, and USSR close to war in 1946.<sup>815</sup> After the USSR's demand for a military base on the Turkish Strait was rebuffed by Britain and the United States at the Potsdam Conference, the USSR subsequently went around institutionalized channels and issued a demand for a base directly to Turkey. Notably, circumvention of allied pressure and institutionalized channels of cooperation is problematic for institutionalist arguments.<sup>816</sup> At the time, U.S. and British intelligence reports showed a Soviet military buildup along the Turkish border, and the United States and United Kingdom prepared to mobilize in Turkey's defense.

Drawing on declassified sources, however, Mark shows that reports of the Soviet military buildup were wrong and Soviet force levels constant at the height of the Turkish crisis.<sup>817</sup> Equally important, it is opaque how damaging a Soviet base on the Straits would have been.<sup>818</sup> Even at the time, British and American military assessments concluded that granting the USSR a military base on the Straits was militarily irrelevant: modern air and sea power meant that the Mediterranean could be defended using air bases on Crete, Malta, and other islands in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>819</sup> Although Britain and the United States responded as if the Soviets were acting aggressively, it appears that the Soviet demands were limited and strategically unimportant. Moreover, the crisis resolved in the manner predicted by Realist Decline Theory. That is, having seen limited demands rebuffed and with an Anglo-American axis forming against the USSR, the Soviet Union called off its demands and de-escalated the crisis. On the whole, Soviet behavior does not seem to fit into the predatory mold predicted by Democratic Peace Theory, while the resolution of the crisis seems to accord with predictions from Realist Decline Theory.

v. *Rationales*

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<sup>813</sup> Mark, "Allied Relations," 61–62; United States Department of State, *FRUS 1946: Near East*, 405–406, 413–470. From what I can ascertain, British oilfields were in southern Iran. Thus, wherever the British were, the Soviets were not.

<sup>814</sup> The overwhelming Soviet preoccupation with diversified oil supplies is clear in Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 90–93.

<sup>815</sup> Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 195–196.

<sup>816</sup> Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 260–270, 355–366.

<sup>817</sup> Mark, "The War Scare of 1946 and Its Consequences."

<sup>818</sup> Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War," 809–810.

<sup>819</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1946: Near East*, 857–858; Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 56–58.

Soviet policymakers offered two related arguments in favor of the Moderate Support strategy. First, Soviet policymakers believed it was important to back Britain as a potential ally against the United States in the postwar system. This matches one core prediction from Realist Decline Theory, namely, that support emerges in multipolarity in part because of the attractiveness of preserving a declining state as a partner against future threats. To be clear, Stalin, Molotov, and other key Soviet officials hoped wartime cooperation would continue postwar. In fact, Stalin went so far as to downplay evidence of great power differences by arguing, “at the basis of the alliance [. . .] lie not accidental and transitory motive, but extremely important and long-lasting interests.” If a breakdown did occur, however, Soviet leaders believed it would most likely emerge due to American aggrandizement: owing to the growth of American power during the war, as well as the ingrained capitalist need for new markets, it was possible that the United States would try to continue expanding in the postwar period.<sup>820</sup> American expansion, in turn, could lead to a breakdown in great power relations as the United States isolated and threatened the USSR by “stimulating the resurrection of Germany and Japan [and] building up an anti-Soviet bloc in Europe using such countries as France.”<sup>821</sup>

The Soviet Union would need allies in this situation, and Britain was the obvious candidate. In the Soviet analysis, Britain would be as threatened by American machinations as the Soviet Union. On one level, a primary American postwar objective involved, per Litvinov’s analysis, “opening the doors of the British empire” and gaining access to British markets that would further weaken the United Kingdom.<sup>822</sup> At the same time, British security would be imperiled if American efforts led to a German revival. Past Anglo-Soviet differences notwithstanding, Anglo-American and Soviet-American tensions gave the USSR and United Kingdom a stake in each other’s survival.<sup>823</sup>

It was therefore in the Soviet Union’s interest to bid for British friendship and “keep Britain as a strong power.”<sup>824</sup> To this end, the USSR would “be interested in Britain’s retention of a strong navy, for such [. . .] can be needed by us to counterbalance the USA’s imperialist expansion.”<sup>825</sup> At the same time, the aforementioned spheres of influence approach to Anglo-Soviet relations would be used to strengthen Britain’s hand in dealings with the United States by allowing Britain to dominate France, Italy, and the other states of Western Europe. Combined, the United Kingdom would be able to play a significant role in ensuring the Soviet Union was not isolated and confronted by an aggressive United States.<sup>826</sup>

Second, retaining Britain as a potential ally also meant the USSR needed to avoid steps that would threaten Britain and drive the United Kingdom into the American orbit. This matches another core realist prediction, namely that the USSR will be concerned with creating an Anglo-American axis and thus try to avoid posing a challenge to British power. The Soviet task was complicated by the expectation that Britain would, in all likelihood, turn to the United States in the short-term as a source of postwar economic assistance, and as a hedge against the growth of Soviet power in Europe. If Britain was to be kept out of the American orbit for the long-term, then the Soviet Union needed to avoid deepening British suspicions of the Soviet Union. Stalin’s

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<sup>820</sup> Filitov, “Problems,” 12.

<sup>821</sup> quoted in Pechatnov, *Big Three*, 6.

<sup>822</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>823</sup> Quoted in Filitov, “Problems,” 13.

<sup>824</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>826</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 29–31.

comments to members of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in mid-1946 are instructive in this regard. Explaining to BCP leaders why it was important not to establish a Communist dictatorship, Stalin, as Eduard Mark describes, “advised the BCP to permit parties to exist outside the [BCP], and shared with its leaders the reason for his advice: the need for both Bulgaria and the USSR to maintain good relations with the United States and Britain.”<sup>827</sup> This echoed Stalin’s advice to other Communist groups in Iran, Yugoslavia, and other states in and around Europe: avoiding local political challenges to areas central to British security was expected to help reassure Britain and lay the foundation for future Anglo-Soviet cooperation.<sup>828</sup>

Nor did signs of Anglo-American cooperation in 1945-1946 dispel Soviet plans to work for British friendship. Anglo-American cooperation was expected to be ephemeral and Anglo-American relations ultimately drift apart. Ambassador Nikolai Novikov captured the thinking well, telling Molotov and Stalin as late as November 1946 that “current relations between England and the United States, despite the temporary attainment of agreements on very important questions, are plagued with great internal contradictions and cannot be lasting.”<sup>829</sup> The Soviet Union needed to take advantage of the situation when it appeared and offer Britain an alternative, particularly at a time when “the present policy of the American government with regard to the USSR is also directed at limiting or dislodging the influence of the Soviet Union.”<sup>830</sup> Soviet officials even saw some evidence that British policymakers were inclined in this direction, with Stalin protégé Andrei Zhdanov noting in September 1946 that elements of the British Labor Party “wanted to prepare the ground for the moment when, should they be in a tight spot, they would have some support from the Soviet Union.”<sup>831</sup> The USSR stood ready to offer this assistance.

However, too much support for the United Kingdom was not in the Soviet Union’s interest. First, just as the United States worried that an Anglo-American front would antagonize the USSR, so too do Soviet leaders seem to have calculated that too clear a bid for Britain would cause the breakdown in Soviet-American relations they sought to avoid: as Realist Decline Theory predicts, the USSR limited support for the United Kingdom when it seemed an Anglo-Soviet front might antagonize the United States! Insofar as the USSR sought to sustain great power cooperation in the postwar period, a tight Anglo-Soviet front would threaten to close off Europe to the United States at a time when the United States had “broken away from isolationism and will remain actively involved with the world at large.”<sup>832</sup> Given the American interest in “the military defeat of Germany and [. . . its] economic and military enfeeblement,” it is likely Soviet policymakers particularly recognized the dangers of an Anglo-Soviet deal on Germany.<sup>833</sup> A better solution was for the Soviet Union to provide limited support for the UK while still trying to enlist the United States behind Soviet objectives. That is, if the United States agreed to Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe and British predominance in Western Europe, then the Soviet Union could countenance Soviet dominance in the Western Hemisphere and

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<sup>827</sup> Mark, *Revolution by Degree*, 33.

<sup>828</sup> Leonid Gibianskii, “The Soviet Bloc and the Initial Stage of the Cold War: Archival Documents on Stalin’s Meetings with Communist Leaders of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, 1946-1948,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 10 (March 1998): 112-148; Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War*, 74; Roberts, *Stalin’s Wars*, 222.

<sup>829</sup> Nikolai Novikov, “The Novikov Telegram Washington, September 27, 1946,” *Diplomatic History* 15, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 535.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>831</sup> Quoted in Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War*, 76.

<sup>832</sup> Quoted in Pechatnov, *Big Three*, 6.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



some kind of influence in Europe writ large.<sup>834</sup> This approach would also give the USSR the option of playing Britain off the United States as necessary.

More importantly, at a time when Britain retained a robust posture, it appears Soviet policymakers remained unclear how wise it was for the USSR to intensely back the United Kingdom. This accords with another key implication of my argument, specifically: Soviet support for the United Kingdom will be limited and cautious so long as Britain retains the military wherewithal to defend itself and potentially threaten the USSR. Although data is scarce, circumstantial evidence suggests Soviet policymakers worried that Britain's robust posture might cause a supportive strategy to backfire. For example, Litvinov's paper arguing for Anglo-Soviet cooperation began by first noting the long history of Anglo-Soviet antagonism and ongoing Anglo-Soviet disputes in Iran and Turkey. Although Litvinov calculated these conflicts were manageable, they still needed resolution before Britain and the USSR could make common cause.<sup>835</sup> Likewise, Stalin's reticence to back the Greek Communists seems to have been premised on concerns that intervention would provoke a clash with the British military that might hurt the USSR.<sup>836</sup> Above all, Anglo-Soviet cooperation was limited by British support for non-Communist groups in Eastern Europe. As Roberts details, "any interference or involvement by the British [. . .] was unacceptable to Stalin, who defined Eastern Europe as a sphere of influence free from all great power meddling except his own." Until British intervention stopped or capabilities eroded, the Soviet Union had no reason to intensely help a state that was challenging a vital Soviet interest. These concerns reached a head in 1946-1947 as intervention in Eastern Europe "became increasingly entangled with fears that the progressive deterioration of Soviet relations with Britain and the United States was leading to [. . .] an anti-communist western bloc."<sup>837</sup>

It is important to note that the preceding analysis of why the Soviet Union supported the United Kingdom is not widely embraced by other scholars.<sup>838</sup> Even researchers who dispute the notion of an expansionist and aggressive USSR in the early Cold War allow that the Soviet Union sought to support the United Kingdom as part of a long-term strategy to build up its strength for an eventual clash with the West (broadly defined).<sup>839</sup> As the above discussion indicates, I disagree. Although Stalin and other Soviet leaders sometimes spoke in such terms, the important point for this study is that for the first several years after the Second World War, the USSR pursued a supportive strategy towards the United Kingdom due to a combination of political and military factors. Moreover, and as I discuss in the next chapter, because Anglo-Soviet relations permanently collapsed after 1947, it is difficult know whether and how long the USSR's embrace of Moderate Support would have lasted under other conditions. On balance, what we can say is that the Soviet Union pursued more restrained and cooperative policies towards the United Kingdom in 1945-1946 for reasons that are in line with Realist Decline Theory. Thus, it is at least plausible that Soviet support vis-à-vis the United Kingdom would have continued for a period of time despite Soviet rhetoric to the contrary.

### C. Assessment

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<sup>834</sup> Pechatnov, *Big Three*, 10–11.

<sup>835</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>836</sup> Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, 80–81.

<sup>837</sup> Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 222.

<sup>838</sup> This includes many of the scholars using the declassified Soviet studies cited above; Filitov, "Problems"; *ibid.*; Pechatnov, "Soviet Union."

<sup>839</sup> A good example is Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, 297–320.

Overall, Soviet strategy towards the United Kingdom provides good evidence for Realist Decline Theory and somewhat less evidence for the competing explanations. Realist Decline Theory predicted the Soviet Union would pursue a Moderate Support strategy in the case by seeking to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power using cautious means. It further expected the USSR would pursue this strategy in order to avoid the costs of triggering an Anglo-American coalition against the USSR and provoking British internal balancing. These predictions were borne out. First, and as shown, the Soviet Union adopted positions that did little to further weaken the United Kingdom. In practice, this involved steps to limit the military threat to the United Kingdom (thus limiting the extent to which Britain needed to balance the USSR), embracing a spheres of influence solution to Europe that would preserve British dominance in Western Europe, and limiting the activities of Communist parties that might complicate British security in the postwar system. It is unclear whether more intensive forms of support were considered and rejected, but overall Soviet strategy appears to have been designed with a “live and let live” attitude in mind – the Soviet Union consciously avoided steps that would make life more difficult for Britain at a time of British weakness.

Equally important, Soviet strategy was expressly predicated on the interactive goals of preserving Britain as a potential ally, avoiding steps that might appear predatory and trigger counterbalancing against the USSR, and yet avoiding intensive means of support at a time when Britain still posed a threat to Soviet security. Although the documentary record is limited, the weight of evidence shows that Soviet leaders shaped Soviet strategy in order to cooperate with the United Kingdom and preserve Britain as a potential ally against either the United States or Germany. The outlines of this strategy began before the close of World War Two, and reached fruition in the early postwar period as Stalin expressly avoided opportunities to prey upon Western Europe or British interests in Southeastern Europe. The inverse was also true and, judging from arguments made to European Communist leaders and in internal reports, it seems that the USSR feared driving Britain into American arms if it did *not* back Britain in the postwar system and appeared predatory. In essence, the Soviet Union consciously decided upon a strategy that would need to be at least as supportive and no more predatory than the United States in order to avoid losing Britain as an ally and triggering Anglo-American balancing. And yet, because the United Kingdom could still pose military problems for the Soviet Union, Soviet policymakers seem to have avoid more intense means of support: given that the United Kingdom could still threaten the Soviet homeland and back anti-Soviet groups in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Soviet strategists appear to have decided the USSR could have its cake and eat it too if it let British military capabilities erode before intensely aiding the United Kingdom. Overall, Soviet strategists sought a Goldilocks solution that would 1) support Britain to preserve the U.K. as an ally, 2) but not so much that the British military threat might continue, and 3) without appearing predatory and triggering counterbalancing and Soviet isolation. These results match the complicated calculations predicted by Realist Decline Theory in a multipolar system where the declining state retains a robust military posture.

Competing arguments, on the other hand, do not fare as well. First, there is very little evidence for Democratic Peace Theory. In contrast to the predatory strategy borne of divergent Soviet and British regime types predicted by democratic peace arguments, the Soviet Union in fact tried to preserve Britain as a great power. More importantly, the case suggests Soviet strategists were happy to ignore the United Kingdom’s democratic system if doing so would help secure Britain as an ally against the United States and as a hedge against a revived Germany. Simply put, British democracy was no barrier in the eyes of Soviet strategists to solid Anglo-

Soviet relations and Soviet support for the United Kingdom in the postwar system. Both the process and outcome thus go against the predictions from Democratic Peace Theory.

There is more evidence for Institutional Theory, though it also faces problems. Institutional Theory correctly predicted that the USSR would adopt a Moderate Support strategy. It also rightly expected that the USSR would try to work through existing institutions (particularly the CFM) to sustain the United Kingdom. These are strong points in Institutional Theory's favor. However, the theory faces three major limitations. First, Soviet policymakers expressed interest in supporting the United Kingdom and took the first steps in that direction in 1944-1945, *before* the CFM began operations. Because the Soviet Union began formulating its Moderate Support strategy before the major institution binding the United Kingdom and USSR took root, it is difficult to claim institutions caused the Soviet Union to pursue the strategy – they were not necessary for the USSR to avoid predation. Second, even after the CFM began operating, the USSR proved willing to go around CFM constructs if it felt its interests so dictated. This was notably the case during the Turkish Straits dispute as the USSR bucked Anglo-American objections voiced in the CFM to a Soviet base in order to continue pressing Turkey. Although I argue the Turkish Straits crisis is overblown and does not contradict the overall Moderate Support strategy enacted by the USSR, it is noteworthy that the CFM proved insufficient in breeding Anglo-Soviet cooperation when the two sides substantively disagreed. Finally, the available evidence suggests Soviet rationales diverged from those suggested by institutionalist arguments. That is, the available documentary record suggests Soviet strategists wanted to support the United Kingdom for the sake of preserving the United Kingdom as a potential ally rather than any particular desire to secure continued British participation in the CFM. Although additional research may turn up evidence that Soviet policymakers wanted to support the United Kingdom in order to sustain postwar institutions, the current record suggests Soviet rationales do not match Institutional Theory predictions. Although Institutional Theory receives more backing in the case than Democratic Peace Theory, it is ultimately limited and mixed evidence.

## **VII. Summary and Conclusion**

### **A. Summarizing the Results**

In the aggregate, American and Soviet strategies towards the United Kingdom in 1945-1946 provide significant evidence for Realist Decline Theory and suggest it is a better explanation of American and Soviet strategies than its competitors. Not only did my argument successfully predict that the United States and Soviet Union would both adopt strategies of Moderate Support, but it aptly captured the underlying logics. As shown, both the Soviet Union and United States sought to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power. Not only did Soviet and American policymakers calculate that the United Kingdom might be useful as an ally in another war, but it had great utility in providing peace and security in Western Europe. They also recognized that adopting any strategy aside from support would be harmful, either by weakening the United Kingdom and eliminating it as an ally, or pushing it into the arms of another great power. However, and as my argument further predicted, intensive means of support at a time when the declining United Kingdom retained a robust posture were avoided, as it might either help the United Kingdom continue threatening the rising state's security (the Soviet concern) or antagonize other great powers and increase the risk of chain-ganging (the American concern). The cost-benefit calculations predicted by my theory were readily observed.

In contrast, American and Soviet strategies offer only limited evidence for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory. Democratic Peace Theory might provide a partial explanation of American behavior. In particular, the theory aptly predicted the outcome of the case, while the occasional reference to preserving Britain as a strong democracy suggests the similarity in Anglo-American domestic regimes had some influence on U.S. strategy. However, even in the American case, the overwhelming American concern was on preserving Britain as a balancer against the USSR and security provider in Europe – not about preserving the United Kingdom as a democracy per se. Moreover, the theory utterly fails to capture why the Soviet Union pursued a Moderate Support strategy; given the dissimilar domestic regimes, Democratic Peace Theory predicts rivalry and predatory behavior by the USSR. This never emerged, and the Soviet Union bent over backwards to preserve the United Kingdom as a potential ally. In other words, the democratic United States and non-democratic Soviet Union behaved similarly towards the democratic United Kingdom, outcomes that are the opposite of what Democratic Peace Theory predicts.

The evidence is also mixed for Institutionalist Theory. Unlike Democratic Peace Theory, institutionalist arguments rightly predicted that both the United States and Soviet Union would adopt strategies of Moderate Support. The theory also captures the episodic efforts by American policymakers to give life to the Bretton Woods institutions, and Soviet efforts to work through the CFM. Overall, however, the rationales and internal arguments offered by both American and Soviet analysts generally ignored the influence of international institutions; indeed, when passing the Anglo-American loan, American policymakers expressly turned to the strategic value of preserving Britain as an ally while downplaying the importance of the loan in incorporating the Bretton Woods regime. Similarly, both the United States and Soviet Union were willing to work around or ignore institutions when their interests so dictated rather than find them institutionally constrained. Above all, institutions seem to have a hard time explaining the evolution of U.S. and Soviet strategy in the case: American strategy was supportive despite the significant reduction in Anglo-American institutional binding that accompanied the disbandment of the wartime joint boards, while Soviet support for Britain emerged before the CFM became operational. Ultimately, although there is some support for institutionalist arguments, it appears institutions were neither necessary nor sufficient to produce the Moderate Support strategies. Realist Decline Theory is a stronger explanation for the case.

#### B. Conclusion

The United States and Soviet Union pursued Moderate Support in 1945-1946 when it appeared Britain was weak but not yet dead and might serve as an ally to either party. The process and outcome of the cases provide more evidence for my argument than its competitors, suggesting Realist Decline Theory may be a useful account of rising state behavior towards declining great powers in multipolar settings. The next chapter continues this test by examining American and Soviet reactions as British military power collapsed in early 1947 and its posture shifted from robust to weak.

## Chapter Six:

### The Decline of the United Kingdom and Great Powers Relations, Part II:

#### Diverging American and Soviet Policies, 1947-1949

##### I. Introduction

The preceding chapter evaluated American and Soviet strategy in response to Britain's decline immediately after World War Two. I showed that the United States and USSR both pursued strategies of Moderate Support. These behaviors contrast with dominant views of American and Soviet policy in the immediate postwar period: the United States was less supportive of the United Kingdom than often claimed, while the Soviet Union was less predatory and more supportive than commonly perceived. In doing so, I also showed that Realist Decline Theory offers a more powerful tool than either Democratic Peace Theory or Institutional Theory to explain the course and outcome of U.S. and Soviet strategy. The results suggest Realist Decline Theory can be used to account for rising state-declining state relations in multipolar settings.

This chapter offers a final test of Realist Decline Theory's multipolar predictions by examining Anglo-American and Anglo-Soviet relations from 1947 through Great Britain's exit from the great power ranks in 1949. Empirically, the chapter centers on two puzzles. First, why did the United States move early in 1947 to intensely aid the United Kingdom? After all, British weaknesses were clear for the preceding two years, yet the United States avoided using intense means to keep Britain a great power. In the winter of 1947, however, the United States turned and began pursuing an Extreme Support strategy to reconstruct British power and protect British security using intense means. It did so by first defining core British interests as core American interests, then providing extensive economic aid via the Marshall Plan, and ultimately promising to fight alongside Britain at the start of any hostilities with the Soviet Union. What explains this shift?

The second puzzle involves Soviet behavior. As shown in the prior chapter, the Soviet Union pursued policies that tried to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power, provided doing so would not allow the British to threaten Soviet security or imperil relations with the United States. In 1947-1949, however, Soviet policy underwent two shifts. One shift involved the move towards increase competition and, ultimately, efforts to prey upon the United Kingdom; this was wrapped up in the oft-noted turn towards Soviet-Western competition marking the start of the Cold War. However, *before* Soviet-Western tensions became entrenched, the Soviet Union increased efforts to support the United Kingdom by offering a Britain formal alliance in early 1947 that would ensure Anglo-Soviet cooperation in Europe. The Soviet alliance offer, which relatively few scholars have discussed, is interesting not just because it contradicts the widespread impression of Soviet hostility towards the West, but parallels growing American support for Britain at the same time.<sup>840</sup> What, then, explains the double shift in Soviet policy – first towards Extreme Support for Britain, followed by predation?

Assessing the American and Soviet shift towards Extreme Support, followed by the subsequent divergence in U.S. and Soviet policy towards the United Kingdom, is important for

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<sup>840</sup> Several searches turned up only one publication that expressly addresses the Anglo-Soviet alliance offer; Wayne Knight, "Labourite Britain: America's 'Sure Friend'? The Anglo-Soviet Treaty Issue, 1947," *Diplomatic History* 7, no. 4 (October 1983): 267-282.

both theory and history. On the one hand, the more we unpack the ways in which American and Soviet policies moved in response to Britain's decline, the more we may uncover new insight into the origins of Soviet-American differences in the early Cold War. This, in turn, may help us explain why wartime cooperation and the postwar effort to sustain wartime accord broke down amongst the three great powers. On the other hand, understanding the degree to which American and Soviet policies were shaped by calculations over the costs and benefits of balancing, the influence of international institutions, and the similarities and differences among different governing regimes can tell us much about the sources of great power behavior more broadly. Given, in particular, that several scholars see the deepening of Anglo-American relations as intimately related to the open, democratic nature of their governments and the availability of international institutions to manage their relationship, re-examining the course and conduct of both Anglo-American and Anglo-Soviet relations provides a good check on democratic peace and institutionalist arguments.<sup>841</sup>

Although all three theories gain some support from these tests, the results again provide significant evidence for Realist Decline Theory and somewhat less for its competitors. First, I show that the emergence of Extreme Support in Anglo-American relations flowed from American calculations of the costs and benefits of retaining Britain as a great power. Seeking as far back as 1945 to ensure Britain was available as a prospective ally, the collapse of British military power in late 1946-early 1947 caused American policymakers to realize that, unless the United States moved to intensely aid Britain, the United Kingdom might be lost as potential partner. More than anything related to common democratic regimes or the advantages of sustaining institutionalized cooperation with the United Kingdom, pure calculations of the need for alliance options in a multipolar world drove American policy.

Second, and although the eventual Soviet turn towards predation diverges from my argument, significant portions of what we know of Soviet policy accord with Realist Decline Theory. Specifically, confronted with growing signs of British weakness in late 1946 and early 1947 as British posture shifted from robust to weak, the Soviet Union pursued a strategy of Extreme Support by extending Britain a military alliance and diplomatic reinsurance treaty. Although some scholars see the Soviet effort as a ploy to lure Britain into a false sense of confidence to abet Soviet predation, it is telling that British policymakers were interested in the Soviet offer and explored the option. In fact, it was only after the United States made Britain a better offer in the form of the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, and Anglo-American military cooperation that Britain turned away from the Soviet offer.<sup>842</sup> This, in turn, pushed the USSR to fear an Anglo-American axis directed against the USSR and pushed the USSR towards a confrontational and predatory stance. While the documentary record is particularly sparse, what we know of Soviet decision-making in this period thus accords with Realist Decline Theory: the Soviet Union's first response to British military weakness was to turn towards Extreme Support. Rather than break with Britain because of different regime types or support Britain because of the presence of international institutions, Soviet policy was driven by a strait calculation of the

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<sup>841</sup> An overview is found in Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 190–210; Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 159–219; scholars working in the democratic peace tradition argue Anglo-American relations were supportive well before 1945, suggesting the post-1945 was simply a continuation of prior trends; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6–7; Davidson and Sucharov, "Peaceful Power Transitions: The Historical Cases," 102–112.

<sup>842</sup> On questions of Soviet intentions, see Barker, *Between*, 70–74; for a moderate interpretation, see Bullock, *Bevin*, 371–372. My understanding largely comes from "Conclusions of the Meeting of the Cabinet," 3 February 1947, CAB 128/9/15; Clement Atlee, "Revision of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty," 20 April 1947, CAB 129/18/29.

benefits of preserving the United Kingdom as a prospective ally and the costs that would result if Britain were lost.

To prove these points, the remainder of this chapter proceeds in several parts. Having introduced the case, I code the variables central to Realist Decline Theory and derive predictions, before doing the same for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory. Due to space constraints, I avoid reproducing the extensive codings introduced in the prior chapter and focus only on those variables that changed between the 1945-1946 and 1947-1949 periods. Next, I test the assorted predictions against American policy in 1947-1949, before doing the same for Soviet strategy; along the way, I weigh and assess the evidence. Finally, I summarize the results.

## II. Realist Decline Theory: Coding and Predictions

### A. Polarity: Multipolar

As the CINC scores (Tables 6.1-6.3) suggest, Europe remained multipolar through 1949. Although British economic problems continued to fester, there were signs by late 1946 that industrial production was recovering, and British strategists had long-term plans to bring strategic ends and economic means in line to help them remain a major player in the European security game.<sup>843</sup> Although the next two to five years would be challenging, British policymakers were mildly optimistic that international trade, and with it the economic foundations of British power, would recover within the next decade.<sup>844</sup> At the same time, the wealthier United States had been successfully cajoled into providing the 1946 loan even as the United States reduced its wartime association with European politics.<sup>845</sup> Even if the loan was too small to cover all Britain's problems, it was a good stopgap measure. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, faced the daunting task of recovering from wartime damage and consolidating its position in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>846</sup> This would hinder the USSR's ability to use the latent capabilities developed during the war to expand its political reach, but also meant it would have to be taken seriously in any discussion of great power politics. Overall, the three victors from World War Two remained the principle players in European politics at the start of 1947. It was only in 1949-1950, after the British situation worsened and the United States and Soviet Union surged ahead, that Britain fell out of the great power ranks (Tables 6.2, 6.3).

**Table 6.1: Identifying the European Great Powers, 1947**

Great Powers			Other States (for illustration)		
State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)	State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)
USA	38.7	100	France	5.1	10.4
USSR	21.5	55.6	Italy	3.3	8.5
UK	12.3	31.8			

<sup>843</sup> Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1951* (London: Methuen, 1984), 1-56; Cairncross, *Years of Recovery*, 3-46, 61-120; Baylis, *Pragmatism*, 80-84.

<sup>844</sup> Cairncross, *Years of Recovery*, 112-115; Richard Clarke, *Anglo-American Economic Collaboration in War and Peace, 1942-1949*, ed. Alec Cairncross (London: Clarendon Press, 1982), 66-82.

<sup>845</sup> Clarke, *Economic Collaboration*, 66-71.

<sup>846</sup> Discussion of Soviet problems is in V. M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 51-54.

**Table 6.2: Identifying the European Great Powers, 1949**

Great Powers			Other States (for illustration)		
State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)	State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)
USA	35.6	100	France	5.2	14.6
USSR	25	70.2	Italy	3.5	9.8
UK	10	28.1			

**Table 6.3: Identifying the European Great Powers, 1950**

Great Powers			Other States (for illustration)		
State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)	State	CINC Score (% total European capabilities)	% of Strongest State (USA)
USA	37.1	100	UK	8.9	24
USSR	27	72.8	France	5	13.5
			Italy	3.3	8.9

As before, I am not arguing Britain was as strong as the Soviet Union or the United States. Clearly the United States and USSR were stronger than Britain and gaining ground. However, as late as 1949 Britain was nearly twice as strong as France (the next most powerful state on the continent) and nearly three times as strong as Italy; the 1945 American judgment discussed in the prior chapter that Britain would be in a “lower category” than the U.S. or USSR but still a viable competitor remained apt. Overall, I code the period as multipolar.

#### B. British Military Posture: Weak

Unlike the polarity of the system, British military posture changed in late 1946 and early 1947 as it moved from robust to weak. This shift related to the underlying economic weakness of the British position. Although British economic power was hoped to be slowly on the mend, its recovery hinged on large-scale imports of goods and materials from the United States. Because potential British trading partners in Western Europe also imported from the United States, Britain’s recovery did not correspond with a concomitant increase in exports and a large deficit opened between British expenditures and income. Closing this gap forced British policymakers to progressively reduce British military expenditures and its overseas presence. Through 1945-1946, cuts occurred primarily in colonial areas as Britain reduced its footprint in the Pacific, the Indian Subcontinent, and portions of the Middle East and Africa, in order to keep British strength in and around Europe intact.

By the winter of 1946-1947, however, the continued gap between income and expenditures meant more drastic cuts would be necessary and affect Britain’s role in European politics.<sup>847</sup> After sharp debate in the British Cabinet that winter, plans were announced in early-mid 1947 for a major withdrawal and drawdown in British military forces in and around the continent.<sup>848</sup> Forces in Greece, Italy, and Austria would be withdrawn entirely, assets in Germany kept at minimal strength, and many units were either converted to a “training” cadre or mothballed altogether.<sup>849</sup> Under the retrenchment and reduction scheme presented by the middle of the year, these reductions meant that the *total* British army by 1948-1949 would consist of one active infantry division and two independent infantry brigades, with an additional 2 division

<sup>847</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*, 352–368.

<sup>848</sup> Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 286–315; Owendale, *Alliance*, 45–61.

<sup>849</sup> Following figures from Defence Committee, “Defence Requirements,” 15 September 1947, CAB 131/4.



equivalents as a “training” force; forces in Europe would fall to one active brigade and two training divisions, or only 70,000 troops total, all stationed in Germany. The Royal Navy, meanwhile, would be reduced to little more than a force in being, and even this would be mothballed for much of 1947-1948. Above all, the Royal Air Force -- the primary means of immediately retaliating against an aggressor and defending Britain against a Soviet attack -- was cut to 160 aircraft in Bomber Command and 192 in Fighter Command.<sup>850</sup> These cuts came against a force that was already estimated in late-1946 to be “inadequate for its peacetime commitments” and meant, as the Cabinet concluded, an “inability to meet essential commitments, as well as grave prejudice to the prospect of building up small but efficient post-war Forces in the next 5 years or so.”<sup>851</sup> Britain, in short, was undercutting not just its short-term military strength, but its ability to play a meaningful military role for the foreseeable future as well. Although the country would try to keep a small presence in Europe and around the Mediterranean, Britain’s economy could no longer support a sufficient forward presence or military deterrent to provide for British security. Thus, once British withdrawals and reductions began in early 1947, Britain’s military posture shifted from robust to weak.<sup>852</sup>

Table 6.4 provides a sense of the change by comparing the distribution of British land forces in Europe in 1946, with the revised scheme under the post-1947 cuts.

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<sup>850</sup> I have been unable to find estimates for Bomber and Fighter Commands before these cuts. However, a report from November 1946 shows plans to maintain 272 day fighters in Britain and Germany, alongside 280 strategic and light bombers in the same area. The 272 and 280 figures themselves represent a large cut from the 384 fighters and 352 bombers planned for the post-1947 period in an early February 1946 estimates. The point is that British military forces were cut over the course of 1946, and reached a crisis point in late 1946-early 1947; for the earlier estimates, see Defence Committee, “Memorandum on the Size of the Armed Forces, 30 June 1946 and 31 December 1946,” 13 February 1946, CAB 131/2; Defence Committee, “Strength of the Armed Forces at 31 December 1946 and 31 March 1948,” 8 November 1946, CAB 131/3.

<sup>851</sup> Assessment from Defence Committee, “Strength of the Armed Forces at 31<sup>st</sup> December 1946 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 1948,” 8 November 1946, CAB 131/3; Defence Committee, “Defence Estimates 1947-1948,” 7 January 1947, CAB 129/6/33. While the Cabinet initially agreed not to implement the feared changes, economic pressure soon forced Britain’s hand; Cabinet, “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet,” 28 January 1947, CAB 128/9/13.

<sup>852</sup> Aside from the above, see Defence Committee, “Strength of the Armed Forces,” 2 August 1947, CAB 131/4.

**Table 6.4: The British Withdrawal from Europe, 1947-1949<sup>853</sup>**

	<b>Deployed, Nov-Dec 1946</b>	<b>Post-1947 plans</b>
<b>Germany (active units)</b>		
armored divisions	1	0
infantry divisions	2.67	0
armored brigades	1	0
infantry brigades	0	1
occupation brigades	0	0
regiments	3	0
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>4+ divisions</i>	<i>1 active brigade + 2 "training" divisions</i>
<b>Southeast Europe (Austria, Italy, Greece,</b>		
armored divisions	1	0
infantry divisions	1	0
armored brigades	0	0
infantry brigades	3	0
occupation brigades	2	0
regiments	1	0
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>3+ divisions</i>	<i>0 (all withdrawn)</i>
<b>OVERALL IN EUROPE</b>	<b>7+ divisions</b>	<b>1 active brigade, 2 training divisions</b>

These cuts changed the military situation facing both the United States and Soviet Union. For the Soviet Union, the cuts significantly reduced the prospective costs of British internal balancing and thus the potential downside of assisting Britain. First, Britain's military weakness meant that the risk of an accidental conflict arising between the Soviet Union and United Kingdom was now unlikely. Even if a misunderstanding erupted between Soviet units and remaining British forces in Germany, the chance of escalation was minimal. With British troops barely adequate to garrison Germany, let alone defend it, and with British air and naval assets unable to undertake offensive operations, Britain could not escalate very far before finding its options limited. This, in turn, meant the USSR would not need to worry about British retaliatory attacks or a sustained Anglo-Soviet rivalry: even if a crisis erupted, the USSR would easily hold the upper hand and could escalate or de-escalate as its interests dictated.

Second, the likelihood of Britain cracking down on local Communist forces and spiraling into conflict with the USSR was much reduced compared to the 1945-1946 period. As discussed in the previous chapter, although Stalin ordered local Communist parties to cooperate with Western governments, it was possible British leaders would incorrectly see a Communist threat from local political movements, stage a crackdown, ensnare Soviet prestige, and thus lead to a rivalry or war between the United Kingdom and USSR. Yet now, because British forces were in fast retreat, this risk was reduced. The areas in which local Communists were most active – namely, Southeastern Europe – were precisely those areas Britain was leaving. Furthermore, if

<sup>853</sup> Defence Committee, "Strength of the Armed Forces at 31<sup>st</sup> December 1946 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 1948," 8 November 1946, CAB 131/3; Defence Committee, "Defence Requirements," 15 September 1947, CAB 131/4.

Communist groups in British-occupied areas of Germany challenged British influence, the few British forces on the ground were less likely to pick a fight with a local movement of unknown force than if larger British forces were present; even if Britain responded, its forces could only do so much before British resources were exhausted. And because British defense expenditures were being cut, it had few tools available to back local anti-Communist forces in Eastern Europe and the USSR in retaliation. In short, with British action against local Communist forces unlikely and with British support for anti-Communist forces capped, the chance of an Anglo-Soviet conflict arising out of local political difficulties was constrained.

The change in British posture also affected American security costs, although these manifested in a different form than those with the USSR. In 1945-1946, the biggest cost posed by Britain's robust posture was that of Britain chain-ganging the United States into a conflict with the USSR that the United States wanted to avoid. Because the United Kingdom was strong enough to spiral with the USSR but not strong enough to defend Europe, a war between the USSR and United Kingdom would require American intervention to prevent Western Europe from falling under Soviet domination. Yet because of Britain's weak posture, this problem was now broadly solved. At least in the near-term, British military forces were so weak that they could not engage the USSR without an American guarantee, thereby giving the United States the ability to veto British actions. Put differently, because British military options were few and far between, the United States could exert a de facto veto over British policies that threatened American interests. As a result, Britain's shift from a robust to a weak posture reduced the primary British threat to the United States, thereby freeing the United States from the need to distance itself from close Anglo-American cooperation.

### C. Predictions

Given the combination of multipolarity and a weak British posture, I predict that both the United States and Soviet Union will pursue a strategy of Extreme Support. Freed of the need to hedge against Britain's robust posture, the benefits of supporting a declining great power in a multipolar environment will be recognized and acted upon. This carries several observable implications. First, both the United States and Soviet Union will aim to preserve Britain as a great power. Despite likely British concerns that they will be left bereft of allies and backers as their problems mount, in fact both the United States and USSR will seek to prevent the United Kingdom from falling from the great power ranks. Intensive means will be employed in this effort as both states 1) offer Britain military alliances and diplomatic guarantees, 2) transfer resources to Britain, and/or 3) settle outstanding political-military disputes. Particularly in comparison to the distant and sometimes-tense relations marking Anglo-American and Anglo-Soviet relations in 1945-1946, we expect to see a marked increase in American and Soviet willingness to come to Britain's aid, alongside more sustained and consistent backing for British security.

Additionally, we expect American and Soviet strategists to offer clear rationales for American and Soviet behavior. As noted earlier, at the heart of my theory is an argument that rising states in multipolarity fear being balanced and isolated, and therefore try to preserve declining states as potential allies by adopting supportive strategies. I expect policymakers in the United States and USSR to discuss and analyze this logic. Strategists in both states should emphasize the security benefits of Extreme Support: they are expected to discuss their recognition that support is a way of retaining alliance options. The inverse is also true, and they should underscore the disadvantages of preying on Britain as other states might flock to Britain's aid. Furthermore, policymakers will underscore the need to use intense means to aid Britain at a

time when Britain is already on the geopolitical ropes. Internal analyses will justify intense support out of worries that 1) any further weakening will lead to Britain being lost as a future ally, and 2) they might be “outbid” for Britain’s friendship by the other great power and thus Britain be lost as an ally in a different fashion.

We additionally expect to see the United States and Soviet Union monitoring British military posture for signs that it is continuing to weaken (or, inversely, strengthen). This should particularly be an issue in 1947 as British military power collapses. Because American and Soviet support will move in response to British posture, signs that British posture is continuing to weaken will lead the United States and Soviet Union to double-down on assistance to Britain by, for instance, offering more economic aid or tightening alliance bonds. Conversely, signs that the British military is recovering and shifting back to a robust posture will lead the U.S. and USSR to reduce their aid to Britain and shift to a Moderate Support strategy.

Finally, American and Soviet strategists will be highly attuned to signs of British weakness and, when made aware of British problems, take steps to prevent additional problems from manifesting by buttressing British capabilities. As such, American and Soviet policymakers also will try to prevent *other* great powers from weakening Britain any further. Because of this dynamic, unfortunately, there may be significant ground for misunderstanding and spiraling between the United States and Soviet Union: with each trying to come to Britain’s aid to preserve the United Kingdom as a potential ally, each may end up seeing the other as pursuing exclusivist and confrontational policies by allying with Britain and isolating the other side. It would therefore not be surprising if, in the course of coming to Britain’s aid using intense means, both the Soviet Union and United States fear the hostile intentions of the other side and accuse one another of diplomatically isolating the other.

### III. Alternate Explanations

Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory generate different predictions than my realist argument. Here, I briefly code the independent variables and derive predictions from the arguments in sequence.

#### A. Democratic Peace Theory

##### i. Coding Regime Type

Per Polity scores, the regime types of the various great powers did not change in the 1947-1949 period. Matching the codings from the 1945-1946 chapter, the United States and United Kingdom remained democracies while the Soviet Union remained a non-democracy. As before, this accords with common perceptions of the United States and United Kingdom as the leading democracies in the post-1945 system and the Soviet Union the dominant state of a non-democratic bloc.<sup>854</sup> If anything, Soviet-Western domestic differences were ossifying in the late 1940s as Stalin prepared for another round of crackdowns and purges inside his regime to buttress his rule in the postwar period.<sup>855</sup> Overall, there is a clear break between the democratic United States, the democratic United Kingdom, and the non-democratic Soviet Union.

##### ii. Predictions

Under these conditions, we expect American and Soviet strategies towards the United Kingdom to diverge. Given that the United States and United Kingdom constitute a democratic dyad, the United States is expected to adopt an Extreme Support strategy towards the United Kingdom. As before, American policymakers will want to preserve a fellow democracy to stand

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<sup>854</sup> Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 186–188.

<sup>855</sup> Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, chap. 3.

alongside it against the non-democratic USSR and preserve a democratic way of life. Unlike the 1945-1946 period, however, I expect the military weakness of the United Kingdom to focus American attention and encourage intensive means to these ends; we should see the intensity of American assistance increasing as Britain becomes weaker. Moreover, I predict American policymakers will justify aid to the United Kingdom in the language of the democratic peace, meaning that they should underscore in their private deliberations the need to ensure a fellow democracy's survival against a rising non-democratic Soviet challenger. Particularly given Britain's mounting military weakness, the Soviet threat ought to be portrayed in dire terms and the risk of Britain "falling" to non-democratic forces especially acute. Thus, the logic of the theory suggests American decision-makers will paint a dire picture of the international environment if Britain were to "fall" to Communism and the United States lose its premier democratic ally.

Meanwhile, once the decision for intensive assistance to Britain is made, I predict Anglo-American negotiations to proceed free of widespread misunderstandings or disputes. Because democratic institutions are transparent and generate a common democratic set of interests related to peace and cooperation, it should be easy 1) for policymakers in the United States to understand what needs to be done to aid Britain, and 2) for the United States and United Kingdom to reach mutually-acceptable deal over the terms of American backing. These trends should be all the more noticeable after the United States makes the decision to pursue Extreme Support, as the pressing nature of British problems act to focus the attention of American strategists on doing all that is necessary to preserve Britain as a democratic great power. Finally, as before, we expect aid for Britain on democratic grounds to enjoy widespread popular and political support as the joint democratic nature of the Anglo-American dyad generates enthusiasm for American backing to a democratic ally.

Conversely, democratic peace arguments suggest the Soviet Union will pursue a strategy of Extreme Predation. As in 1945-1946, the divergent British and Soviet regime types are likely to breed Anglo-Soviet misunderstanding as the two sides misinterpret one another's power, misconstrue their interests, and thereby end up in a rivalry with one another. This rivalry will push the USSR to try to prey on the United Kingdom in order to reduce the British threat to Soviet security. With British military posture shifting to weak, the Soviets will have a golden opportunity to eliminate this threat by trying to further weaken the United Kingdom. Hence, the Soviets will move into the breach created by British weakness to try to further adumbrate British power. By definition, Anglo-Soviet relations will lack the ease of bargaining, communication, and sense of shared interests predominating in Anglo-American relations, and there should be few Soviet efforts to help the United Kingdom survive as a great power. Finally, to the extent we can assess Soviet internal deliberations, we should find evidence that Soviet strategists framed their policies around the different nature of the British ruling regime: we expect to see Soviet policymakers from Stalin downward discussing the threatening nature of British liberal democracy and therefore the attractiveness of undermining British strength.

## B. Institutional Theory

### *i. Coding Institutional Presence*

Unlike regime types, institutions underwent a subtle shift in the 1947-1949 period as the Council on Foreign Ministers (CFM) broke down in 1947.<sup>856</sup> As Trachtenberg details, the inability of the great powers to reach an agreement on the future of Germany led the United States to decide the CFM was a failure and of no use in managing inter-great powered relations.

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<sup>856</sup> Timothy Ireland, *Creating the Entangling Alliance* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 22-23.

Following stalemated CFM meetings in April and December 1947, American policymakers (with British backing) decided to call-off further collaboration with the USSR.<sup>857</sup> Thus, within one year of Britain's shift to a weak military posture, the primary venue for binding the United Kingdom to the USSR was also gone.<sup>858</sup>

In contrast, institutions binding the United States and United Kingdom continued. Although the prior chapter documented the collapse of the Anglo-American wartime integration, postwar institutions came online in their stead. In particular, scholars such as Ikenberry see the growth of the Bretton Woods system, beginning with the IMF, as the start of a deeper process of Anglo-American postwar integration.<sup>859</sup> Coming amidst the slide in Anglo-Soviet relations and Britain's shift to a weak posture, the deepening of the Bretton Woods agreements ostensibly bound the United States to Britain in the early postwar period. They may also have provided a focal point around which other institutions were layered: Ikenberry in particular sees the financial integration fostered by the IMF and Bretton Woods as preparing the ground for eventual Western (including Anglo-American) integration via the North Atlantic Treaty from 1949 onwards.<sup>860</sup> Thus, just as Anglo-Soviet institutional binding broke down, Anglo-American institutional integration continued.

#### ii. *Predictions*

Like Democratic Peace Theory, Institutionalist Theory makes divergent predictions of Soviet and American strategy towards the United Kingdom. American strategy is the most straightforward. Given the continued and deepening binding between the United States and United Kingdom, we expect to see the United States respond to growing British problems by adopting an Extreme Support strategy. The goal is to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power, and the United States will do so using intense means. To justify the policy, policymakers will emphasize the need to support Britain in order to aid and abet British participation in Western institutions – American policymakers will be driven by a desire to preserve the institutional status quo and fear British defection from extant institutions absent American backing. In the process, we expect to see the United States funnel aid to Britain primarily through extant institutions, while building up and layering additional institutional channels of cooperation as necessary: if, as institutionalist scholars argue, institutions provide a venue for states to negotiate bargains and communicate information, we ought to see American officials utilizing and elaborating upon institutional mechanisms in the process of supporting Great Britain. By definition, this means we expect to see few signs of American officials trying to work around existing institutions and evidence that the United States is trying to avoid institutional channels is strong disconfirming evidence of the argument. Finally, we expect to see American support for Britain emerging without significant disagreement over the terms of U.S. backing or delay in offering this assistance. That is, because institutions help states assess the distribution of power and interests, bargain with one another, and avoid tendencies to buck-pass, the institutionalized character of Anglo-American relations should see the United States readily understand what it would take to buttress British power and offer the necessary arrangements.

Soviet strategy is more complicated. Due to the collapse of the CFM in late 1947, we expect to see a break in Soviet strategy around the start of 1948: before that point, we should see

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<sup>857</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 60–70.

<sup>858</sup> Baylis, *Pragmatism*, 64–65.

<sup>859</sup> Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 194–199.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*, 199–207.

Soviet efforts to pursue Extreme Support; afterwards, we expect a shift towards predation in the absence of institutions able to manage Anglo-Soviet relationship. In pursuing Extreme Support through the end of 1947, Soviet policy should mirror that of the United States: Soviet strategy should try to preserve Britain as a great power in order to ensure it can continue to participate in international institutions while funneling support through and within the CFM. After the CFM collapses, however, we expect the USSR to prey on Britain as misunderstanding and misperceptions proliferate in the absence of institutions able to structure great power relations. In fact, the collapse of the CFM may even be taken as a sign that Britain is untrustworthy and unreliable as a negotiating partner. Under these conditions, the Soviet Union has no reason not to prey on the United Kingdom and to try to use its relative power its advantage; if it fails to do otherwise, then Britain may recover from its present problems at some point in the future and threaten Soviet security. Thus, the Soviet Union will move into the breach created by British weakness to try and push Britain out of the great power ranks by pursuing a predatory strategy. In turn, we expect to find evidence of policymakers rationalizing Soviet policy in these terms: we expect to see policymakers stressing British perfidy and hostility, and stressing the advantages of exploiting Britain while it was weak.

#### **IV. American Strategy and British Decline, 1947-1949**

This section analyzes American strategy towards the United Kingdom in 1947-1949. Along the way, I weigh the results of the case against predictions from the competing theories.

##### **G. Overview of American Strategy: Extreme Support**

As all three theories predict, the United States adopted a strategy of Extreme Support beginning in early 1947. Amidst growing signs of British military weakness, the United States not only sought to keep Britain as a great power, but used intensive means to pursue this goal: Britain would not be allowed to fail as a great power if the United States had anything to say about it. In contrast to the early postwar period, the United States associated itself closely with British security and the reconstruction of British power. Anglo-American military cooperation took off, epitomized by the restart of joint Anglo-American military planning and development of American military plans to fight alongside British forces should war with the USSR erupt. Diplomatic support was equally intensive, as the United States moved to help rebuild the British economy with few preconditions and extended diplomatic guarantees to protect British security interests in and Europe. The overall process culminated in a formal military alliance and American diplomatic guarantee to British security with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT, forerunner of NATO) in mid-1949.

Overall, I find significant evidence for all three theories, but somewhat more evidence for Realist Decline Theory. Simply put, American policy seems to have been driven by the security advantages of retaining Britain as a great power and strengthening it enough to play a major role against the Soviet Union. This is not to say institutionalist or democratic peace arguments were unimportant, but simply that American strategy was more driven by the factors identified by my theory and more closely followed the process described by my argument than anything else. I elaborate on these points below.

Please note that because of the particularly complex interplay between military policy and diplomatic policy in this period, I avoid the analytic structure of the prior chapters to provide a synthesis of American strategy writ large in this period.

##### **H. The Turn of 1947**

By the close of 1946, Anglo-American relations were stuck in an ambiguous position. Although the United States did not want Britain to decline any further, American efforts to buttress British power were limited at best. Not only had Anglo-American military cooperation faltered in the aftermath of World War Two, but American diplomatic support for Britain – epitomized by the Anglo-American loan negotiation – was idiosyncratic and fraught with misunderstandings. At the start of 1947, it was unclear how far the United States would go to prop up the United Kingdom as a great power.<sup>861</sup>

In the middle of February, however, Britain began the first phase of its retrenchment from Europe by announcing the suspension of aid to Greece and Turkey and the withdrawal of military units from Greece.<sup>862</sup> At the time, and as detailed in the preceding chapter, both Greece and Turkey appeared to face a Soviet threat. If they were to fall, American policymakers feared it could set off a cascade in which other countries would be lost to Soviet domination.<sup>863</sup> To prevent this from happening, Britain had previously taken responsibility for defending the countries by providing economic assistance and sending a large contingent of forces to fight against insurgents in northern Greece.<sup>864</sup> Now, however, the British withdrawal plan upset the situation. If Britain were to withdraw while the Soviet threat continued, the domino effect feared by U.S. strategists might take hold and “result in the loss of the whole Near and Middle East and northern Africa,” as well as France and Italy, to the USSR.<sup>865</sup>

As shown in the prior chapter, when the putative Soviet threat to British security in the Eastern Mediterranean first appeared in 1946, the United States responded with cautious means. When, however, the diplomatic notes announcing the British withdrawal arrived on 21 February, American policymakers were jolted into action.<sup>866</sup> Acheson described the United States as “met at Armageddon”: the collapse of British military power left the United States uniquely vulnerable.<sup>867</sup> Within one week, the United States decided to take up a British offer to begin Anglo-American military consultations with an eye towards the United States accepting responsibility for Greece and Turkey’s military defense; plans were also developed to provide the two countries with extensive economic assistance.<sup>868</sup> This was only the first step. On 12 March, Truman went before Congress to depict a world threatened by Soviet Union and to portray Greece and Turkey as the opening salvo in the battle to keep Soviet totalitarianism at bay. To do so at a time when Britain, “owing to its own difficulties,” could no longer take the lead, the United States needed to step into the breach and provide economic and political support for those democracies resisting the Soviet threat; this effort soon became known as the Truman Doctrine.<sup>869</sup> Between the extension of American aid to countries central to British security, and accompanied by the implicit promise of open-ended American assistance following the 12 March

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<sup>861</sup> Ovendale, *Alliance*, 59–61.

<sup>862</sup> Kunilholm, *Near East*, 404–405.

<sup>863</sup> Gaddis, *Origins*, 348; Robert Jervis, “The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24, no. 4 (December 1980): 573.

<sup>864</sup> Xydis, “Greek Arena”; Kunilholm, *Near East*, 406–409.

<sup>865</sup> Gaddis, *Origins*, 348; United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947: Volume V, The Near East and Africa* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 30, 39–40.

<sup>866</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1947, Vol. 5*, 31–38; Robert G. Kaiser, *Cold Winter, Cold War* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), chap. 6.

<sup>867</sup> Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 219.

<sup>868</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1947, Vol. 5*, 47–62.

<sup>869</sup> Gaddis, “Turning Point,” 386–388. Also Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine,” March 12, 1947, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846>.



speech, the United States intensified the means used to aid British security, limit British losses, and in so doing abet American security. These moves in February and March 1947 represented the start of an escalating series of American commitments to intensely support Britain as the United States “decided in principle to assume Britain’s obligations in the Near East.”<sup>870</sup>

Prima facie, the fact that Truman publicly justified intense assistance as a way of defeating totalitarianism and protecting democracy against the Soviet threat seems to confirm a core democratic peace prediction, namely, that policymakers will justify Extreme Support as needed to protect a fellow democracy.<sup>871</sup> However, there are reasons to doubt the democratic pitch reflected the true motivation for American strategy. First, Marshall’s efforts to rally Congressional support for aid to Greece and Turkey lack any reference to democracy and totalitarianism, focusing instead on the dangers of growing Soviet power and ambitions if they were not halted.<sup>872</sup> Second, senior members of the United States government including Marshall, George Kennan, and State Department Counselor Charles Bohlen were taken aback by Truman’s presentation of an ideological struggle, wondering if “Truman was overstating the case a bit.” In reply, Truman, admitted the democratic rhetoric was largely for public consumption, explaining that “this was the only way in which the measure could be passed” by Congress.<sup>873</sup>

Above all, however, internal analyses explained that the American decision to aid Greece and Turkey was driven by much more by fears of losing Britain a *military* partner against the USSR.<sup>874</sup> This provides significant evidence for Realist Decline Theory: American policymakers rationalized and argued for support to Greece and Turkey not due to Communist threat, but because of how it would help preserve the United Kingdom as a potential ally. The State Department committee charged with determining the U.S. response to the British pullout was explicit on this issue, proposing that if the United States failed to accept responsibility for British interests in the region, then “the resulting chaos would be accompanied by an immediate weakening of the strategic position of the whole western world, particularly of Great Britain, and the very security of the United States threatened.” Indeed, if British efforts to engage the United States failed to produce intensive American support, then “the British government might decide that [. . .] it must come to an arrangement with the Soviet Union, including a military alliance and the setting up of a spheres of influence.” This result “would tend to isolate the United States” and raised the risk that the United States “might become eventually involved in a world conflict, possibly without the effective military support of Great Britain.” Thus, the report concluded, “it would be in the interest of the United States [. . .] to relieve the British Government” of responsibility for Greece and Turkey.<sup>875</sup> A meeting of the Secretaries of State, War, and the Navy to assess the British request reached a similar conclusion, underscoring “the position of Greece and Turkey in relation to the present financial difficulties of Great Britain and the implications of the situation to the United States’ strategic position” – that is, American

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<sup>870</sup> Kaiser, *Cold Winter, Cold War*, 192.

<sup>871</sup> See also Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope*. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 100–101.

<sup>872</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1947, Vol. 5*, 60–61; In his memoirs, Acheson claims Marshall’s argument failed to sway the Congressional leadership and had to be followed with a pitch presenting the United States as locked in a battle with totalitarianism. Kaiser, however, casts significant doubt that Acheson’s story; see Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 219; Kaiser, *Cold Winter, Cold War*, 191–192.

<sup>873</sup> Charles E. Bohlen, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Norton, 1969), 86–87; Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 26–27; United States Department of State, *FRUS 1947, Vol. 5*, 229.

<sup>874</sup> Kaiser, *Cold Winter, Cold War*, 189–192.

<sup>875</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1947, Vol. 5*, 51–52.

security was affected by what happened to Britain following the pullout from Greece and Turkey.<sup>876</sup> And when Truman was briefed on the implications of the British pullout and decided to take up the British burden, the State Department conclusions constituted the bulk of the briefing material.<sup>877</sup> In short, there is significant evidence that the United States aided Greece and Turkey in order to protect British security and prevent faltering Britain from striking a deal with the USSR that would deny the United States a potential ally.

#### I. Extreme Support Deepens

The decision to intensely protect British interests in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean marked the start of Extreme Support for the United Kingdom. Yet while the United States was now responsible for protecting a specific set of British interests, the American military commitment to Britain proper remained opaque as there were “no assurances that the United States would go further than supporting Greece and Turkey.”<sup>878</sup> Moreover, while the United States was providing extensive economic aid to Greece and Turkey, no new American aid for Britain emerged despite the recognition that the British pullout was due to Britain’s exhausted economic position. In short, Extreme Support began in early 1947, but there were still gaps in the Anglo-American relationship to be filled in.<sup>879</sup>

The economic situation reached a turning point that spring. Although British military commitments and forces were being cut left and right, the reduction in overseas expenditures did not stabilize Britain’s economy. Although industry continued to recover, the trade deficit with the United States continued to grow as markets and trading partners (aside from the United States) were absent. Growing deficits, however, ate into the Anglo-American loan.<sup>880</sup> Moreover, with sterling-dollar convertibility scheduled to begin in July, Britain’s economic position might become even more pressed if convertibility led to a run on the pound, forced Britain to tap the Anglo-American loan to defend its currency, and thus lack the resources needed for import-led growth. An economic recovery was needed for Britain to reconstitute its military and function as a potential ally. However, extant American economic assistance was insufficient to meet this goal and the terms under which it was provided promised to worsen the British position.<sup>881</sup>

Shortly after the Truman Doctrine and decision to aid Greece and Turkey, American policymakers began to address the economic problem.<sup>882</sup> Rather than further bilateral aid akin to the Anglo-American loan, American strategists turned to more intensive means of assistance by looking to rebuild Britain’s economy alongside that of Western Europe writ large (including an economically revived Germany). Ideally, a Europe-wide approach would put Britain on a more sustainable economic footing by creating 1) markets for its goods, and 2) trading partners from whom it could obtain goods and materials, thereby helping to raise British industrial output and avoid dollar-denominated deficits.<sup>883</sup> The solution, laid out in a series of reports and culminating in announcement of the European Recovery Program (ERP, informally known as the Marshall Plan) in the spring, was large-scale resources transfers to prime the European economic pump

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<sup>876</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid., 58, n2; Truman, *Trial and Hope*, 100.

<sup>878</sup> Ovendale, *Alliance*, 61.

<sup>879</sup> Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 33.

<sup>880</sup> Britain’s financial problems are covered in Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1951*, 5–55.

<sup>881</sup> Michael J. Hogan, “The Search for a ‘Creative Peace’: The United States, European Unity, and the Origins of the Marshall Plan,” *Diplomatic History* 6, no. 3 (July 1, 1982): 269–270.

<sup>882</sup> Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 33.

<sup>883</sup> Ibid., 31, 42–43.

and economic-political integration to contain a revived Germany.<sup>884</sup> Once it began operating in early 1948, over \$13 billion dollars were transferred to Britain and Western Europe within four years, while the United States used the political leverage resulting from its aid package to push for lowered intra-European trade barriers and supranational institutions to sustain long-term growth.<sup>885</sup> Notably, of the \$13 billion total, Britain received the most of any one country (\$3.2 billion), nearly 20 percent more than France (2.7 billion) and well over double the total provided to the future West Germany (\$1.4 billion).<sup>886</sup> Furthermore, once British opposition to European integration spiked in 1948-1949, the United States backed away from its plans to push supranational institutions and European federation in favor of looser plans for European rapprochement and inter-governmental coordination. In contrast to the haggling and discord that marked the Anglo-American loan negotiations only two years earlier, the United States quickly moved at a time of British military weakness to commit extensive sums of American economic resources and political capital to the task of European and British recovery under terms amenable to the United Kingdom.<sup>887</sup>

As Realist Decline Theory predicts, security calculations were integral to the ERP overall, as well as the specific decision to aid Britain via the ERP. At the grossest level, the ERP was intended to keep Western Europe outside of Soviet control. As Europe's economic conditions continued to stagnate into 1947, policymakers including Kennan, Clayton, Marshall, and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal worried that economic weakness would leave the region susceptible to Soviet influence and Communist subversion.<sup>888</sup> This, in turn, would require constant American efforts to prevent the USSR from dominating Europe's war-making potential and thus scuttle any hopes of eventually disentangling the United States from Europe. Thus, restoring Europe's economic health and making it economically and politically strong enough to stand against the USSR was, as Forrestal put it in early 1948, "requisite to the maintenance of peace" and a vital American interest.<sup>889</sup>

Still, Britain's particular recovery and preservation as a leading great power was central to this task. On one level, and as the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) concluded in the spring, "two world wars in the past thirty years have demonstrated the interdependence of France, Great Britain, and the United States in case of war with central or eastern European powers. In war these nations not only need one another but are in mortal peril if they do not combine their forces." Therefore, "the maintenance of these two countries in a state of independence, friendly to the United States and with economies able to support the armed forces necessary" for continued independence was "of first importance to the national security of the United States." Baldly stated, Britain (and France) needed to be supported as necessary to ensure it was available as an ally in the event of another war.<sup>890</sup>

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<sup>884</sup> Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 35–37.

<sup>885</sup> McAllister, *No Exit*, 124–141.

<sup>886</sup> Agency for International Development, "'Marshall Plan' Assistance, Grants and Loans by Country, April 3, 1948-June 30, 1952," 24 August 1967, online via George C. Marshall Foundation, [http://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/doc\\_marshall\\_plan\\_aid.html](http://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/doc_marshall_plan_aid.html).

<sup>887</sup> Owendale, *Alliance*, 63–65.

<sup>888</sup> a good summary is in Green, "The Systemic and Ideological Sources of Grand Strategic Doctrine: American Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century," 286.

<sup>889</sup> quoted in Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 60.

<sup>890</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947: Volume I, General, United Nations* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 739–740.

Second, Britain's economic recovery would allow it to take the lead in assuaging West European concerns that a revived Germany would eventually dominate the continent and thus ensuring Western Europe was sufficiently integrated to stand against the USSR.<sup>891</sup> As American officials recognized, Western Europe's recovery would only be sustainable if the western zones of Germany could be reconstructed and brought into the planned West European grouping. Yet after the CFM collapsed in late 1947, and with memories of the war still fresh, a recovered Germany was anathema to France and the smaller states of Western Europe without external security guarantees.<sup>892</sup> If (as policymakers hoped) the United States distanced itself from Europe, then only Britain could fulfill this role and to do so, Britain needed to be strengthened.<sup>893</sup> As Kennan explained, plans for European recovery would therefore need to "embrace, or be linked to, some sort of plan for dealing with the economic plight of Britain. The plan must formally be a British one, worked out on British initiative and British responsibility, and the role of the United States [. . .] must be to give friendly support."<sup>894</sup> After all, it was "questionable whether [European integration] could be strong enough to serve its designed purpose *unless it had the participation and support of Great Britain* [emphasis mine]."<sup>895</sup> By rebuilding Britain alongside Western Europe and laying the foundation for British leadership of a West European grouping, the United States could withdraw from the continent confident that economic recovery and political cooperation were self-sustaining as "British power balanced that of a revitalized Germany."<sup>896</sup> If the ERP was designed to use Germany to solve Europe's economic malaise and with it buttress European security, then it was also to be used to strengthen Britain's security hand so the United States could reduce its commitment to the continent.<sup>897</sup>

Aiding Britain's recovery also meant limiting steps that contributed to British weaknesses and hindered its ability to function as a useful American ally. This became a critical issue in the summer of 1947 as sterling-dollar convertibility kicked in. As noted in the preceding chapter, free convertibility of the pound was one of the lodestones of prior U.S. economic assistance to the United Kingdom because of its perceived centrality to the smooth operation and viability of the Bretton Woods institutions. British policymakers, however, feared a run on the pound if convertibility went forward and that is precisely what happened: when convertibility began in

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<sup>891</sup> Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 45–49.

<sup>892</sup> On the CFM failure, see Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 60–65.

<sup>893</sup> McAllister, *No Exit*, 149–150.

<sup>894</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947: Volume III, The British Commonwealth, Europe* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 227.

<sup>895</sup> Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 115. State Department analysts were clearer in 1949, arguing, "no effective integration of Europe would be possible without UK participation because of the belief (not without reason) held by western continental powers of potential German domination if such UK participation did not take place;" quoted in Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 164–165.

<sup>896</sup> Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 20.

<sup>897</sup> Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 116. Later analyses would present the ERP as designed to preserve democratic governments, as the Harriman Report of November 1947 emphasized: "a European recovery program is an investment in the continued survival of a world economically stabilized and peacefully conducted in which governments based on fundamental democratic principles can prosper in which right, not night, prevails, and in which religious freedom, economic opportunity, and individual liberties are maintained and respected." These arguments, however, should be taken with a grain of salt as the initial discussion of aid to Europe and Britain emphasized much more the security benefits of preserving Britain and Western Europe as a zone free of Soviet control. Like the Truman Doctrine, it may be the case that policymakers moved on the basis of the security logic, but then reframed their arguments around democratic principles to mobilize public support; President's Committee on Foreign Aid, *European Recovery and American Aid* (Washington, DC, November 1947), B3, online at [http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/historical/martin/13\\_01\\_194711xx.pdf](http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/historical/martin/13_01_194711xx.pdf).

July, Britain was forced to use the Anglo-American loan to defend its currency.<sup>898</sup> Within six weeks, the loan was close to being exhausted.<sup>899</sup> This left Britain with the unpalatable choice of either devaluing its currency or suspending convertibility, and led British officials to visit Washington to assess the American reaction if Britain took the latter route.<sup>900</sup> In the process of doing so, the British government warned not just of the dislocations that would result, but also that “dollar shortage is bound to react [sic] on their military commitments abroad” - underscoring that British economic weakness could lead to still sharper reductions in British military posture.<sup>901</sup>

In contrast to the position adopted in 1945-1946, American officials signaled acceptance if Britain backed away from the terms of the Anglo-American loan, sterling-dollar convertibility, and adherence to the Bretton Woods regime. Rather than, as Institutionalist Theory predicts, pressure Britain into maintaining institutional solidarity or providing additional assistance to help Britain comply with the Bretton Woods accords, U.S. policymakers recognized that suspending sterling-dollar convertibility for the indefinite future was the only way Britain could remain economically solvent. Although American officials were annoyed at the peremptory nature of the British announcement, they nevertheless reasoned that, “in the interest of over-all recovery, we are and will continue to do our utmost to keep Britain afloat.”<sup>902</sup> As a result, not only was convertibility suspended, but American officials from Marshall downwards worked to ensure that the manner of the British withdrawal did not result in a Congressional backlash that might jeopardize additional aid (such as under the Marshall Plan).<sup>903</sup> Moreover, and after a brief period of suspension, members of the State and Treasury Departments ensured that Britain could tap into the remaining Anglo-American loan funds while still suspending convertibility. Overall, as Milward concludes, “if ‘the Bretton Woods system’ [. . .] ever existed, it ended for European countries in 1947.”<sup>904</sup> The United States, as my theory argues, was willing to cease activities that undercut British capabilities and sacrifice its own international institutions if doing so helped reconstruct British power.

#### J. Military Protection and Diplomatic Guarantees

As Ross observes, “the United States had become deeply engaged in European and global power politics” by late 1947.<sup>905</sup> As demonstrated, Britain’s survival as a great power was central to these plans. However, American military power was not yet committed to Britain’s defense: an alliance had been avoided all through 1945-1946, while Anglo-American military coordination had significantly reduced with the end of the war. This began to change shortly after the suspension of sterling-dollar convertibility. Beginning in October 1947, British and American military planners met for staff talks aimed at developing Anglo-American war plans for the defense of the Middle East. Baylis’ description is instructive, arguing that these talks “opened the door for a greater degree of strategic planning on a global basis between the two

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<sup>898</sup> Cairncross, *Years of Recovery*, 132–138.

<sup>899</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*, 452.

<sup>900</sup> Cairncross, *Years of Recovery*, 139–142.

<sup>901</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1947, Vol. 3*, 47.

<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. Britain had failed to forewarn the United States that the Anglo-American loan was being exhausted at a precipitous rate.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, 66–68. Also Bullock, *Bevin*, 462.

<sup>904</sup> Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1951*, 44.

<sup>905</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 79.

countries,” so much so that by April 1948, “Britain and the United States were working on parallel emergency war plans.”<sup>906</sup>

The plans themselves underwent an important change. As described in earlier in this dissertation, American war plans in 1945-1946 emphasized freedom of maneuver and strategic flexibility in the event of war in Europe: American forces would withdraw from the continent as speedily as possible, Western Europe would be surrendered to the USSR, and the United States would deploy air and sea assets as the situation mandated and opportunities arose irrespective of British security concerns. Following the resumption of Anglo-American staff talks, however, American military plans moved towards establishing a deeper American commitment to Europe. Instead of withdrawing from Europe in the event of Anglo-Soviet hostilities, American forces were now directed to fight alongside British units to delay a prospective Soviet advance.<sup>907</sup> Equally important, and amidst growing debates inside the American military over whether the weakened British military could defend the British Isles, American planners decided that American military aid would have to flow to the United Kingdom near-automatically. While the denuded state of the U.S. military meant this aid would only be available after six months, the United States was still prepared to deploy air and air-defense units to the United Kingdom as soon as they became available.<sup>908</sup> And, rather than await an opportune moment to strike against the USSR, American air power would immediately deploy to the Middle East to attack Soviet troops and installations.<sup>909</sup> By mid-1948, the United States “accepted the idea of fighting in Western Europe. The Americans [. . .] did not believe they could halt the Red Army, but had nonetheless decided not to abandon the Continent without significant resistance.”<sup>910</sup> Britain would not have to fight and bear the brunt of a Soviet offensive by itself.

The underlying logic of American actions supports realist arguments. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff put it in December 1947, “so long as the U.S. elects to take these steps [. . .] it may be anticipated that Britain and the remaining western powers will be sufficiently reassured to remain joined with the U.S. in a firm policy counter to that of the Soviets. In this event, the most probable short-term trend in world politics should be one of improving western democratic political and power position.”<sup>911</sup> Although framed in democratic terms, the real concern involved the loss of Britain as an ally, as if the United States failed to act in Britain’s support, then the British might “consider a variation of their traditional ‘balance of power’ role [. . .] this time as mediators on a global scale between the United States and U.S.S.R.” Only intense American support “would permit Britain to remain resolute in opposition to Soviet pressure.”<sup>912</sup>

The intensification of American military support for Britain entailed more than simply planning. Even as Anglo-American military coordination went forward and the economic relationship progressed, the first true crisis of the Cold War erupted as the USSR blocked Western access to Berlin. As the Berlin Crisis deepened, Anglo-American military consultations took place to discuss what the two would do if war erupted.<sup>913</sup> More importantly, however, the

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<sup>906</sup> Baylis, *Pragmatism*, 82.

<sup>907</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 91.

<sup>908</sup> Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 304, 318–319.

<sup>909</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 91–92.

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*, 91; also Barker, *Between*, 116–117.

<sup>911</sup> Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 292.

<sup>912</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>913</sup> Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 101; Avi Shlaim, “Britain, the Berlin Blockade and the Cold War,” *International Affairs* 60, no. 1 (1983): 4–8.

United States extended a type of nuclear guarantee to Britain and Europe by deploying two groups (60 planes) of B-29s to British bases. Although the bombers were not nuclear-capable (nuclear-capable bombers would not arrive until the summer of 1949), American strategists obfuscated the point to trick the USSR into thinking (or at least wondering) otherwise.<sup>914</sup> And regardless of their nuclear-capabilities, the forward deployment “signaled to the Russians that an attempt to seize West Berlin [thereby risking a general war and threats to Britain] might provoke bombers raids into the Soviet Union.”<sup>915</sup> Moreover, even after the crisis stabilized in the second half of 1948, American strategists decided to keep one bomber group and one fighter squadron constantly in Britain, while preparing British bases to handle American nuclear bombs if a new crisis erupted.<sup>916</sup>

The point of American efforts, as my argument predicts, was to buttress British resolve to resist Soviet pressure and prevent Britain from sliding out of the American orbit. As Secretary of Defense James Forrestal recorded at the time, the United States, had “the opportunity [. . .] of sending these planes, and once sent they would become somewhat of an accepted fixture [in Britain] whereas a deterioration of the situation in Europe might lead to a condition of mind under which the British would be compelled to reverse their present attitude.”<sup>917</sup> In other words, if the United States failed to act, then Britain (as well as other states in Europe) might bandwagon with the USSR.<sup>918</sup> Thus, having ended 1946 by denying Britain access to American nuclear expertise in contravention of wartime agreements, the intensification of American support in 1947-1949 led the United States to extend a de facto nuclear umbrella over the weakened state for fear of losing Britain to the USSR.

The stage was now set for codification of an American political guarantee and the revival of a formal Anglo-American alliance as tensions with the USSR escalated. Already in March 1948, Truman announced the United States’ willingness to “extend to the free nations [of Europe] the support which the situation requires” to arm themselves against the USSR.<sup>919</sup> At a time when Europe faced a threat of “fifth-column aggression supported by the threat of external force,” the United States needed to decide on a guarantee that reassured potential Soviet targets and prevented “a fatal policy of appeasement.”<sup>920</sup> This precipitated a series of internal and external negotiations to decide the form of the American commitment. One approach would simply extend an American military guarantee if a crisis or war appeared to be in the offing. The alternative was to strike a formal alliance with Britain and the rest of Western Europe that signaled a more general American interest in the fate of Western Europe. Notably, and aside from deterring the USSR, the United States intended to use a political-military guarantee as cover to continue pushing for European integration under British leadership that would eventually rebuild western Europe as an independent military force able to confront the USSR.<sup>921</sup>

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<sup>914</sup> Shlaim, “Berlin Blockade,” 8–9.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>916</sup> Stuart J. Ball, “Military Nuclear Relations Between the United States and Great Britain Under the Terms of the McMahon Act, 1946–1958,” *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (1995): 442–445.

<sup>917</sup> James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis (New York,: Viking Press, 1951), 457.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>919</sup> Quoted in Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 73.

<sup>920</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948: Volume III, Western Europe* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 41; see also Marshall’s remarks to Truman along these lines, p. 49.

<sup>921</sup> Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 82–83.

Policymakers were initially undecided between a unilateral declaration or formal alliance guarantee. A series of negotiations with the British and Canadians in the spring, however, drove the United States towards a formal commitment. British influence appears to have been decisive. Not only did British policymakers underscore to American strategists that France desired a formal American commitment as insurance against Germany, but Bevin himself played on American fears of *British* bandwagoning and appeasement, cabling in April that, “one of my great anxieties [. . .] is whether, if trouble did come, we should be left waiting as in 1940 in a state of uncertainty. In view of our experience then it would be very difficult to be able to stand up to it again unless there was a definite worked out arrangement for the Western area.”<sup>922</sup> He followed up in mid-May with another message emphasizing that a treaty guarantee by the United States “would, by itself, encourage the democratic forces all over the world and be far the best deterrent to any Soviet miscalculation, which constitutes the only serious danger of war in the near future.”<sup>923</sup> Shortly after Bevin’s second note arrived, the balance inside the United States government shifted in favor of a formal alliance. The logic of this move, as both my argument and Democratic Peace Theory predict, was to reinforce deterrence against the USSR and lay the foundation for Western Europe’s political integration as a democratic bulwark against the USSR.<sup>924</sup> Indeed, as Ireland concludes, the United States calculated that if “the British were hesitant to participate on the continent and to help smooth the integration of West Germany into western Europe, [then] that task would have to be assumed by the United States” indefinitely.<sup>925</sup> Although interrupted by the Berlin Crisis, negotiations over a formal American-West European alliance thus began that fall and culminated in the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) in April 1949. The United States was now formally committed to Britain’s survival and the protection of vital British security interests on the continent. Funding for the reconstruction of British and Western European military power followed shortly thereafter.

Hence, having started 1947 with a strategy of Moderate Support, within two years the United States had renewed its alliance with the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, these efforts were not enough to salvage Britain’s great power status. Britain’s relative decline continued as the United States and USSR made good wartime losses and grew in the postwar system, while Britain’s economy continued to stagnate. By 1950, Britain fell from the great power ranks entirely; by the middle of the Cold War, it was as weak or even weaker than France and West Germany. Still, this was not for want of intense American support: even if late in the game, the United States was willing to commit significant economic and military resources to Britain’s defense once its military position began to unravel. Although these efforts proved insufficient, going forward Britain would at least decline under the aegis of American protection.

#### K. Assessment

All three theories correctly predicted the United States would adopt a strategy of Extreme Support. Following on the Moderate Support strategy in 1945-1946, the revised strategy saw the United States provide increasing amounts of political and military assistance to the United Kingdom in order to reinforce Britain’s role as a great power in postwar Europe. This process culminated in the signing of the NAT and formal creation of an Anglo-American peacetime alliance.

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<sup>922</sup> United States Department of State, *FRUS 1948, Vol. 3*, 80.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>924</sup> Ireland, *Entangling Alliance*, 95.

<sup>925</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.



Overall, however, the course and rationale of American strategy provides significant additional evidence for Realist Decline Theory while offering only limited process evidence for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory. As my theory predicts, American policymakers were explicit in justifying escalating levels of aid and backing for Britain as an effort to retain Britain as an ally. At a time when American strategy sought to rebuild Western Europe as a bulwark against the USSR, the United States looked to Britain to lead that alignment and thereby sought to ensure Britain had the wherewithal to do so. Otherwise, if Britain were not available, then the United States itself would have to commit to a long-term presence in Europe in order to either 1) assuage West European concerns over a revived Germany, or 2) take the lead itself in balancing the USSR. In essence, if the United States did not want to commit itself to Europe in perpetuity, Britain needed to remain a great power and American strategy oriented to that goal. The inverse was also true, as intense support for Britain would prevent the United States from facing the isolation that could result if the United Kingdom, desperate and broke, made a separate agreement with the Soviet Union. Dangerous in peacetime, isolation due to an Anglo-Soviet deal could prove, as the JCS warned, devastating to American security in war and therefore mandated increasingly intensive means to keep Britain a great power. In short, and exactly as my theory predicts, the United States moved to back Britain in order to keep it at a potential ally in a multipolar system and prevent the loss of external balancing options.

Equally important, and particularly in comparison to the situation in 1945-1946, the collapse of British military power appears to have been the major driver of intensifying American support.<sup>926</sup> First, strategists emphasized the collapse of the British military position in Greece and Turkey as the precipitating cause of intensifying American military assistance. Second, and although less explicit, American policymakers focused on Britain's role in establishing an effective military coalition against the USSR throughout 1947-1949. Finally, in the course of intensifying American support for Britain, American policymakers seem to have paid particular attention to the state of the British military as a tool against the Soviet Union. Combined, core realist predictions are confirmed as the United States 1) monitored the health of the British military, and 2) seemingly shaped American strategy vis-à-vis the United Kingdom in response to developments in British military posture.

Finally, it is briefly worth pointing out that as British military posture moved from robust to weak, American concerns of British chain-ganging and entrapment appear to have dissipated. This contrasts with the situation in 1945-1946, when American strategists feared that intensive support for Britain would antagonize the Soviet Union and might lead Britain to try to chain-gang the United States into a standoff with the Soviet Union. As my theory predicts in a multipolar environment in which the declining state holds a weak posture, the absence of British military options seems to have obviated American worries that intensive means of support would rebound and undercut American security. This conclusion can only be tentative, as it is difficult to say for certain whether a particular issue was absent from the strategic calculus. However, given the prominence of these concerns throughout 1945-1946 and their virtual absence after the winter of 1947, it appears the weakness of the British military position after this point altered

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<sup>926</sup> Some might claim that American strategy towards Britain was simply an outgrowth of rising Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union. Clearly this is partially the case, as intensifying American support for the United Kingdom occurred against the backdrop of rising Soviet-American tensions. However, Soviet-American tensions were mounting throughout the post-war period, yet it was only after British military power collapsed that American aid to Britain intensified. The onrushing Cold War was an important backdrop, but changes in British posture seem to have been decisive in the Anglo-American relationship within the broader Cold War.

American calculations surrounding aid to Britain. Moreover, this change occurred *before* Soviet-American relations turned irretrievably antagonistic with the collapse of the CFM and Berlin Blockade, meaning that the shift in American concerns vis-à-vis Britain occurred before a breakdown in Soviet-American relations would have made concerns of entrapment and chain-ganging irrelevant. On the whole, the outcome and process of the case strongly match the predictions of my theory and provide substantial confirming evidence.

In contrast, there is less evidence for Democratic Peace and Institutionalist Theory. Aside from predicting the Extreme Support strategy, the strongest evidence for Democratic Peace Theory comes from occasional public pronouncements by American policymakers (particularly Truman) that the United States needed to act to prevent potential democratic allies from falling under the sway of non-democratic governments. Decision-makers certainly justified their policies this way in public. However, as shown by the opposition of Kennan, Marshall, Bohlen, and other strategists to this effort, as well as Truman's own suggestion that such rhetoric was mainly for public consumption, it is difficult to find evidence that American policy was *motivated* by the desire to preserve Britain as a fellow democracy. These concerns may have lurked in the background, but the major shifts in U.S. strategy and the private rationales offered depended much more on the strategic desirability of preserving Great Britain as a military ally. Furthermore, available evidence does not substantiate the point that American policymakers had reason to be worried that Britain *itself* would be lost as a democracy if the United States did not move to Britain's aid. As I describe in the following section, not only did the Soviet Union maintain its policy of keeping West European Communist parties in check through the middle of 1948 (well after the U.S. moved towards Extreme Support), but even then this effort was a more direct threat to France, Italy, and Germany than the United Kingdom itself. Overall, Democratic Peace Theory receives very limited backing from the case.

Institutionalist Theory also receives mixed marks. As with Democratic Peace Theory, the strongest evidence for the argument is the United States' adoption of a strategy of Extreme Support. Otherwise, the theory performs poorly. First, there is virtually no mention in any of the American discussions of the need to aid Britain to sustain existing international institutions. Second, and as shown above, the United States was happy to allow Britain to work around and defect from institutional mechanisms such as the Bretton Woods regime when doing so helped buttress British capabilities. Rather than seeing institutions shape U.S. policy and encourage the United States to support Britain to ensure institutions continued to operate, the United States did the opposite and allowed the institutions to weaken in order to ensure Britain continued as a great power. Third, the United States channeled much of its support for Great Britain – particularly economic and military aid – to the country outside of institutional forum. That is, rather than trying to sustain existing institutions such as the CFM or Bretton Woods, American support instead involved efforts to channel aid bilaterally and create new mechanisms to provide American assistance. Thus, instead of serving as prime venues to provide Britain with support, existing institutions were either ignored or bypassed in the process of coming to the United Kingdom's side.

Finally, institutionalist theory has a major timing problem. Simply put, the United States' Extreme Support strategy reached its apogee with the signing of the NAT in the spring of 1949. However, by the time this agreement was reached, major postwar institutions that might have ostensibly brought the United States around to Britain's side, particularly Bretton Woods and the CFM, had either failed or experienced serious setbacks in their operations. This means that United States intensified support to Britain *despite* the absence of binding institutions rather than

*because* of their function! Although some might counter that the restart of Anglo-American military planning provided a de facto institution and paved the way for the alliance, this overlooks the fact that Anglo-American military planning itself had significantly decreased after the war and was a shadow of its former self; it is difficult to see why a much-weakened bilateral institution would take the place of collapsed and truly multilateral forum. On balance, Institutional Theory also receives very limited support from the process of American strategy at this time.

## V. Soviet Strategy and British Decline, 1947-1949

Having traced the evolution of the United States' Extreme Support strategy and shown Realist Decline Theory provides a better explanation of U.S. policy than its competitors, this section continues the test by examining the evolution of Soviet strategy in 1947-1949. As before, I test competing predictions along the way before assessing the results.

### A. Overview: Soviet Strategy and British Decline, Part II

Soviet strategy towards the United Kingdom underwent two shifts in the 1947-1949 period. Eventually, after mid-1947, it pursued a Moderate Predation strategy that matches the conventional Cold War perception of a hostile and antagonistic USSR. This behavior saw the Soviet Union try to consolidate its control over Eastern Europe as a competing grouping to the nascent Western bloc centered around the Anglo-American alliance. In early-mid 1947, however, the Soviet Union pursued a strategy of Extreme Support. It did so by preempting the United States (by many months) and offering a formal Anglo-Soviet alliance. Although formally directed at Germany, the alliance seems to have been designed to woo Britain into the Soviet orbit more generally and represented a deepening of the 1945-1946 Moderate Support strategy that looked to preserve Britain as an ally.<sup>927</sup>

In what follows, I discuss the evolution and development of both strategies. However, due to the particular paucity of research on Soviet policy in this period and lack of access to Soviet archives, it is difficult at times to isolate for the specific role of the United Kingdom in Soviet strategy. Thus, for large portions, I am forced to rely upon the pattern of Soviet behavior towards the United States and Western Europe writ large. Limited resources also means that I am forced to combine diplomatic policy, military policy, and internal rationales into one general description of Soviet strategy. This makes any results preliminary and tentative. Future research will need to address these limits.

### B. The First Turn: Extreme Support in early 1947

Anglo-Soviet relations had progressively deteriorated throughout 1945-1946 as British worries over the insertion of Soviet power into Central-Eastern Europe overlapped with misperceptions over the crises in Greece, Turkey, and Iran. Nevertheless, the USSR continued bidding for British friendship and was willing at the start of 1947 to utilize intense means to this end. As British posture began to shift from robust to weak, the Soviet Union used a visit to Moscow by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in January 1947 to broach the idea of a revived Anglo-Soviet alliance.<sup>928</sup> At the time, Montgomery was one of the British officers involved in secret staff talks with members of the U.S. military (noted in the preceding chapter),

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<sup>927</sup> Some see essentially no variation in Soviet behavior and argue the Anglo-Soviet alliance offer was mainly tactical; I disagree, for reasons laid out below. William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy* (New York: Norton, 1982), 155.

<sup>928</sup> The Soviet Union and United Kingdom had signed an alliance against Germany in 1942, but its terms lapsed with Germany's defeat.

while the United Kingdom itself was in the process of finalizing the Treaty of Dunkirk with France intended to organize an anti-German alliance to hedge against a German revival.<sup>929</sup> Stalin likely knew of both developments and was willing to play along, emphasizing that the USSR had no objection to an Anglo-American alliance (or any British alliance) provided it was not directed against the Soviet Union. Then, in an apparent effort to prevent Britain from associating too closely with the United States, Stalin proposed an Anglo-Soviet alliance.<sup>930</sup>

After deliberating over the next two weeks, British leaders decided to embrace the Soviet offer. In contrast to ex post arguments presenting the Soviet offer as disingenuous, the record of British deliberations strongly suggests British leaders saw the Soviet offer as sincere, a viable solution for structuring Anglo-Soviet relations in a positive direction, and thus a way of breeding Soviet support for British security.<sup>931</sup> Bevin's view is instructive, concluding in late January that, "we should certainly welcome this opportunity of clarifying our relations with the Soviet Union by bringing our Treaty with them up to date."<sup>932</sup> In practice, bringing the treaty "up to date" involved active Anglo-Soviet cooperation. As Bevin prepared to depart for the March 1947 CFM conference in Moscow during which Anglo-Soviet treaty talks would occur, the Cabinet authorized him to "negotiate a Treaty, going as far as [ . . . ] the Anglo-French Treaty, giving him full latitude to make variations as he may think necessary."<sup>933</sup> Considering the Anglo-French treaty promised British support for France to "prevent Germany from becoming a menace again" and vice versa, the implications of a similar treaty with the USSR were clear: the Soviet Union would support Britain (and vice versa) if another war with Germany loomed.<sup>934</sup>

Soviet support vis-à-vis Germany was only the beginning, as the USSR intended a revised treaty to open the door to a broader Anglo-Soviet alignment. By mid-April, the Soviet Union tabled a revised treaty that promised not only an alliance against Germany, but 1) "military and other aid and co-operation" in a war with any state allied or associated with Germany, and 2) pledged Britain and the USSR "not to conclude any alliances and not to take part in any coalitions or actions or measures directly or indirectly directed" against one another. In other words, and as my theory predicts, the Soviet Union sought to keep Britain out of a possible anti-Soviet coalition while ensuring Britain would function as a Soviet ally in case of war with another state.<sup>935</sup> British policymakers recognized the Soviet objective and worried that this might set Britain against the United States, particularly if the United States and USSR went to war and the United States mobilized its portion of Germany against the USSR.<sup>936</sup> This was not, however, enough to prevent Britain from continuing negotiations with Soviet leaders as

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<sup>929</sup> Knight, "Anglo-Soviet Treaty," 274–275.

<sup>930</sup> Defence Committee, "The Anglo-Soviet Treaty, the Question of an Anglo-Soviet Military Alliance; and Anglo-American Standardisation, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs," Annex I, 30 January 1947, CAB 131/4;

<sup>931</sup> Knight, "Anglo-Soviet Treaty."

<sup>932</sup> Defence Committee, "The Anglo-Soviet Treaty, the Question of an Anglo-Soviet Military Alliance; and Anglo-American Standardisation, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs," 30 January 1947, CAB 131/4; Defence Committee, "Confidential Annex," 31 January 1947, CAB 131/5. Also Bullock, *Bevin*, 371.

<sup>933</sup> Cabinet, "Revision of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty: Memorandum by the Prime Minister," 16 March 1947, CAB 129/17/43.

<sup>934</sup> John Baylis, "Britain and the Dunkirk Treaty: The Origins of NATO," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5, no. 2 (1982): 244; Sean Greenwood, "Return to Dunkirk: The Origins of the Anglo-French Treaty of March 1947," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 6, no. 4 (1983): 61. Note that Greenwood sees the Anglo-French alliance as oriented against the USSR. Given the British reaction to Soviet overtures, I disagree.

<sup>935</sup> Cabinet, "Revision of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, Appendix B," 20 April 1947, CAB 129/18.

<sup>936</sup> Cabinet, "Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet," 17 April 1947, CAB 128/9.

British strategists apparently concluded the benefits of Soviet support outweighed the risks. Thus, even over opposition from the British Chiefs of Staff, the Cabinet advanced a revised offer promising “support and assistance will be afforded [. . .] against any other power which may join with Germany in such an attack in Europe.” Significantly, the British offer went beyond even the terms of the United Kingdom’s nascent alliance with France.<sup>937</sup> The overall pattern is clear: the Soviet Union was willing to pursue a strategy of Extreme Support at the very time British military weaknesses began to tell by offering Britain an alliance, and British leaders were happy to explore the offer.

### C. The Second Turn: Moderate Predation, mid-1947 through 1949

Only a few days after British leaders agreed to proceed with the Anglo-Soviet alliance, however, the United Kingdom reversed course and “decided, on reflection, that it would be inadvisable to extend the military clauses on the lines discussed.” The best Britain was now willing to offer was general coordination and cooperation against Germany.<sup>938</sup> The change, which occurred on 22 April, apparently came in response to the collapse of the Moscow CFM meeting amidst Anglo-American-Soviet recriminations and disharmony.

The CFM had been meeting throughout the second half of March and into April, for a total of six weeks. Throughout the period, differences between the United States and the Soviet Union mounted over the fate of Germany. Briefly stated, the United States sought a federal, decentralized central government to run the country, limits on reparations, and permission to immediately rebuild the German economy whereas the Soviet Union sought a centralized government and significant reparations before restarting the German economy. No agreement was reached. Already distrustful of the USSR, Britain was driven squarely onto the American side by Soviet efforts to gain control over the Ruhr industries in the British occupation zone, as well as Soviet rejection of an American offer to keep Germany disarmed for 25 years.<sup>939</sup> When the CFM ended in disagreement approximately one week later, there was a clear division between the USSR on the one hand, and the U.S. and U.K. on the other, over the future of Germany and thus the future of Europe.<sup>940</sup> Britain moved away from Anglo-Soviet alliance talks as these divisions became clear.

Subsequent American announcement of the ERP apparently convinced the USSR that the possibility of Anglo-American-Soviet cooperation was over.<sup>941</sup> Despite having just tried resolving outstanding disputes over Germany with the United States and Great Britain, and even as the Anglo-Soviet treaty offer officially remained on the table, Soviet leaders concluded the USSR faced an Anglo-American front directed against the Soviet Union.<sup>942</sup> Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov’s comments in July 1947 are illustrative, arguing that the Marshall Plan represented, “behind the scenes collusion of the United States and Great Britain.”<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> Cabinet, “Revision,” 20 April. Also Appendix E to said document.

<sup>938</sup> Cabinet, “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet,” 22 April 1947, CAB 128/9.

<sup>939</sup> Byrnes had first tabled the offer to disarm Germany one year earlier; now Marshall asked for a decision; Bullock, *Bevin*, 385. An overview of British policy at the CFM is found in Martina Kessel, “The Art of Failure: British and French Policies Towards Germany and the Council of Foreign Ministers, 1947,” in *The Failure of Peace in Europe, 1943-48*, ed. Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 249–270.

<sup>940</sup> Bullock, *Bevin*, 357–392; Philip Zelikow, “George C. Marshall and the Moscow CFM Meeting of 1947,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 8, no. 2 (July 1997): 97–124.

<sup>941</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 104.

<sup>942</sup> See the report of Anglo-American coordination described by Soviet intelligence, selectively quoted in Mikhail Narinskii, “The Soviet Union and the Marshall Plan,” in *The Failure of Peace in Europe, 1943-48*, ed. Antonio Varsori and Elena Calandri (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 279–280.

<sup>943</sup> Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Kremlin’s Cold War*, 105.

Ambassador Novikov was even clearer, cabling from Washington, “In this American proposal are the clear contours of a West European bloc directed against us,” and later, “a careful analysis of the Marshall Plan shows that in the end it amounts to the creation of a West European bloc as an instrument of US policy.”<sup>944</sup> In Soviet eyes, Britain was now solidly in the American camp.

In response, the USSR shifted to a strategy of Moderate Predation. This strategy contradicts my argument: rather than continue bidding for Britain’s friendship and pursuing support, the Soviet Union shifted to a strategy of confrontation that exacerbated British insecurity and deepened the emerging Cold War.<sup>945</sup> The effort became clear beginning in September 1947 when the USSR stood up the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) as a successor to the interwar Comintern with the goal of “coordinating the policies and actions of the major European communist parties.”<sup>946</sup> Instead of pushing West European communist parties to cooperate with the United States and United Kingdom in reconstructing Western Europe, the USSR now adopted an oppositional line and urged local confrontation with non-Communist groups. The result was a wave of strikes and political maneuvers that convulsed West European governments.<sup>947</sup>

The Soviet Union expressly linked the Cominform’s creation to Anglo-American consolidation and the appearance of an Anglo-American alliance against to the USSR. Even at the time, Cominform head and Soviet Politburo member Andrei Zhdanov justified the Cominform on the grounds that, “in England and the United States the activity of reactionary circles [. . .] had steadily increased [. . .] the Anglo-American imperialists have shown their unwillingness to take into account the legitimate interests of the Soviet Union [. . . and were now] prepared not only to frustrate the policy of democratization and demilitarization of Germany, but even to liquidate Germany as a unified state and divide her.”<sup>948</sup> If the United Kingdom was going to work with the United States against the USSR, then the Soviet Union was not going to buttress British power and work for British friendship. Notably, although the Moderate Predation strategy itself diverges from my theory, the focus on Anglo-American cooperation and Britain’s *loss* as a potential ally seems to better accord with my argument than its competitors.

As Anglo-American coordination deepened in the second half of 1947 and into 1948, Soviet policy became more oppositional. December 1947 saw a final CFM meeting in London as the United States, Britain, and USSR made one last effort to reach a deal on Germany. It failed when the Soviet Union, although evincing some movement on the reparations issue was unwilling to move far enough towards the Anglo-American position, and the United States and Great Britain were unwilling to delay restarting the German economy.<sup>949</sup> Immediately

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<sup>944</sup> Quoted in Roberts, *Molotov*, 114.

<sup>945</sup> This behavior is understandable to some extent. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union did not have the economic resources to help Britain reconstruct its economy and thus could not respond to the Marshall Plan with a parallel effort. However, even if the Soviet Union could not outcompete the United States for British friendship, it did not need to adopt policies that reinforced Britain’s link to the United States.

<sup>946</sup> Roberts, *Molotov*, 115; Scott D. Parrish, *The Turn to Confrontation: The Soviet Reaction to the Marshall Plan, 1947*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper 9, March 1994; Geoffrey Roberts, “Moscow and the Marshall Plan: Politics, Ideology and the Onset of the Cold War, 1947,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 8 (December 1994): 1371–1386.

<sup>947</sup> Parrish, “USSR and Security Dilemma,” 222.

<sup>948</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 221–222; also Natalia Egorova, “Stalin’s Foreign Policy and the Cominform, 1947–1953,” in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–53*, ed. Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 198–200.

<sup>949</sup> McAllister, *No Exit*, 142–143.

afterwards, Bevin and other British leaders began calling for moves towards a Western military alliance and, as shown above, Anglo-American military cooperation began to pick up.<sup>950</sup> In response, the Soviet Union began to entrench its position in Central-Eastern Europe and actively build up a bloc to match the Anglo-American position. This effort proceeded in three parallel steps. First, the USSR began developing its zone of occupation in Germany as a separate state (eventually the German Democratic Republic) under Communist control.<sup>951</sup> Second, the USSR minimally permitted, and may have sponsored, a coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 that displaced a democratically-elected regime that sought to remain neutral in the onrushing Cold War, with a Communist government allied to the USSR.<sup>952</sup> Finally, the USSR forged a series of bilateral alliances with the states in Eastern Europe – many of which still hosted large numbers of Soviet troops – in order to consolidate the region under Soviet control in the winter-spring of 1948.<sup>953</sup> Although the areas now under Soviet control still did not expand beyond the areas envisioned in the 1944-1945 spheres of influence strategy (except for East Germany, which was matched by Anglo-American influence in West Germany), the Soviet Union was beginning to form a security system optimized for a drawn-out struggle to compete with the Anglo-American sphere.<sup>954</sup> This suggests that the Soviet Union, although increasingly hostile to the United States and Great Britain, still did not envision intensely preying on the West – it was interested in Moderate rather than Extreme Predation.

In pursuing Moderate Predation, the limited documentary record suggests the USSR remained attentive to Britain's loss as an ally and the military balance vis-à-vis the nascent Anglo-American alliance. Stalin's comments to a special session of the Politburo in March 1948 is particularly telling, with the Soviet leader remarking that England and the other "small European countries [. . .] follow America out of necessity, and yield to her through fear cast to them by adroit propaganda. We have already spoken enough of that. We have already worked out our active plans and it now rests for us to follow them." In this effort, the Soviet Union needed to acquire the military capabilities to bring the United States and United Kingdom to the bargaining table. Particular attention would therefore be paid "to the development of the Soviet Army and Navy. Their present condition in comparison with the American and English armies, about which we have absolutely correct information, I can definitely say that only in one respect are we inferior, that of surface water fleet, whilst in all other respects, we are far superior."<sup>955</sup> This focus on the military balance and desire to obtain a military advantage seems to accord with Institutional Theory's prediction that, in the absence of institutions, Anglo-Soviet relations should resemble an offensive-realist world. At the same time, the desirability of balancing an Anglo-American alliance by building up the USSR's own forces seems to accord with realist predictions that states ultimately balance one another and will do so using internal means when isolated from potential allies.

The denouement began in June 1948. As the United States prepared to consolidate its alliance with Britain and the rest of Western Europe via NAT negotiations, the Soviet Union announced the suspension of all road and rail traffic between Berlin and the western zones of

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<sup>950</sup> Ibid., 141–142, 146–147.

<sup>951</sup> Wettig, *Cold War in Europe*, 159–166.

<sup>952</sup> Kennedy-Pipe notes that it remains unclear whether the coup was sponsored by the USSR, or conducted by indigenous forces with the tacit acceptance of the USSR; see Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 122–123.

<sup>953</sup> Ibid., 121; Parrish, "USSR and Security Dilemma," 253.

<sup>954</sup> Parrish, "USSR and Security Dilemma," 254–256.

<sup>955</sup> See the translated speech in Cold War International History Project, "Stalin and the Cold War, 1945-1953" (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, September 1999), 431.

Germany. This set off the Berlin Crisis. Soviet objectives, as Kennedy-Pipe argues, were straightforward: convince the West not to reconstruct the West German economy (via the ERP) and military (via the NAT), encourage renewed Four Power negotiations over Germany's future, and consolidate Soviet and Communist control over the eastern zone of Germany.<sup>956</sup>

Nevertheless, the effort to coerce the nascent Anglo-American alliance to these ends backfired. Despite repeated Soviet offers to end the blockade if the United States and Britain returned to the negotiating table, there was no interest in this by either party and no opening in the Anglo-American position emerged.<sup>957</sup> Instead, the blockade simply reinforced American efforts to come to the aid of Britain and the rest of Western Europe. American economic and military aid began to flow in earnest, and the United States formalized its postwar alliance with Britain with the spring 1949 signing of the NAT. By the time the blockade ended in May, Britain was firmly established in the American camp in the onrushing Cold War.

Soviet political leaders appear to have eventually realized that their efforts were deepening Anglo-American relationship. In the midst of the blockade, Molotov treated the decision-makers in the two countries as oriented around the same policies, remarking that "the Soviet Union is compelled to take into consideration the fact that the ruling circles of the United States and Great Britain have gone over to a frankly aggressive political course."<sup>958</sup> *Pravda*, the official press organ of the Soviet government, was blunter shortly after Berlin crisis resolved, noting the alliance between the two countries (and others in Western Europe) by describing, "The Anglo-American bloc regards the German militarists as allies."<sup>959</sup> Thus, having begun the postwar period seeking to support the United Kingdom as a potential ally, the Soviet Union appeared resigned to Britain's loss as a partner by the time Britain fell from the great power ranks after 1949.

#### D. Assessment

Soviet policy in 1947-1949 provides mixed evidence for all three theories tested in this project. No single theory is overwhelmingly dominant, although the process evidence seems to provide somewhat stronger support for Realist Decline Theory than its competitors.

Democratic Peace Theory performs strongest in capturing the turn towards predation in Soviet policy beginning in mid-1947. As the theory predicts in a democratic/non-democratic dyad, misperception and mistrust ultimately drove the two sides apart and generated power-maximizing behavior on the part of the rising Soviet Union. Although Soviet strategy from mid-1947 does not seem the extremely predatory course predicted by the theory, the overall turn towards predation amidst major Anglo-Soviet misunderstandings are major points in the argument's favor. That said, the theory has a hard time explaining why the initial Soviet inclination was to intensify efforts to support the United Kingdom when confronted with a militarily weak Britain at the start of 1947. If democratic peace variables drive rising state behavior, then they should readily capture state strategy when decline begins to become a rout, that is, when the declining state's geopolitical survival is on the line. Democratic Peace Theory has a hard time in this regard. In particular, the Soviet alliance offer appears to have been genuine and, given Britain's willingness to negotiate and explore the Soviet offer, seems to have been seen as such by British policymakers. Therefore, and in contrast to what Democratic Peace Theory expects, it seems the Soviet Union was more than willing to overlook the domestic

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<sup>956</sup> Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 125.

<sup>957</sup> See, for instance, Stalin's January 1949 offer discussed in *ibid.*, 127-128.

<sup>958</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 149.

<sup>959</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 145.



political differences between the United Kingdom and USSR in order to make a serious bid for British friendship.

Along similar lines, the apparently sincere Anglo-Soviet back and forth suggests peaceable and sincere negotiations can take place and help states cooperate even when they are led by dissimilar regime types. This behavior contradicts a core causal logic in the democratic peace corpus, as dissimilar regimes did not hinder sincere bargains and substantive negotiations. Relatedly, it is worth pointing out that even after the USSR turned towards Moderate Predation, it expressed its logic in terms of Anglo-American cooperation as a bloc against the USSR – not in terms of the basic, fundamental difference between Anglo-American and Soviet regime types. In essence, the USSR seems to have been less focused on the internal politics of the United Kingdom and more interested in its external behavior than Democratic Peace Theory expects. Although the theory receives some backing from the episode, the overall evidence is mixed.

Institutionalist Theory performs somewhat better, though it also faces problems. Institutionalist Theory seems to provide a ready explanation for the double shift in Soviet strategy. Put simply, when the CFM was operational and appeared viable through mid-1947, the Soviet Union responded to mounting signs of British weakness by increasing the degree of support; when the CFM weakened, so did Soviet support for the United Kingdom. Equally important, the prediction that the CFM would become a prime negotiating venue for the Soviet Union to channel and negotiate support for the declining United Kingdom was borne out. As shown, the March-April Moscow CFM helped Soviet and British officials work out the terms of the planned Anglo-Soviet treaty. Existing institutions appeared, at least for a fleeting moment, to generate important spillover effects in helping the United Kingdom and USSR maintain cooperative relations as the Soviet Union worked to buttress British security. Finally, it is likely significant that Soviet officials argued that Anglo-American cooperation caused the breakdown in great power negotiations over Germany and, during the Berlin blockade, offered to end the standoff if the Western powers returned to the negotiating table. Because negotiations over Germany were a primary focus of CFM talks, Soviet statements imply the Soviet leadership may have been thinking in terms of the potential for international institutions to help ameliorate great power tensions. Although not definitive, this provides circumstantial evidence that Soviet calculations may have developed along the lines predicted by Institutionalist Theory.

That said, Institutionalist Theory confronts a major problem in the case, namely, that Anglo-Soviet relations collapsed and the Soviet Union shifted to Moderate Predation when the CFM remained formally in operation. As noted, the turn towards Moderate Predation began in the summer and early fall of 1947, yet the final meeting of the CFM only took place in November-December. Why the Soviet Union moved towards a predatory stance when it was still formally bound to the United Kingdom is difficult to explain using institutionalist constructs. If the theory operates as designed, then we would expect Anglo-Soviet relations to collapse and the USSR pursue predation only after the final CFM meeting. Instead, the timing of Soviet decisions suggests institutionalist breakdown and the turn towards predation may have both been endogenous to some other set of factors not captured by the theory. Hence, Institutionalist Theory also provides an incomplete account for the case and the available evidence is not fully supportive of institutionalist predictions.

Realist Decline Theory also receives mixed marks in the case, although process evidence suggests it performs marginally better than either of its two competitors. The strongest strike against the theory is the ultimate outcome of the case. My argument predicted that the Soviet Union would bid for British friendship and try to retain the United Kingdom as an ally by using

intensive means to preserve the United Kingdom as a great power. Ultimately, the USSR went in the opposite direction, adopted a strategy of Moderate Predation, and pursued policies that posed serious challenges to British security at a time when British resources were scarce. This provides strong evidence against my argument.

That said, several pieces of process evidence provide backing for my argument. First, the Soviet Union's pursuit of Moderate Predation only emerged after the USSR attempted a strategy of Extreme Support. Soviet Extreme Support, moreover, emerged at the very time when British military posture moved from robust to weak. In the absence of more abundant Soviet archival documents, the timing of this decision provides at least circumstantial evidence that Soviet policymakers monitored the state of the British military and shaped strategy accordingly. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why the USSR made the alliance offer in the winter of 1947 even though British decline was recognized throughout the postwar period: none of the independent variables (e.g., Soviet or British domestic institutions, the CFM) identified by competing accounts changed so as to predict Extreme Support specifically at this time. In short, Realist Decline Theory successfully predicted the type of Soviet strategy when first confronted by a declining and military weak United Kingdom. Even if this strategy was eventually abandoned, the initial effort at adopting Extreme Support backs my argument.

Equally important, what we know of Soviet rationales and justifications turning away from Extreme Support provide moderately strong evidence for realist arguments. As noted above, a constant Soviet complaint and justification for Moderate Predation was the appearance of an Anglo-American bloc directed against the USSR. This complaint is significant, because it suggests the Soviet Union moved away from Extreme Support once it concluded Britain would no longer be available as an ally. The Soviet focus on its external balancing options, in turn, provides good backing for Realist Decline Theory: as expected in a multipolar system, a rising USSR focused at least in part on retaining the declining United Kingdom as an ally and shaped its strategy accordingly. Although the resulting Soviet strategy was not predicted by the theory, the process and a large portion of the cost-benefit analysis predicted by Realist Decline Theory appears to have been present in the case. Simply put, the Soviet Union appeared to be fixed on the United Kingdom's availability (or unavailability) as an ally in the precise manner predicted by my argument.

In the final analysis, none of the three theories perfectly explains the Anglo-Soviet case. This suggests the case may be anomalous, or the theories themselves need revision. On points, however, it seems that my argument marginally outperforms its competitors. Democratic Peace Theory misses what we know of the logic undergirding Soviet strategy and the initial effort to pursue Extreme Support. Institutionalist Theory captures some of the rationales expressed by Soviet policymakers and predicted the effort to negotiate an Anglo-Soviet alliance during the CFM, but the turn to Moderate Predation seems to be driven by variables other than those identified by the theory. Realist Decline Theory, on the other hand, predicted the initial Extreme Support strategy, predicted the timing of the effort, and offers some insight into the rationales expressed by Soviet policymakers even for the move towards Moderate Predation. Although Moderate Predation itself was not expected, the realist story is the only explanation that explains both some of the outcome of the case and provides consistent insight into what we know of Soviet rationales. Although not perfect, it somewhat outperforms its competitors.

## **VI. Summary and Conclusion**

### **A. Summarizing the Results**

Although the evidence is less robust than in the 1945-1946 period, American and Soviet strategies towards the United Kingdom in 1947-1949 again provide strong evidence for Realist Decline Theory and suggest it is a better explanation of American and Soviet strategies than its competitors. First, the theory aptly predicted the United States' adoption of an Extreme Support strategy and, while the Soviet Union eventually turned towards Moderate Predation from mid-1947, accounts for the USSR's initial effort to similarly intensify support for the United Kingdom. Second, my argument captured the underlying logic of American and, to a lesser extent, Soviet behavior. That is, both the United States and Soviet Union remained focused in this period on preserving the United Kingdom as a great power and potentially ally. Here, the United States continued to see Britain as important in ensuring stability in Western Europe. While the evidence is less clear-cut, Soviet behavior and policy suggests the USSR believed it important to prevent the United Kingdom from allying with the United States and thus presenting the USSR with a front of the major European powers. Third, the collapse of British military power and shift of British posture from robust to weak led, as predicted, to an intensification of American and Soviet efforts to buttress British power. American strategists were explicit on the underlying rationale, emphasizing in early 1947 the need to provide extensive economic and military assistance to the United Kingdom if the United Kingdom was going to play a meaningful role in European security affairs. There is no direct evidence on the Soviet side for the justification behind the Anglo-Soviet alliance offer in January 1947, but the timing of the decision (coming as British posture eroded) strongly suggests Soviet strategists were attuned to British military developments and shaped strategy accordingly as my theory predicts. Overall, the theory is able to explain much of the behavior in the case, and offers significant insight into the cost-benefit calculations of the United States and Soviet Union.

In contrast, American and Soviet strategies in 1947-1949 provide only limited evidence for Democratic Peace Theory and Institutional Theory. Democratic Peace Theory might provide a partial explanation of American and Soviet strategy. The theory rightly predicted that the United States would pursue a strategy of Extreme Support, while also capturing the eventual Soviet pursuit of predation. Yet even in the American case, the overwhelming focus was on preserving Britain as a potential ally against the USSR and as a source of military support in Europe – there is strong evidence that any discussion of preserving Britain because of Britain's democratic legacy was purely for public consumption. Furthermore, the theory confronts a major empirical anomaly in the initial Soviet effort to pursue an Extreme Support strategy with the United Kingdom. As in 1945-1946, there is again evidence that the democratic United States and non-democratic Soviet Union behaved similarly towards the democratic United Kingdom. This outcome is again problematic for Democratic Peace Theory.

The evidence is similarly limited for Institutional Theory. Institutional Theory correctly predicted that the United States and Soviet Union would pursue Extreme Support strategies so long as binding institutions were available. It also offers insight into the Soviet shift towards predation once the CFM – the main institution linking the United Kingdom and USSR – collapsed. Still, what we know of American and Soviet rationales and internal arguments suggest policymakers generally ignored the influence of international institutions and focused on the benefits of keeping the United Kingdom an ally. More importantly, the United States was willing to allow Britain to defect from existing institutions when doing so buttressed British capabilities, and continued to provide intense support even as the postwar institutions binding the U.S. and U.K. (especially the CFM and Bretton Woods regimes) frayed. As for the Soviet Union, it began to pursue its predatory strategy despite the continued operation of the

CFM, suggesting the institution itself was not enough to maintain Extreme Support once Anglo-American relations began to solidify. In the final analysis, while there is some evidence that institutionalist arguments can explain portions of the case, there is strong discordant evidence that limits the theory's applicability to the 1947-1949 period.

#### B. Conclusion

America and Soviet strategies towards the United Kingdom diverged in 1947-1949 after an initial parallel effort to pursue Extreme Predation. Although the USSR's eventual adoption of Moderate Predation does not fully match what was predicted by Realist Decline Theory, my argument does account for American strategy, the initial Soviet move towards Extreme Support, and many of the arguments and cost-benefit analyses evinced in the 1947-1949 period. Overall, the case provides more evidence for my argument than its competitors. Combined with the tests presented in the preceding chapter, there is strong evidence that Realist Decline Theory provides a good account for rising state strategy towards declining great powers in multipolar systems.

## Chapter Seven:

### Conclusion, Implications, and Extensions

#### I. Introduction: Overview of Project and Findings

The preceding chapters presented one overarching argument: rising states shape their strategy towards declining great powers in response to the structure of the international system and the military posture of the declining state itself. This argument, tested using detailed case studies and process tracing, challenges much of the existing wisdom on the fate of declining great powers and the behavior of rising competitors.

Scholarship on great power decline has traditionally been dominated by the assumption that rising states are natural born predators who seek to further grow their power at the expense of declining states. Rising states, in this view, are enjoined by the competitive nature of international politics and the new opportunities available to them as increasingly capable actors to act as power maximizers. And as Thucydides' famous description of the origins of the Peloponnesian War – that the war was caused by “the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta” – reminds us, both the reality and the concern of rising state predation can carry profound consequences: not only can rising state predation lead to the destruction of once-great powers, but declining states fearing rising state predation may wage preventive wars and adopt risky behaviors of their own that roil international politics.

The theory and findings of this project, which I summarize below, add nuance and challenge large elements of this assumption. Far from pursuing predation whenever and wherever possible, rising states are much more discriminate and display more variation in their strategies towards declining peers. Rather than accept the notion that international politics invariably propels relatively rising states to make life for declining states nasty, brutish, and short, I focus on the varying structural and military conditions under which a rising state has to address a declining great power. These differing structural and military conditions can generate both powerful incentives for preying on a declining state, but also profound disincentives that cause rising states to pursue varying *degrees* of predation at different times and in different places. Under certain conditions, it is even possible that structural and military circumstances can give rising states strong reasons to avoid predation altogether and try to preserve a declining state as a great power by pursuing a supportive strategy. In short, rising states sometimes act as predators, but they may also act as power satisficers and try to support a declining great power depending on the specific structural and military conditions at hand.

These findings further rebut widely held liberal notions as to the options available to declining states to limit or avert rising state predation. One school of thought holds that by encouraging the spread of liberal democracy, declining democracies can create a democratic community in which rising states will continue to cooperate and support the power and security of their declining democratic brethren. I find, however, that there is more variation in rising state strategy than regime-type arguments suggest: rising democracies are often less supportive of declining democracies than Democratic Peace Theory suggests, while rising non-democracies are often more supportive than democratic peace arguments allow.

A second liberal view comes out of Institutional Theory. This school of thought holds by embedding rising and declining states in the same international institutions, rising states are given a stake in the international status quo that can lead them to support declining states. Again, the results of my work challenge these arguments. Rather than ameliorating great power

competition during power shifts, international institutions were shown to be either superfluous to rising state calculations of their power and interest, or ignored altogether when doing so suited rising states. Put differently, international institutions were either endogenous or irrelevant.

The remainder of this conclusion proceeds in five parts. Following this overview, I first summarize the theory before reviewing the evidence. Next, I discuss the implications of my work for both international relations theory and ongoing policy debates. I conclude by highlighting areas for further research and improvement.

## **II. Summarizing the Theory**

### **A. Cost-Benefit Analysis and Conditions**

Declining states fear predation by their rising peers. In some sense, they are right to do so: all states operating in an anarchic international system have reason to advance their security by maximizing power at other states' expense and preying on their peers. The notion that states are inclined to maximize power stands at the core of what I term Realist Decline Theory.

However, rising states do not always act as power maximizers. Because power is a means to security, whether a rising state pursues predation depends on the costs and benefits associated with this strategy. Under certain conditions, the security costs can be sufficiently large that rising states may end up acting as power satisficers and pass on opportunities to grow their relative power at a declining state's expense. Put differently, when the costs of predation are minimal and the benefits large, rising states pursue predatory strategies and act as power maximizers. Yet when these costs are large and the benefits dubious, rising states tend to support declining states and act as power satisficers.

Rising states reap an obvious benefit from successful predation: they become relatively stronger. Still, there are three potential costs a rising state may face along the way. First, the declining state itself may internally balance and threaten or wage war against the riser. Second, other great powers in the international system may flock to the declining state's side as the declining state externally balances. Finally, there is a long-term political cost associated with lost alliance opportunities if a rising state pushes a declining state from the great power ranks, only to discover it (the rising state) needs allies of its own against a future threat.

A combination of the polarity of the international system and the declining state's own military posture determine when the costs and benefits of predation obtain in a specific situation. First, one great power may rise and another decline in a bipolar system. Under bipolarity, the declining state cannot attract great power allies to help it externally balance, just as the declining state itself has no value to the rising state as a future partner. Instead, the rising state can eliminate all great power threats to its security if it pushes the declining state from the great power ranks; only the declining state's internal balancing keeps this behavior in check. Thus, bipolarity minimizes the costs of predation, maximizes the benefits, and encourages predatory strategies.

Different calculations occur in multipolar systems. Multipolarity virtually guarantee that the declining state, in addition to internally balancing, will attract allies of its own and have some use to the rising state as a partner. Hence, multipolarity encourages supportive strategies in order to 1) avoid the risks associated with predation and 2) preserve the declining state as an ally.

However, much also depends on the declining state's own military choices. The military capabilities at the declining state's expense – what I term the declining state's military posture – determine the decliner's ability to internally balance in bipolarity, in addition to the attractiveness for other states in aiding or preserving the decliner in multipolarity. When a

declining state holds a robust military posture (meaning that it has the wherewithal to secure itself and possibly aggress against others) other states are likely to fear being ensnared in a conflict or contest with a declining state that can still effectively internally balance. As a result, relatively rising great powers are likely to act cautiously towards the decliner. In contrast, a state with a weak military posture (defined as a state that is unable to defend itself and is thus unable to threaten the other great powers) cannot effectively internally balance, reduces the risk of other states ending up in a war or competition with the declining state, and minimizes rising state concerns of the declining state's future behavior.

#### **B. Combining Polarity and Posture: Predicted Outcomes**

Combined, polarity and posture generate four ideal-type strategies a rising state may pursue. First, decline in a bipolar world in which the declining state holds a robust posture generates what I term Extreme Predation. In this scenario, the rising state has reason to push the declining state from the great power ranks to eliminate all threats to its security, while the decliner's weak posture means the rising state can use intense means to pursue this goal freed of the risk of internal balancing by the decliner.

Yet decline may also occur in a bipolar system in which the declining state holds a robust military posture. Here, the declining state still has reason to push the declining state from the great power ranks. The declining state's ability to wage war in response to predation, however, keeps the intensity of rising state predation in check. This situation generates a strategy of Moderate Predation, in which the rising state attempts to slowly shift the distribution of power in its favor using cautious, prudent means.

Third, decline in a multipolar system in which the declining state retains a robust posture produces a strategy of Moderate Support. Although rising states in multipolarity have reason to support a declining state, the decliner's robust posture act as an impediment to its obtaining international backing. Not only may great powers that would otherwise ally with the declining state be reluctant to do so for fear of being entrapped into a conflict generated by the decliner or being snookered and attacked by the declining state, but the need to work hard to preserve the declining state as a future ally is obviated if the decliner looks like it is able to provide security for itself. The result is a strategy of Moderate Support in which the rising state tries to preserve the declining state using cautious, low-risk, and low-cost means.

Finally, rising states adopt a strategy of Extreme Support when a great power declines in multipolarity and holds a weak military posture. Here, the rising state's incentive to preserve the declining state as a potential ally encourages a supportive strategy, while the decliner's military weakness encourages intensive efforts to prop up the decliner for fear of the decliner being too weak – or lost entirely – to serve in this role. If Extreme Predation represents the classic fear of declining states, then Extreme Support is, *ceteris paribus*, the best possible outcome for a declining great power.

### **III. Reviewing the Evidence**

The study tested these arguments against competing claims from the democratic peace and institutionalist traditions using a series of case studies and extensive process tracing from post-1945 European politics. Specifically, I focused on American strategy towards the declining Soviet Union in 1989-1990, alongside American and Soviet strategy towards the declining United Kingdom in 1945-1949. Because the post-1945 world is often portrayed as overwhelmingly stable and dominated by the United States, these cases have not often been included in the literature on great power rise and decline. As demonstrated, however, there has

been massive change in the post-World War Two international distribution of power as the world went from multipolarity, to bipolarity, and ultimately to a period of American unipolarity. Thus, analyzing the strategies adopted by relatively rising states in response to the decline of post-1945 great powers is to link the United States' unipolar era to the decline of the other major powers in European politics.<sup>960</sup>

Aside from the intrinsic value of the cases, the project looked to these cases because they offered a series of strong tests for Realist Decline Theory against its liberal competitors. Not only was there significant variation over time and space in the degree to which 1) rising and declining states were embedded in the same international institutions and 2) were led by democratic or non-democratic regimes, but prominent scholars have attempted to explain rising state strategy within the cases using theories I argue against. By pitting my argument against its challengers in the British and Soviet cases, I am therefore giving other theories the benefit of the doubt and staging multi-cornered tests of my argument. Using this approach, I am able to assess not just whether my argument is able to explain the cases, but whether its predictions capture more of the process and outcome and rising state strategy than alternate arguments.

American strategy towards the Soviet Union was a good first test in this regard. On one level, institutionalist scholars such as Ikenberry and Deudney have explicitly argued that the United States pursued a supportive strategy towards the Soviet Union following the November 1989 opening of the Berlin Wall thanks to the influence of international institutionalism. At the same time, Haas' recent work suggests that the liberal-democratic reforms launched by Gorbachev from late 1988 bred American support for the Soviet Union from 1989 onward. None of these claims held up to scrutiny. Instead, and as my theory predicts in a bipolar system, the United States pursued a Moderate Predation strategy in 1989 when the Soviet Union held a robust posture, before adopting an Extremely Predation strategy once Soviet military power collapsed in the winter of 1990. More specifically, American policymakers initially adopted a Moderate Predation strategy geared towards gradually weakening the Soviet hold over the USSR's East European client states without triggering violent Soviet backlash. In 1990, American strategists recognized a window of opportunity to make maximal gains at the USSR's expense using any and all means at the United States' disposal explicitly due to the USSR's lack of military options; thus, American strategy focused on rapidly reunifying East and West Germany within NATO, tearing the heart out of the Warsaw Pact, and denying the USSR any compensation for this change. Meanwhile, American policymakers showed themselves more than happy to ignore or circumscribe international institutions for fear of actually being forced to support Soviet security in Central-Eastern Europe, and equally inclined to pursue a predatory course irrespective of the state of Gorbachev's domestic reforms. Simply put, both the process

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<sup>960</sup> For discussion and debate over American unipolarity, see Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1991-1990): 23-33; Samuel P. Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (April 1993): 68-83; Robert Jervis, "International Primacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 52-67; Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (April 1993): 5-51; William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 5-41; Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' Unipolar Moment," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 7-41; Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth, "Introduction: Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009): 1-27; Beckley, "China's Century?"



and outcome of the 1989-1990 case provided strong evidence for Realist Decline Theory and little evidence for democratic peace and institutionalist arguments.

American and Soviet strategy towards the United Kingdom in 1945-1949 provides additional evidence backing my argument in a multipolar setting. Historians and political scientists traditionally see a stark divergence in American and Soviet behavior after World War Two. In liberal accounts, the United States quickly came to the aid of its democratic wartime ally and constructed an array of institutions that used American power to buttress Britain's own amidst Europe's postwar devastation. Conversely, the Soviet Union putatively embarked on an aggressive, predatory strategy looking to capitalize on postwar chaos and Britain's weakened position.

My research debunked these claims. In 1945-1946, both the United States and Soviet Union adopted Moderate Support strategies. Both states looked to bid for Britain's friendship and tried to preserve Britain as a great power, but remained leery of backing Britain too intensely at a time when Britain retained significant military capabilities: the United States was willing to offer limited and conditional military and economic aid that partially subsidized British security, the USSR proved willing to allow Britain dominance in Western and Southeastern Europe, but neither state was willing to actively reconstruct British power or offer a formal alliance. Notably, these behaviors pose problems for competing accounts because the United States offered what support it did despite the collapse of wartime institutions that embedded the United States and Great Britain, while the Soviet Union adopted Moderate Support despite lacking the same democratic institutions as the United Kingdom.

American and Soviet behavior shifted abruptly after 1947. Initially, both the United States and Soviet Union pursued Extreme Support strategies towards the United Kingdom as the USSR offered Britain an alliance, and the United States advanced the Marshall Plan. The trigger for both Soviet and American behavior was the collapse of British military power at the turn of 1946-1947 that seems to have alerted American and Soviet policymakers that Britain might be lost as a future ally unless intensive assistance were given as quickly as possible. However, once it became clear that Britain was going to ally with the United States instead of Soviet Union, American and Soviet strategy diverged. The United States continued Extreme Support for Britain, culminating in Anglo-American military coordination and a formal American alliance under the North Atlantic Treaty. The USSR, on the other hand, changed gears and pursued a Moderate Predation strategy by launching the 1948 Berlin Crisis and organizing Eastern Europe to confront the Anglo-American front. Although this outcome contradicts my argument, what we know of Soviet debates suggests the processes identified by my theory held true: Soviet policymakers worried that Britain was now lost as an ally and feared that, in the absence of its own alliance options, it had no choice but to oppose the Anglo-American front. And, similar to the situation in 1945-1946, American and Soviet strategies initially converged towards Extreme Support despite the differences in American, British, and Soviet domestic regimes, while the USSR moved towards Moderate Predation even when it was still bound to the United Kingdom by de facto international institutions: again, we see American and Soviet behavior converging and diverging at different times and in different places than those expected by liberal arguments. Although the Soviet turn towards Moderate Predation in late 1947 means my theory does not gain as much backing from the British case as from the late Cold War episode, Realist Decline Theory ultimately explained substantial portions of the case and provided significantly more insight into American and Soviet strategy writ large than liberal explanations.

Overall, the outcomes and processes of the cases provided strong confirming evidence of the theory presented in Chapter Two. Realist Decline Theory performed poorest in explaining Soviet strategy towards the United Kingdom after the middle of 1947. Given that the Soviet move toward Moderate Predation occurred in the face of an Anglo-American alliance, the case suggests that the realist argument advanced in this project may break down if alliances become too fixed and tight. Under these conditions, a rising state may conclude that even a militarily weak declining state in a multipolar system will only be a threat by virtue of its relationship with other great powers. A sense of the flexibility or inflexibility of existing alliances is currently missing from the argument.

Still, the abundant evidence in the case of Soviet decline, as well as the theory's performance in the whole of the British case, provides strong grounds for endorsing the theory. Institutional and democratic peace arguments consistently failed to explain the course and logic of rising state behavior. Instead, relatively rising states fixed on the security costs and benefits of weakening or helping declining states, assessed these costs and benefits in light of the polarity of the system and the decliner's ability to provide security for itself, and formulated strategy accordingly. Under some conditions, this process led to the outcomes classically feared by declining great powers – an all out rising state surge toward Extreme Predation. In most other circumstances, however, rising states acted with significantly more caution, if not outright interest in preventing decliners from falling from the great power ranks. Baldly stated, the evidence indicates that relative decline is not always as pernicious as common wisdom suggests.

#### IV. Implications for International Relations Theory

The findings of this project carry important implications for international relations theory. First and foremost, they suggest that structural realist hypotheses can be used to predict and explain specific state strategies, at least under certain conditions. The debate over whether structural realism makes specific foreign policy predictions has been ongoing since shortly after Waltz published his *Theory of International Politics* in the late 1970s.<sup>961</sup> Both critics and fans of Waltz's work have allowed that a structural framework may be unable to generate specific predictions of state behavior without additional variables.<sup>962</sup> Indeed, an entire subfield of the realist tradition – neoclassical realism – has emerged in large part as an effort to blend domestic-level variables with structural insights to explain foreign policy decisions.<sup>963</sup> In contrast, a subset of scholars has maintained that structural realism can, at least theoretically, be used to predict specific state behaviors provided additional structural variables are used in the analysis. Yet after an effort to incorporate offense-defense variables into a Waltzian framework, this effort petered out.<sup>964</sup>

My findings suggest the structural realism-as-foreign-policy camp may still be correct. Using purely structural variables and hypotheses, I have shown that specific state policies can be

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<sup>961</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979.

<sup>962</sup> For an overview, see the text and notes in Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (1996): 7–53; Waltz, "Not Foreign Policy"; Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1999): 5–55.

<sup>963</sup> Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998): 144–172; Steven Lobell, Norrin Ripsman, and Jeffrey Taliaferro, "Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–41.

<sup>964</sup> Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks"; Posen, *Sources*; Eric J. Labs, "Do Weak States Bandwagon?," *Security Studies* 1, no. 3 (1992): 383.

explained without turning to domestic variables or sidestepping realist insights altogether. To do so, scholars must fully account for how the distribution of power in the system affects unit-level actions while allowing that, as Waltz suggests, multipolar and bipolar systems may produce different behaviors. In other words, structure can produce regular and predictable unit-level behaviors, but these behaviors may vary depending on the particular distribution of power at hand. Power-maximizing and power satisficing behavior may then be two sides of the same realist coin.

Adopting this perspective while seeking out additional structural variables beyond those identified by offense-defense theory, suggests a way to utilize the structural realist enterprise as a predictor of state behavior. This approach may both allow structural realism to explain a greater range of more subtle state behaviors than it has heretofore been used to capture, as well as more readily function as a successor to classical realism in capturing the process by which great powers interact and pursue their interests in a competitive international marketplace. It also offers an important caveat to studies that critique structural realist insights on the grounds that states do not always maximize "power." As demonstrated, just because a state (or states) are found not to maximize "power" under certain circumstances does not refute the structural realist enterprise: it could well be the case that pressures from the system argue for acting as power satisficers rather than power maximizers, and the absence of power-maximizing behavior occur along lines predicted by structural realist logic. In short, this project's effort at utilizing structural realism as a theory of foreign policy suggests a path to explain unit-level behavior without turning to domestic variables or abandoning the realist tradition entirely.

Second, and related to the preceding, this project offers a possible way of beginning to integrate what have historically been different realist traditions into a unified whole. Internecine fights between different branches of realism have occupied a prominent place in the international relations literature over the past quarter century.<sup>965</sup> These debates made good progress in clarifying the fault lines between power maximizing realism, structural realism, and offense-defense realism, but the debate remained intractable in the absence of a sovereign academic authority able to adjudicate disputes. The theory offered in this project, however, suggests the possibility of moving past the debate altogether. As shown, insights from the different traditions can be usefully integrated into a unified approach that is both theoretically rigorous and that captures important empirical phenomena. Future work may build on the effort in this project to see whether and to what extent this effort at unifying the different realist branches can productively bridge the chasm between the various schools of thought without resorting to unit-level variables à la neoclassical realism. Just as neoclassical realism seeks to salvage realist arguments by incorporating domestic variables to predict state behavior, so too may it be time to attempt a "neo-structural realist" framework that builds across rather than within a single realist body of work.

Finally, this project offers important caveats to liberal attempts to explain great power behavior. In showing that democratic peace and institutionalist theories cannot readily account for rising state behavior during power shifts, my findings raise the possibility that liberal mechanisms that supposedly drive great power behavior are actually determined by hard-headed calculations of state power and security. This was particularly shown to be the case with American policy towards the USSR, where the supposed benefits and byproducts of international

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<sup>965</sup> A good precis is Stephen G. Brooks, "Dueling Realisms," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 445-477.

institutions were shown not just to be a chimera, but in fact part of an effort to prey on the declining Soviet Union.

These findings suggest the need for additional research that carefully delineates what liberal accounts contribute to our understanding of great power behavior. On the one level, and even if I have found liberal accounts an unsatisfactory explanation of great power behavior at moments of decline, it could still be the case that liberal theories 1) explain great power behavior absent power shifts, and 2) were important contributing explanations even if my realist account proved dominant. On the other hand, finding that liberal mechanisms failed to produce the supposed benefits for declining states raises red flags. If liberal accounts cannot explain great power relations during periods of rise and decline – one the most basic issues in international politics – within cases liberal scholars claim to account for, then the viability of liberal theories as truly independent explanations of great power relations should be re-evaluated. In short, and as this project offers a way of bridging the gap between different realist traditions, so may it be the case that this project shows that some of the phenomena ascribed to liberal mechanisms are better subsumed under a realist framework. It may not be the case that liberal mechanisms are irrelevant (as some scholars suggest), but simply that their explanatory power is more limited than some of their more ebullient proponents expect.<sup>966</sup>

## V. Implications for Policy

These findings also offer clear contributions of this project to ongoing policy debates surrounding the decline of the United States. It is difficult to say for certain whether present concerns surrounding the “decline of the United States” will turn out to be justified. After all, as a recent study by Robert Lieber argues, the United States has been through several waves of decline concerns since the end of World War Two without experiencing a substantial diminution of its relative power.<sup>967</sup> Still, this study offers room for cautious optimism if present worries over the waning of American power prove accurate.

First, this study has shown that the most pernicious and extreme forms of rising state predation occur only under a restrictive set of conditions, namely, a situation in which 1) the declining state is bereft of potential allies, 2) militarily weak, and 3) of no use to the rising state as an ally in its own right. In all other situations, rising states either cautiously exploit the declining state for fear of the decliner’s internal balancing, or support and try to preserve the declining state as an ally. In this regard, worries that a weakening United States will be intensely preyed upon by a rising China, India, or other actor appear overblown. On one level, present trends suggest American decline is occurring in a nascent multipolar system in which several states, including the U.S., China, India, Japan, and perhaps Russia, will hold the capacity to influence one another’s behavior.<sup>968</sup> If so, then my theory suggests American decline will be mitigated as relatively rising states bid to retain the United States as an ally, and are deterred from predation by the prospect of internal and external balancing.

Yet even if one rising state jumps in front of the others and the system appears on the cusp of bipolarity, then the United States’ robust military capabilities should allow it to keep

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<sup>966</sup> For charges of irrelevance, see John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (December 1994): 5–49; for ebullience, see Slaughter, *New World Order*; Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*; Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*; Lipson, *Reliable Partners*.

<sup>967</sup> Lieber, *Power and Willpower in the American Future: Why the United States Is Not Destined to Decline*.

<sup>968</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternate Worlds*; Barry R. Posen, “Emerging Multipolarity: Why Should We Care?,” *Current History* 108, no. 721 (November 2009).

Extreme Predation in check for a significant period of time. Given past American investments in advanced military power, the absolute wealth of the United States and its significant advantages in advanced technology, it would seem that the United States should be able to retrain a robust military posture for the indefinite future. Combined, my study suggests that worries over the consequences of American decline should be taken with a grain of salt: either the structure of the system will encourage rising states to support the United States, or American military options will keep the most intense forms of rising state power maximization in check. In short, even a declining United States will be safe.

This framework, however, also offers a warning: the United States should not rest its strategy on the kindness of fellow democracies, nor on the restraining and support-inducing effects of international institutions. American efforts to spread liberal democracy and reinforce the foundations of Western order may be useful for various things, but preventing rising state predation is not one of them. Thus, not only do policymakers risk lulling themselves into a false sense of confidence by relying too heavily on liberal precepts, but they may actually cause more harm than good if efforts to spread democracy and build institutions antagonize rising states. Ultimately, one of the core prescriptions of this project is a negative one, as policymakers should reverse the long-standing hope in liberal tropes as a solution to great power problems when fundamental questions of power and security are on the line.

Instead, policymakers would instead be better served by carefully analyzing the shifting distribution of power over time and scoping American policy accordingly. Just as this project warns against putting too much stock in liberal tropes, so does it suggest the need to carefully shape U.S. military posture in response to the changing international distribution of power. This approach may be counterintuitive, as declining states often seem inclined to pump ever greater resources into their militaries in an effort to maintain military superiority against rising challengers and, judging from debates over the U.S. defense budget today, the United States is no exception.<sup>969</sup> That said, one of the major implications of this project is that the benefits of military strength vary according to the polarity of the system. To the extent that the system is heading towards bipolarity, then American policymakers would indeed be wise to pump capabilities into retaining a robust military posture. If the system is heading towards multipolarity, however, then the United States actually risks antagonizing potential allies while allowing prospective partners to free-ride on American largesse. A better strategy under these conditions would be to *curtail* military spending and limit the size of the America military – akin to what Britain did after 1947 – in order to encourage other stakes to flock to the United States’ aid out of their own self-interest. To be clear, successfully scoping American military posture to the polarity of the system is unlikely to be an easy or frictionless task, and there is substantial room for miscalculation along the way. Yet compared with the alternatives of 1) wasting potentially scarce resources on military spending when allies could pick up the slack, or 2) allowing a rising challenger a window of opportunity, carefully monitoring the distribution of power and shaping American military policy accordingly may be the best of several unpalatable options.

## VI. Areas for Further Research

In an effort to establish when and why rising states target declining great powers for predation, this project has necessarily raised several issues for future research. First, it would be

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<sup>969</sup> Sec, for an example, Barack Obama, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 2012).

useful to examine a larger universe of rising state-declining state relations. As noted, I scoped this study on post-1945 cases of decline in Europe in an effort to study modern cases of decline that may offer insight to current policy debates. Building off this set of cases, I found my realist argument to explain variation in rising state behavior. Future research, however, should examine both whether these findings can explain great power behavior outside of Europe, as well as in different time periods. Although there are good reasons to study modern European politics, it could be the case that post-World War Two Europe represents a special type of great power system, such that findings from the cases are less applicable in other settings. Examining a wider array of cases would control for this possibility and explore the limits of Realist Decline Theory.

Second, this project treated all great powers as essentially undifferentiated in terms of their aggregate capabilities. Future research should relax this assumption and assess whether differences in gross capabilities among the great powers affect the behavior of relatively rising states. For example, rising states may respond to the decline of the strongest state among several great powers in a different manner than they respond to the decline of fourth or fifth strongest state. Similarly, there may be important differences in rising state behavior if a state rises from fourth to third place, rather than an already predominant state rising to even more dominant position (e.g., the strongest state in the system growing even more capable). The present study offers a series of hypotheses that can be used as a baseline for analysis, but future research is needed.

Third, the empirical work in this project poses a theoretical question: when and why do rising states recognize a fundamental change in the distribution of power? In other words, what convinces states that the distribution of power is changing, and does this pattern vary in regular ways? This project examined rising state behavior after rising states recognized a power shift. It may be the case, however, that the same variables driving responses to great power decline also influence the perception of great power decline and thus determine when in the course of one state's decline rising states begin to adapt their strategy. Additional work is needed to probe the link between a rising state's perception of a change in the distribution of power and its response. Admittedly, there are numerous attempts to determine whether and to what extent state perceptions of the distribution of power track objective measures of power, all without making substantial progress in offering a grounded theory to answer this problem.<sup>970</sup> Linking the perceptual question to the outcomes of this process, however, may offer a new way forward while simultaneously addressing whether the timing of a recognized change affects rising state policy.

A fourth avenue for exploration concerns the treatment of "military posture." As noted earlier, this study treats military posture as a basic issue of whether declining states hold enough relative military capabilities to secure themselves in the face of the military threat posed by other great powers. This approach, however, breaks from other efforts to assess military posture as offensive, defensive, or deterrent.<sup>971</sup> Additional work should explore whether finer-grained distinctions in the decliner's military policy affect the strategies chosen by rising states.

Equally important, emerging from the cases is a sense that declining states have a difficult time convincing relatively rising peers that their military capabilities are, in fact, changing. In the Soviet case, the 1988 shift to a defensive military footing, largely undertaken due to Soviet economic limits, failed to convince American policymakers that the USSR was

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<sup>970</sup> Amongst others, see Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 1988; William C. Wohlforth, "The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance," *World Politics* 39, no. 3 (April 1987): 353–381; Wohlforth, *Elusive Balance*.

<sup>971</sup> Posen, *Sources*.

essentially throwing in the towel in the Cold War military competition; the USSR attempted to signal weakness, and the United States disregarded or missed the message. The British case witnessed similar developments, as even Britain's poor military showing against Germany in the war and constrained contributions compared to the USA and USSR failed to convince American and Soviet strategists that Britain would be a military basket-case in the postwar period. In the end, only the utter collapse of Soviet and British military power convinced the other great powers that a fundamental change in military affairs was afoot. Additional work is needed to explain this phenomenon: why do declining states have a difficult time convincing other great powers that their military power is truly waning, and why do relatively rising states seem to ignore or misinterpret signs of military weakness? This research would help verify whether the choice of dichotomizing the military posture variable is empirically and theoretically valid.

Finally, additional work is needed to assess the systemic consequences of great power decline. This project focused narrowly on the relationship between relatively rising and declining states to challenge the notion that rising states act as inveterate power maximizers. Beyond the rising state-declining state dyad, however, are questions of whether and to what extent fundamental change in the distribution of power affects the stability of the international system. Just as some scholars claim rising states prey on declining great powers, so too do other scholars worry that power shifts prime the system writ large for instability as public goods go underprovided, international institutions break down, and conflicts among weaker states proliferate in the absence of a single hegemon able to adjudicate disputes; these concerns are particularly common among long-cycle, hegemonic stability, and power transition scholars.<sup>972</sup> Assessing when and why these broader consequences of decline emerge is a needed next-step. Relative decline may not be as worrisome as often feared for declining great powers themselves, but its effects on world politics writ large are still open to investigation.

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<sup>972</sup> George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Organski, *World Politics*; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*.

## Appendix A: Identifying Declining Great Powers

To identify the universe of declining great powers and the periods of their decline, I measure change in the distribution of great power capabilities. As noted in Chapter Two, the hallmarks of this change are that one or more states 1) lose a significant proportion of their relative capabilities, 2) within a politically meaningful period of time, and 3) are unable to recover from the trend. To meet these criteria, I define cases of precipitous decline as situations in which 1) a great power loses at least 5 percent of its share of great power capabilities, 2) within a ten year window, after 3) at least five years of sustained losses to great power capability share. For the post-1950 period, I measure losses solely on the basis of economic capabilities; for the 1945-1950 period, I rely on the Correlates of War Composite Index of National Capabilities (COW/CINC) scores. Methodology and justification are as follows.

First, using the list of great powers identified in Chapter Two, I assessed the share of capabilities held by these states as an inclusive set. If, for example, I identified three states (A, B, C) as great powers, I summed the total capabilities held by these three states and determined the share of great power capabilities held by each relative to this total. Doing so presents a snapshot of the distribution of capabilities at any point and establishes how states compare to one another.

Using shares of great power capabilities, I next identified situations in which a state lost at least 5 percent of its share of capabilities compared to its average share over the preceding ten years. Capturing a 5 percent drop against the ten year average ensures that the decline is significant compared to its prior performance as a great power.<sup>973</sup> Combined, this tells us that a given state experienced a significant setback in the great power competition.

However, to further ensure that this losses was not a temporary aberration – for example, resulting from an intense but brief recession – I next calculated the two year average change in capability share. Taking a two year rolling average smooths out annual variation in state performance – say, one year of exceptionally good economic growth or a sudden decrease in energy consumption – while still showcasing overall trends in the distribution of power. As we would intuit, a consistently negative change of share indicating that one’s share of capabilities is steadily falling, and a positive average indicating growth in share. Looking at cases where the average change in share was negative for 5 or more years provides strong evidence that the state was not able to recover from the prior setback – that the decline in great power share is more than just a temporary aberration. This provides time for statesmen to recognize and begin to respond to the changing distribution of power.

When all these conditions are met and a state has lost at least 5 percent of its capability share after 5 or more years of sustained losses, I code the situation as a case of relative decline and begin analyzing the strategies of other great powers after this point. I continue this analysis until the declining state either drops from the great power ranks entirely (falling below the 10 percent overall share/25 percent share of strongest state threshold for a great power), begins to recover as identified by 5 or more years of positive growth in capability share, or a decade elapses. Table A.1 lists the results, showing both the United Kingdom and Soviet Union as declining European great powers in the post-1945 world which ultimately exited the great power ranks.

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<sup>973</sup> Thanks go to Chad Hazlett for helping think through a way of measuring change in the distribution of power over time.



**Table A.1: Declining Great Powers in post-1945 Europe**

Declining State	Years of Decline	Share of Great Power Capabilities, Start of Decline	Share of Great Power Capabilities, End of Decline	Share of Great Power Capabilities, 5 Years after End of Decline	Reason Analysis Ends
United Kingdom	1945-1949	19.3*	14.1	11.4	Exits great power ranks
Soviet Union	1989-1991	26.2	24.3	9.2	Exits great power ranks
* taken from 1946 due to sudden shifts in 1945 capabilities resulting from end of World War Two					

Finally, it is worth observing that this list compares reasonably well with other datasets of declining great powers. In particular, Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* argues the United Kingdom exited the great power ranks circa 1944-1947 and led to the onset of the U.S.-Soviet bipolar contest. My dataset shows multipolarity lasting a few additional years, but agrees with Kennedy that multipolarity ended sometime in the mid-late 1940s. A larger difference is Kennedy's argument that the USSR began declining in the early 1980s. This discrepancy may be larger than it appears, however, since my study waits 5 years after a state begins experiencing relative losses to begin the study of decline in order to allow time for statesmen in the rising state to recognize the changing distribution of power.<sup>974</sup>

More recently, MacDonald and Parent have usefully compiled a list of great powers worldwide and assessed those which declined over the last two centuries.<sup>975</sup> Because their list uses a different definition of decline than my own, compares all great powers to one another without accounting for whether the states actually interacted or assessed their performance relative to one another, and (most importantly) identifies decline based on whether a state drops by one or more ordinal ranks, their results are not fully comparable to my own. Indeed, their study has some empirically questionable codings, such as the argument that the USSR "declined" in the late 1980s due to the rise of Japan and China. However, even with these differences, their results for the great powers I am interested in roughly match the results of my study and show that the United Kingdom declined as a great power over 1946-1951, while the USSR declined from 1987-1991. Given the different approaches to the phenomena, the fact that the MacDonald and Parent study produces very similar results to my own corroborates the notion that the United Kingdom and USSR fell from the great power ranks in the mid-late 1940s and late 1980s-early 1990s, respectively.

<sup>974</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 357, chap. 8.

<sup>975</sup> MacDonald and Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment."

## Appendix B:

### Tracing American Assessments of Soviet Decline in the 1980s

I began the analysis of U.S. strategy towards the declining USSR from the late 1980s. By this time, the Soviet Union had been losing significant ground relative to the United States for several years and showed no signs of recovery, allowing time for U.S. policymakers to begin responding to the trend. In what follows, I begin by examining Soviet economic performance relative to the United States. Because a large and modern economy is central to one's ability to maintain military power and project influence in the modern world, focusing on Soviet and American economic focus provides a crude proxy with which to assess the overall U.S.-Soviet distribution of power. Because, however, economics is only one facet of a state's power, I expand the analysis to consider evidence as to what American statesmen perceived to be relative position of the United States and USSR.

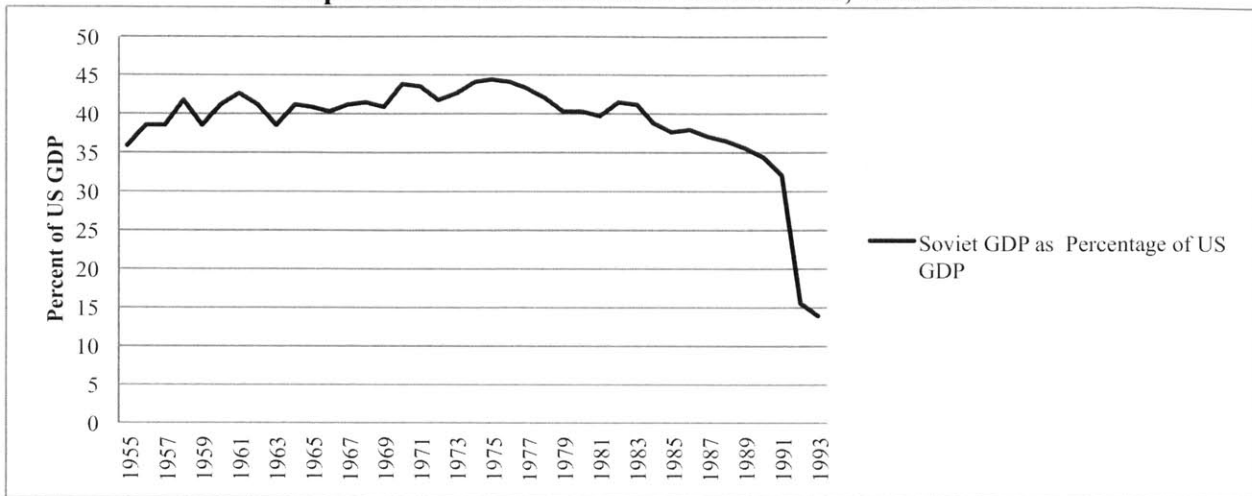
Graph B.1 shows the dyadic ratio of Soviet to American Gross Domestic Product (GDP) using data from Angus Maddison from 1955 through 1993.<sup>976</sup> As the graph shows, Soviet GDP was consistently somewhere between forty and forty-five percent that of the United States through the start of the 1980s. Although by the mid-1970s the Soviet Union was falling from its postwar economic highs, Soviet performance vis-à-vis the United States remained within historical parameters. However, this situation began to change sometime around the turn of the decade. By the middle of the 1980s, the Soviet Union found itself rapidly weakening, not just relative to the United States, but also relative to its own past situation. Indeed, by 1984, the Soviet Union had lost more than 5 percent of its share of GDP against its average share of GDP over the preceding ten year (e.g., GDP in 1989 versus the average GDP for the 1978-1988 period; Graph B.2).<sup>977</sup> Through the Soviet collapse in December 1991, these losses to Soviet GDP share continued and accelerated. Although Soviet GDP appeared to stabilize and recover some ground episodically during the decade (most notably 1981-1983), by 1987-1988 the Soviet economy was losing ground to the United States' on a regular basis. Using the coding criteria described earlier in this project, I begin analyzing the U.S. response to Soviet decline after 1987-1988: to repeat the earlier point, by this time, the Soviet share of GDP had fallen by over five percent compared to the share held ten years earlier and Soviet growth rates had been consistently negative for at least 3 years. Although Soviet decline became, in retrospect, more or less permanent a few years prior, lagging the analysis through the 1987-1988 periods allows time for American policymakers to recognize the changing distribution of power and begin formulating a response.

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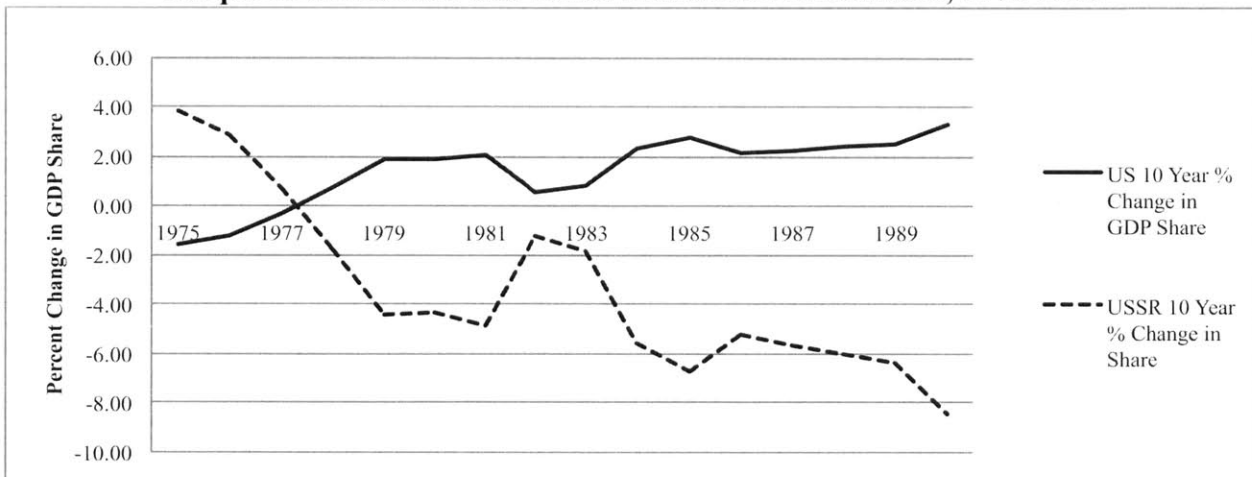
<sup>976</sup> Sarotte, 1989; Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>977</sup> Change in GDP shares provides a good way of assessing overall economic performance. Calculating shares lets us see how the two economies measure up to one another in relative terms at any given point in time. By seeing how these shares change over time, we thus capture the net relative performance of the two countries: if, over a given period, Soviet GDP share increases, the economy has outperformed that of the United States (and vice versa).

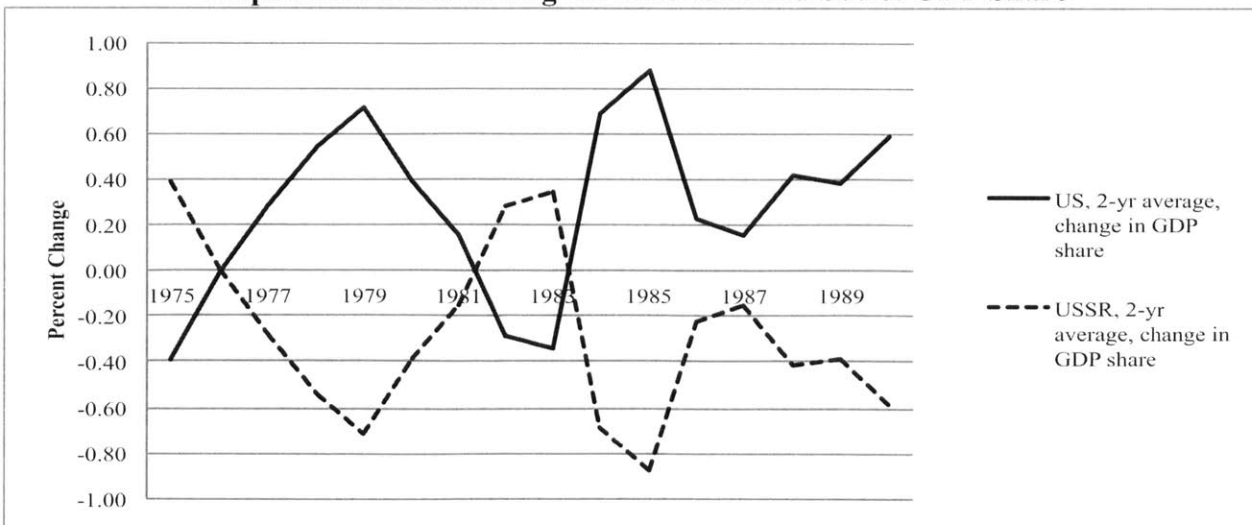
**Graph B.1: Soviet Economic Performance, 1955-1993**



**Graph B.2: American and Soviet Economic Performance, 1975-1990**



**Graph B.3: Annual Change in American and Soviet GDP Share**



Some might contend that by delaying the analysis of U.S. policy until after 1988, I am biasing the study by ignoring the possibility that American policymakers recognized Soviet decline at an earlier date: if statesmen intensely care about and analyze changes in the distribution of power, then it is reasonable to expect U.S. policymakers to recognize the change in Soviet power relative to the United States at an earlier date. If true, then the analysis would have to be extended to an earlier point in the U.S.-Soviet relationship.

One way to check this possibility involves digging into the debates and assessments of the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power in the 1981-1987 period. This period roughly corresponds to what the economic data suggests might be the start of Soviet relative decline. Drawing on archival research, interviews, memoirs, and the secondary literature on U.S. assessments of the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power, I find fairly strong evidence to support my argument: although many senior officials in the Reagan Administration recognized that the Soviet Union's economy was under stress, it was only in the late 1980s that 1) this trend seemed to be affecting the overall position of the USSR as a superpower competitor to the United States, and 2) that the Soviet Union was unlikely to recover from its internal problems.

At first glance, there is much to commend the idea that American policymakers recognized Soviet decline at an earlier date. For instance, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) briefings to President-elect Ronald Reagan and his advisors in November 1980 emphasized that after a period of rapid growth, Soviet "industrial growth has slowed to lowest level since WW II; [and] growth in GNP [Gross National Product] has averaged only 1% in each of last 2 years."<sup>978</sup> A year later, National Security Advisor Richard Allen praised and forwarded Reagan a similar intelligence assessment arguing that "Soviet economic performance has deteriorated to the point that, if military expenditures continue to expand as in the past, there will be few if any resources left with which to raise living standards."<sup>979</sup> Richard Pipes, then the NSC's senior director for Soviet affairs, argued at nearly the same time in a classified report that "Soviet Communism [. . .] confronts a profound crisis caused by persistent economic failures and difficulties brought about by overexpansion," and compounded by a sclerotic leadership.<sup>980</sup> By the middle of 1982, Reagan himself was commenting in National Security Council meetings that "the Soviet Union is economically on the ropes" and suggested that "the Soviets do not believe that they can keep up with us" in a direct military competition.<sup>981</sup> And, at the start of 1983, an interagency report designed to outline U.S. policy on relations with the USSR concluded that the USSR faced "declining productivity, morale, and economic growth" as well as political unrest at home and

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<sup>978</sup> See "Agenda for Briefing of President-elect Briefing," 11 December 1980, available online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19801211.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19801211.pdf).

<sup>979</sup> Richard Allen to The President, "CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate," 21 November 1980 and Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Dependence of Soviet Military Power on Economic Relations with the West," SNIE 3/11-4-81, 1, both online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19811117.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19811117.pdf).

<sup>980</sup> Richard Pipes, "Reagan Soviet Policy (Short Version)," November 1981, Pipes Files, Box 3, "Miscellaneous Papers," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (hereafter RRPL), Executive Summary and 3-13. Pipes' report later became the basis for Reagan's 1983 official statement on U.S.-Soviet relations, National Security Decision Direct (NSDD) 75, "U.S. Relations with the USSR," 17 January 1983. For the report supporting NSDD-75, see "Response to NSSD 11-82: U.S. Relations with the Soviet Union," 6 December 1982, NSC Secretariat Files, Box 91285, "NSC 00070 16 Dec 82 [1 of 2]," RRPL. The NSSD 11-82 report has since been digitized: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/collection/reagan-collection>.

<sup>981</sup> National Security Council Meeting minutes, "Review of Soviet Sanctions," 24 May 1982, and NSC minutes, "NSSD 1-82," 16 April 1982, both as printed in *The Reagan Files*, Jason Saltoun-Ebin, ed. (self-published: Jason Saltoun-Ebin, 2010): 144, 164.

abroad that left the Soviet leadership “sober about the consequences of unregulated competition or direct confrontation with us”.<sup>982</sup> Combined, there is no shortage of evidence that the United States recognized Soviet problems before the late 1980s.

However, evidence that the Soviet Union faced growing economic and political problems is not the same thing as saying that the Soviet Union 1) was beginning to fall behind the United States, and 2) that these trends would soon have an impact on international politics. On the one hand, the Reagan Administration took office convinced that the *United States* was declining vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.<sup>983</sup> This conviction was rooted in the poor performance of the American economy at the time, as well as a worry that the United States had underinvested in its conventional military and nuclear capabilities, and failed to demonstrate its resolve to confront the USSR throughout the late 1970s.<sup>984</sup> Indeed, while Soviet economic performance was falling compared to its postwar highs, Soviet economic growth was comparable to that of the United States throughout the 1970s, and significantly higher than the United States at the turn of the 1980s (Table B.1).<sup>985</sup> Similarly, in the military realm, the Soviets were believed to be ahead of the United States conventionally – where, as Reagan put it, they enjoyed “superiority”<sup>986</sup> – while “all the momentum in the strategic race seemed to be on the Soviet side.”<sup>987</sup> Combined, Reagan

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<sup>982</sup> The study was led by the State Department, with input from the CIA and the Department of Defense (DOD); “U.S.-Soviet Relations: Executive Summary,” (no date, circa 10 January 1983), Executive Secretariat, NSC: National Security Planning Group (NSPG) Records, Box 91306, NSPG 0049 10 Jan 1983 [US/Soviet Relations] (1 of 2), RRPL. The report was reviewed by Reagan, Vice President George H.W. Bush, Secretary of State George Shultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, members of Reagan’s senior political staff, and representatives from the military and CIA, and discussed at an NSPG meeting on 10 January 1983; for an overview of the discussion, list of participants, and meeting background, see William P. Clark, “NSPG Meeting,” 10 January 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: National Security Planning Group (NSPG) Records, Box 91306, NSPG 0049 10 Jan 1983 [US/Soviet Relations] (1 of 2), RRPL.

<sup>983</sup> For an insightful description of the perception inside the government at the time, see Gates, *From the Shadows*, 170–184.

<sup>984</sup> Jack Matlock, who served as Reagan’s principal NSC advisor on Soviet affairs from 1983-1987, argued in retrospect that “Reagan was convinced that U.S. defenses had been allowed to deteriorate during the 1970s [ . . . ] In his view, an imbalance could encourage the Soviet leaders to believe that they could use their superior military strength to blackmail the U.S. and split its alliances.” At the same time, Reagan “was also convinced that the 1970s had left the United States with a weakened economy (high inflation and unemployment) and a lack of political will (the “post-Vietnam syndrome,” Carter’s talk of national “malaise”).” Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 11, 13 Interviews with Matlock (3 August 2011) and his predecessor (Richard Pipes; 8 July 2011) confirmed this perspective. see also Shultz, “A Perspective From Washington,” xx; For an overview of American economic problems in the 1970s and comparison to prior economic performance, see the chapter by Charles Maier in Ferguson, Maier, and Manela, *The Shock of the Global*.

<sup>985</sup> Soviet data is annual percent growth in Gross National Product (GNP), supplied in Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Soviet Analysis, *USSR: Economic Trends and Policy Developments*, Congressional Joint Economic Committee, Briefing Paper, 14 September 1983, Table 14, NARA, CREST. American data is from the World Bank World Data Bank, annual percent growth in Gross National Income (GNI), most recently accessed March 2013, <http://databank.worldbank.org/>. In the *Economic Trends* report, analysts cautioned that “the USSR has found ways to muddle through periods of economic difficulty in the past, and it will do so again in the 1980s [ . . . ] economic growth is likely to continue” at about 2 percent per year. Ultimately, “the USSR [was] not on the verge of economic collapse” and retained strengths that would allow it to compete with the United States, including enormous natural resources, an educated populace, and a large industrial base. If anything, the USSR could spur moderately increased growth simply by redirecting resources to more productive sectors of the economy and away from less-efficient sectors; *Economic Trends*, 40, 43-44.

<sup>986</sup> Remarks at an 13 October 1981 meeting on Theater Nuclear Forces; *Reagan Files*, 59

<sup>987</sup> Gates, *From the Shadows*, 171; see also 195-196. The CIA’s 11 Dec 1980 briefing to Reagan suggested the trend, noting that the Soviets “clearly established themselves in lead today [sic]” in strategic nuclear forces, and that a

could argue that “the cold, hard fact of the matter is that our economic, military, and strategic strength [. . .] is eroding.”<sup>988</sup>

**Table B.1: Average Annual Economic Growth, USA and USSR, 1971-1982**

<u>Period</u>	<u>USA (GNI)</u>	<u>USSR (GNP)</u>
1971-1975	2.8	3.7
1976-1980	3.7	2.7
1981-1982	1	2.1

The concern was such that a July 1981 report intended to guide U.S. relations with the USSR concluded that “our national security strategy must rectify a deterioration across the spectrum of our defense posture towards the Soviet Union” by engaging in sustained buildup of U.S. conventional and nuclear assets.<sup>989</sup> Similarly, a November 1981 NSC report intended to summarize U.S. foreign policy in the Administration’s first year emphasized that “our primary foreign policy objective has been to restore the domestic capabilities (economic and military) and credibility [. . .] of America’s foreign policy leadership.”<sup>990</sup> Despite acknowledging the problems facing the Soviet Union, Reagan’s advisors warned in April 1982 that “the growth of Soviet military power over the last decade has called into question the ability of the United States and its allies to deter attack by the Soviet Union [. . .] building on their strengthened military position, the Soviets have developed a comprehensive and sophisticated political/military/economic strategy [. . . the objectives of which] are to extend Soviet influence globally and to weaken the United States.”<sup>991</sup> And, in a January 1983 strategy report on U.S.-

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“bulge” in Soviet capabilities relative to those of the United States would hold through the middle of the 1980s. Oddly, despite suggesting that Soviet nuclear assets dominated those of the United States, the CIA briefing noted that American capabilities were sufficient to destroy all urban areas in the USSR ever after absorbing a Soviet first strike. This discussion suggests a real disconnect between the perception of a Soviet nuclear advantage, and the lack of a practical effect of a Soviet “lead” on the nuclear balance; see “Agenda for Briefing of President Elect,” 11 December 1980, op. cit.

<sup>988</sup> Televised Address by Governor Ronald Reagan, “A Strategy for Peace in the ‘80s,” 19 October 1980, online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/Reference/10.19.80.html>.

<sup>989</sup> “East-West Policy Study,” 14 July 1981, Box 91278, Executive Secretariat NSC: NSSD File, “NSSD 11-82 [US Policy Toward the Soviet Union] (1 of 8), III-1. Pipes and National Security Advisor Richard Allen recommended that Reagan approve the strategy in July 1981, but this step was apparently never taken. Core concepts, however, were later dusted off and incorporated into Reagan’s subsequent National Security Strategy (NSDD 32) and U.S.-Soviet Strategy (NSDD 75). On this back and forth, see the 1981-1982 correspondence among NSC officials in Richard Pipes Files, Box 5, “Soviet NSSD I [NSSD 11-82],” RRPL, particularly that involving Pipes, NSC staffer Paula Dobriansky, Allen, and William P. Clark (Allen’s successor as National Security Advisor).

<sup>990</sup> Henry R. Nau to NSC Staff, “Charges of Foreign Policy Disarray,” 25 November 1981, Matlock Files, Box 39, “U.S. Policy General 2/2,” RRPL, 1. An accompanying report reflecting on the Administration’s accomplishments during its first year in office similarly observed that, “Reagan administration [sic] foreign policy in the first 90-120 days began the process of restoring America’s confidence, leadership, and strength in world affairs. It focused on putting in place the instruments of a more confident American foreign policy, in particular a revitalized American economy, vastly strengthened American defense capability, and upgraded intelligence, information and foreign assistance programs. The objective was to avoid empty rhetoric, while carrying a big stick and taking the tough, concrete policy decisions to affect real capabilities;” Henry R. Nau, “Foreign Policy at the Beginning,” November 1981, 6-7, in *ibid.*

<sup>991</sup> See “U.S. National Security Strategy,” April 1982, System II Files, 8290283 (NSDD 32), RRPL, 2. The national security strategy report was prepared at Reagan’s request by long-time aide Thomas Reed, who was called into the

Soviet relations the Administration concluded that Soviet leaders likely concluded they enjoyed a number of major gains in the ongoing competition with the United States, including “superpower status and global reach; a quarreling, economically shaky West; domestic political stability; [and] an economy strong enough to support massive military outlays”. As such, the effort to “re-establish American ascendancy” would necessarily focus on “rearmament, world economic recovery, respect for international law and order, and the promotion of democratic values.” The United States needed to work diligently to restore American economic power, military capabilities, and use these capabilities abroad in order to restore American power and leadership.<sup>992</sup> In sum, there was a pronounced concern at the start of the 1980s that the United States was losing ground to the Soviet Union due to a combination of economic problems of its own, military underinvestment, and political problems.<sup>993</sup> Soviet problems notwithstanding, only if the United States revitalized its own economic and military fortunes could the United States recover ground and make it clear that the Soviet Union could not – as Reagan put it – “keep up with us” in an all-out political competition.<sup>994</sup>

Nor, as the United States rebuilt its capabilities, did it mean the Soviet Union would fall behind the United States overnight. By the start of 1983, Reagan’s advisors began to conclude that the United States had arrested its decline and laid the foundation for long-term recovery. These trends, however, would not produce a change in the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power until later in the decade. A February 1983 memorandum from National Security Advisor Clark argues the position well and is worth quoting at length:

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NSC specifically to author the strategy and translate Reagan’s views into policy. Despite vocal opposition from the foreign policy bureaucracy that Reed was pushing the strategy forward without sufficient time for review, the strategy was reviewed by senior policymakers in April 1982 and approved on 20 May. For background on the report, see author interview with Thomas Reed, 10 March 2011, and Michael Wheeler to L. Paul Bremer, et al., “Minutes of Interagency Review Group Meeting, NSSD 1-82, March 13, 1989,” 15 March 1989, National Archives and Record Administration (hereafter NARA), CIA Records Search Tool (hereafter CREST). For the senior level review, see the transcript in *Reagan Files*, 137-144, 146-153. Interestingly, the report offers a much calmer assessment of the strategic nuclear balance with the USSR, simply arguing that “the loss of U.S. nuclear superiority means that the U.S. cannot depend on nuclear forces to offset its general purpose force deficiencies [. . . increasing] the relative importance of U.S. and allied conventional capabilities.” With nuclear parity, in other words, the United States could not readily threaten to escalate to a nuclear exchange with the USSR, putting a premium on conventional defense; see “U.S. National Security Strategy,” 2.

<sup>992</sup> “U.S.-Soviet Relations: Executive Summary,” circa January 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSPG Meetings Files, Box 91306, “NSPG 0049 10 Jan 1983 [US/Soviet Relations] (1 of 2),” RRPL, 1, 5. The report was drafted by an interagency group led by members of the State Department and involving principals from the Defense Department and CIA. Secretary of State George Shultz was a major champion of the report. Given that Shultz was widely perceived as a relative “dove” on U.S.-Soviet relations inside the Administration, the fact that the report emphasized the relative strengths of the USSR is a telling indicator that many in the Administration were concerned about the overall U.S.-Soviet distribution of power; see George P. Shultz to The President, “US-Soviet Relations in 1983,” 19 January 1983, William P. Clark Files, Box 8, “U.S.-Soviet Relations Papers Working File: Contains Originals (3),” RRPL. The January report was briefed to and discussed by Reagan, Shultz, Vice President George H.W. Bush, National Security Advisor William P. Clark, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and others on 10 January 1983; see William P. Clark, “NSPG Meeting,” 10 January 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSPG Meetings Files, Box 91306, “NSPG 0049 10 Jan 1983 [US/Soviet Relations] (1 of 2),” RRPL.

<sup>993</sup> In retrospect, much of the ostensible Soviet defense buildup of the late 1970s and early 1980s appears to have been a chimera: Soviet military investment was lower than many analysts feared. CIA analysts reported this possibility at the time, but Reagan and his advisors appear not to have been aware of or acknowledged the trend. For discussion of lower Soviet military investment, see Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Soviet Analysis, *USSR: Economic Trends and Policy Developments*, Congressional Joint Economic Committee, Briefing Paper, 14 September 1983, 18, NARA, CREST.

<sup>994</sup> *Reagan Files*, 144.



It was your view – correctly in my judgement [sic] – of the state of our relations at the end of the decade of the seventies that the Soviets may well have considered us a nation in decline and that before we could have any realistic hope of getting them to bargain seriously with us towards the resolution of the many problems before us, we had to make that we had reversed the trend [. . .] Toward that end, you set out to restore our defenses, to reassure our allies, to solve our economic problems at home and in sum, to show by action that we were coming back [. . .] At the end of two years it seems to me that you have succeeded and that there is a very solid basis for concluding that the Soviets may be reconciled to the fact that *by the end of the decade we will have passed them again*. The corollary is that now, *at a position of maximum relative strength*, they ought to cut the best deal that they can. In this respect, they are not unlike the Japanese in 1941 [emphasis added].<sup>995</sup>

In other words, by the mid-1980s trends were in the United States' favor, but the United States would only begin gaining on the USSR towards the end of the 1980s.<sup>996</sup> Other Reagan advisers made similar points in the 1983-1986 period.<sup>997</sup> At the start of 1984, for instance, Matlock and Robert McFarlane – who replaced Clark as National Security Advisor in October 1983 – agreed that the Soviet leadership was “very nervous about the prospects [of competition] with the United States five to ten years down the road – not so much of confrontation as such, as of a decisive shift in the balance of military power which would require them either to back down or accept the risk of confrontation [. . .] just trying to keep up will put enormous pressures on their shaky system.”<sup>998</sup> Concurrently, a joint NSC-State Department memorandum argued that “after a period in which they [the Soviets] were surging ahead, they now see us shifting the ‘correlation of forces’ against them – through substantially increased military capabilities and overt and covert activities in areas which hurt them [. . .] We should try to get them to recognize these

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<sup>995</sup> William P. Clark to The President, “The Prospects for Progress in US-Soviet Relations,” 4 February 1983, William P. Clark Files, Box 8, “US-Soviet Relations Papers Working File: Contains Originals (2),” RRPL. Annotations indicate Reagan read and analyzed the document. See also a memorandum from Clark to Reagan later that year – likely the late spring or early summer – in which he argued: “we are well on track in rebuilding our defense strength and in rallying our Allies on the most critical issues. Our economy is showing increasing signs of a long-term recovery, and your position of leadership is strong and assured [. . .] The basics, therefore, are moving unmistakably in our direction and our negotiating strength is stronger than it has been for many years. Our task is to manage the U.S.-Soviet relationship in a manner which will insure that these trends continue over the long term;” William P. Clark to The President, “Summitry,” no date, William P. Clark Files, Box 9, “US-Soviet Relations Working File: Contains Original (15),” RRPL.

<sup>996</sup> See, for instance, William P. Clark to The President, “National Security Priorities – Where Are We Going and How Are We Going to Get There,” 14 June 1983, Clark Files, Box 9, “US-Soviet Relations Papers Working File: Contains Originals (12),” RRPL.

<sup>997</sup> Shultz, widely perceived as a “dove” on U.S.-Soviet relations compared to the more hawkish Clark and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, made essentially the same points as Clark in a January 1983 memorandum, arguing that before progress could be made in U.S.-Soviet relations, the United States needed to continue to continue “rebuilding of American economic and military strength.” That Clark and Shultz agreed on the overall trend in the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power is strong evidence that perceptions inside the Reagan Administration were changing; George P. Shultz to The President, “US-Soviet Relations in 1983,” 19 January 1983, William P. Clark Files, Box 8, “US-Soviet Relations Papers Working File: Contains Originals (2),” RRPL. See also George P. Shultz to The President, “USG-Soviet Relations – Where Do We Want To Be and How Do We Get There?” 3 March 1983, Clark Files, Box 8, “US-Soviet Relations Papers Working File: Contains Originals (5),” RRPL.

<sup>998</sup> Jack Matlock to Robert C. McFarlane, “CIA Study on Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of Armed Confrontation with the United States,” 11 January 1984, and Robert C. McFarlane to George P. Shultz and William J. Casey, “U.S.-Soviet Relations,” 21 January 1984, both online at: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/collection/reagan-collection>.



realities.”<sup>999</sup> And, at a September 1985 meeting designed to survey the state of U.S.-Soviet relations, Shultz argued – and Reagan agreed – that “the Soviets may have a serious interest in reaching an arms control agreement. Economic conditions, their situation in Afghanistan, and Gorbachev’s focus on his domestic agenda, *could* impel them to seek resolution of some of their international difficulties [emphasis added].”<sup>1000</sup> American officials perceived an increasing chance that the distribution of power would soon be skewed in the United States’ favor and the Soviet Union fall from its powerful perch at the start of the decade.

Mikhail Gorbachev’s March 1985 selection as Soviet General Secretary changed the trend line. Prior Soviet leaders, while recognizing Soviet economic and domestic problems, were nevertheless seen as committed to 1) maintaining military parity with the United States, and 2) making tactical fixes to the Soviet economy to ensure the USSR “muddled along” vis-à-vis the United States.<sup>1001</sup> These dynamics were reinforced by a political consensus favoring “sacrifices” to maintain the competition with the United States, meaning that civilian consumption would be suppressed for the sake of short-term economic growth and military spending.<sup>1002</sup> Through 1985, a succession of Soviet leaders – Leonid Brezhnev (ruled 1964-1982), Yuri Andropov (1982-1984), and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-1985) – thus made limited efforts to spur Soviet economic performance and improve productivity, while sustaining high levels of defense spending.

Gorbachev came to power interested in revitalizing the Soviet system to make it an economically and militarily viable superpower over the long-term.<sup>1003</sup> His initial efforts seemed an extension of earlier reforms under Andropov that called for limited reforms to the current system of resource allocation and planning to make it more efficient and productive.<sup>1004</sup> Despite

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<sup>999</sup> These points were argued in a rough draft of a memorandum ultimately sent to Robert McFarlane – who replaced Clark as National Security Advisor in October 1983 – on 24 February 1984. The finalized version lacks the discussion of the changing ‘correlation of forces.’ Note that the rough draft is undated, but an envelope from the State Department in which the document was sent is stamped 15 February 1984. McFarlane seems to have sent the memorandum to Reagan in time for a 2 March 1984 meeting with his national security team. For the rough draft, see “U.S.-Soviet Relations: A Framework for the Future,” no date (circa 15 February), Jack F. Matlock Files, Box 42, “US-USSR Relations [Feb 1984] 1/2,” RRPL. The finalized version can be found in Jack Matlock to Robert C. McFarlane, “U.S.-Soviet Relations ‘Framework’ Paper,” 24 February 1984, Jack F. Matlock Files, Box 42, “US-USSR Relations [Feb 1984] 2/2,” RRPL. For the 2 March 1984 meeting on U.S.-Soviet relations, see the scope memo and transcript of conversation in Jack Matlock Files, Box 42, “US-USSR Relations [March 1984] 1/3,” RRPL.

<sup>1000</sup> For Shultz’s comments and Reagan’s agreement, see *Reagan Files*, 282.

<sup>1001</sup> As Matlock offered, “There was, from 1981 to 1984, no hope for any fundamental change in Soviet policy until a new generation came to power. Even then, it would take a while before it was clear to the Soviet leader how dysfunctional the system had become.” Simply put, heading into 1985 American policymakers expected the basic contours of the U.S.-Soviet competition -- with the USSR muddling along -- to remain intact; Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 104–105.

<sup>1002</sup> “U.S. National Security Strategy,” April 1982, ii. For examples of such behavior, see State Department cables reporting on Soviet efforts to “tighten” worker discipline and play up external pressure to divert attention from economic problems; Amembassy Moscow to SecState, “Party Decree on Control Criticizes ‘Bureaucratism,’” 17 August 1981 and Amembassy Moscow to SecState, “Soviet ‘Public Opinion’ on Political Issues,” 21 October 1981, both in Jack Matlock Files, Box 24, “USSR-Domestic EE (1/2),” RRPL.

<sup>1003</sup> Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 110.

<sup>1004</sup> On the Andropov program, see Amembassy Moscow to SecState, “Andropov on Economic Changes,” 16 August 1983, Jack Matlock Files, Box 25, “USSR-Economy (6/10),” RRPL, and Amembassy to SecState, “The Soviet Union Under Andropov: A Year Later,” Jack Matlock Files, Box 20, “Andropov (4),” RRPL; Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy*, 164–176, esp. 174. A late 1983 memorandum in the files of Deputy National Security Advisor Donald Fortier noted the janus-faced implications of Andropov’s reforms for U.S.-Soviet relations. Indeed, Andropov commissioned a series of studies while General Secretary to look at options for fixing the Soviet

rhetorical calls for extensive change to the Soviet system in 1985-1986, major plans to restructure the Soviet economy did not emerge until after the initial reform effort petered out in 1986-1987 and only took hold in 1987.<sup>1005</sup> In the interim, Gorbachev pressed ahead with limited efforts to tighten worker and managerial discipline (notably cracking down on alcohol consumption) and increasing the resources allocated to investments in infrastructure and high technology.<sup>1006</sup> Where Andropov failed to institutionalize his reforms, Gorbachev looked to create a political base for sustained change by appointing younger, reform-minded colleagues to the Soviet leadership. And, of great interest to American policymakers, Gorbachev's early pronouncements suggested interest in slowing or halting the growth in Soviet defense expenditures as part of a broader effort to create propitious internal conditions for economic success.<sup>1007</sup> Collectively, Gorbachev's focus on domestic reform, the solidification of a political consensus favoring reform, and recognition that resources for domestic efforts opened the possibility that, if initial reforms faltered, then the fundamental nature of the U.S.-USSR competition might change. In the absence of quick success, Gorbachev might feel pressure to alter the traditional course of "muddling along" in the competition with the United States and undertake deeper changes that would require a fundamental rethink of the USSR's place in world politics. The question for American policymakers was stark: would Gorbachev's initial efforts succeed?

At least initially, American policymakers were cautious and waited to see how the reforms played out. Shortly after Gorbachev's March 1985 selection, Matlock apparently gave it a 70-30 chance that the USSR would do as well or better under Gorbachev as under prior Soviet leaders: there was a 30 percent chance the USSR would experience a liberal revolution (bad for the Soviet regime, but potentially propitious for the United States), a 50 percent chance that the USSR would muddle along, and a 20 percent chance that Gorbachev would successfully meet the "needs of system for modernity [sic]."<sup>1008</sup> Even if "time was working to the advantage of the United States" – as Matlock later wrote – a window of American opportunity vis-à-vis the USSR was not yet in the offing and the United States needed to see whether Gorbachev came "to the conclusion that the Soviet Union required more than arms control agreements to solve its problems."<sup>1009</sup> CIA Director William Casey, in a briefing to Reagan just before the November 1985 Geneva Summit, echoed Matlock's analysis, arguing analysts "do not believe Gorbachev now is prepared to pay much for breathing space." Even if Gorbachev's reforms were unsuccessful and pressure to offer "real concessions on strategic forces and foreign policy" mounted in the future, for the time being the USSR could sustain competition with the United

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system. Gorbachev was familiar with these studies, and may have played an instrumental in the reviews themselves. See Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 262.

<sup>1005</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 490–491.

<sup>1006</sup> Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy*, 178–185.

<sup>1007</sup> Archie Brown, *Seven Years That Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 82–96; Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 488; Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Subcommittee on National Security Economics, *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China, 1986* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1988), 14–16.

<sup>1008</sup> These options were sketched out in diagram form on a piece of paper Matlock left for his successor on the NSC, Fritz Ermarth. The diagram is undated, but an accompanying sheet of questions used to guide Matlock's analysis suggests these outcomes date from early in Gorbachev's tenure in office. The diagram and questions can be found in Jack Matlock Files, Box 27, "Important History pre-1987 [Material Left for Fritz Ermarth] 4/4," RRPL.

<sup>1009</sup> Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 112.

States.<sup>1010</sup> Appropriately, Reagan and Shultz had discussed just this question a few weeks earlier and came to an analogous finding. That is, while Gorbachev might be interested in reaching a strategic accord with the United States – particularly an arms control accord – to allow him to focus on his economic problems, the key question remained (as Reagan put it) “how far Gorbachev will be prepared to go because of [economic problems.]”<sup>1011</sup> Given that the U.S.-Soviet competition was relative, much also depended on the United States: to ensure the Soviet Union could no longer readily compete, the United States needed to both sustain its own domestic bases of power and the ongoing military buildup to sustain the pressure on the Soviet Union.<sup>1012</sup>

Over the course of 1986 and 1987, however, it became increasingly clear that Gorbachev’s reforms would not turn Soviet fortunes around. Soviet decline, which seemed in the offing for much of the preceding decade, now became acute. The November 1985 Geneva Summit saw Gorbachev criticize those American analysts suggesting Soviet economic problems would prevent the Soviet Union from sustaining its superpower status vis-à-vis the United States; at the same time, however, he averred that both the United States and USSR “could do better if they could release [military] resources to the civilian economy.”<sup>1013</sup> After Gorbachev repeated these themes during a private discussion with Reagan, Reagan came away convinced that “the Soviets have more to gain by exercising restraint now from an economic perspective.”<sup>1014</sup> Despite a spurt in Soviet growth in 1985-1986,<sup>1015</sup> American officials watched as Soviet growth collapsed in 1987 and Gorbachev sought more extensive reforms to fix the Soviet economy

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<sup>1010</sup> “DCI Talking Points: Meeting with the President,” 13 November 1985, online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19851113A.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19851113A.pdf).

<sup>1011</sup> *Reagan Files*, 282. On the eve of the Geneva Summit, Reagan recorded his janus-faced conception of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. On the one hand, Gorbachev “will be out to prove his strength and dedication to Soviet traditional goals” and looked to “weaning our European friends away from us” by promoting high-profile if hollow proposals for peace and stability in Europe. Yet, at the same time, the Soviet leader sought to “reduce the burden of defense spending that is stagnating the Soviet economy” and did not “want to face the cost of competing with us.” Clearly, there is a tension in suggesting that Gorbachev wanted to reduce the Soviet defense burden yet also demonstrate Soviet strength and pursue traditional Soviet goals, hinting at the ambiguous American assessment of the new Soviet government. Reagan’s comments can be found in Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 151.

<sup>1012</sup> See “DCI Talking Points,” op. cit., and *Reagan Files*, 279-283. In a late 1985 memorandum intended to help prepare Reagan for his Geneva meeting with Gorbachev, Matlock went so far as to argue, “the Soviet Union is a superpower only in military terms [. . .] the Soviet Union is non-competitive in a peaceful world, and its leaders know it. Therefore, they can be dissuaded from applying or threatening force in given situations only by being convinced either that their efforts are doomed to failure, or that they would run unacceptable risks such as a dangerous military confrontation with the United States or a political defeat damaging to their prestige [emphasis added].” Soviet leaders, in short, would bandwagon with a stronger power, putting pressure on the United States to ensure such an outcome; Jack Matlock, “Russia’s Place in the World: The View from Moscow,” Jack Matlock Files, Box 21, “Background Material for the Pres Extra Copies + Incoming 2/3,” RRPL. The report is undated, but accompanying reports are dated from early August. The report was sent to Reagan in the run-up to the Summit; see Robert C. McFarlane to The President, “Background Reading on the Soviet Union: Internal Problems,” no date, found in *ibid*.

<sup>1013</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Plenary Session,” Geneva Summit, 19 November 1985, available online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/Doc16.pdf>. See also Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 156.

<sup>1014</sup> *Reagan Files*, 315. Reagan’s remarks were made at a 25 March 1986 NSPG meeting on nuclear arms control.

<sup>1015</sup> Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Subcommittee on National Security Economics, *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China, 1987* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), Table 12. GNP growth in 1985 was only estimated to be 1.6 percent, but the CIA praised Gorbachev for preventing the Soviet economy from performing even worse; see pp. 11-13.

while refashioning the Soviet political system.<sup>1016</sup> The former effort culminated in the first half of 1987 as Gorbachev and his allies pushed through laws allowing foreign firms to operate in the USSR and a “law on state enterprises” that gave businesses significant say in setting their own economic priorities and production goals.<sup>1017</sup> Talk of capping military expenditures became acute, as Gorbachev and his colleagues sought ways of ensuring Soviet security that did not require such an extensive and costly military presence around the world.<sup>1018</sup> Clearly, if prior reforms were sufficient to put the Soviet economy back on track, then these more fundamental efforts would not have been necessary.

As if to accentuate the point, NSC talking points for Reagan’s use in a spring 1986 meeting averred that “the momentum in the balance of power is with the United State” – meaning, the distribution of power was still moving in the United States’ favor.<sup>1019</sup> Shultz, speaking at an NSC meeting in June, tellingly argued that the Soviets were “at a fork in the road where they can either choose to wait out the President – gambling that Congress will cut the defense budget – or go for an agreement that will allow them to reduce their defense spending on that premise that “ Ronald Reagan is their best hope for selling an agreement to the American public.”<sup>1020</sup> This sense of Soviet decline on the cusp of becoming a rout – but not yet there – was echoed in October, where separate CIA and NSC memoranda developed for the Reykjavik Summit that month concluded that Gorbachev faced little immediate pressure to improve U.S.-Soviet relations.<sup>1021</sup> If anything, Shultz warned Reagan to be prepared for “a Gorbachev blast” at Reykjavik – meaning, Soviet opposition to American policy and dedication to thwarting American objectives.<sup>1022</sup>

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<sup>1016</sup> For a general overview, see Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 300–307; for American monitoring and assessments at the time, see Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Subcommittee on National Security Economics, *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China, 1987*, 12–14. Reagan was apprised of these results no later than the run-up to the December 1987 Washington Summit; see the briefing papers on Soviet economic performance in “Soviet Economic Performance” and “USSR: Political and Economic Reforms,” circa 8 December 1987, Kenneth Duberstein Files, Box 4, “Washington Summit,” RRPL.

<sup>1017</sup> Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy*, 195–197.

<sup>1018</sup> William E Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution*; Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Subcommittee on National Security Economics, *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China, 1987*, 77–78.

<sup>1019</sup> Jack Matlock “U.S.-Soviet Relations: Strategy for 1986,” no date, Jack Matlock Files, Box 44, US-USSR Relations [March-May 1986] (2),” RRPL. Matlock’s report was sent to colleagues on the NSC on 29 May; see the accompanying cover memo, “Poindexter Tasking on U.S.-Soviet Relations,” in *ibid*.

<sup>1020</sup> Shultz’s remarks at a 2 June 1986 meeting on U.S.-Soviet affairs, in *Reagan Files* 322. The United States, in turn, needed to keep the pressure on Gorbachev and hopefully bring him around to seeking an agreement by “restore[ing] budget cuts to defense and international functions; work[ing] on alliance relationships; and go[ing] for a good arms control agreement.” At a follow-up meeting six days later, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger argued that “The Soviets want [an arms control] agreement to cut their defense budget.” Chief of Staff Don Regan agreed, stating “the right agreement will give the Soviets what they want – reduced costs,” while Reagan chimed in “The Soviets have economic problems and Gorbachev has his own internal problems with the [political] hardliners.” The United States thus needed to stick to its positions on arms control and regional conflicts and wait to see if the Soviets met U.S. positions; meeting on 12 June 1986, *Reagan Files*, 324-235

<sup>1021</sup> CIA, “Gorbachev’s Position on the Eve of the Summit,” 2 October 1986, online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19861002.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19861002.pdf); Stephen Sestanovich, “Gorbachev’s Goals and Tactics at Reykjavik,” 4 October 1986, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document06.pdf>.

<sup>1022</sup> George Shultz to The President, “Reykjavik,” 2 October 1986, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document04.pdf>.

One year later, however, the American assessment was different. Alongside evidence that Gorbachev's initial reforms were failing, Gorbachev escalated the search for a deep rapprochement with the United States, encapsulated in proposals at the October 1987 Reykjavik Summit to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000, and Soviet acceptance of U.S. demands for a ban on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) throughout 1987.<sup>1023</sup> To American policymakers, the sustained Soviet interest in acceding to American demands in international affairs and the demonstrable failure of efforts to fix the Soviet system combined to signal that the Soviet government was prepared to accept American strength and their own weaknesses.<sup>1024</sup> Even if the USSR wanted to compete with the United States over the long term, Soviet leaders recognized they would need a "breathing space" to make fundamental fixes to the Soviet domestic system.<sup>1025</sup> Strikingly, the run-up to the December 1987 Washington Summit saw Shultz, newly-appointed Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, and equally new National Security Advisor Colin Powell each agree that the Soviet Union was now actively looking to focus on its mounting internal problems, and needed American cooperation to do so. The American objective, in turn, was to force Soviet concessions to American interests – compelling the Soviets to "purchase" American cooperation – in order to better position the United States for future competition with a revitalized USSR. Carlucci put the point well, writing in November that, "the Soviet Union is in deep trouble at home, in East Europe, and around the world. *It can only get out of that trouble with far-reaching reforms and, even then, only with Western help.* This gives us an opportunity to demand a high price on behalf of peace, stability, and freedom [emphasis added]."<sup>1026</sup> Even if, as Powell wrote, Gorbachev faced "a troubled political scene at his back [. . .] which probably preclude[d] major new concessions," he was still looking to concede to U.S. demands; ultimately, Gorbachev was "playing for the longer haul, for 1988 and beyond [. . . he needs] a positive atmosphere and forward movement."<sup>1027</sup>

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<sup>1023</sup> For discussion of Reykjavik and Soviet concessions to the United States in 1987, see Garthoff, *The Great Transition*; Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*; George Pratt Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner's, 1993); Oberdorfer, *The Turn*.

<sup>1024</sup> In essence, American policymakers defined Soviet decline as "the weakening of the Soviet Union as evidenced by Soviet bandwagoning with American objectives." This is admittedly a problematic definition as it kludges capabilities and behavior together in one net assessment. Nevertheless, it tracks fairly closely with the continued slowdown in the Soviet economy and domestic base, the failure of basic reforms to get the system working again, and a credible signal that Soviet leaders recognized "muddling along" would not be sufficient over the long haul. There is thus a basic capabilities story undergirding the American assessment of Soviet decline.

<sup>1025</sup> Aside from the reports cited above and below, see also Robert Gates, "Gorbachev's Gameplan: The Long View," 24 November 1987, online at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/17/19871124.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/17/19871124.pdf). Gates' memo was distributed to Vice President Bush, Shultz, Carlucci, Powell, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

<sup>1026</sup> Frank Carlucci to The President, "Scope Paper on December US-Soviet Summit," no date, Lisa Jameson Files, Box 92305, "Summit/Background Material," RRPL. Ermarth was the original author of the document. Given the content, Carlucci most likely sent the memo while serving as Powell's predecessor as National Security Advisor, which ended on 23 November. See also the accompanying report on "Key Issues for the Summit."

<sup>1027</sup> Colin Powell to The President, "Your Meetings with Gorbachev," 2 December 1987, Kenneth Duberstein Files, Box 4, "Washington Summit Briefing Book," RRPL. Shultz was more ebullient than Powell, arguing that "Gorbachev's hands have never been fuller, and he has fewer options. The 'breathing space' he has said he wants is probably more important to him than ever. He is thus probably prepared to go even further than he has so far to achieve a predictability in U.S.-Soviet relations that will enable him to focus on getting his own house in order;" George P. Shultz to The President, "The Washington Summit," in *ibid*.



**Table B.2: Economic Growth in the USA and USSR, 1982-1989**<sup>1028</sup>

Year	USA (GNI)	USSR (GNP)
1981	2.8	1.0
1982	-0.9	2.2
1983	3.1	3.3
1984	7.7	1.4
1985	3.6	0.7
1986	2.6	3.9
1987	4.0	0.5-1.5
1988	5.1	1.5

In sum, by 1988 senior officials inside the Reagan Administration had come to the conclusion that the Soviet Union faced a period of acute relative decline, that Soviet leaders recognized this situation, and that this situation offered the United States a window of opportunity – of uncertain duration – in which the United States could choose to pressure the USSR. While there is undoubtedly evidence that American policymakers recognized the potential for fundamental change in the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power at earlier points in the decade, it sustained Soviet problems, American recovery, and the mounting failures of Soviet reforms to convince decision-makers that a period of decline was at hand. From this point onward, American policy became a debate over what the United States should do response to the changing distribution of power – not whether a change was in the offing. By February 1988, documents for Reagan’s upcoming visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels argued that Reagan should claim the success of American policies in dealing with the Soviet Union: the West was “dealing from strength in its dealings with the Soviet Union” while the USSR was on the mats due to “the evident and glaring failure of the Soviet economic system.”<sup>1029</sup> In a meeting with the Finish President that May, Reagan bluntly echoed these points, noting: “there been a great change in our relationship [with the USSR] over the past three years [ . . . ] we recognize that Gorbachev is motivated less by his interest in developing a positive relationship with us than by the nature of his internal economic situation. He knows what we have long known, namely, that his economy is kind of a basket case.”<sup>1030</sup> While long known, it was only in the late 1980s that Soviet problems were viewed as decisive, such that the Soviet Union appeared to be slipping down the great power ranks with no end in sight.

Finally, it is briefly worth noting that senior policymakers in the Bush Administration shared their predecessors’ views of the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power. Of the seven core

<sup>1028</sup> Soviet data for 1981-1986 is from JEC 1987, Table 4, 64. For 1987 and 1988, see JEC 1988, 38; American data from WorldBank, World Databank, updated 8 Jan 2013, last accessed March 2013

<sup>1029</sup> Fritz Ermarth and Nelson Ledsky to Colin Powell, “The State of the Atlantic Alliance,” 10 February 1988, in “President’s Weekend Reading: The NATO Summit,” Nelson Ledsky Files, Box 92164, “NATO Summit March 1988 Memos-Letters-Cables,” RRPL, 2.

<sup>1030</sup> “The President’s Meeting and Lunch with President Koivisto of Finland,” 27 May 1988, Fritz Ermarth Files, Box 92084, “1988 US-Soviet Summit Memcons (1),” RRPL, 3. Two weeks later, Shultz similarly argued that “certainly the West had the winning hand; it simply had to play it well;” USDel Secretary in Spain to SecState, “Madrid NAC: Discussion of Vienna Negotiations and Global Trends,” 10 June 1988, Nelson Ledsky Files, Box 92164, “Travel/NATO Ministerial Lowenkron Madrid, Spain 6/6 – 6/10/88 (2),” RRPL. See also Shultz’s equally frank discussion of the need to maintain pressure on Gorbachev, in USDel Secretary in Spain to SecState, “Madrid: NAC: Burdensharing Discussion,” 10 June 1988, in *ibid*.

individuals who advised him on foreign policy – the “Core Group” of Secretary of State James Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, Chief of Staff John Sununu, and Vice President Dan Quayle – Gates, Powell, and Baker served in the Reagan Administration, while Scowcroft often served as an outside advisor on national security matters.<sup>1031</sup> As Bush had been Vice President for Reagan’s two terms, a critical mass in the Bush foreign policy apparatus were privy to the debates and changing assessments of the Reagan Administration. Indeed, around the time Powell – then Reagan’s Chief of Staff – wrote of Gorbachev’s need for a period of quiet in U.S.-Soviet relations to focus on his internal problems, Gates – then the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence – offered that, “The Soviets' need to relax tensions is critical because only thus can massive new expenditures for defense be avoided and Western help in economic development be obtained.”<sup>1032</sup> By early February 1989, Baker argued that Gorbachev was trying to help the USSR cope with “era of stagnation.”<sup>1033</sup> Less than a week later, Bush agreed to Scowcroft’s proposal to review of U.S. policy towards the USSR, largely inspired by the realization that “the pressures of a failing system at home and frustrated policies abroad” had caused the USSR to focus on its internal problems, trends which were likely to continue during the Administration’s time in office; on balance, “the trends in US-Soviet relations are, in large part, favorable to us.”<sup>1034</sup>

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<sup>1031</sup> For composition and background on the Core Group, see Miller Center, Interview with Scowcroft, 31-33.

<sup>1032</sup> Colin Powell to The President, “Your Meetings with Gorbachev,” 2 December 1987; Robert Gates, “Gorbachev’s Gameplan: The Long View,” 24 November 1987, op cit.

<sup>1033</sup> Baker added the phrase by hand to a paper meant to outline the Administration’s approach to U.S.-Soviet relations; see “U.S.-Soviet Relations,” 10 February 1989, Box 108, Folder 2, James Baker Papers, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University (hereafter BP).

<sup>1034</sup> George H.W. Bush, “National Security Review 3: Comprehensive Review of US-Soviet Relations,” 15 February 1989, online at: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr3.pdf>. The Bush Administration later criticized the anodyne results of the review, but Bush and Scowcroft initially had high hopes and took an active role in shaping the study; see Beschloss and Talbot, *At the Highest Levels*, 24-25; Miller Center, Interview with Scowcroft, 19, 31.

## Appendix C: American Policy and Soviet Decline in 1991

### I. Overview

Chapters Three and Four examined American policy towards the declining Soviet Union in 1989 and 1990. The chapters demonstrated that the degree of American predation waxed and waned in response to Soviet military posture: when Soviet posture was robust, the degree of American predation was limited, while intense means of predation emerged once Soviet posture became weak.

This Appendix briefly discusses American strategy towards the Soviet Union in 1991. Because the Soviet Union tottered and eventually collapsed in the course of the year, it is difficult to assess American policy purely in light of the variables identified by my argument and its competitors. Large elements of American policy were driven by factors outside the domain of this study, in particular, the desirability of averting nuclear anarchy in the former USSR once Soviet collapse appeared inevitable.<sup>1035</sup> Nevertheless, the case is sufficiently clear to provide at least some evidence in support of Realist Decline Theory.

### II. The Question of American Strategy

American strategy in 1991 centered on the fundamental question of whether the United States would side with a growing number of independence and secessionist movements in the Soviet Union to encourage the breakup of the Soviet state, or work with central Soviet authorities under Gorbachev that would have the effect of playing for time and let Soviet decline continue without active American involvement. In essence, the choice was again Extreme Predation by encouraging a breakup, or Moderate Predation by adopting a hands-off attitude.

Prima facie, one might expect American strategists to pursue the first approach and expedite the dissolution of the USSR. After all, the United States was more than happy to evict the USSR from Eastern Europe in 1990 by ripping the GDR out of the Soviet alliance network; presumably, if the United States was content to destroy the Soviet Union's presence in Europe, it would be equally enthused to encourage the destruction of the USSR as a great power in and of itself. Moreover, Democratic Peace Theory and Institutionalist Theory would both predict Extreme Predation: not only did the Soviet leadership appear to be moving away from democracy and democratic reforms (epitomized by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's December 1990 resignation amidst charges that Gorbachev was establishing a dictatorship), but Germany's reunification ended the Two Plus Four process and with it, the main forum binding the United States and USSR.<sup>1036</sup> Baldly stated, recent American strategy as well as liberal theories of rising state behavior both suggest the United States should take advantage of Soviet domestic problems, side against Gorbachev, and encourage the expeditious breakup of the Cold War adversary.

### III. Pursuing Moderate Predation

In fact, American policymakers took the opposite track and adopted a strategy of Moderate Predation. This policy composed three inter-related elements. First, the United States refrained from publicly or privately backing secessionist, autonomy, or independence movements within the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin, who became President of the Russian Soviet Republic within the USSR, was arguably the leading proponent of American intervention in

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<sup>1035</sup> Interview, Larry Napper, 25 October 2011. On nuclear anarchy, see Graham T. Allison et al., *Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>1036</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 491–500.



favor of a Soviet breakup, but substantial pressure also came from members of the Baltic republics, Ukraine, Georgia, and political groups in Central Asia. Through December 1991, however, American policymakers refrained from endorsing these calls and instead were willing to simply let Soviet central authority gradually weaken without efforts to expedite the process.

Bush hinted at the hands-off strategy in an August 1991 visit to Kiev, during which he told a heavily nationalist Ukrainian audience that the United States “will not try to pick winners and losers in political competitions between Republics or between Republics and the center. That is your business; that's not the business of the United States of America.”<sup>1037</sup> Though criticized at the time, Bush’s public remarks simply reflected preexisting policy. As early as January 1991, Bush and his advisors had refused to limit or penalize U.S.-Soviet relations after the USSR launched a crackdown against independence movements in the Baltics, arguing that the U.S.-Soviet relationship as a whole needed to be preserved and “we still have a great deal of business to do with the Soviets.”<sup>1038</sup> Nor did American policy change afterwards, as an interagency group tasked with shaping American policy towards the disintegrating USSR similarly emphasized in November that, the United States would deal with “what's there” in the USSR, meaning “we continue to deal with central government institutions on some issues – nuclear/military issues and some portions of foreign policy – at the same time building new and more vigorous relationships with the republics [of the USSR seeking independence].”<sup>1039</sup> And when it became clear around the same time that the Soviet Union would fragment within a few years (at most), Bush and Baker dispatched diplomatic missions to lay out a series of preconditions the independence-seeking republics would have to meet (focusing heavily on nuclear command and control issues) to obtain American support for the effort; in doing so, American policymakers offered a de facto sop to Soviet authorities by not rushing to embrace a Soviet breakup.<sup>1040</sup>

Neither, however, would the United States do anything to help actively protect Soviet central authority. Even if the United States was unwilling to intensely prey on Soviet weakness in 1991, Moderate Predation also meant avoiding steps that might help buttress the foundations of Soviet power. This was notably an issue in the spring of 1991. At the time, Soviet leaders (aided by intermediaries at the John F. Kennedy School of Government) renewed a push to obtain substantial Western economic support for Soviet reforms. This time, the effort was pitched as part of a “Grand Bargain” in which the USSR would adopt a series of reforms to democratize Soviet politics and liberalize the Soviet economy, and the West would respond with

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<sup>1037</sup> George Bush: "Remarks to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of the Ukraine in Kiev, Soviet Union," August 1, 1991, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=19864&st=&st1=>.

<sup>1038</sup> Condoleezza Rice to Brent Scowcroft, “Responding to Moscow,” 21 January 1991, Rice Files, CF00718, “Baltics,” GBPL; Condoleezza Rice to Brent Scowcroft, “Dealing with the Lull in the Baltic Crisis,” 15 January 1991, Rice Files, CF00718, “Baltics,” GBPL; Nicholas Burns to Brent Scowcroft, “Your Meeting with Representatives of Major Baltic-American Organizations,” 21 January 1991, Rice Files, CF00718, “Baltics,” GBPL.

<sup>1039</sup> No author [likely Ed Hewett], “Contingency Group Workplan,” undated, Burns and Hewett Files, CF01599, “Policy Group Meetings 1991 [1],” GBPL. Given the content of the document, the report comes from November 1991.

<sup>1040</sup> These missions were led by Deputy Secretary of State Reg Bartholomew. Many of Bartholomew’s cables can be found in the Burns and Hewett Files at GBPL. For an overview, see “JAB Notes from 10/2/91 mtg w/Gen. Scowcroft, Sec. Cheney, The White House,” 2 October 1991, Box 110, Folder 7, BP, and Arnie [Kanter] to the Secretary, [Untitled Letter on Nuclear Initiatives], found on back of document entitled, “JAB Notes from 9/27/91 mtgs. w/UK, France, Germany; Soviet FM Pankin; NATO, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia re: POTUS speech on Defense Strategy,” 1 October 1991, Box 110, Folder 7, BP.

billions of dollars of economic aid.<sup>1041</sup> As before, American policymakers feared the Soviet plan might arouse interest among American allies or the American public, and the United States government be cajoled or pressured into assisting the Soviet government and thus abetting the USSR's continued presence as a potential competitor.

The solution, laid out in a Cabinet meeting in early June, was to muddy the issue and block the Soviet effort. The Soviet problem was to successfully trade domestic reforms that did not affect the U.S.-Soviet competition, for substantive concessions by the United States – or, as Baker put it, “how do you beat something for nothing?”<sup>1042</sup> To deflect Soviet pressure, the United States would instead “come up with a package [of putative assistance to the USSR] that does not cost,” including associate status for the USSR in Western financial institutions and developing plans to convert Soviet defense plants to civilian purposes. At the end of the day, and as Scowcroft put it, the United States needed to “set [demands] they would find it hard to meet” in return for true American aid, “get away from schemes that simply pour money down a rathole [sic],” and be seen as cooperating with the USSR without truly aiding Soviet plans to reform and remain a great power.<sup>1043</sup> Thus, when Soviet efforts to obtain American backing resurfaced in the summer and fall, American policymakers simply referred back to a policy that demanded additional Soviet reforms that would help transform the USSR into a “third-rate power.”<sup>1044</sup> In line with Moderate Predation, the USSR would receive no meaningful support from the United States.

Finally, concurrent with efforts to cautiously weaken the USSR were steps to reinforce American military dominance in Europe. On one level, and although Soviet forces were withdrawing from Central-Eastern Europe and the Warsaw Pact was defunct, Bush made final Congressional ratification of the CFE treaty a priority in order to formalize an American military edge in Europe. Second, members of the U.S. military and Defense Department developed plans to retain a significant military presence in Europe, and to deploy overwhelming force to deter or defeat a future hegemonic threat to Europe from a revived USSR if future events required.<sup>1045</sup> This process occurred even as the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe allowed the United States to reduce the overall size of its military, but the net result ensured the United States enjoyed a significantly greater relative conventional advantage over the USSR than at any time in the past.<sup>1046</sup>

Third, and following the Soviet coup attempt of August 1991, Bush and his senior advisors formulated what became known as the “Presidential Nuclear Initiative (PNI)” of 1991. On one level, PNI represented an American effort to limit the threat of nuclear anarchy, the

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<sup>1041</sup> Graham Allison and Grigor Yavlinsky, “Window of Opportunity: Joint Program for Western Cooperation in the Soviet Transformation to Democracy and the Market Economy,” 13 June 1991, Burns and Hewett File, CF01407, “USSR Chron File: June 1991 [1],” GBPL; “JAB Notes from 6/3/91 NSC Principals mtg on US Economic Relationship w/USSR,” Box 110, Folder 4, BP. Also Jack F. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 534–550.

<sup>1042</sup> The following is from Memorandum for the Files, “Meeting on U.S.-Soviet Economic Relations, 1:30-2:30 PM, June 3, 1991, White House Situation Room,” Burns and Hewett Files, CF01407, “USSR Chron File: June 1991 [1],” GBPL; to my knowledge, this is the first internal senior conversation on U.S.-Soviet relations to come to light.

<sup>1043</sup> See also James Baker, “Proposed Agenda for Meeting with the President, June 26, 1991,” Box 115, Folder 8, BP.

<sup>1044</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 540–541.

<sup>1045</sup> Jaffe, *The Development of the Base Force, 1989-1992*; Paul Wolfowitz, “Shaping the Future: Planning at the Pentagon, 1989-1992,” in *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey Legro (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 44–62.

<sup>1046</sup> Dale A. Vesser to Scooter Libby, “First Draft of DPG,” 3 September 1991, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb245/>.

Soviet loss of nuclear command and control, and de-escalate the U.S.-Soviet nuclear standoff.<sup>1047</sup> It did so by removing U.S. and Soviet tactical nuclear assets from Europe, taking U.S. nuclear bombers off of alert while requesting the Soviets reciprocate by confining mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to garrisons, and reducing U.S. ICBM modernization programs while calling on the USSR to do the same.<sup>1048</sup> PNI's terms, however, also seem to have locked in substantial U.S. nuclear advantages. Not only would confinement of Soviet mobile ICBMs make them easier to track and target in the event of hostilities, but PNI did not affect U.S. submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and thus kept a potential counterforce asset untouched.<sup>1049</sup> Like the CFE in 1989, therefore, Soviet adherence to PNI would help foster a relatively improved U.S. military position than which obtained beforehand. Even if PNI had semi-altruistic motives, the terms were heavily weighted in the United States' favor.

#### IV. Realist Decline Theory as an Explanation

Driving Moderate Predation in 1991 were two countervailing incentives. First, American policymakers wanted to improve the United States' relative power position at the Soviet Union's expense and so held predatory goals. This mirrored the situation in both 1989 and 1990, and matches my theory's expectation that a rising United States will want to make relative gains at the USSR's expense. Shortly after the Gulf War concluded in 1991, Scowcroft outlined the approach to Bush, arguing that it was "time to consolidate our gains" with the USSR.<sup>1050</sup> In practice, this meant (as Baker explained in his memoirs), "trying to get as much as we could out of the Soviets before there was an even greater turn to the right or shift into disintegration."<sup>1051</sup> A June Cabinet meeting was even more explicit, with Baker, Scowcroft, and other senior officials agreeing that the United States wanted "to see the Soviet military radically reduced" while recognizing that "a real reform program would turn [the USSR] into a third-rate power."<sup>1052</sup> Hence, as the United States maneuvered to address Soviet political unrest and fragmentation, the United States needed to keep its eyes on the prize of a much weaker Soviet Union. As a mid-June interagency report concluded:

Our priority now should be to lock in moderate Soviet international behavior and limits on their ability to threaten us or their neighbors. We want to create barriers against any resumption of past misconduct [ . . . ] We also want to see the Soviet defense sector – and the conventional and military capabilities it sustains – drastically reduced [ . . . ] this is among the most vital interests we have both in arms control and in engaging the Soviets on the reform of their system.<sup>1053</sup>

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<sup>1047</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 543–545; Matthew Fuhrmann and Bryan R. Early, "Following START: Risk Acceptance and the 1991–1992 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4, no. 1 (January 2008): 21–43.

<sup>1048</sup> Susan Koch, *The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991–1992*, Case Study Series (Washington, DC: National Defense University, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, September 2012).

<sup>1049</sup> The accuracy of the D-5 Trident missile would allow the U.S. to use SLBMs as a counterforce weapon rather than a purely counter-value asset. Thanks go to Owen Cote for conversations on the D-5. Combined with the garrisoning of Soviet road-mobile ICBMs, it is not implausible that Soviet adherence to the PNI would facilitate an American counterforce strike on Soviet nuclear assets. This is particularly so at a time when Soviet forces were already fraying due to internal fragmentation in the USSR.

<sup>1050</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 499.

<sup>1051</sup> Baker, *Politics*, 475.

<sup>1052</sup> Memorandum, "Meeting on U.S.-Soviet Economic Relations."

<sup>1053</sup> Brent Scowcroft to The President, "The U.S. Response to the New Soviet Pluralism," undated [circa 13 June 1991], Burns and Hewett Files, CF01407, "USSR Chron File: June 1991 [1]," GBPL.

At the end of the day, and as my theory predicts, American strategists sought to let the Soviet Union weaken and incorporate a world in which the U.S. would constitute “the world’s sole superpower.”<sup>1054</sup>

However, the United States could not use intense means to undercut Soviet capabilities for fear of Soviet internal balancing. Even though Soviet military forces were withdrawing from Central and Eastern Europe in line with the 1990 deals, the USSR still retained robust military capabilities that could prevent the dissolution of the USSR itself.<sup>1055</sup> Put differently, even if the Soviet military could not threaten an attack against Western Europe, it had the wherewithal to crack down against unrest within the USSR itself (epitomized by crackdowns in Lithuania and Latvia in early 1991).<sup>1056</sup> Crackdowns, in turn, might roil U.S.-Soviet relations, upset ongoing change in Europe, and potentially lead to a nuclear crisis with a Soviet Union that, though weakening, still had a significant nuclear arsenal. Equally important, crackdowns might further diminish Gorbachev’s domestic authority, thereby allowing hardliners to press for more resources for the Soviet military and an effort to reassert Soviet control over Eastern Europe.<sup>1057</sup> Efforts to reconstitute a Soviet military threat might take months or years, but it might still happen. In short, because the USSR could intervene at home, the United States faced potential costs from predation related to Soviet internal balancing.<sup>1058</sup>

Therefore, and as my theory expects, even as the United States worked to ensure the continued weakening of the Soviet Union, American strategists consciously avoided intense and all-out efforts to encourage the USSR’s dissolution. As Gates put it in retrospect, “a constant question before us was how much pressure the system could take without a rightist backlash (something we all worried about) – which could erase many, if not most, of the internal and external changes.”<sup>1059</sup> As Gates suggests, American officials repeatedly feared Gorbachev was on the verge of either launching a crackdown of his own, or would soon be displaced by a right-wing group, and circumscribed American policy to try and avoid such a development.<sup>1060</sup> Indeed, Bush, Baker, and Scowcroft were sufficiently worried about this risk that they used a late-July meeting with Shevardnadze (then a private citizen) to query him as to the strength of right-wing

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<sup>1054</sup> Vesser, “First Draft of DPG.” Also Eric S. Edelman, “The Strange Career of the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance,” in *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey Legro (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 63–77.

<sup>1055</sup> On the troop withdrawals, see Central Intelligence Agency, Director of Soviet Analysis to Philip Zelikow, “Soviet Withdrawals from Eastern Europe,” 30 January 1991, Zelikow Files, CF01468, “File 148: NATO Strategy Review #1 [2],” GBPL; David Armstrong, “Relocation and Resubordination [sic] of Soviet Ground Equipment: Motives and Significance,” NIC 00109/91, 7 February 1991, online at: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>.

<sup>1056</sup> Condoleezza Rice to Brent Scowcroft, “Dealing with the ‘Lull’ in the Baltics Crisis,” 15 January 1991, Rice Files, CF00718, “Baltics,” GBPL; Condoleezza Rice to Brent Scowcroft, “Responding to Moscow,” 21 January 1991, Rice Files, CF00718, “Baltics,” GBPL; James Baker, “Letter from Secretary Baker to Lithuanian President Landsbergis,” 18 March 1991, Burns Files, CF01487, “Lithuania [1],” GBPL.

<sup>1057</sup> See the discussion in Rice, “Responding to Moscow.” Also James Baker, “Proposed Agenda for Meeting with the President,” 13 February 1991, Box 115, Folder 8, BP.

<sup>1058</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, “Soviet Forces and Capabilities for Strategic Nuclear Conflict Through the Year 2000,” 8 August 1991, NIE 11-318-91W; Director of Central Intelligence, “Implications of Alternative Soviet Futures,” NIE 11-18-91, June 1991; both reports online at [foia.cia.gov](http://foia.cia.gov). See also a list of possible “crisis contingencies” related to Soviet internal weakness in Condoleezza Rice to Robert Gates, “Soviet Crisis Contingencies,” 18 December 1990, Burns and Hewett Files, CF01536, “4.3.0 – U.S. Relations with Russia; Policy on the Debate Over the Union,” GBPL.

<sup>1059</sup> Gates, *From the Shadows*, 528.

<sup>1060</sup> This was confirmed in a series of interviews with senior policymakers throughout 2010 and 2011. I particularly thank Nicholas Burns for his help in the matter.

forces and assess the likelihood of a crisis resulting from the continued decline of the Soviet Union.<sup>1061</sup> And, even when reformers led by Boris Yeltsin defeated an August 1991 hardline coup and seemed to show that a conservative backlash was unsustainable, American strategists remained fixed on the short-term risks in expediting a Soviet breakup. Not only might American encouragement of a collapse push conservatives towards a second coup attempt to keep the USSR together, but it could discredit Soviet reformers and encourage the emergence of “fascism with nuclear weapons” in the USSR.<sup>1062</sup> As late as October and November, these were going concerns that limited the American embrace of Soviet fragmentation.<sup>1063</sup> As Bush ultimately put it in his memoirs, even as the United States contemplated the destruction of the USSR’s “old order” that would improve the American strategic position, the U.S. government, “wanted to see stable, and above all peaceful, change.”<sup>1064</sup> Avoiding the costs of Soviet internal balancing was the prime downside to be avoided and the major threat to peace. These concerns again match what we expect if robust military postures deter intense predation in bipolar systems.

## V. Conclusion

The above sketch is intended only to show that American foreign policy towards the Soviet Union in 1991 broadly tracks with what we would expect if Realist Decline Theory were accurate. Clearly, due to the breakup of the USSR itself, factors beyond those highlighted above drove American strategy decisions and discussions. Additional work is necessary to flush out the ins and outs of American strategy and adjudicate among the drivers of American policy. Nevertheless, available evidence makes clear that the threat of Soviet internal balancing for internal purposes and the use of Soviet military forces to suppress domestic changes, buttress a hardline regime, and confront the United States proved a major impediment to intense American predation. This is sufficient to indicate Realist Decline Theory affords some traction in the case and, due to the nature of U.S. strategy and concerns, relatively more purchase than competing accounts. Security concerns remained powerful drivers of American behavior even at the twilight of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>1061</sup> “JAB Notes from 7/29/91 mtg/dinner with E. Shevardnadze, Moscow, USSR,” 29 July 1991, Box 110, Folder 5, BP; also Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Eduard Shevardnadze of the Soviet Union,” 6 May 1991, Burns and Hewett Files, CF01422, “POTUS Meetings March 1991 – July 1991,” GBPL.

<sup>1062</sup> “JAB Notes from 9/4/91 Cabinet Meeting w/GB, The White House, Washington, DC,” 4 September 1991, Box 110, Folder 7, BP; Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 543.

<sup>1063</sup> Conversations with Bob Hutchings and Nicholas Burns made this point clear. See, too, the annotations on the NSC copy of National Intelligence Officer/USSR, “Gathering Storm,” 24 October 1991, Burns Files, CF01498, “USSR Contingency Papers (Past),” GBPL; also No Author [likely Burns], “The Debate over a Successor (or Successors) to the USSR: Possible Outcomes, U.S. Influence over Those Outcomes, and Contingent Responses,” 7 October 1991, Burns and Hewett Files, CF01599, “Policy Group Meetings 1991 [1],” GBPL.

<sup>1064</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, *World Transformed*, 502.

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Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California  
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California  
Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (online collections)  
National Archives (United Kingdom), (online collections)

### Interviews (with brief description of role in U.S. government, alphabetical by last name)<sup>1065</sup>

Norman Bailey, NSC Senior Director for International Economics, 1981-1983  
Dennis Blair, NSC Staff Member for Western European Affairs, 1981-1983  
Nicholas Burns, NSC Staff Director for Soviet Affairs, 1990-1995  
Richard Burt, Director of Political-Military Affairs; Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs; U.S. Ambassador to Germany; Chief START Negotiator, 1981-1991  
Lee Butler, Vice and Director of Strategic Plans at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1987-1991; Command in Chief of Strategic Air Command, 1991-1992  
Jack Chain, Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, 1984-1985; SHAFE Chief of Staff, 1985; Commander in Chief of Strategic Air Command (SAC), 1985-1989  
Kenneth Dam, Deputy Secretary of State, 1982-1985  
James Dobbins, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Soviet Affairs, 1989-1992  
Edward Djerejian, Head of Political Section of U.S. Moscow Embassy, 1979-1982  
Eric Edelman, Special Assistant to Secretary of State, 1982-1984; Director of Soviet Policies at the Office of Soviet Affairs at the Department of State, 1984-1986; Head of External Political Section at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, 1987-1989; Special Assistant to the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs; April 1989-April 1990; Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Soviet and East European Affairs, April 1990-April 1993  
Fritz Ermarth, NSC Senior Director for Soviet Affairs, 1987-1988; Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, 1988-1993  
John Galvin, Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR), 1987-1992  
Sherwood Goldberg, Executive Assistant to the Secretary of State, 1981-1982  
David Gompert, NSC Director for European Affairs, 1990-1993  
Donald Gregg, National Security Advisor to the Vice President, 1982-1988  
Jonathan Howe, Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 1982-1984; Deputy

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<sup>1065</sup> Many of the interviews shaped my thinking of U.S. strategy even if they were never cited in text.

Chairman, NATO Military Committee, 1986-1987; Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1987-1989; Deputy National Security Advisor, 1991-1993  
 Charles Hill, Executive Assistant to the Secretary of State, 1985-1989  
 Robert Hutchings, NSC Director for European Affairs, 1989-1993  
 Bobby Ray Inman, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, 1981-1982  
 Zalmay Khalilzad, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Planning, 1990-1992  
 Robert Kimmitt, Undersecretary of State, 1989-1993  
 John Lehman, Secretary of the Navy, 1981-1987  
 Doug MacEachin, Head of the CIA Office of Soviet Analysis (SOVA), 1984-1988  
 Jack Matlock, Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, 1981-1983; NSC Senior Director for Soviet Affairs, 1983-1987; Ambassador to the USSR, 1987-1991  
 Robert 'Bud' McFarlane, Counselor to the State Department, 1981; Deputy National Security Advisor, 1982-1983; National Security Advisor, 1983-1985  
 Edwin Meese, Counselor to the President, 1981  
 Herbert Meyer, Special Assistant to CIA Director William Casey, 1981-1983  
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 Henry Nau, NSC Director for International Economics, 1981-1983  
 Mark Palmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 1982-1986; Ambassador to Hungary, 1986-1990  
 Richard Pipes, NSC Senior Director for Soviet Affairs, 1981-1983  
 John Poindexter, Military Assistant to the President, 1981-1983; Deputy National Security Advisor, 1983-1985; National Security Advisor, 1985-1986  
 Colin Powell, Deputy National Security Advisor (1987), National Security Adviser (1988-1989), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989-1993  
 Dan Quayle, Vice President, 1989-1993  
 Thomas C. Reed, NSC Member (at large), 1982-1983  
 Richard Kerr, Deputy Director, CIA, 1991-1992  
 Robert Kimmitt, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, 1989-1993  
 Rozanne Ridgway, Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic 1983-1985; Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, 1985-1989  
 Roger W. Robinson, NSC Director for International Economic Affairs, 1982-1985  
 Henry Rowen, Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, 1981-1983; Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, 1989-1991  
 Raymond Seitz, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 1989-1991  
 Stephen Sestanovich, NSC Director for Soviet Affairs, 1984-1986  
 Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor, 1989-1993  
 George Shultz, Secretary of State, 1982-1989  
 Thomas Simons, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs 1985-1989  
 Richard Solomon, Director of Policy Planning, 1986-1989; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 1989-1992  
 William Taft IV, Counselor to the Secretary of Defense, 1981-1985; Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1985-1989; Ambassador to NATO, 1989-1993  
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