On November 5, 1937, Adolf Hitler summoned his generals to a meeting in Berlin. The meeting was expected to be routine, but once it began Hitler swore the participants to secrecy and proceeded to outline his plans for war. According to minutes drafted from memory a few days later by an army adjutant, Colonel Friedrich Hossbach, Hitler said that the aim of German policy was to secure a larger living space—*Lebensraum*—for the German racial community. This expansion could be accomplished only through war, which had to occur before 1943–1945, when German power would peak. The first steps would be to seize Czechoslovakia and Austria. Hitler believed that France, England, and Poland had already written off the Czechs and had too many problems of their own to offer any resistance. But if they did, Germany must counter with lightning strikes. The deck would then be cleared for the final strike against the primary enemy, Russia.¹
Is this the explanation for World War II? Did the war result from a premeditated plan by a single racist man (notice the identity perspective and individual level of analysis) who had written two books ten years earlier—the two-volume Mein Kampf in 1925–1926 and a secret, unpublished book in 1928—that not only laid out a strategy for conquering territory in the east but also hatched his horrific plans for the extermination of the Jews? The war followed this plan pretty closely. As Professor John Mueller concludes, “The Second World War . . . was almost single-handedly created by one man, Adolf Hitler.” The explanation seems convincing, right? Case closed. We can go straight to the next chapter.

Causes of Madness

Not so fast. How did a man like Hitler ever come to power in the first place? What domestic-level factors facilitated his rise, and what systemic factors permitted another colossal catastrophe so soon after the death trenches of World War I? What about causal forces from the liberal perspective? Hadn’t European diplomats abandoned the balance of power and built a bold new international institution called the League of Nations to settle disputes peacefully? Massive mistakes that set the conditions for war must have been made long before Hitler came to power in January 1933. Did Hitler just exploit these mistakes? Could someone else have started World War II even if he had not? Or would Germany have gone to war eventually because realist factors, such as Germany’s unity and exposed central location, continued to fuel the security dilemma, even if Germany and other countries had done almost everything right? We have to try to answer these questions, because World War II killed three times as many people, approximately thirty-five to fifty million, as World War I, six million of them Jews in the Holocaust. What could have caused such madness?

Once again, there is disagreement. Realists ask if World War II wasn’t really just a continuation of World War I. The basic problem was the same: anarchy, the security dilemma, and an unstable balance of power. After World War I, Germany was not occupied or destroyed. It remained intact and potentially a looming menace again in the exposed center of the European system (remember the open plains). True, Germany was much weaker. It had lost about 13 percent of its prewar territory, the monarchy had ended, and runaway inflation and economic depression had followed. The Versailles Treaty limited Germany’s arms and stripped it of its colonies, but it continued to have the largest population in Europe and one of the most resilient, talented, and efficient societies in the world. The major powers in Europe did not see this problem in the 1920s, distracted, as realists see it, by utopian liberal schemes of collective security centered on the League of Nations. When they did see it in the late 1930s, it was too late. Germany had gathered momentum, as it had before World War I, and the security dilemma intensified with renewed force. Germany was too big to contain without encirclement and too little to feel safe with encirclement.

From the liberal perspective, the balance of power itself was the problem. As the dilemmas with German encirclement suggested, such a balance could never be stable. It had to be replaced by new institutional arrangements. Liberal advocates led by the
U.S. president, Woodrow Wilson, proposed a whole new scheme for managing military relations in international politics. The concept of collective security organized force on a different principle, one based on common institutions and the preponderance of power rather than on separate national interests and the balance of power. The League of Nations embodied this imaginative new approach, but it didn’t work at the time. Why? Liberal accounts lay the blame largely at the door of the United States. It refused to play its role as a new, leading great power. After helping win World War I, the United States did an about-face, left Europe, refused to join the League, and retreated into isolationism during the 1920s and 1930s. Without the leading power, the League could not muster a preponderance of power, and the world marched off into another nationalist struggle for power.

But why does nationalism have to lead to war? How do nationalities or identities get constructed so as to lead to war? If all nations were satisfied with the status quo, no state would seek to upset it. What kind of nationalism leads to aggression? Identity perspectives have an answer—the kind that derives from revanchism (the desire for revenge), irredentism (the desire to regain territories), racism, and xenophobia. German nationalism after World War I had all these characteristics. Many Germans felt that they had been unjustly blamed for World War I and humiliated by the Versailles Treaty that ended the war. They considered it only reasonable that Germany should regain territories where Germans lived, such as Alsace-Lorraine, which France had seized in World War I (and which, of course, Germany had seized in 1871). Many Germans also indulged in a racism of Aryan superiority and murderous anti-Semitism, and they dehumanized foreigners not of their superior race. This was the extreme nihilistic nationalism that German nationalism unleashed in the 1860s. Otto von Bismarck, the German statesman who unified Germany through war, predicted it in conversations with his conservative mentor, Leopold von Gerlach: “I can even think out the idea that some day ‘unbelieving Jesuits’ will rule over the Mark Brandenburg [core of Prussia] together with a Bonaparte absolutism.” Aggressive missionaries (Jesuits) without any beliefs (unbelieving) ruling over Berlin with a Napoleon-like absolutism—not a bad description of the Nazis who controlled Germany from 1933 to 1945.

This time let’s start with liberal explanations of the war. President Wilson and the League of Nations may have failed to prevent a second world war, but they left a powerful example of collective security through universal international institutions that was later realized in the UN intervention in 1990–1991 in the first Persian Gulf War (see Chapter 5). Liberal perspectives argue that if there is hope that the world community might someday go beyond the balance of power and domesticate military force—that is, convert it to police power, as in domestic society—this hope will have to grow out of the seed of institutional arrangements in which all nations and people participate. As we will see, other perspectives disagree. Realist perspectives say it still matters more who holds power within those institutions, while identity perspectives argue that the values these institutions promote matter more than the rules or power they employ. Parallel Timeline 3-1 helps organize events leading to World War II by perspectives.
### Parallel Timeline 3-1

**Events Leading to World War II from Different Perspectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realist</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1919</strong></td>
<td><strong>1919</strong></td>
<td><strong>1900s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versailles Treaty</td>
<td>League of Nations</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1922</strong></td>
<td><strong>1922</strong></td>
<td><strong>1920s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapallo Pact</td>
<td>Washington Naval Conference</td>
<td>American exceptionalism/isolationism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France occupies and leaves Ruhr Valley (next to Rhineland); forms alliance with Little Entente</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weimar (democratic) Republic struggles and fails in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1925</strong></td>
<td><strong>1928</strong></td>
<td><strong>1920s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locarno Pact</td>
<td>Kellogg-Briand Pact</td>
<td>Fascism takes power in Italy; communism in the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1931</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1930s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan invades Manchuria</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hitler’s idea of a German Third Reich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1933</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1930s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitler takes power</td>
<td>Germany and Japan leave League</td>
<td>Japan’s idea of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soviet Union joins League 1933</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German nonaggression pact with Poland; German–British naval agreement</td>
<td>Spanish Civil War 1934</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1935</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1930s</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy invades Ethiopia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany occupies Rhineland; signs Axis powers alliance with Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1936</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1930s</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan invades China</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1937</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1930s</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany annexes Austria March</td>
<td>Appeasement at Munich</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1938</strong></td>
<td>September 1938</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany occupies Sudetenland September</td>
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(Continued)
In asking Congress to declare war on Germany, Woodrow Wilson emphasized that “the world must be made safe for democracy.” Subsequently, in January 1918, he laid out for Congress his famous Fourteen Points, a plan to restructure the world order after the war. Consider the emphasis in this plan on liberal themes of relationships, negotiations, interdependence, and peaceful pursuits (non-zero-sum goals). Wilson advocated open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, general disarmament, removal of trade barriers, impartial settlement of colonial claims, internationalization of the Dardanelles, and establishment of the League of Nations. The program also contained realist elements. It called for territorial and military adjustments: restoration of Belgium, return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, evacuation of Russian territory, readjustment of Italy’s frontiers, evacuation of the Balkans, and creation of Poland (actually re-creation—it had been partitioned among Prussia, Russia, and Austria at the end of the eighteenth century) with access to the sea. And there was an important identity element as well, the granting of autonomy or self-determination to the national minorities of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Wilson expected that self-determination would lead to democracy, hence his theme of “making the world safe for democracy.” But the plan relied overwhelmingly on the expectation that repetitive practices of trade and diplomacy would condition state behavior to preserve the peace and prepare the way for democracy to spread and the balance of power to recede. Liberal procedures would steadily trump identity and power disparities.

## Collective Security, Not Balance of Power

What was this new approach? Collective security started with a fundamentally different configuration of power. From the liberal perspective, the decentralization or balance of power had failed disastrously. Wilson was an unrelenting critic of the secret treaties, arms races, colonial rivalries, and great power maneuvering that he believed drove the balance of power toward war before 1914. Restoring that system after World War I, as the Congress of Vienna did after the Napoleonic Wars, was out of the question. Wilson wanted “no odor of the Vienna settlement” at Versailles. The new approach of collective
security would centralize, not decentralize, military power. It would require all nations to join together in a single universal institution and pool their military power to create an overwhelming central military force. This central force would be so powerful it could reduce the overall level of force through disarmament and operate largely on the basis of economic, not military, sanctions. Now if a particular country threatened another country, the common institution would order the offending power to desist and, if necessary, threaten it with economic sanctions. Overpowered, the offending country would be deterred or, if it persisted, defeated. No country could withstand the centralized power of the entire global community. Protection for all countries would be achieved not through the balance of power but through the preponderance of power.

How would the central institution decide which country was threatening the system? In the balance-of-power system, countries aligned against the country with the greatest power, because relative power determined threat. But in the collective security system, all countries belonged to the same common institution (one great big alliance). How would this institution define and measure threat? It would do so by creating a set of common institutional procedures that states would have to follow in resolving international disputes peacefully. If a state violated these rules, it became the threat. From the liberal perspective, common institutions and rules defined threat, not relative power. Intentions were more important than capabilities.

The League of Nations

The League of Nations was the first international institution to embody the collective security approach to the use of military power. The Covenant of the League spelled out the various provisions of collective security.

Article 5 of the Covenant established the principle of unanimity. All nations, great and small, participated in the League and decided collectively what constituted a threat to international peace and security. Remember from Chapter 2 Gladstone’s appeal in the nineteenth century to the “general judgement of civilized mankind”? The League was, as Woodrow Wilson said, the “general judgment of the world as to what is right.” Consequently, all countries, regardless of relative power or domestic ideologies, made decisions on an equal basis. The League of Nations buried the old Congress of Vienna system, in which great powers had special responsibilities.

Article 2 created the two main institutions of the League: the Council, composed initially of nine members, and the Assembly, composed of all members. Article 4 made the five great powers that had just won the war (the United States, which of course never joined; Great Britain; France; Italy; and Japan) permanent members of the Council. But these members did not have any special privileges. Each Council member, great or small, had a veto. Unanimity was required to act. Moreover, the Council had no special responsibilities. The Assembly, on which all members sat and also made decisions by unanimity, had exactly the same responsibilities. Indeed, Articles 3 and 4, establishing the
responsibilities of the Assembly and Council, respectively, used the same language: either body “may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world.” There was no hierarchy between the Council and the Assembly.

Articles 10 and 11 of the League Covenant established the collective commitment to deter or defeat aggression. Article 10 committed members to “respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of all Members of the League.” Article 11 committed members to consider “any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, . . . a matter of concern to the whole League.” Now a threat to any member was a threat to all members, regardless of whether that threat immediately affected a particular country. Conflict anywhere was a threat everywhere. Peace was indivisible; it was a collective good, hence, collective security. It existed for all or none, and its enjoyment by one did not diminish its enjoyment by others.

How was this possible? As realists argue, don’t countries have separate geopolitical interests and see threats differently? Think of the differences between the United States and some of its allies in the 2003 war in Iraq. True, but the hope in the League was to channel these differences through a process, a discussion of disputes, a set of rules and procedures that would lead to compromise and define the aggressor as any country that stood in the way of compromise.

Articles 12 through 15 set out the League’s rules that countries had to follow to resolve disputes peacefully. They created a path of procedures that would identify the aggressor. Notice how this liberal approach defines threat by iterative interactions, reciprocity, and path dependence, not by power disparities or ideological differences. Article 12 said members must submit disputes to peaceful arbitration, judicial settlement, or the Council—which in turn could submit disputes to the Assembly. Countries must then refrain from war until after the League made a decision. If the issue was suitable for arbitration or judicial settlement, Articles 13 and 14 set up the Permanent Court of International Justice to render judicial decisions. If the dispute went to the Council, Article 15 required the Council to settle the dispute or issue a report with its recommendations. If the Council issued a unanimous report except for the parties to the dispute, the members agreed that they would not go to war with any party to the dispute that abided by the Council’s recommendations. This provision was intended to isolate the
aggressor party and make it feel the full condemnation and power of the common com-
munity of nations.

Article 16 then said that if any member went to war in disregard of Council or judicial
recommendations as prescribed in Articles 12 through 15,

it shall, ipso facto, be deemed to have committed an act of war against all
other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to sub-
ject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of
all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-
breaking state, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal
intercourse between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking state and the
nationals of any other State, whether a member of the League or not.

The word immediately implied that these sanctions would be automatic.

Presto, the world had a new system to define threat and deal with it. But didn’t such
a system risk turning every dispute, however minor, into a global war? After all,
everyone had to confront the aggressor. That made a local dispute a global one, just
the way the balance of power turned a local clash between Austria and Serbia into
World War I. The League had an answer. As Article 16 said, League members would
use economic sanctions, not military force. Because everyone would be participat-
ing, economic sanctions would suffice to deter the aggressor. The aggressor would
be isolated and would relent or starve to death if it did not. Military force would not
be necessary, except as a backup or last resort should sanctions fail—for example, if
the aggressor attacked out of desperation. Military power, in fact, could be reduced.
Article 8 called for “the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point con-
sistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international
obligations.”

Here is the classic liberal solution to conflicts (at any level of analysis, but in this case
at the systemic structural level). Get everyone to participate, negotiate peacefully, use
economic sanctions if necessary, and maintain military power only to the extent neces-
sary to implement economic sanctions and serve as a last resort should sanctions fail.
Do you think this approach is utopian or irrelevant today? Think again—it worked
like a textbook case in the first Persian Gulf War in 1990–1991. And it inspired critics
of U.S. policy in the second Persian Gulf War in 2003 who argued straight from the
collective security rule book: the United Nations was the only legitimate institution to
make the decision to go to war because it included everyone (the general judgment of
the world), negotiations were the only way to facilitate inspections and resolve the issue
of weapons of mass destruction, economic sanctions were sufficient to convince Iraq to
come clean, and military force was necessary only to support economic sanctions—that
is, to get the UN weapons inspectors back into Iraq by positioning an invasion force
in the Persian Gulf, but not by invading the country. Under both Presidents George W.
Bush and Barack Obama, the United States pursued exactly the same collective security
strategy to stop the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran. The idea of collective security is alive and well today, even if it failed under the League of Nations.

Why the League of Nations Failed

What went wrong with the liberal solution of the League of Nations? Several things. First, the United States, the leading world power, did not join. Nor did the Soviet Union until 1933, by which time two other major powers, Germany and Japan, had withdrawn. The League of Nations never achieved the preponderance of power it required to work effectively. Second, the League never organized effective security guarantees. It failed to provide credible military commitments to defend all countries and establish the indivisibility of peace as a collective good. Eventually countries scrambled to protect their security outside the League through alliances. Third, although it made some progress in reducing arms, disarmament without credible security commitments led to more, not fewer, security fears. Fourth, unanimity proved to be the League’s Achilles’ heel. The aggressor country also had a veto. The League could issue a report without concurrence of the parties to the dispute, but the report was toothless unless the League either followed it up with specific actions, which the aggressor could veto, or implemented Article 16 sanctions automatically, which might mean war. When the League condemned Japan’s invasion of Manchuria, Japan vetoed the report and withdrew from the League. When the League imposed economic sanctions on Italy, it eventually backed off because France and Britain feared this action might mean war with Italy, and they were more concerned at the time with the threat from Germany. Peace in this case proved not to be indivisible. One threat (Germany) was not considered to be the same as another threat (Italy). And given different perceptions of threat, the veto for everyone became a loophole that meant action from no one.

Let’s see how American isolationism, utopian disarmament agreements, unanimity, and Japanese and Italian aggression undermined the League.

American Isolationism. Woodrow Wilson literally died trying to persuade the U.S. Congress and American people to join the League. In July 1919, he returned from the peace negotiations in Paris to campaign nonstop across the country to gain support for congressional approval of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. But in early October he collapsed and suffered a massive paralytic stroke. When the treaty came up for votes in Congress in November and again in March 1920, the League’s greatest champion was still seriously ill.

A favorite counterfactual question from the liberal perspective is whether different leadership (for example, someone like Franklin Roosevelt, who deftly guided an isolationist country into World War II) or a healthier President Wilson might have persuaded Congress to approve the League. The country was not of one mind on the League issue. One group opposed the League and any American military entanglement abroad. It was led by William Jennings Bryan, a frequent Democratic presidential candidate and Wilson’s first secretary of state, and by Senator William E. Borah of Idaho. This group
harked back to George Washington’s warning in his farewell address to stay out of foreign alliances. A second group, led by former president Teddy Roosevelt and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, did not oppose military commitments per se, but preferred specific ones and recoiled at the automatic provisions under Article 16 to act without congressional deliberations. Finally, a third group led by former president William Howard Taft supported the League.

To win the confirmation battle in the Senate, Wilson had to win over the second group, the one that demanded reservations on Article 16 preserving the constitutional power of Congress to declare war. He failed, and analysts still argue about the causes. Was it, as the causal arrow illustrates, because the constitutional structure of the American government prevented Congress from giving up its power to declare war—a liberal argument from the domestic level of analysis? Or was it Wilson’s high-mindedness and ideological inflexibility? Now identity factors at the individual level of analysis dominate institutional ones at the domestic level. Or maybe it was simply a political struggle for domestic power between Wilson and his foes—a realist explanation from the domestic level of analysis. Notice again how our analytical tools of perspectives and levels of analysis help sort out a sometimes bewildering array of conflicting arguments explaining a historical event. (See if you can draw the causal arrows showing how the levels of analysis interact in the identity and realist explanations of Wilson’s failure.)

The result, in any case, was a League of Nations that was supposed to mobilize preponderant power but lacked from the outset the world’s then most important power, the United States. Another soon-to-be-great power, the Soviet Union, also went into isolationism. The October 1917 Russian Revolution toppled the czar, and Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin, whom the Germans had transported into Russia in 1916 in a secret railroad car, seized power with his Bolshevik faction and pulled Russia out of the war—which is why the Germans helped him in the first place. Russia slipped into civil war and then, under Stalin after 1925, out of world diplomacy as Russia concentrated on building socialism in one country. Marxist-Leninist ideology—an identity factor—convinced some communist leaders that the state would wither away and that diplomacy, at least as conventionally understood, would not require much of their time.

**Disarmament Agreements: The Washington Naval Conference and Kellogg-Briand Pact.** Compared with realist perspectives, liberal perspectives tend to downplay military power. As we have noted, Article 8 of the League Covenant called for disarmament. Other international agreements at the time similarly restricted military capacity. The Treaty of Versailles imposed stringent arms control measures on Germany. The Washington Naval Conference of 1921–1922 set ceilings on sea power, placing the United States on a par with Great Britain and holding Japan to three-fifths of the U.S. level. Disarmament talks continued episodically throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Even after Germany left the League in 1933, Hitler concluded a naval pact with Great Britain in 1935 that limited the German surface fleet to 35 percent of Britain’s. From
the liberal perspective, as the causal arrow shows, disarmament treaties reduce the role of military power and thereby increase trust among nations.

The idea of getting rid of arms and war itself was behind the Kellogg-Briand Pact, signed in 1928. Originally proposed as a U.S.-French agreement, the pact called on all signatories “to condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy.” Practically all the nations of the world signed it, including Germany, Japan, and Italy. As a statement of moral and legal sentiment, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was unsurpassed. But as a practical matter, it barely survived its signing. Immediately, countries, especially the United States, entered reservations based on self-defense, regional security, and sovereignty that gutted the commitment. The pact became meaningless. When asked why the United States should be interested if another nation broke the treaty, U.S. secretary of state Frank Kellogg replied, “There is not a bit of reason.”

**Japanese Aggression in Manchuria.** The first real test for the League came in 1931. Japan invaded Manchuria, a northern province of China. China appealed to the League, and the League called on Japan to withdraw its troops. But Japan voted against the resolution. Here was the core problem of collective security, as seen from a realist or an identity perspective. Unanimity, and the veto, let the big and the bad guys hold the rest of the world community at bay.

When the Qing dynasty fell in 1911, China lapsed into civil war, and Japan exploited this situation to increase its military position along the Manchurian railroad, where it had already stationed troops under agreements stemming from the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 (brokered by U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt, one of America’s first forays onto the stage of world diplomacy). In September 1931, the Japanese military, with or without orders from Tokyo (this is still disputed), staged an incident and invaded the rest of Manchuria, creating the puppet state of Manchukuo.

After Japan blocked League action, the League established a commission to investigate the incident. The Lytton Commission (named for its chairman, Lord Lytton of Great Britain) issued a report in September 1932 that asked League members not to recognize Manchukuo. But the report did not invoke Article 16. When the League voted in February 1933 to accept the Lytton report, Japan cast the lone dissenting vote and then abruptly withdrew from the League. The League was exposed as a paper tiger. It was not long before European powers, Italy and Germany, dealt the finishing blow to the League.

**Italian Aggression in Ethiopia.** In the nineteenth century, Italy acquired colonies in Eritrea, an African territory at the mouth of the Red Sea. It tried at the time to colonize neighboring Ethiopia as well but failed. In October 1935, the Italian government, under fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, invaded Ethiopia again. This time, the League got around the unanimity requirement. It convened a special conference. Fifty members attended and defined Italy as the aggressor. They invoked specific but not
complete sanctions—an arms embargo, the cutoff of loans to Italy and imports from Italy, and an embargo on certain exports to Italy, such as rubber and tin. But they did not embargo steel, coal, and oil exports to Italy, break off diplomatic relations, or close the Suez Canal, through which Italy supplied its forces in Eritrea. The League seemed to be working, at least partially and certainly better than in the case of Japan and Manchuria.

By December 1935, however, Britain and France were having second thoughts because they needed Italy to balance power against an increasingly resurgent Germany. Here was the problem with collective security arrangements. These arrangements considered every threat to be of equal concern to all League members, regardless of where the conflict occurred or which countries it involved. Peace was assumed to be indivisible, or a collective good. But in this case, Britain and France did not consider the threat from Italy to be as great as that from Germany. Thus, the British and French foreign ministers met and came up with the Hoare-Laval plan, which divided Ethiopia into two parts, awarding one part to Italy and the other to the League. When word of the plan leaked, the British minister, Samuel Hoare, had to resign. Public opinion was outraged, as were the representatives of small nations, one of whom warned, “Great or small, strong or weak, near or far, white or colored, let us never forget that one day we may be somebody’s Ethiopia.” The fate of the weak in this case was nevertheless sealed. When Hitler marched into the Rhineland in March 1936, Britain and France met with Italy in Stresa and gave the green light to Italy’s conquest of Ethiopia. The balance of power prevailed over collective security. Would the balance of power now work better than it had in 1914? Don’t hold your breath. (See Figure 3-1 for a summary of liberal explanations of the causes of World War II.)

**Realist Accounts**

From the realist perspective, the problem was always Germany. As Map 3-1 shows, its unity and location in the center of Europe upset the balance of power. Germany was either too small, and thus vulnerable to neighbors on both sides, or too big, and thus threatening to neighbors on either side. As Henry Kissinger writes, “Germany for much of history has been either too weak or too strong for the peace of Europe.” This reality triggered a virulent security dilemma of encirclement and fear. So Germany had to be either weakened or divided again, as it was before 1871. The Versailles Treaty tried the first solution. It weakened Germany. But then Germany scratched its way back. It aligned with Russia, joined the League, and accepted border guarantees with France and Belgium in the west but not with Poland and Czechoslovakia in the east. Hitler systematically reclaimed territories and German populations in the east that Germany had lost in World War I. By 1939, Germany faced the prospect of another two-front war. This time it defeated France outright and occupied Russia all the way to the outskirts of Moscow. Germany now dominated a weakened Soviet Union on one side (Map 3-2), and Japan threatened the Soviet Union on the other side (Map 3-3). The United States
Collective security problems and the failure of the League of Nations:
- Major powers did not join to create preponderance of power
- Centralized commitments too weak to establish security as a collective good and provide incentives to disarm
- Aggressor states not members of League and hence not subject to institutional constraints

Economic depression reduces interdependence

Misperceptions of threat:
- United Kingdom sees France as stronger than Germany
- France thinks defense dominant and “chain-gangs” with United Kingdom and Poland (leaving initiative to Hitler)
- United Kingdom appeases instead of balancing Hitler at Munich (1938) and fails to align with Soviet Union after Hitler invades Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

Spread of immoderate goals:
- Germany and Japan are revisionist states, seeking to overturn the Versailles Treaty and create Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

British foreign minister tries to finesse domestic opposition to plan to divide Ethiopia

Divided domestic interests lead United States to reject League
- Economic collapse in Germany

Ineffective leadership of Congress by a dying President Wilson
became concerned. It tightened the noose on Japan, and Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The United States joined Great Britain and the Soviet Union and eventually destroyed German and Japanese power. After World War II, the allies tried the second solution—they divided Germany again. But we save that story for the next chapter; here we take up the tragedy of Versailles and the interwar period.

**Versailles Treaty**

After World War I, the victorious allies met in the Versailles Palace outside Paris to conclude the peace treaty. The Versailles Treaty gutted the former German empire. Germany lost territory and its colonies. Alsace-Lorraine went back to the French. The Rhineland was permanently demilitarized and administered for fifteen years by an international authority. Poland was restored with a corridor to the sea and the port of Danzig, which became a “free city” under League supervision (see Map 3-1). The Polish corridor split East Prussia from the rest of Germany, in the same way that Kaliningrad, a Russian province in former East Prussia, is separated today from Russia. Versailles cut Germany’s army to one hundred thousand volunteers and its navy to six cruisers and a few smaller vessels. The German navy was interned by the British and then scuttled by its own
officers pending the outcome of the Versailles negotiations. Germany was forbidden to have a general staff and any offensive weapons such as submarines, aircraft, tanks, or heavy artillery. Most punitively, Versailles pronounced in Article 231, the famous “war guilt” clause, that Germany was solely responsible for the outbreak of World War I and was required to pay massive reparations (then about $33 billion; in today’s dollars, some $300–$400 billion) that subsequently burdened the German economy and international trade. Notice how this decision implies a judgment about the relative weight of the different levels of analysis. It elevates domestic-level causes of German behavior above the responsibility of other countries or systemic causes and above the role of individual elites or decision makers.

Peace restored, right? Not quite. France knew that Germany would not remain weak permanently. Like the victorious powers at Vienna in 1815, France wanted a military alliance to subdue the defeated power should it rise again. Britain, however, saw France as the more powerful country. In the 1920s, France had a smaller share of European wealth than Britain, but it had an army of around six hundred thousand men, double or triple the size of Britain’s and six times Germany’s allotted number.12 Neither Wilson and the U.S. Congress nor a Bolshevik and isolated Russia was ready to make a military
commitment to defend France. So France turned to keeping Germany weak as long as possible and finding smaller allies. It occupied the Ruhr Valley—the heart of Germany’s industrial establishment next to the Rhineland—in January 1923 to extract reparations. And it concluded alliances with the small states of eastern Europe—Poland and the “Little Entente” of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia—to serve as a substitute, it hoped, for the Franco-Russian Alliance before World War I.

Rapallo and Locarno

Excluded and humiliated by the Versailles Treaty, Germany responded to encirclement by meeting in April 1922 with the Russians at Rapallo, a seaside resort in Italy. Both
countries nurtured grievances against the West (Russia because of Western involvement in its civil war from 1918 to 1920) and agreed to establish full diplomatic relations. Over the next fifteen years, Russia helped Germany evade some of the Versailles restrictions on its military forces and training. Think of it. Here was a classic realist alignment. Even then ideological foes, the two countries (one recently monarchist going fascist—Hitler’s barroom putsch failed in 1923—the other already communist) shared a common interest in radically revising the established order coming out of World War I. As the causal arrow depicts, relative geopolitical weakness dictated an alliance to promote security despite radically different ideologies.

Seeing the dangers of alienating Germany, the Western powers rushed to reassure Berlin. France ended the Ruhr occupation in fall 1923, and Great Britain proposed the alliance that France had always wanted. But Britain did not want to isolate Germany further, so it proposed an alliance to guarantee French and Belgian borders as part of a broader agreement under the League, which would also admit Germany as a new member. The Locarno Pact, signed in 1925 (and for which the French, British, and German foreign ministers won the Nobel Peace Prize), guaranteed Germany’s western borders with France and Belgium. As a member of the League, Germany now also undertook general obligations to settle disputes peacefully with its eastern neighbors—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Significantly, however, arbitration agreements with these countries did not guarantee borders in the east as the Locarno Pact did in the west. Nor did other League members guarantee the eastern borders.

So here was a huge hole in the commitment to collective security. In the west, where France and Great Britain were relatively strong, the League guaranteed borders. In the east, where small states had replaced Russia and Austria-Hungary and the balance of power was relatively weak, the League did not guarantee borders. All that existed in the east were a few frail alliances that France had set up with Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. This vulnerability only got worse with the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which promised peace without any alliances or use of power whatsoever. Absent firm security commitments, countries were nevertheless encouraged to disarm. From the realist perspective, the stage was set for German aggression well before Hitler showed up, especially in the east, where World War II started.

**Germany Expands**

If Germany had ever intended to accept a weakened role in the postwar Versailles order, Hitler emphatically rejected that option. But he disguised his plans masterfully for several years. In October 1933, nine months after coming to power, Hitler pulled Germany out of the League and immediately broke the restrictions on German rearmament. At the same time, however, he concluded a nonaggression pact with Poland that weakened Poland’s commitment to France if Germany attacked France and signed a naval treaty with Great Britain that avoided the kaiser’s mistake of competing with Britain on the high seas. He also started a major propaganda campaign to promote the notion that Germany sought only to reclaim what an unjust Versailles Treaty had taken.
away—once Germany had united all Germans again, it would have no further designs on its neighbors.

Thus, when German troops marched into the “permanently demilitarized” Rhineland in March 1936 to liberate German residents, no Western power resisted, even though this step violated German as well as League guarantees. The next target was the German people in Austria. Germany signed an alliance with Italy in 1936 to create the Axis powers and wean one of Germany’s perennial rivals for control of Austria away from the West (remember how France and Britain had backed off on sanctions in the Ethiopian affair to court an alliance with Italy?). With Italy on board, Hitler then annexed Austria in March 1938. His last target, presumably, was the German population in the Sudetenland—Germans, living on the Czechoslovakian side of the border, who had been separated from Germany by Versailles. Hitler demanded the annexation of the Sudetenland. In late September 1938, Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, met Hitler in Munich, together with the French and Italian heads of government. The Western allies agreed to return the Sudetenland to Germany, and the Munich Conference went down in history as the classic symbol of appeasement, a policy of making concessions to a stronger foe because one is unwilling to consider the use of force. Now that Germany was whole, the allies hoped, Hitler would surely cease to upset the status quo.

Another Two-Front War

Unfortunately, not so! From a realist perspective, whatever Hitler’s intentions, Germany still faced a security dilemma. Was that why Hitler did not stop after Munich? By 1939–1940, Germany was again superior. It controlled 36 percent of Europe’s wealth, compared to 9 percent for France, 24 percent for Great Britain, and 28 percent for the Soviet Union.13 It was too big for its neighbors to deal with individually, but if those neighbors got together, Germany was too small to deal with them collectively.

Germany faced the same situation of superiority and encirclement that it had before World War I. As the causal arrow suggests, the security dilemma still dictated a two-front military strategy that had Germany prepare for a quick strike against France in the west to eliminate one adversary, and then wheel around for the final stroke against Russia in the east. Some realists find it uncanny that this strategy repeated itself. It’s too easy, they argue, to attribute the war simply to Hitler’s megalomania. Larger structural forces had to be at work.14

Germany invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Now Germany’s neighbors knew it was not just trying to unite Germans, and Britain immediately signed defense guarantees with Poland and Romania. Counterbalancing was happening, but it was happening late. Why? Some realists argue that it was because Germany’s power, especially military power, did not peak until 1939–1940, unlike before World War I, when it peaked already in 1905.15 In addition, this time Germany had disguised its military buildup as well as its intentions. But the chess pieces were now moving into place. Both Britain and France had defense commitments with Poland and Romania. The Triple
Entente (remember, Britain, France, and Russia before World War I) was struggling to reemerge. The missing piece was the Soviet Union.

Joseph Stalin succeeded Lenin in 1925 and brutally yanked his country into the twentieth century. Massive state-driven industrialization raised the Soviet Union to the great power ranks. But Stalin imprisoned and murdered millions of farmers and opponents in the process. The Soviet Union joined the League in 1933 and played a cat-and-mouse game—realists call it *buckpassing*—with France and Britain; each was trying to get the others to stop Hitler. By summer 1939, however, the cat-and-mouse game was over, and the cat was about to jump into the fire.

Stalin had to decide whether to work with France and Great Britain or to throw in his lot with a fellow dictator. He negotiated with both sides and, to the surprise of the world, announced in August 1939 a nonaggression pact with Hitler, the famous Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, named for the two countries’ foreign ministers. Stalin gambled on *bandwagoning* and joined the stronger rather than the weaker side in the hope that the Soviet Union might benefit from the spoils of war between Germany and the west. German and Russian leaders agreed once again to partition eastern Europe, including the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, the Soviet Union occupied the other half of eastern Europe, and World War II was under way.

Finishing off Poland, Germany turned west. It took Norway in the winter of 1939–1940 and invaded the Low Countries and France in spring 1940. An all-out air war against Great Britain followed, and Britain came perilously close to defeat. But the British air force bested the German Luftwaffe, and Hitler, frustrated, wheeled east in June 1941 and attacked the Soviet Union. Now, as the realist school warns, the dangers of bandwagoning came home to roost. Stalin reportedly couldn’t believe the perfidy of his Nazi ally—who was only following, of course, the realist proscription against permanent alliances—and went into a depression for several weeks.

**Japan and the Pacific War**

All the while, America slept. The United States had long since become the wealthiest country in the world. By 1941, its wealth constituted 54 percent of the combined wealth of the United States plus Germany, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and Italy. But it was not using this wealth to exert a great power military role. Why? Some realist perspectives explain America’s isolationism in geopolitical terms. America enjoys “strategic immunity.” As long as it stays out of foreign military commitments, it is relatively invulnerable to attack. Two oceans thwart successful invasion, and the country’s vast size enables greater economic independence. Thus, as the causal arrow suggests, it was rational for the United States to stand aside from Europe’s wars. Britain eventually repulsed German air power, and the Soviet Union ultimately emasculated German land power. All the United States had to do was buckpass and wait for other countries to do the balancing. Notice that this version of realism expects balancing to

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**buckpassing**: a free-riding strategy wherein a country allows other countries to fight conflicts while it stays on the sidelines.

**bandwagoning**: the aligning of states with a greater power to share the spoils of dominance.
take place automatically, like the classic balance-of-power system in eighteenth-century Europe. No one power has to seek overall balance; rather, overall balance results from the work of an invisible hand.

Other realist perspectives aren’t so sure. For them, Hitler’s success in Russia would have been intolerable for Americans because German and Japanese power would have then dominated the Eurasian landmass. The United States would have faced a fascist juggernaut alone. If the European war was not enough to draw America in, certainly a global war including Asia was. Russia’s fate linked the European and Asian balance of power. Someone had to take charge of balancing the overall system, and America was the only remaining great power to step in.

In 1936, Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany. This was a declaration of opposition to communism and Soviet sale of arms to China. From its base in Manchukuo, Japan then invaded China in 1937. It declared its intent to create a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In 1940, after Hitler attacked France, Japan seized French colonies in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. (See Map 3-4.) And in
September 1940, Japan, Germany, and Italy signed the Tripartite Pact, which committed each country to go to war if any other country came to the defense of England. The pact was aimed primarily at the United States, but Stalin had reason to worry about an alliance between Germany and Japan on either side of the Soviet Union. In April 1941, he countered and signed a neutrality pact with Japan. Fortunately for Stalin, Japan was preparing to attack the United States, not the Soviet Union. When Germany finally attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin was able to concentrate all his forces against the Nazi onslaught. Even then, he just barely survived.

So the fact that Japan struck against the United States rather than the Soviet Union may have saved the Soviet Union. Did the United States play a role in this outcome? President Franklin Roosevelt tightened oil deliveries to Japan in 1939, either to deter Japan from striking the Soviet Union or perhaps to prod it to strike south toward the oil fields of Southeast Asia. As Roosevelt put it, “The United States would slip a noose around Japan’s neck and give it a jerk now and then.” While Roosevelt did not expect an oil embargo to lead to war, Japan began to see the situation it faced as the last move in a prisoner’s dilemma game. If war was coming, Japan had better make a preemptive strike first.

And it did. Japan bombed the American fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the United States declared war. Four days later, Germany, drawing on the Tripartite Pact, declared war on the United States. The world was off for its second encounter with Armageddon, this one three times more deadly than the first.

**Why Don’t Hegemons Stop?**

Realist perspectives do not predict that balancing will always prevent war. The power transition school, in fact, predicts that balancing causes war when the challenger creeps up on the declining power. Nor do realist perspectives predict that states will always balance. States, like the Soviet Union in 1939, often buckpass or try to get others to balance for them. Realist perspectives predict only that balances will result. By war or other means, hegemons do not endure. That prediction seems solid enough. Hitler, like Louis XIV (who waged a hegemonic war against other European powers in the late 1600s and early 1700s) and Napoleon before him, ultimately went too far, and other states counterbalanced and beat him back.

An interesting question is, why don’t hegemons stop when they are ahead? Hitler did not have to attack the Soviet Union, and he certainly held a commanding position in 1942 after driving the Soviet Union back to the outskirts of Moscow. Look again at Map 3-2. He dominated the entire continent, in effect ending Germany’s encirclement and security dilemma. Britain, even if it could not be beaten, posed no threat of invasion, and Russia might have been encouraged to sue for peace. But Hitler, like others before him, could not resist the temptation to keep going.

Realists give multiple explanations for this behavior: offensive imperatives, domestic cartels, polarity, and preventive war. Let’s look briefly at each.
Offensive Imperatives. Offensive realists, such as John Mearsheimer, argue that states always seek more power because more power brings more security. In Germany’s case, Russia was still a looming menace on its border, and Germany was more secure if it controlled Russia than if it didn’t. But was it more secure? Liberal perspectives might respond that conquering and holding territory costs more than it returns. No, the offensive realism school counters, conquest actually pays. If that’s right, Hitler was rational to attack Russia. So far, the argument is pure realist.

But Mearsheimer goes on to argue that states that achieve conquest and hegemony on land cannot achieve hegemony across large bodies of water. The reason is the “stopping power of water,” by which Mearsheimer means that geography does not permit the projection of land power across large bodies of water. And hegemonies cannot conquer and hold territory with naval and sea power alone. Thus, Hitler, like Napoleon, did not succeed in conquering Great Britain. And if Hitler could not subdue Great Britain across the English Channel, he certainly could not invade North America across the Atlantic Ocean. The United States was dominant in its region and relatively safe behind two large oceans. True, Japan did attack a territory of the United States, but it did not attack the mainland, and it did so by air, not by land. And although Japan did invade China across a body of water, it had already established a foothold in China in 1905 on the basis of the treaty ending the Russo-Japanese War. In the 1930s, it expanded that position while possessing complete air and sea superiority, something Hitler never achieved against England.

The United States used a similar foothold in England to stage the successful D-Day invasion of Europe in 1944. With such a foothold, a land invasion across a smaller body of water may be possible, especially if the invader enjoys air and naval superiority, as the United States and Japan did in their respective assaults. Thus, technological constraints, not geography, may explain the stopping power of water. And technology can always change. The realist perspective tends to give the nod to geography (stopping power of water) over technology.
Domestic Cartels. Defensive-oriented realists consider expansion beyond what is needed for security unnecessary from a systemic structural point of view. More power is not always better than less, and balancing suffices to achieve stability. Thus, when states cannot stop expanding, defensive realism looks for explanations at other levels of analysis. Some attribute the inability of hegemons to stop their expansion to domestic political factors. As noted in Chapter 2, Professor Jack Snyder argues that because of its late industrialization Germany had many diverse social groups with narrowly defined interests; remember the iron (industry) and rye (agriculture) coalition before World War I. These groups could not achieve their objectives independently, but they could logroll, or combine, to implement them through coalitions. In the process, their cumulative goals committed the state to overexpansion.

Hitler faced similar domestic cartels prior to World War II. He did not stop because he was backed by a wide domestic coalition that supported the need for Lebensraum. According to Snyder, “The Nazis won power . . . by promising incompatible payoffs to every group in Weimar society: labor, industry, farmers, clerks, artisans. . . . Hitler saw conquest as the only alternative to a politically unacceptable decision to cut consumption.”23 But this explanation, Snyder concludes, is not enough, because Hitler eventually did cut consumption to finance the war effort. Now Snyder appeals to pure ideology. Hitler held the country together with strategic myths such as Lebensraum.

Notice how this explanation, while remaining realist at its foundation (domestic interests compete for power), takes on some liberal (an emphasis on political logrolling and coalitions) and identity (myths) aspects. The explanation also drops to the domestic level of analysis. The competition for power as well as the logrolling and strategic myths all come from the country’s political system at home rather than from systemic factors such as the relative distribution of power abroad.

It is worth quoting Snyder’s conclusions in full to show how a sophisticated analyst considers all perspectives but ultimately weighs them differently. When you read books or articles, these are the kinds of passages you cannot afford to miss and, hopefully, with the help of this text, will detect:

Domestic explanations for German overexpansion must look not only at the interests of groups, but also at the process by which those interests were reconciled [logrolling] and at the unintended ideological consequences [path dependence] of the strategic myths used to promote those interests.24

Interests (power) and hence realist factors are still the primary causal variables. Logrolling is now the “process by which those interests were reconciled,” and “strategic myths” are “unintended ideological consequences . . . used to promote those interests.” Logrolling and myths are instruments or consequences of interests, not causes of them. If they become independent variables and dominate interests (become primary), the argument is no longer a realist one.
Polarity. Still another realist perspective, neorealism, explains Hitler’s attack on Russia in purely systemic terms. For political scientist Randall Schweller, the explanation lies in the peculiar distribution of power that preceded World War II. This distribution was tripolar: the United States, Germany, and the Soviet Union. In a tripolar world, no pole can allow the other two to come together, because that would constitute a dominating coalition. Hence, the tripolar distribution of power is uniquely unstable. Either Germany and its allies would dominate Russia or the United States and its allies would. Roosevelt understood that fundamental fact, and this knowledge prompted his intervention to weaken Japan, a German ally. The causal arrow ran from a tripolar structure of power to diplomatic efforts to deny a coalition of two against one to the decision to go to war.

Preventive War. For Dale Copeland, the factor that drove German policy in World War II was the same as that in World War I—not the present power balances but Germany’s fear of Russian superiority in the future. At the meeting that Hossbach recorded, Hitler said that Russia was the ultimate target and that it had to be attacked before 1943–1945, when Germany’s power relative to Russia’s would peak. After that, Russia would have the advantage. So Germany undertook a preventive war to keep Russia from becoming more powerful as Germany became less powerful. As long as this assessment of power shifts was reasonable, and Copeland thinks it was, the realist perspective explains Germany’s behavior from a systemic structural level of analysis. Copeland, unlike Snyder (and Mark Haas; see the “Identity Matters” section later in this chapter), minimizes the role of race and ideology in Nazi decision making. He sees systemic power factors dominating and allows a role for identity only in the possibility that a country’s leadership might change in the future and become more belligerent. The causal arrow runs from future systemic power shifts to diplomatic efforts to cope with these shifts to a de-emphasis on racial and ideological fears.

If the assessment of power shifts is not reasonable—meaning not warranted by the systemic evidence available to the observer—then the assessment is being influenced by other factors, namely, institutional (lack of information) and identity (misperception) factors. For example, German leaders may not have had enough information to make an accurate assessment of Russia’s future power. Or, contrary to Copeland, they may have been affected by their racist or ideological (for example, anticommunist) prejudices toward Russia. When the perceptions of decision makers matter, the level of analysis often drops from the systemic structural level to the foreign policy level. The foreign policy level, as noted in Chapter 1, links systemic process factors such as German perceptions of Russia’s rise in power with domestic-level factors such as insufficient or inaccurate information in the German bureaucracy and intentional variables such as German leaders seeking to stay in power. An example, discussed next, is
when decision makers misperceive the power realities because they lack information or indulge their biases.

**Role of Misperceptions in Realist Accounts**

Realist perspectives expect assessments of power to be accurate because material forces dominate. When such assessments are inaccurate, as Professor Snyder’s analysis shows, realist explanations appeal to liberal and identity factors that apparently distort material forces. Professor Stephen Walt developed a realist line of reasoning that includes judgments about institutional factors such as whether offensive or defensive weapons dominate in a particular historical period and ideological factors such as whether leaders’ intentions are aggressive or not. Threat is a function no longer just of capabilities, as in neorealist analysis, but also of military strategies and ideological intentions. As Walt’s critics point out, however, the analysis remains realist only if material factors still account for more of the explanation than does strategy or ideology. One liberal factor distorting realist behavior is misperception. Stalin, for example, judged French and British power to be much greater in 1939 than it actually was. He thought those two countries would hold out against Germany and drain its resources, allowing Russia to enter the conflict later as the decisive power. Thus, he buckpassed, but in this case he misperceived the realities. He lacked accurate information.

Another realist, the historian A. J. P. Taylor, concludes that the war was the consequence of a long series of such misperceptions and mistakes. Rejecting identity arguments that the war was intentional, he writes, “The war of 1939, far from being premeditated, was a mistake, the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders.” Hitler, he argues, bears unique responsibility for domestic horrors such as the Holocaust, but he does not bear any more responsibility than other powers for foreign policy mistakes. He sought to restore German power and exploited other countries’ mistakes to do so, especially Britain’s failure to negotiate an alliance with Stalin in 1939. “Human blunders,” Taylor concludes, “usually do more to shape history than human wickedness.” Notice, as the causal arrow illustrates, how Taylor discounts motives or identity factors (wickedness) and emphasizes liberal factors (negotiations and blunders). Taylor believes the balance of power should work, and when it doesn’t, he blames inept diplomacy, which overrides balancing imperatives.

States also misperceive the advantage of offensive versus defensive military power. France thought a defensive strategy dominated and buckpassed in 1938, when it still had an advantage over Germany. It waited for Britain to commit. When Britain finally did commit in 1939, France expected the defense to dominate and chain-ganged with Britain and Poland. This chain-ganging, or creation of a rigid defensive alliance (the opposite of buckpassing), left the initiative to Hitler. Hitler seized it and neutralized Russia while attacking Poland and France. Offensive power proved dominant. France had misperceived the offensive-defensive balance.
Identity factors may influence perceptions when realists assess risks. Copeland acknowledges, for example, that even if Russia became more powerful than Germany in the future, Germany would still have to assess whether Russia was more or less likely to attack in the future compared to the present. That assessment might depend to some extent on the identity or nature of the political regime in Russia. A declining authoritarian regime, such as Germany, might remain suspicious of a rising authoritarian power such as Russia. This might have been the case in the 1930s when Germany feared rising Russian power in the future. But a declining democratic state, say Great Britain, might not worry too much about a rising state that was also democratic, say the United States. As noted in Chapter 2, this was the case before World War I when Britain worried more about Germany’s rise than about America’s.

In all these cases, realists draw on other factors to supplement relative power explanations. Liberal factors, such as domestic processes and institutions, distort perceptions. And identity factors, such as the ideology of Lebensraum and the nature of domestic political regimes, affect risk taking. When information is missing or misleading, institutions and ideologies fill in the gaps. (See Figure 3-2 for a summary of realist explanations of the causes of World War II.)

Identity Matters

World War I decisively ended the common Christian and monarchic community that had provided a shared identity for Europe since the time of Charlemagne. The old Europe functioned on the basis of substantive religious beliefs (Holy Roman Empire) and the equal rights of sovereign monarchs (the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the religious wars in 1648). The new Europe functioned more on the basis of secular norms (nationalism and self-determination) and international institutions (League of Nations). Self-determination encouraged the proliferation of new nations from the remnants of old empires—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, among others—and nationalism pushed nations further and further apart, making institutional agreement based on unanimity more and more difficult.

British nationalism and French nationalism were vindicated by World War I, but German nationalism was humiliated and Russian nationalism was reinvented under communism. Many of the new nations in eastern Europe became irredentist. Irredentism, a virulent form of nationalism exploited also by Hitler in Germany, demanded changes in national boundaries to bring together peoples sharing historical memories and speaking the same languages. Liberal nationalism in Britain and France encouraged public pacifism and indifference and in the United States isolationism. Fascist nationalism engulfed Italy and, after a brief democratic interlude, Germany and Japan as well. The Spanish Civil War in the 1930s showcased the fierce battle going on between fascism and communism. And anti-Semitism, which had erupted periodically in Europe since the time of Christ, reached its zenith with Nazi racism. Jews became the scapegoats for practically every grievance, from World War I to the Great Depression.
PART I

The Causes of World War II: The Realist Perspective and Levels of Analysis

- Distribution/balance of power:
  - Relative rise of German and Japanese power
  - Germany alienated instead of restored as a great power
  - Power vacuum caused by many new, weak states in eastern Europe and a weak China in Asia
  - Major powers such as the United States and Soviet Union do not balance
  - Tripolarity sets off scramble among Germany, Russia, and the United States to ally with third country

- Failure of United Kingdom, France, Poland, Russia, and United States to align against the greater power (Germany); they buckpass:
  - German diplomacy adept (compared to clumsy, as before World War I)—Hitler’s pact with Poland, naval treaty with Britain, and alliance with Italy
  - Threats based on different national (geopolitical) interests, not common institutional procedures—peace not indivisible
  - France forms alliances with Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania—all weak states—instead of the Soviet Union

- German leaders use aggressive domestic interests to wage expansionary war

- Aggressive interests of various domestic groups in Germany cause leaders to go to war

- Hitler’s war
- Roosevelt’s embargo
CHAPTER 3 • WORLD WAR II

Outside Europe, national self-determination did not apply. Colonialism persisted and suppressed nationalist sentiment. The League of Nations created mandates to legitimate colonial rule and carved up Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of the developing world to satisfy colonial rivalries with little regard for the ethnic or national identities of local populations. Resentment and simmering revolutions built up in many mandated territories. The League was trying to hold countries together using rules that liberated nationalities inside Europe but stifled them outside Europe. From an identity perspective, it might be argued that the League sought to hold together too many substantive differences with too little procedural glue.

How much did these ideological differences matter? Identity perspectives say they mattered a lot. As the causal arrow shows, they drove the competition for power, which realist perspectives emphasize, and weakened institutions, such as the League of Nations, which liberal solutions depend on.

Consciously or subconsciously, competitive or diverging identities propelled nations toward the abyss. As before World War I, nations constructed identities that exacerbated differences and conflicts, creating an atmosphere of xenophobia and racism. Because realist alliances continued to form among ideological adversaries—the Soviet Union and Germany in 1939 and then the Soviet Union and the western powers after 1941—most historians hesitate to attribute the primary causes of World War II to ideological factors. Identity factors become more prominent in the Cold War, after World War II. Nonetheless, capitalism, fascism, and communism were powerful identity factors driving events before World War II.

Cultural Nationalism

Cultural nationalism, the glorification of one national culture over others, hit its high-water mark in the period right after World War I. Romania and Bulgaria had become independent already in 1861 and 1908, respectively. Now Versailles created further new nations out of the collapse of the German, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Self-determination both justified and contradicted this process. The new countries comprised peoples who shared common languages and cultures, but they also included minorities who did not. And the presence of these minorities triggered resentment, irredentism, and perpetual grievances throughout the interwar period.

The new democracy of Czechoslovakia had a population of fifteen million, which included three million Germans, one million Hungarians, and one-half million Poles. We saw how that mix played into the irredentist demands of Hitler when he claimed that he wanted only to reunite Germans in the new Third Reich. Romania became home to millions of Hungarians, and Poland included millions of Germans. Hungary, created in 1918, was embittered two years later by the Treaty of Trianon, which left five million Hungarians, or one-third of the Hungarian population, outside its
The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia gained nationhood but contained significant Russian minorities. Yugoslavia brought together at least six national groups: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Bosnians. In the process, Yugoslavia became the epicenter of cultural fault lines between Catholic Croatia and Orthodox Serbia on one hand and these Christian groups and Bosnian Muslims on the other. Turkey emerged as the rump or residual Ottoman state and immediately fought terrible wars of ethnic and nationalist fury with Greece and Armenia, resonating to the present day with animosities and charges of genocide. Not only did new nations contain minorities that felt betrayed by the process of self-determination, but other nations also effectively disappeared as the Soviet Union put together its empire and subdued the Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

What did all this mean? Which peoples should have a nation, when should they have one, and how should they govern it? In particular, how should a nation treat minorities? Nationalism based on language and culture inherently discriminates against other cultures. So, by this standard, minorities either acquired autonomy, which threatened national unity, or were oppressed, which negated their right of self-determination. President Wilson hoped that democratic political ideas would temper and eventually integrate diverse ethnic and national differences. Democracy protects minorities and celebrates cultural diversity. Unfortunately, Wilson was fifty or more years ahead of his time.

**Liberal and Social Democracy**

Liberal democracy emerged most prominently in the United States. It built a community ethos around the constitutional rights of individuals instead of around the homogeneous culture of the nation (although American folk culture and the English language remained powerful pressures to assimilate) and promoted a free-market economic system based on private property and competition. Social democracy was more prominent in Europe. It put more emphasis on community than on individual rights and favored state regulation and ownership of key sectors of the economy to manage the class struggle between management and labor. Socialist parties were already strong in Europe before World War I, controlling, as previously noted, the German parliament in 1914.

Britain and France became exemplars of social democracy. Both suffered traumas in World War I and in the interwar period confronted virulent enemies of freedom from domestic fascist and communist movements. Liberal forces in the middle were weakened, and inflation and later economic depression undermined enthusiasm for free markets. By the mid-1930s, France was so divided that conservatives seemed more fascist than nationalistic. “Better Hitler than Blum” was the conservative slogan, referring to the French socialist leader Léon Blum, who came to power in 1936. Ideologies were beginning to transcend national feelings, and this affected foreign policy. As Professor Mark Haas notes, conservative groups in Britain and France preferred to align with fascist
countries, such as Italy, to counterbalance Germany, while socialist groups preferred to align with communist countries, such as the Soviet Union, to counterbalance Germany. The unintended consequences of these ideological divisions were indecision and the failure to counterbalance Germany at all. The causal arrow ran from ideological differences among political parties within states to conflicting preferences for alignment with other countries to inaction to counterbalance threats.

**American Exceptionalism**

The United States suffered economic crisis but, because of leadership and national experience, avoided the violent class and cultural cleavages of Europe. The United States began as a conventional nation with a homogeneous culture. Its population was mostly Anglo-Saxon, except for the enslaved black minority. Despite slavery, it was one of the leading democracies of its day, at least regarding the number of white male citizens who could vote and the rights of that group to ownership and protection of property. Other countries, such as Britain, had smaller white male franchises during the nineteenth century but abolished slavery before the United States.

Subsequent waves of immigrants slowly transformed America into a multicultural country. The country was tied together less and less by a common culture—although a single language prevailed—and more and more by a common ideological creed of political and economic freedom. Slaves gained legal freedom in the Civil War, a private enterprise system took hold in the late nineteenth century (compared to the state-run industries of fascist and socialist systems in Europe), the Progressive Era (1900–1930) broadened suffrage and regulatory reform, and Franklin Roosevelt introduced a national social security system and broader concern for economic equality.

No fascist or socialist party of any consequence ever developed in the United States. While Europe armed, America’s military establishment remained minuscule. In June 1940, America had only 267,767 men under arms. Britain had 402,000, and France and Germany more than 2.2 and 2.7 million, respectively. And Roosevelt’s deft leadership during the economic crisis of the Depression preempted more radical socialist and communist economic alternatives that might have nationalized industries or eroded economic freedoms.

Altogether, the United States, even with its continuing faults, such as political and economic constraints on the freedom of blacks and the poor, was the leading example of liberal democracy in the interwar world. In this sense, it acquired an identity of *exceptionalism*, a country set apart from the rest of the world by its progressive, freedom-loving, and pacifist nature.

But the United States indulged this sense of exceptionalism too much and shunned Europe, and while it remained uninvolved, the lights of liberal democracy went out in Europe as well as across the rest of the world. After 1922, as Samuel Huntington observes, liberal democracy disappeared from one country after another.
In a little over a decade fledgling democratic institutions in Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia were overthrown by military coups. Countries such as Yugoslavia and Bulgaria that had never known real democracy were subjected to new forms of harsher dictatorship. The conquest of power by Hitler in 1933 ended German democracy, ensured the end of Austrian democracy the following year, and eventually of course produced the end of Czech democracy in 1938. Greek democracy . . . was finally buried in 1936. Portugal succumbed to a military coup in 1926 . . . . Military takeovers occurred in Brazil and Argentina in 1930. Uruguay reverted to authoritarianism in 1933. A military coup in 1936 led to civil war and the death of the Spanish republic in 1939. The new and limited democracy introduced in Japan . . . was supplanted by military rule in the early 1930s.36

Why did the United States not care? Some identity perspectives might argue that it was the country’s self-image, not its institutions or geography, that kept it out of the League of Nations. As the causal arrow shows, American ideals created a sense of exceptionalism that spurned the League of Nations and created a reluctance to use force even if the United States had joined the League. The United States needed more than institutions or alliances to motivate its participation in world affairs. As we see in the next chapter, when it finally entered World War II, it came up with another set of universal ideas to run the world. The United Nations was somewhat more realistic than the League, but it was still pretty high-minded in the tradition of American exceptionalism.

Communist Nationalism

The communist movement brought a radical edge to socialism. In Germany right after the war, communists battled conservatives in Berlin.37 Whites (conservatives) fought Reds (Bolsheviks) in Russia. Eventually, Lenin and then Stalin consolidated communism in Russia. Whereas socialist parties struggled for the rights of workers through the parliamentary system, communism eradicated the party system. It designated the Communist Party as the sole vanguard of the proletariat or workers’ movement and used state institutions to uproot reactionary forces—conservative nobility and peasants—and commandeer the nation’s property and industry. Stalin forced Russian industrialization through state ministries and planning and displaced and starved millions of peasants to create collectivized farms. He also purged the military officer corps, a last bastion, as he saw it, of aristocratic nobility and fascist predilections.38 As the causal arrow suggests, Stalin’s decimation of the officer corps suggests that his decisions were driven more by psychological or identity factors than by national security concerns.
Fascist and Racist Nationalism

Radicalization on the left was matched by radicalization on the right. Fascist parties rallied conservative forces to recall old glories of national triumph and merge militaristic virtues with heroic symbols borrowed from ancient Greece and Rome. Benito Mussolini’s fascist party seized power in Italy in 1922. Fascist and military groups subsequently dominated in Germany and Japan. Both countries had had parliamentary systems in the 1920s. Germany created the Weimar Republic and had, some believe, a moderate foreign policy leadership under Gustav Stresemann that might have brought Germany back peacefully into the European fold. Japan had political parties that struggled to control the military from the late nineteenth century on. By the early 1930s, however, both countries had chosen fascist futures.

Racism became a big part of nationalism in Germany and Japan. While prejudice is hardly unique to these two countries, the maniacal extremes it reached there remain the ultimate examples of human brutality and depravity. The Holocaust, of course, stands out by any standard, with more than six million Jews, plus other minorities such as Roma (often called Gypsies), systematically exterminated. It epitomizes genocide, the extermination of an entire people based on their race or ethnicity. Is there any way to explain it? Probably not to everyone’s satisfaction. How much blame do the masses of people share? How much do the leaders deserve? Could it have happened elsewhere? Is this a darkness that lurks in every society? The United States is not blameless. It has its own legacy of slavery and then race-based vigilantism. And the United States did not help the international cause of equal rights when it rejected a Japanese appeal at Versailles for a declaration of racial equality. Japan, of course, indulged in its own racism, alienating many of its Chinese and South Korean neighbors and raising issues, such as its use of “comfort women” or sex slaves, that fester to the present day. Suffice it to note that atrocities happened. They cannot be denied, as a few still do in Germany and perhaps more in Japan. And the explanation may not be as important as the process of forever searching for an explanation. Otherwise, such atrocities may happen again.

Ideological Constructions and Chasms

Social constructivists emphasize the collective identities constructed in the interwar period that glorified nationalist traits and military exploits. More agency-oriented constructivists emphasize the relative identities or chasms that erupted among the self-images of different societies.

The ideological struggles going on in Europe came to the fore vividly during the Spanish Civil War. In 1936, the Spanish people elected a radical socialist government similar to the one in France under Blum. The rightist groups—monarchists, militarists, and fascists—rebelled and started a civil war. Fascism and communism went head-to-head. The battle fascinated the world, including Ernest Hemingway, who covered...
the war and wrote his classic novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* to describe it. Italy and Germany aided the fascist rebels. Russia aided the republican government. For reasons of weakness and ideological divisions of their own (as we have noted), France and Great Britain stayed out of the conflict. After two years, the republican government lost the battle it probably would have won with modest help from the democracies. General Francisco Franco seized power but then did not join the fascist alignment during World War II.

So how relevant were ideological struggles to the outbreak of World War II? Did identities really have an effect on behavior, or were states responding largely to material and institutional forces? Clearly the Axis powers shared an ideological affinity. Germany, Italy, and Japan were tied together by similar militarist and fascist politics rather than by the monarchist systems that had united Germany, Austria, and Italy before World War I. On the other hand, Spain, another fascist system, did not join their cause, and for two years Germany allied with its ideological archenemy, the Soviet Union. That alliance did not last, to be sure, but then the Soviet Union joined up with other ideological archenemies, the liberal democracies of Britain, France, and the United States, to defeat the Germans. Hence, it cannot be said very easily that the war was about conflicting identities and ideologies.

Did Germany’s Nazi identity cause World War II, or did Germany’s geopolitical circumstances cause the war? Was identity or power more important overall? As we learned in the introduction to this volume, scholars ask counterfactual questions to tease out the answers to such questions.

Professor Copeland writes, “If one imagines a Germany in 1939 with superior but declining military power, but led by military leaders lacking the racist ideology of Nazism, would these leaders have gone to war?” He answers no, they would not:

> Given that to a man senior [German] generals were holdovers from the First World War, and given that the military pushed for war in 1914 because of a rising Russia, . . . racism appears to be neither a sufficient nor even a necessary condition . . . to explain why Germany initiated world war for a second time in a generation. . . . German geopolitical vulnerability and the desire to eliminate the Russian threat would have existed with or without Nazi ideology.40

As the causal arrow suggests, Copeland argues that Germany’s geopolitical vulnerability led to hostile relations with Russia whether Nazi racism existed or not.

Professor Haas asks the same question and concludes the opposite, “that Germany’s international decisions in the 1930s would have been very different if the Nazis had not been in power.” He emphasizes the fact that a group of German generals led by Ludwig Beck, the army chief of staff, “viewed Britain and France as
Germany’s ideological allies against the greatest ideological threat in the system: the Soviet Union.”41 Before the German attack on France, this group risked treason by communicating Hitler’s battle plans to Britain and France. The dissident generals, Haas contends, would not have put their lives on the line merely to disagree with Hitler about the tactics or timing of Germany’s attack, which is Copeland’s conclusion. Hitler subsequently purged the Beck group, but Haas concludes that it was not geopolitical factors that predetermined Hitler’s policies but an ideological struggle within the German leadership that the Nazis won. Thus, for Haas, as the causal arrow illustrates, Nazi ideology played a more important role than existing or future power balances in explaining the outcome of war. (See Figure 3-3 for a summary of identity explanations of the causes of World War II.)

When do identity differences matter and when do power differences matter? Careful analysts consider all factors and try to determine the circumstances under which one variable matters more than another. Professor Haas concludes, for example, that power matters more when identity differences among the major powers are roughly equidistant from one another—that is, when the major powers are equally alienated from one another or have no ideological affinities toward one another. That was the case, some might argue, before World War II. Liberal, fascist, and communist nationalism were equally distant from one another ideologically. Thus, power factors dominated alignments. Fascist Germany allied with communist Russia in 1939 to concentrate power against liberal France and Britain, and democratic Britain, France, and the United States allied with communist Russia in 1941 to concentrate power against fascist Germany. Notice that identities still matter, but power influences identities more than identities influence power. Indeed, that is what realists mean when they tell us that nations pursue different values, but they all pursue power to defend those values. On the other hand, when those values converge (ideologies become less equidistant from one another), power and anarchy may matter less. That is what happens in the case of the democratic peace (see Chapter 7).
Critical Theory Perspective

We can't do justice in this small space to the rich literature that offers critical perspectives on the origins of World War II. Marxism, as amended by Lenin and Stalin, foresaw, as noted in previous chapters, the advance of capitalism, which in turn created its antithesis—communism. Lenin introduced the idea that in the last stages of capitalism, capitalist states pursued colonialism or imperialism as a means to get rid of surplus production and wage war against one another for world markets. The Great Depression of the 1930s seemed to confirm this diagnosis. The capitalist powers suffered economic collapse at home and in turn accelerated the scramble for export markets abroad. Both
fascist and liberal states were capitalist and hence in need of foreign markets. They would clash and ultimately hasten the rise of communism. Undoubtedly this expectation influenced Stalin and contributed to his decision to buckpass and ally with Hitler in the hope that Hitler and the other capitalist countries would fight each other to the death and hasten the demise of capitalism altogether. Moscow created the Communist International, or Comintern, to work with communist parties in other countries and foment the revolutionary cause.

The revisionist school of American history known as the Wisconsin School (because some of its leading adherents were located at the University of Wisconsin) applied the Leninist thesis to the United States, the leading capitalist country of the twentieth century. Charles A. Beard attributed America’s rising power and influence in the world to the country’s quest for markets on behalf of the capitalist class. In a book published in 1930, Beard and his wife, Mary, argued that the Civil War was not an ideological war about human rights but an economic class war between capitalist and agrarian economic systems. The capitalist system won, and American foreign policy after that was one of steady expansion. “As the domestic market was saturated and capital heaped up for investment,” the Beards wrote, “the pressure for expansion of the American commercial empire rose with corresponding speed.” The “open door policy” followed, in which the United States pressed for economic access to one part of the world after another: China, Europe, and the colonial territories. In a later book, Charles Beard placed the blame for World War II squarely on the policies of the United States. These policies were not only imperialist but deceptive and degenerate, a blatant attempt to saddle the American people with the profit plunder of the arms industry. In *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, William Appleman Williams picked up on this theme about the dark side of U.S. foreign policy. He identified America’s expansion not with liberty but with repression and the conquest of native Indian and Mexican lands. He blamed the United States and the Soviet Union equally for the onset of the Cold War and drew a moral equivalence between the oppression of capitalist societies and the dictatorship of communist ones. (See Figure 3-4 for a summary of critical theory explanations of the causes of World War II.)
FIGURE 3-4

The Causes of World War II: The Critical Theory Perspective and Levels of Analysis

- Capitalist states war against one another while communist states pick up the spoils
- Depression weakens capitalism
- American leaders wage WW II to consolidate domestic power of arms industry
- United States adopts open door policy to dump export surpluses on world markets
- Lenin modifies Marxism to include imperialist phase of capitalist expansion

a. Remember that critical theories consider levels of analysis to be inseparable. Factors identified at the various levels of analysis are not distinct causes but parts of a holistic explanation.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have revisited numerous concepts laid out initially in Chapter 1 and examined how these concepts work in regard to the history of World War II. The security dilemma figures prominently in realist accounts; collective goods, especially collective security and multilateral institutions, in liberal accounts; and identity construction and differences in identity perspectives.

Realist arguments often dominate the historical record. Was World War II, then, mostly a struggle for power? Perhaps, but liberal and identity factors were also at work. Ironically, one communist power, the Soviet Union, joined the League of Nations just as the two fascist powers, Germany and Japan, withdrew. The United States never joined. In that sense, the League never got a fair test, perhaps because of ideology. By the mid-1930s domestic political systems had diverged to such a large extent that trust was increasingly in short supply. When Britain negotiated with the Soviet Union in summer 1939 to form an alliance against Hitler (an exercise that ultimately failed...
when the Soviet Union aligned with Hitler, here is what Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, wrote:

I must confess to the very most profound distrust of Russia. I have no belief whatsoever in her ability to maintain an effective offensive, even if she wanted to. And I distrust her motives, which seem to me to have little connection with our ideas of liberty, and to be concerned only with getting everyone else by the ears.45

Diplomacy—the liberal perspective—cannot bridge unlimited ideological chasms. Nor can alliances—the realist perspective. The United States and the Soviet Union allied in extremis to defeat Nazi Germany, but once that menace was vanquished the wartime allies had a severe falling out that became known as the Cold War. Ideology ultimately severed the alliance and undermined the United Nations, a body that the allies had intended to lead the world. That’s at least an identity perspective on the topic we take up in the next chapter.

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KEY CONCEPTS

appeasement, 139  chain-ganging, 146  genocide, 153  offensive realism, 143
bandwagoning, 140  defensive realism, 144  League of Nations, 123  self-determination, 126
buckpassing, 140  exceptionalism, 151  Lebensraum, 122  unanimity, 127

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. If Hitler planned and predicted war at the meeting with his generals in 1937 recorded by Hossbach, how can anyone argue that this was not a premeditated war reflecting the identity perspective from the individual level of analysis?

2. Contrast the way balance-of-power and collective security systems work.

3. Explain why the League of Nations failed from the three different perspectives.

4. What are three realist arguments why hegemons, such as Nazi Germany, France under Louis XIV, and France under Napoleon, cannot stop once they have achieved superiority?

5. Distinguish the following questions according to the perspectives they reflect. Did the norm of self-determination create weak states in eastern Europe, did weak states emerge from a vacuum of power, or did the Locarno Pact concluded by the League of Nations fail to protect weak states?