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World War I and the Versailles Settlement

How fortunate we are to be living on this first day of the 20th century! Let us make a wish that as the 19th century vanishes into the abyss of time, it takes away all the idiotic hatreds and recriminations that have saddened our days.

—LE FIGARO,

FRENCH NEWSPAPER, JANUARY 1, 1900

A spirit of optimism pervaded Europe at the dawn of the twentieth century. The marriage of science and industry produced one technological marvel after another; medical advances promised longer, healthier lives; and the exponential growth of international commerce generated extraordinary wealth, particularly for those in high society. The *Exposition Universelle* (Paris Exposition) of 1900 exemplified this buoyant mood, displaying moving walkways, diesel engines, and other dazzling inventions to the wonder and delight of over 50 million visitors. Hopes about politics among nations also ran high. Not only had the great powers avoided war for three decades but at The Hague Conference of 1899, they crafted rules to control the use of military force. Almost everyone assumed that the threat of armed conflict had receded. Peace and prosperity would grace the new century.

To be sure, a few skeptics doubted that the scourge of great-power war would fade away; however, most people expected to enjoy a more peaceful future. Persuaded by a six-volume work on advances in armaments and military tactics written by the Polish banker and railroad financier Ivan Bloch,¹ some individuals imagined that the destructiveness of modern weaponry made fighting on open terrain suicidal, which they assumed would reduce the probability of one great power attacking another. Others, influenced by the economic arguments of the British writer Norman Angell,² thought that the staggering costs of an all-out military clash in an increasingly interdependent world would make great-power war unlikely. Confidence in the

prospects for peace was further supported by faith in progress: Humanity seemed to be making significant headway toward realizing the ancient aspiration of beating swords into plowshares. Andrew Carnegie, a wealthy industrialist and philanthropist who had emigrated in his youth from Scotland to the United States, was sure that the dream of perpetual peace was now within reach. To seize the moment, he provided funds to build a “Peace Palace” at The Hague in the Netherlands that would house a permanent court for the settlement of international disputes. Judicial decisions, he reckoned, would replace trial by combat. On August 28, 1913, following the opening ceremony for the new building, he wrote in his diary that establishing a world court would be “the greatest one step forward ever taken by man, in his long and checkered march upward from barbarism.”³

Less than a year after Carnegie penned these words, war engulfed Europe. By the time it ended, several empires collapsed, over 16 million people were dead, and a generation of Europeans had become disillusioned with traditional foreign policy practices. It was not the bright future that so many envisioned for the twentieth century. Why did such an unanticipated, catastrophic war happen? What impact did it have on the way that foreign policy makers thought about rebuilding world order? Could a new design for international security eliminate the conditions that might spark another great-power war?

THE ORIGINS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

On June 28, 1914, a nineteen-year-old Bosnian Serb seeking to undermine Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Habsburg throne. Convinced that the assassin was colluding with officials from the kingdom of Serbia, who policymakers in Vienna saw as the source of separatist agitation within their empire’s Slavic population, Austria secured German support and issued an **ultimatum** on July 23 that was deliberately framed so Serbia would reject its terms, thus providing a pretext for punishing the kingdom militarily. Five days later, after Serbia refused to accept all of the ultimatum’s demands, Austria declared war and bombarded Belgrade, setting in motion a series of impulsive moves and countermoves by other states that transformed what had been a local dispute into a wider war.

A relatively small state, Serbia stood little chance against Austria-Hungary, one of the great powers of the day. When it turned to Russia for help, political leaders in St. Petersburg recognized that their country’s reputation among the South Slavs was at stake. Russia had yielded to Austrian and German pressure at the expense of Slav interests in 1878 during negotiations over territorial adjustments following war with the Ottoman Empire, again in 1908 during negotiations that preceded Austria’s annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and once more in 1913 during negotiations over the boundaries of Albania. To acquiesce

again would destroy Russian credibility in the Balkans. After initially hesitating, Tsar Nicholas II issued an order late in the afternoon of July 30 to mobilize his forces along the Austrian and German frontiers. In turn, Germany declared war on Russia and its ally, France. When German troops swept into Luxembourg and Belgium in order to outflank French defenses, Britain declared war on Germany. Within the next week, Austria declared war on Russia, France and Britain declared war on Austria, and Serbia declared war on Germany. Eventually, thirty-two countries on six continents became embroiled in the conflict.

As shown in Table 2.1, a complex series of events preceded the outbreak of war. Scholars typically point to a combination of variables from three different **levels of analysis** (see Figure 2.1) when categorizing the determinants of foreign policy decisions. Influences on each level—individual, domestic, and systemic—help explain how the dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia escalated to what was called the Great War (known today as World War I).

TABLE 2.1 MAJOR TWENTIETH-CENTURY EVENTS PRECEDING WORLD WAR I

Date	Event
1900	<i>Exposition Universelle</i> opens in Paris
1902	Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy renewed Italy and France agree that each would remain neutral in the event of an attack on the other Great Britain and Japan form naval alliance in the Pacific region
1904	Russo-Japanese War; hostilities ended with 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth Great Britain and France sign “Entente Cordiale,” settling colonial disputes and ending the long-standing antagonism between the two countries
1905	First Moroccan Crisis: Germany supports the Moroccans in their demand for independence from France; settlement in 1906 Algeiras Conference allows France to retain possession of Morocco Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia sign secret Treaty of Björkö pledging mutual security Alfred von Schlieffen, the German army chief of staff, designs a plan for defeating France and Russia in the event of war Anglo-Japanese naval alliance renewed
1906	Great Britain launches the HMS <i>Dreadnought</i> ; the Germans begin building similar battleships
1907	Anglo-Russian Convention: Great Britain and Russia settle territorial disputes in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet Triple Alliance renewed

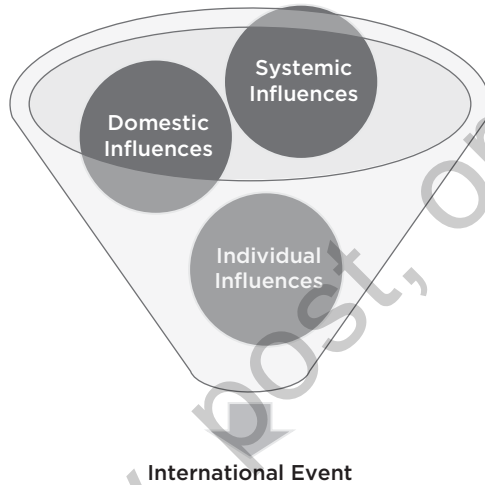
(Continued)

TABLE 2.1

Date	Event
1908	Germany launches the SMS <i>Nassau</i> , its first dreadnought-class battleship Annexation Crisis: Germany pressures Russia to accept Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
1910	Germany surpasses Great Britain as Europe's leading manufacturing nation
1911	Second Moroccan Crisis: Germany sends the gunboat <i>Panther</i> to Moroccan port of Agadir to protest French growing military presence in Morocco; Great Britain backs France War between Italy and Ottoman Empire; hostilities ended with 1912 Treaty of Ouchy that cedes control of Tripoli to Italy Anglo-Japanese naval alliance renewed
1912	First Balkan War: Ottoman Empire cedes much of its European territory to the Balkan League, an alliance composed of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro; Albanian independence granted; hostilities ended with 1913 Treaty of London Triple Alliance renewed
1913	Liman von Sanders Affair: Russians object to the German general heading a mission to oversee the garrison at Constantinople Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Rumania (now spelled Romania) renewed Second Balkan War: Unhappy with the Treaty of London, Bulgaria attacks Serbia and Greece but is defeated; hostilities ended with 1913 Treaty of Bucharest
1914	June 28: Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife are assassinated in Sarajevo July 5: Germany promises support to Austria-Hungary against Serbia July 23: Austria-Hungary sends an ultimatum to Serbia July 28: Austria declares war on Serbia July 30: Tsar Nicholas II of Russia orders general mobilization August 1: Germany declares war on Russia; France mobilizes August 2: Germany occupies Luxembourg; Italy announces its neutrality; Ottoman Empire aligns with Germany August 3: Germany declares war on France and invades Belgium; Rumania announces neutrality August 4: Great Britain declares war on Germany; the United States announces its neutrality August 5: Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia August 12: Great Britain and France declare war on Austria-Hungary

FIGURE 2.1 EXPLAINING INTERNATIONAL EVENTS: A FUNNEL OF CAUSALITY

The factors that influence the foreign policy choices leaders make can be classified according to different levels of analysis: Systemic influences emphasize the impact of changes in international circumstances and processes; domestic influences focus on the internal social, economic, and political characteristics of states; and individual influences pertain to the psychological factors motivating people who make decisions on behalf of states. Potentially all three types influences can affect international events.



Many historians pinpoint psychological factors at the individual level of analysis as a leading source of the rivalries that ignited the First World War. Political leaders in Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg generally held virtuous images of themselves, diabolical images of their adversaries, and fears that they were becoming increasingly vulnerable. Although the historical evidence suggests that no great-power head of state sought a major-power war, all felt compelled to act on what they saw as strategic necessities—circumstances that demanded they be willing to resort to war in defense of vital security interests which could not be compromised and must be upheld at any cost. Whereas each leader saw no alternative for his country, they all imagined that their adversaries had multiple options. Moreover, as they finalized their plans to do whatever they felt was necessary, they overestimated their capabilities, envisioning a military showdown as a way to settle the score with their rivals once and for all.

These misperceptions were compounded by a climate of virulent **nationalism**, which made it difficult for mistrustful leaders to see things from another

country's point of view and anticipate how it would interpret and respond to their defense preparations. For example, believing that they were upholding their national honor, the Austrians could not comprehend why Russians labeled them aggressors. Similarly, the Russians did not appreciate how Austria, worried about slipping from the rank of a great power, viewed Serbian aspirations in the Balkans as a serious challenge to its fragile, multiethnic empire. Nor did the Germans understand Russia's concern about being humiliated if it allowed Austria to subdue fellow Slavs in Serbia. Ethnic prejudices flourished in this environment. Austrian foreign minister Leopold Berchtold, for example, complained that the Russians were conniving, Russian foreign minister Sergei Sazonov asserted that he despised Austria, and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany professed to hate Slavs.⁴ With political leaders denigrating the each other's national character, diplomatic efforts to avert hostilities came to naught.

In addition to identifying various psychological factors at the individual level of analysis that influenced the decisions of political leaders during the summer of 1914, scholars also draw attention to how internal conditions at the domestic (or state) level of analysis contributed to the onset of World War I. Looking first at the characteristics of the belligerent great powers in Central and Eastern Europe, pressures were building for change in the authoritarian institutions of the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Romanov dynasties of Austria, Germany, and Russia, respectively. Each autocratic dynasty faced mounting public insistence for democratic reforms prior to the war, which prompted some political and military leaders in these countries to see militant diplomacy as a way to distract attention from internal problems and inspire political solidarity. France and Britain, the democratic great powers in the West, faced domestic pressures as well, especially over fiscal policy and military expenditures.

The rise of German power on land and at sea created anxieties in Paris and London over what moves Berlin might make on the geostrategic chessboard and what was required to counter German aspirations for global status. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Germans resided in a loose-knit confederation of more than three dozen small kingdoms and duchies that lacked the natural protection of formidable mountains or vast oceans. Apprehensive that their political separation and geographical vulnerability put them at the mercy of their larger neighbors, many German nationalists believed unification would provide security against external attack. Following a series of wars that culminated with a stunning victory by the northern German state of Prussia over France, the other German states joined together under King William I of Prussia (later proclaimed kaiser, or emperor) to create the German Empire on January 18, 1871. With over 40 million inhabitants, an excellent educational system; skilled labor; and unparalleled electrical, chemical, and steel industries, newly unified Germany prospered and used its growing wealth to create an awesome military machine. However, the manner in which unification occurred produced both enemies bent on revenge and bystanders wary of the empire's ambitions. France, humiliated by its recent defeat at the hands of Prussia and embittered by the

loss of Alsace and Lorraine under the Peace of Frankfurt, chose to bide time for an opportunity to reverse its fortunes on the battlefield. Russia, suspicious of Berlin's territorial aims, worried about possible German expansion to the east. Although Otto von Bismarck, the empire's chancellor, devised an intricate set of alliances to keep France and Russia from making common cause against Germany, his successors lacked the vision and skills to prevent Paris and St. Petersburg from joining forces.

Germany's rise also alarmed policymakers in London. A power transition was underway, and there appeared no way to hold Germany back. At the turn of the century, Great Britain could proudly sing "Britannia rules the waves" and rightly could boast that it possessed an empire on which the sun never set. But by 1914, that era was ending. Besides fielding the world's foremost army, Germany now possessed formidable naval capabilities, which struck at the heart of British security. Command of the seas had long been deemed necessary to import food and raw materials, protect manufactured goods that British merchants exported, and safeguard the country's numerous far-flung colonies. When Kaiser Wilhelm II boldly proclaimed at the end of the nineteenth century that Germany would no longer be confined to the narrow boundaries of Europe and began a vigorous program of maritime construction, Britain responded by raising naval expenditures nearly 70 percent between 1907 and 1914,⁵ which funded increases in the size and quality of its battle fleet. Germany responded in kind. Despite several attempts to control the ensuing **arms race**, Anglo-German relations deteriorated, which prompted Britain to strengthen political ties with France and Russia. London could not fathom that the Germans saw naval strength as symbolic of great-power status, while Berlin failed to grasp that rather than earning respect, rapidly expanding its navy aroused fear in an island nation that depended on sea power for security.

Finally, turning from the domestic conditions within the belligerent states to the third level of analysis—the features of the international system—scholars accentuate the impact that the tightening web of alliances had in bringing about the war. By the time Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, European military alignments had become polarized, pitting the Triple Entente of France, Russia, and Britain against the Central powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, a counter-coalition that the Ottoman Empire subsequently joined. Once Russia mobilized in response to Austria's attack on Serbia, these ties pulled one European great power after another into the war. An atmosphere of urgency, created by the widespread belief that modern technology favored offensive military action, propelled great-power leaders to respond aggressively to the changing balance of power without pausing to reflect on the consequences of their actions. Only the United States stood aloof, seeking to isolate itself from involvement through a policy of neutrality.

Having promised Austria-Hungary unconditional support, Germany felt that it must act quickly to avoid being mired in a ruinous two-front war. According to a plan developed by General Alfred von Schlieffen, Germany

could sidestep fighting France and Russia simultaneously by hurling the bulk of its army through neutral Luxembourg and Belgium in a complex flanking attack designed to overwhelm French positions on its lightly defended northern frontier. After routing the French, German combat units would pivot eastward and unleash the full weight of their military might against the slower-moving Russians. However, when a modified version of the plan was implemented by Schlieffen's successor, who had ill-advisedly reduced the strength of the right flank of his attacking force, several problems emerged. Not only did the invasion of the low countries bring Britain into the war against Germany but because the Russians moved faster than expected, troops needed to encircle the French were diverted to the eastern front. Furthermore, under the revised plan of attack, the Germans had to break through the fortified area of Liège in Belgium, which took longer than anticipated, therein providing the French with time to stop German momentum at the Marne River.

Fighting on the western front now shifted from a war of movement to one of position, with each side digging a series of defensive trenches that extended from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border. In contrast to the stalemate in the west, the Germans enjoyed greater success on the eastern front, arresting the Russian advance in the Battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. On both fronts, science and technology made the conflict a war of machinery: Old weapons were improved and produced in great quantities; new and far more deadly weapons were rapidly developed and deployed. Widespread universal military conscription drew soldiers from nearly every family and touched the lives of every citizen. Huge armies had to be fed and equipped; consequently, entire national populations participated in the war effort, with mass communication rallying public opinion against the enemy. Demonizing the adversary would prove instrumental in the conduct of the war as well as in its conclusion. Nationalist passions might rationalize the sacrifice of life and property, but by vilifying the entire population of enemy nations, a peace settlement grounded in compromise and reconciliation would remain elusive. In short, the war became total: doing anything to achieve victory was permissible; surrender was unthinkable.

THE ARMISTICE AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PEACE CONFERENCE

Rather than being the short, decisive clash that the great powers envisaged, the fighting degenerated into a gruesome war of attrition. By the third year of the war, soldiers were dying by the thousands on the western front without a hope of breaching enemy lines. Mutinies erupted in the French army—to such an extent that at one point only two French divisions between Soissons and Paris were considered reliable enough to continue the struggle. But the Germans, outnumbered to begin with, were also in dire straits. Huge battlefield losses undermined the confidence of military commanders at the very time that the British naval

blockade was sapping civilian morale. Despite careful planning and strict rationing, supplies of raw materials were running low, and long lines of people waited for dwindling stocks of food. Desperate German leaders saw no alternative but to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, which had been curtailed after the sinking of the passenger liners RMS *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, and SS *Arabic* three months later. The toll that Germany's submarines would take on American shipping led Woodrow Wilson to reverse his neutrality policy. On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany.

On the eastern front, Russia had been ripped apart by the Bolshevik revolution, which toppled the Romanov dynasty and eventually forced Russia to withdraw from the war. In the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918), Germany annexed one-third of Russia's European territory and established a protectorate over the Ukraine. Having defeated its foe in the east, Germany was free to turn all of its forces westward. In the spring of 1918, Germany launched a massive offensive aimed at defeating French and British forces before American reinforcements could join the fight. Despite initial success, the offensive eventually stalled as the Germans suffered heavy casualties and were unable to keep their forward units supplied with food and ammunition. Allied counterattacks that summer on the overextended German lines began shifting the tide of battle. By fall, the German army was retreating. Germany lacked military reserves, its allies were on the verge of collapse, and political unrest was sweeping the country, which resulted in Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicating and a provisional government being formed.

With the military situation rapidly deteriorating and the country facing starvation, fuel shortages, and an influenza epidemic, Germany's leading military figure, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, contacted the Supreme Allied Commander, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, to seek an armistice. His thinking was shaped by prevailing conditions on the battlefield and the home front as well as by the expectation of fair and equitable treatment. Months before, President Woodrow Wilson had preached from Washington that only a peace between equals could endure and urged that a spirit of evenhandedness underpin peace negotiations. Those principles, sketched in an address to the U.S. Senate on January 22, 1917, and elaborated upon in his widely proclaimed Fourteen Points speech delivered to a joint session of Congress on January 8, 1918, outlined a framework for ending what he trusted would be "the culminating and final war for human liberty."

As events unfolded, German hopes of negotiations among equals would be dashed by the angry emotions built up over years of bitter fighting. With nightmarish visions of trenches, barbed wire, poison gas, and mechanized slaughter fresh in their minds, the victors approached the task of making peace with vengeance in mind. The French government, in particular, sought retribution for the suffering its people had endured.

Aboard Marshal Foch's private train in the forest of Compiègne, early in the morning of November 11, 1918, a German mission led by Matthias Erzberger,

a leader of the Center Party who favored a negotiated end to the war, reluctantly consented to the terms of a cease-fire agreement. There had been no bargaining. A few days earlier, Germany was given 72 hours to meet a series of demands or the war would continue. The conditions included a cessation of hostilities; the evacuation of all territory in Luxembourg, Belgium, and France (including Alsace-Lorraine) seized by Germany; the allied occupation of Germany west of the Rhine River; German renunciation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and withdrawal of its troops from Austria-Hungary, Rumania, and the lands of the former Ottoman and Russian empires; and the surrender of Germany's capital ships, submarines, aircraft, railway locomotives, rolling stock, heavy artillery, and machine guns. Meanwhile, the crushing allied naval blockade of German territorial waters would continue until a peace treaty was signed.

To craft the final peace terms, in January 1919 a conference was convened at Versailles, outside of Paris, with representatives from 27 allied states, accompanied by hundreds of advisers and clerks. Before substantive issues could be debated, it was necessary to settle various procedural matters. Because no formal agenda had been established prior to the conference, on January 12, 1919, the delegates began to hammer out organizational issues. Ultimately it was decided that the key decision-making body would be a Council of Ten, composed of the foreign ministers and heads of state from France, Great Britain, the United States, Italy, and Japan. Not long thereafter, participation by the foreign ministers ended, thus leaving a Council of Five. Since Japan only was engaged when the council dealt with a topic pertaining to the Pacific region, most of the decisions were made by a Council of Four (which became a council of France, Great Britain, and the United States when Italy withdrew at the end of April). Because council members lacked detailed information about most substantive issues they addressed, 58 commissions of experts were established to study specific problems and make recommendations. Council deliberations over these recommendations were held in secret, and only eight plenary sessions involving all delegates to the peace conference were held.

BALANCE-OF-POWER THEORY AND WORLD ORDER

Once the procedural preliminaries were finished, the members of the council took up the question of how to construct a new world order. The choices that the leaders of great powers wrestle with when major wars end are among the most consequential they ever make because winning is not an end in itself. The geopolitical landscape is littered with military victories that never translated into stable world orders.

From the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which concluded the Thirty Years' War and marked the beginning of the modern state system, through the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), which ended Napoleon Bonaparte's attempt to replace

the Westphalian system of sovereign equals with an international hierarchy headed by France, envoys attending the major peace conferences that followed in the wake of large destructive wars tended to rely on **balance-of-power theory** as a blueprint for building world order. They believed that countervailing military capabilities restrained hegemonic threats to the system of independent nation-states. As expressed in Article II of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), which spelled out the terms of the peace settlement after a coalition of European countries defeated King Louis XIV's bid for French dominance over the continent, a balance of power is "the best and most solid foundation of a mutual friendship, and of a concord which will be lasting on all sides."

During the period ranging from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, advocates of power balancing claimed that it promoted world order by offsetting the military might of revisionist states—those which sought significant changes in the international status quo. If a pugnacious revisionist gained too much strength, so the reasoning went, it was likely to bully vulnerable countries within its reach; consequently, other states had an incentive to join forces in order to deter (or, if need be, defeat) dissatisfied states harboring aggressive aims. Although diplomats from that time occasionally described balancing as an automatic, self-adjusting process, most of them saw it as the result of deliberate actions undertaken by national leaders. Some actions, like augmenting military capabilities through armaments, alliances, or territorial compensation, try to add weight to the lighter side of the international balance; others, such as negotiating **spheres of influence, neutralization** agreements, and limits on weaponry, attempt to decrease the weight of the heavier side. By judiciously tipping the scales one way or the other, participants in postwar peace conferences allegedly could calibrate the relative distribution of power to establish an equilibrium of forces.

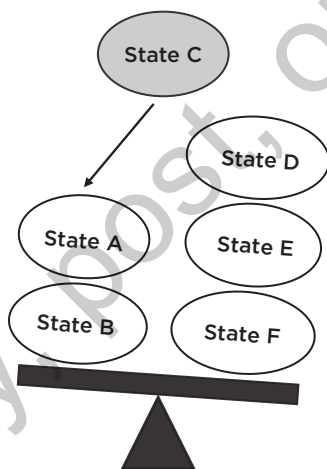
Once stability was achieved, balance-of-power theory advised that states follow certain rules of the game for the equilibrating process to function effectively. Foremost among them was the admonition to be vigilant. Because international anarchy makes each state responsible for its own security, and states can never be sure of one another's intentions, self-interest requires them to constantly monitor international developments and be ready to eradicate growing threats and seize emerging opportunities.

A second informal rule advised states to acquire allies whenever they could not match the armaments of their adversaries. As depicted in Figure 2.2, these alliances should be flexible, formed and dissolved according to the strategic needs of the moment, and not made with regard to cultural or ideological affinities.

The third rule of balance-of-power politics was to oppose states that sought hegemony. If some state achieved absolute mastery over others, it would be able to act with impunity, jeopardizing the autonomy and independence of all other countries. Prudence, therefore, counseled joining forces with one's peers to prevent any single great power from achieving military preponderance.

FIGURE 2.2 ALLIANCE DYNAMICS OF BALANCE-OF-POWER SYSTEMS

Alliances play an important role in the balancing process. They provide a means for rapidly restoring the equilibrium between contending states or groups of states. As illustrated here, State C can help preserve the great-power balance by aligning itself with the coalition of States A and B, which is weaker than the rival coalition of States D, E, and F. This can occur two ways. First, a state can switch alliances, as exemplified in the “Diplomatic Revolution of 1756” engineered by Chancellor Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz of Austria, which broke Vienna’s bonds with England and replaced them with ties to France, England’s long-standing foe. Second, as in the case of sixteenth-century Venice, a prominent state belonging to neither countervailing alliance can temporarily support the weaker side in order to bring the balance back into equilibrium.



Finally, another rule of the game urged restraint. Recognizing that yesterday’s adversary may be needed as tomorrow’s ally, national leaders were advised to pursue moderate ends with measured means, exercising power with forbearance, and coupling firmness regarding their aims with fair-mindedness toward the concerns of others. In the event of hostilities, the winning side should not humiliate the defeated. Instead of being erased from the map, the vanquished should be reintegrated into the postwar order.

A century earlier, the notions vigilance, flexibility, counterpoise, and moderation had influenced Austrian chancellor Prince Klemens von Metternich and British foreign secretary Viscount Castlereagh as they worked assiduously to craft a lenient peace settlement that would allow France to rejoin

the great-power club. If France became a responsible stakeholder in the post-Napoleonic world, both leaders assumed that it would play a meaningful role in balancing against aggressive great powers striving for universal hegemony. By acting in accordance with their understanding of the policy prescriptions of balance-of-power theory, Metternich and Castlereagh joined the ranks of those statesmen who had crafted the settlements that ended earlier hegemonic wars.

Throughout the history of the modern state system, maintaining an equilibrium among the great powers to preserve a stable balance of power has been regarded as a cardinal principle in international diplomacy. Presumably, similar thinking would also guide the delegates to the peace conference in 1919. However, the war's destructiveness prompted many people to question the wisdom of a philosophy that had rationalized watchful suspicion, weapons acquisition, and competitive alignments. A different approach to building world order seemed warranted. Rather than establishing a new balance of power, the American president Woodrow Wilson preached the need for a peace plan rooted in **collective security**.

WOODROW WILSON AND THE LIBERAL TRADITION IN WORLD POLITICS

President Woodrow Wilson personally led the American delegation to the peace conference. A rigid, tenacious individual, he arrived with strong opinions about how to construct a just and durable structure of world order. Much of his ire was directed at conventional power politics. "The center and characteristic of the old order," Wilson complained, "was an unstable thing which we used to call the 'balance of power'—a thing in which the balance was determined by the sword."⁶ In his eyes, balance-of-power systems were immoral; they bred jealousy and intrigue, converting conflicts of interest between contending two parties into larger multiparty wars. What was needed was not another balance of power, but what he called a "community of power."

Liberal political thought shaped Wilson's outlook on world order. At the core of liberalism is a belief in reason and the possibility of progress. As discussed in the previous chapter, liberals view world politics as more of a search for compromises to maximize **absolute gains** than a competition for dominance and **relative gains**. Instead of blaming international conflict on a drive for power that is inherent in human nature, liberals fault the conditions under which most people live. Reforming those conditions would enhance the prospects for peace. Free trade, democratic governance, and intergovernmental organizations were at the forefront of the reforms they sought. As Wilson repeatedly insisted, unfettered commerce reduced the odds of war by enhancing the welfare of trading states; democracies made wars less likely because they shunned lethal force as a way to settle disagreements; and membership in a global organization lowered the probability of war by providing a judicial

mechanism for resolving international disputes wherever misconceptions, wounded sensibilities, or aroused national passions threatened world peace.

Liberal Criticisms of Balance-of-Power Theory

Woodrow Wilson was hardly the first person to critique balance-of-power systems. Critics had long grumbled that “power” was an ambiguous concept. Tangible factors, such as the performance capabilities of different weapons, are hard to compare. Intangible factors, such as leadership and morale, are even more difficult to gauge. Without a precise measure of relative strength, how can policymakers know when power is becoming unbalanced? Furthermore, in an environment of secrecy and deception, how can they be sure who is really aligned with whom? A partner who is being counted on to balance the power of a rival may have covertly agreed to remain neutral in the event of a dispute. As a result, the actual distribution of power may not resemble the distribution that one imagines.

Problems in determining the strength of adversaries and the reliability of allies highlight another objection to balance-of-power theory: the uncertainty of power balances causes defense planners to engage in worst-case analysis, which can incite arms races. The intense, reciprocal anxiety that shrouds balance-of-power politics often fuels exaggerated estimates of an opponent’s strength, which prompts one side, and then the other, to expand the quantity and enhance the quality of their arsenals. Relentless arms competition can transform the anarchical, self-help structure of world politics into a tinderbox that any haphazard spark might ignite.

Still another objection to balance-of-power theory was its assumption that decision makers were *risk averse*: When facing countervailing power, they refrain from fighting because the dangers of taking on an equal are too great. Yet national leaders assess risk differently. While some may hesitate to engage in dicey behavior, others are *risk acceptant* and believe that with a little luck they can prevail. Thus, rather than being deterred by the equivalent power of an adversary, they prefer to gamble on the chance of winning, even if the odds are long. Organizing comparable power against adversaries with a high tolerance for risk will not have the same effect as it would on those who avoid risks.

The upshot of these shortcomings was the repetitive failure of balance-of-power systems to foster peace. As Wilson put it in a speech delivered on January 3, 1919, power balancing “has been tried and found wanting.”⁷ Something else would be needed if this was to be the war to end all wars.

Liberal Aspirations for Collective Security

Embedded within Wilson’s plan for a new world order was the conviction that a League of Nations—a multilateral institution for managing international politics—should supplant unbridled great-power competition and antagonistic alliances. In the list of fourteen points that he declared in

January 1918 as necessary for making the world safe for peace-loving countries, Wilson called for a “general association of nations” to provide “mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small nations alike.” His proposed League of Nations would be based on collective security, a **regime** containing different rules of the game than the balance of power.

Collective security theory views peace as indivisible. If aggression anywhere is ignored, it will eventually spread like a contagious disease to other countries and become more difficult to stop. Second, this theory assumes that all states would voluntarily join the collective security organization, whose universal membership would give it the legitimacy and the military strength to maintain peace. The third rule requires participants in such a collective organization to settle their disputes through pacific means. Finally, if a breach of the peace occurs, the last rule stipulates that the organization will apply timely, robust sanctions to punish the aggressor. Depending on the severity of the infraction, sanctions might range from public condemnation to an economic boycott or military retaliation.

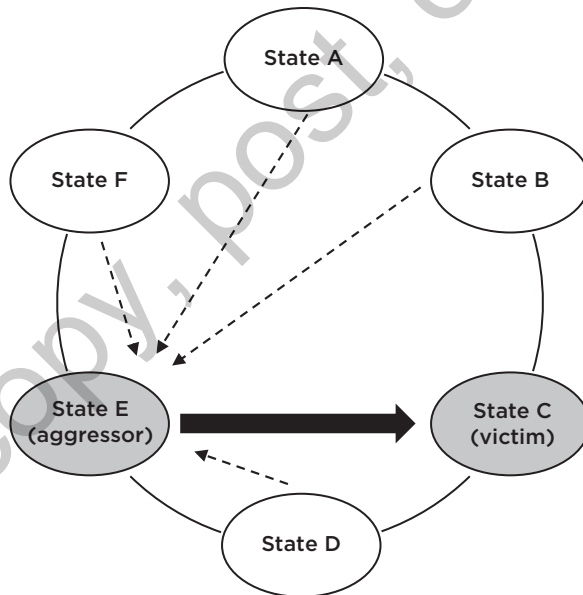
As Figure 2.3 shows, collective security theory is anchored in the creed voiced by Alexandre Dumas’s musketeers: “One for all and all for one!” It proceeds from the premise that threats are a common international concern and postulates that all members of the collective security organization would be willing and able to assist any state suffering an attack. By presenting predatory states with the united opposition of the entire international community, Wilson and like-minded statesmen insisted that collective security would have greater success inhibiting armed conflict than the balance of power. Exuding self-assurance, Wilson noted in a January 25, 1919, speech to a plenary session of the peace conference that establishing a League of Nations to implement the theory of collective security was the keystone in the architecture of a new world order.

NATIONAL SELF-INTEREST CONFRONTS WILSONIAN IDEALISM

As the delegates to the peace conference approached their historic mission, they were influenced by several additional principles in Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech. Beyond promoting collective security, Wilson championed free trade, democratic governance, arms reductions, transparent negotiations, and settling territorial claims based on the right of nationalities to govern themselves through **self-determination**. However, once the delegates began their work, the knives of parochial self-interest began to whittle away at the policy prescriptions emanating from Wilson’s liberal internationalist philosophy. Many European politicians believed that his recommendations were utopian dreams built on illusions about the willingness of egoistic states to sacrifice for

FIGURE 2.3 THE OPERATION OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

Long before Woodrow Wilson championed the League of Nations, the idea of collective security was discussed by ecclesiastical councils held in Poitiers (1000), Limoges (1031), and Toulouse (1210) as well as in the writings of Pierre Dubois (1306), King George Podebrad of Bohemia (1462), and Maximilien de Béthune, Duke of Sully (1638). By the twentieth century, those working to establish a collective security organization had concluded that the prerequisites for its successful operation were universal participation, consensus on the existence of what constitutes a threat to peace, and a commitment to take concerted action against aggressors. The illustration below depicts how collective security is envisioned to function. The circular line connecting States A through F symbolizes common membership in a collective security organization. The block arrow represents aggression by State E against State C, and the dashed arrows depict the sanctions undertaken by the other members of the organization to punish State E for its wrongdoing.



the larger collective good. They remembered that during the war Britain and France had made many secret (and occasionally conflicting) agreements concerning territories they hoped to obtain. Bargaining was driven not by shared ideals but by the national self-interested quest for defensible frontiers, ports and waterways, and supplies of raw materials. Statesmen reared on the ways of

power politics were offended by the pontificating American president. “God was content with Ten Commandments,” growled Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister. “Wilson must have Fourteen.”⁸

Clemenceau, a disciple of the **realpolitik** school of thought, contended that France needed security guarantees to ward off future German attacks and evaluated all recommendations for the peace settlement according to how much they strengthened France and weakened Germany. German military might, in his mind, was an existential problem for France, and he was committed to tilting the distribution of power in France’s favor. Contrary to the American president’s naïve faith in a League of Nations, Clemenceau averred that international politics entailed a relentless struggle for power among self-interested states that could not be tamed by collective security. “There is an old system of alliances, called the Balance of Power,” he told the French Chamber of Deputies. “This system of alliances, which I do not renounce, will be my guiding thought at the Peace Conference.”⁹

Great Britain’s policy was managed by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who, like Woodrow Wilson, was himself something of a reformer; nonetheless, Lloyd George had his ear attuned to the public’s cry for a punitive treaty that would prioritize British national interests. Although campaigning in the 1918 election with the slogan “We will squeeze the orange till the pips squeak,”¹⁰ he attempted to maneuver between the hardline approach urged by Clemenceau and the temperate approach offered by Wilson. For Lloyd George, establishing a League of Nations was neither an act of folly nor a panacea; it was simply a forum for great-power consultation, where the representatives of national governments could negotiate pragmatic adjustments to the peace settlement as evolving conditions merited.

As the discussions at the conference proceeded, Clemenceau’s stark **realpolitik** thinking prevailed. His outlook was shaped by a desire for revenge, although he reluctantly gave his consent to Wilson’s call for a League of Nations to preserve amity among the victors. Clemenceau believed that the league might serve as a supplementary guarantee of French security, bringing the armies of other nations to France’s defense in the event of another war with Germany. While also willing to support a League of Nations, the British were concerned that targeting Germany would make the organization provocative, undermining its potential to serve as an instrument for consultation and conciliation. Wilson tirelessly prodded the delegates in Paris to adopt his vision of the league. If established, he vouched that it would allow the victors to rectify any flaws that might tarnish the final peace settlement, help future disputants avoid accidental wars, and uphold the postwar peace by providing the machinery for dealing with bellicose states.

Designing the league’s structure proved highly contentious, sparking vigorous debates among the delegates. How should decisions be made? Would the league have a permanent staff and an international army? What roles and

responsibilities should the great powers have in comparison to small- and medium-sized countries?

Although Wilson had asked his trusted adviser Colonel Edward House to devise a prototype for the new organization, other countries advanced their own ideas. Lord Phillimore of Great Britain, Léon Bourgeois of France, Vittorio Orlando of Italy, and Jan Christiaan Smuts of South Africa all offered different proposals. The assertive American president may have focused attention on the topic of a League of Nations, but the organization would only emerge through a patchwork of compromises with allies striving to protect their competing national interests. After considerable wrangling, a combined Anglo-American draft was issued by Cecil Hurst and David Hunter Miller, which then served as the basis for the Covenant of the League of Nations, the organization's charter.

THE VERSAILLES SETTLEMENT

The settlement finally reached is known as the Treaty of Versailles because it was signed in the glittering Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles—the same place in which a united Germany was proclaimed in 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War. The treaty ratified the end of the Kaiser's rule in Germany, and the newly created republican government submitted to the agreement on June 28, 1919. The League of Nations that had been promoted so vigorously by Woodrow Wilson was written into the peace treaty with Germany as the first of 440 articles. The rest of the settlement became largely a compromise among the ambitious, self-interested demands of the other victors. Important decisions were made behind closed doors, where the vanquished were excluded from full representation. With its extremely harsh terms, the treaty departed from the spirit of “peace without victory” that Wilson had espoused earlier when explaining his decision for the United States to cease its **isolationist policy** and enter the war. Whereas Wilson's Fourteen Points had proposed open diplomacy, arms reductions, free trade, and self-determination, the final treaty's stipulations were far more punitive toward Germany and distant from the principles for world order that Wilson had championed.

In thinking about the ways that the Germans should be treated in defeat, the victorious Allied powers could not help but to take into consideration how, had Germany won the war, it probably would have treated the countries it subjugated. They shuddered over the earlier Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Germany and Russia. The document was so exploitative that the Russian negotiator, Leon Trotsky, at first refused to sign, in reaction to terms that would deprive Russia of 26 percent of its population, 27 percent of its arable land, and 33 percent of its manufacturing industries. Trotsky was overruled by his comrade, Vladimir Lenin,

who was willing to accept these enormous losses in order to allow the Bolsheviks the opportunity to consolidate communist control over Russia. The Allies concluded that, if victorious, the Germans would have imposed equally severe terms on them.

The Terms of the Peace Settlement

Bitter over the hardships their countries endured and convinced that Germany would have treated them callously had the fortunes of war been reversed, the delegates to the peace conference forced the new government in Berlin to relinquish sovereign control over vast stretches of its former territory. Specifically, the Versailles settlement required Germany to give Alsace-Lorraine to France; Eupen and Malmédy to Belgium; North Schleswig to Denmark; the Memel district to Lithuania; and West Prussia, Posen, portions of East Prussia, Outer Pomerania, and Upper Silesia to Poland. Furthermore, the peace treaty mandated the Saar region to the administrative control of the League of Nations and made Danzig a “free city” in which Germany had no jurisdiction. Germany was also prohibited from uniting with Austria.

In addition to boundary revisions, the Versailles treaty called for eliminating German fortifications, **demilitarizing** the Rhineland, and restricting Berlin’s war-making capability. The army was limited to 100,000 volunteers and was barred from possessing tanks, military aircraft, and large caliber guns. The treaty also severely limited the navy, prohibiting Germany from building submarines and controlling the number and displacement of battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and torpedo boats. According to Article 231 of the treaty—also known as the “war guilt” clause—Germany was obliged to accept responsibility “for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.” Moreover, as spelled out in Article 232, Germany was held responsible for paying huge monetary **reparations** “for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property.” Although war indemnities had been imposed on defeated states in the past, they normally specified how much was owed and outlined a schedule for payments, so debtors knew their obligations. Contrary to this practice, the Versailles treaty did not establish a fixed sum or an installment plan; instead, a Reparation Commission handled these matters, arriving in May 1921 at a total liability of 132 billion gold marks (worth over \$400 billion in today’s dollars). Since Germany lacked the wherewithal to pay this astronomical amount, and France needed funds from Germany for reconstruction, the reparations issue soon became a major impediment to creating a stable postwar order, undermining Germany’s fledgling democracy (see Box 2.1).

Box 2.1 You Decide

Imagine that you are French prime minister Raymond Poincaré in early January 1923. You are frustrated with repeated German defaults on reparations payments, which France needs in order to rebuild its battle-scarred economy and repay loans that were used to help finance the war. Furthermore, you are alarmed at the Treaty of Rapallo signed nine months earlier by Germany and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which reestablished economic relations between the two countries and, you suspect, provided the groundwork for military cooperation. With a growing population, industries intact, and hints that its postwar isolation may be ending, you worry that Germany could once again threaten your country.

France, you reckon, has two options. First, it could agree to a two-year moratorium on reparations payments in order to stabilize the German economy, a plan supported by the British government. While selecting this option would ease tensions with London, whose support is important for French security, you worry that it would undermine the Versailles settlement and reward Berlin for defaulting. A second option would be to militarily occupy the Ruhr valley, the heart of Germany's metallurgical industry and a valuable source of coal and iron ore. Military occupation would guarantee reparation payments by giving France control over Germany's mines and steel industry but at the cost of straining relations with Britain and inflaming German nationalism. If the Germans responded to the occupation by organizing strikes and other forms of passive resistance, the ensuing chaos could paralyze the German economy, jeopardize the flow of reparations, and weaken France's position in the postwar order.

You face a dilemma. Agreeing to a moratorium in reparations could improve relations with Britain, but if German payments stopped, they might never resume. On the other hand, occupying the Ruhr would allow France to extract restitution from Germany, but relations with Britain would sour if Germany resisted and its economy collapsed.

Which option would you choose?

Harsh terms were also included in the treaties imposed on Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. As Maps 2.1 and 2.2 display, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dissolved. According to the Treaty of Saint-Germain (September 10, 1919), Austria was allowed to retain only 27 percent of its former territory, its army was limited to thirty thousand soldiers, and it was saddled with a large indemnity. Likewise, the Treaty of Trianon (June 4, 1920)

MAP 2.1 EUROPE ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR I

When the First World War began, the Triple Entente of Britain, France, and Russia confronted the Central powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, who were soon joined by the Ottoman Empire. Italy had been in a formal alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary since 1882 but aligned with the Triple Entente in 1915 and opened a front against Austria-Hungary.

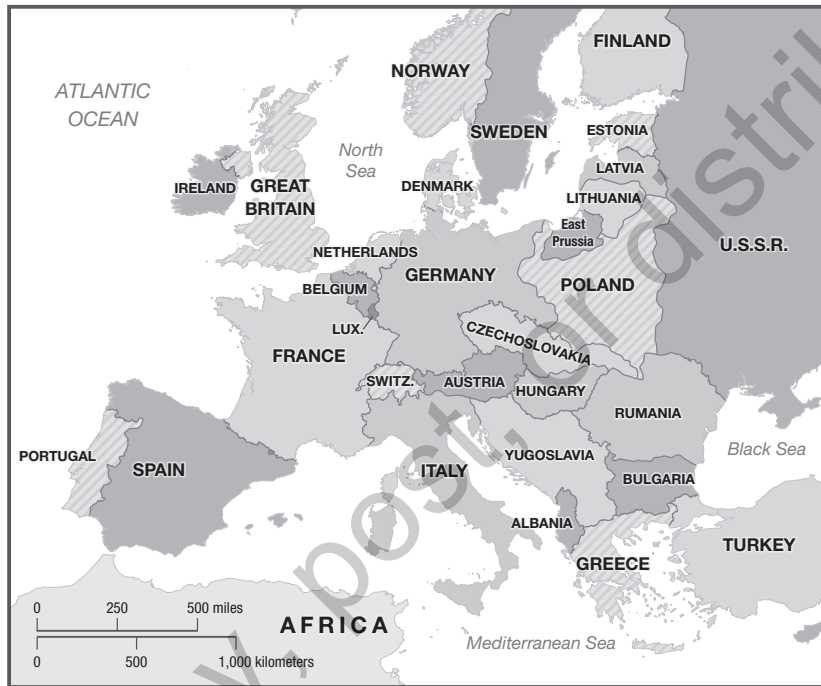


Source: Department of History, United States Military Academy.

required Hungary to surrender 71 percent of its territory, pay reparations to the Allies, and reduce its armed forces to thirty-five thousand soldiers. The Treaty of Neuilly (November 27, 1919) forced Bulgaria to cede four strategically important areas to Yugoslavia and its Aegean coastline to Greece. Similarly, the Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920) dismantled the Ottoman Empire, with Greece gaining ground in Thrace and Asia Minor, and Arab provinces placed under League of Nations mandates.

MAP 2.2 EUROPE AFTER THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

When the First World War ended, the winners redistributed territory at the expense of the defeated. Under the principle of self-determination, new states were carved out of the old German, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires.



Problems With the Peace Settlement

The difficulty with the peace settlement was that it was neither harsh enough to remove Germany from the roster of great powers nor lenient enough to reintegrate it as an acceptable member of the great-power club. Although Germany was not subdivided into a kaleidoscope of smaller countries, it had been humiliated by the “war guilt” clause in the Versailles treaty, burdened with onerous reparations payments, and eventually lost control over the industrial area of the Ruhr Valley to occupying French and Belgian troops. On learning of the provisions in the treaty, the exiled Kaiser was said to have mused that the “war to end wars” had yielded a “peace to end peace.”

By signing the treaty, Germany’s new democratic government, the so-called Weimar Republic (named after the town where the first constitutional

assembly occurred), was immediately discredited in the minds of many Germans. Successive German politicians and policymakers denounced the settlement and demanded revisions in its terms. It was not until late 1925, when a series of agreements were negotiated in the lakeside resort of Locarno, Switzerland, that the groundwork was prepared for Germany's return to great-power status and membership in the League of Nations.

In addition to crafting various **arbitration** agreements between Germany and its neighbors, the negotiators at the Locarno Conference assembled a Rhineland Security Pact in which Germany, France, and Belgium agreed to respect the borders outlined in the Versailles treaty, and Britain and Italy pledged to help repel any unprovoked attack that crossed these lines. The cooperative spirit at Locarno was then hailed as the dawn of a new era. However, the euphoria masked a serious problem: Germany had accepted its truncated frontiers in the west but not in the east. Even more troubling, while Britain was willing to guarantee territorial boundaries between Germany, France, and Belgium, it refused to make similar assurances to uphold the boundaries between Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and other states chiseled out of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. Thus, while Germany faced established great powers in the west, it bordered new, relatively weak powers in the east.

For those intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of Locarno, the League of Nations seemed to offer a path to safeguard vulnerable states. Under Article 10 of the Covenant, countries belonging to the league were obliged to respect and preserve "the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League." Article 16 (1) called for isolating and economically punishing an aggressor, and Article 16 (2) sketched how military force would be brought to bear if these nonlethal sanctions proved insufficient. However, decisions to use force required unanimity, and diverging interests and inconsistent cooperation among the Allies made securing a unanimous vote difficult. Without a clear definition of "aggression" or a consensus on how to share the costs and risks of mounting an organized response to aggressors, league members failed to act as if any threat of war was "a matter of concern to the whole League," as proclaimed in Article 11 (1) of the Covenant. Just as the British at Locarno had been unwilling to guarantee the borders of the fragile new states in Central and Eastern Europe, league members felt no compulsion to take military action in places where they did not see compelling national interests.

Other difficulties for the league arose over membership. To the disappointment of its supporters, the league did not include all of the great powers. Ironically, the United States, which had pushed for collective security under Woodrow Wilson, refused to join the League of Nations. Taking an isolationist stance that portrayed the league as an entangling alliance, the U.S. Senate chose not to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. Whereas the United States refrained from becoming a member, Germany was excluded from the league until 1926 and the Soviet Union (the successor state to Tsarist Russia) until 1934. Without the full

participation and complete collaboration of the great powers, Britain, France, Italy, and the small and middle-ranked members of the league lacked sufficient means for effective military action.

Skeptical of the capacity of the league to provide the framework for a new world order, France sought to buttress its security through more traditional means. On the one hand, it began constructing the Maginot Line, a chain of fortifications along its border with Germany. On the other hand, it forged alliances with Belgium, Poland, and the so-called Little Entente of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. Recognizing that these military partnerships would not provide adequate assistance in the event of a showdown with Germany, France also searched for ways to establish defense ties with the United States. In a speech given on the tenth anniversary of the American entry into World War I, French foreign minister Aristide Briand raised the possibility of a bilateral treaty with the United States that disavowed the use of war in relations between the two countries. U.S. secretary of state Frank Kellogg saw Briand's offer as an attempt to lure the United States into an alliance with France. To avoid becoming ensnared in European affairs, he submitted a counterproposal: *All* nations should be invited to join France and the United States in a multilateral treaty repudiating war as an instrument of national policy. Because such an agreement would undermine the commitment of France's allies to take up arms on her behalf, he expected that Briand would let the matter drop. But having received the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in concluding the Locarno Treaties, Briand could hardly dismiss Kellogg's response, though he would suggest modifications that better supported France's security interests. After months of parrying French proposals to rework the draft treaty, an agreement was reached. On August 27, 1928, representatives from 15 states met in Paris to sign the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War, which became popularly known as the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Eventually 63 states became signatories to the treaty, which did not contain provisions for termination and thus was considered by many legal scholars of the day to be binding in perpetuity.

In summary, three elements of a new post-World War I order were now in place. Peace would be sustained not through traditional balance-of-power diplomacy but through collective security, pacific modes of redress, and the outlawry of war. As the 1920s drew to a close, a feeling of guarded optimism permeated many world capitals. In 1926, the League of Nations helped resolve a border dispute between Turkey and Iraq, which had been under British control after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire; the following year, the league resolved an armed clash between Greece and Bulgaria; and a year later, it defused a quarrel between Poland and Lithuania. The Permanent Court of International Justice, which had been established in The Hague under Article 14 of the League Covenant, also enjoyed modest success, rendering 15 advisory opinions and litigating 22 contentious cases by the end of the decade. During his Armistice Day address on November 11, 1929, U.S. president Herbert Hoover

declared that the “outlook for a peaceable future is more bright than for half a century past.” The great powers, in his estimation, were “becoming more genuinely inclined to peace.”¹¹

A WORLD IN DISARRAY

Believing that they had crossed what British foreign secretary Austen Chamberlain described as the dividing line between the years of war and peace, diplomats from the great powers turned their attention to the pressing issue of arms reductions. According to Article 8 of the League Covenant, “the maintenance of peace required the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety.” At the Washington Naval Conference of 1921–1922, the leaders of the United States, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy agreed to adjust the relative number and tonnage of capital ships in their fleets.

The time seemed ripe to negotiate reductions in land and air forces. How that might be accomplished divided the league’s members: Some states asserted that disarmament would engender greater security; others argued that security must precede disarmament. Disagreement also existed over what types of armaments and military personnel should be limited. In December 1925, the League Council appointed a commission to work through these preliminary matters in preparation for a World Disarmament Conference.

After years of diplomatic squabbling, representatives from 61 states arrived in Geneva during February 1932 to open the conference. Two intertwined developments complicated the negotiations. First, the world economic depression, which began with the October 1929 crash on the New York Stock Exchange, reached its nadir as the conference commenced. Highly dependent on foreign capital, the German economy unraveled as investment funds dissipated and creditors called in their short-term loans. Unemployment spiked and public confidence in the fledgling Weimar Republic plummeted, furnishing an opportunity for demagogues and armed militias to disrupt national politics.

The second development arose when Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Workers’ (or Nazi) Party, which had become the largest party in the German parliament with 37.3 percent of the vote in the July 1932 election, was named to the chancellorship in January 1933. Germany, with its military limited by the Treaty of Versailles, had consistently argued for parity. Unless other great powers reduced their armaments to its level, Germany claimed it would be justified in upgrading to their level. Wary of Hitler’s intentions, France balked at any proposals that might reduce its strength or license German rearmament. With negotiations deadlocked, Germany withdrew from the conference, announced its resignation from the League of Nations, and soon repudiated the military clauses of the Versailles treaty.

Roughly a decade after the Treaty of Versailles had been signed, war clouds began gathering over Europe. Signs of the approaching storm appeared in the

failure of the World Disarmament Conference and the inability of the League of Nations to respond effectively to the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the 1932 Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay, and Italy's 1935 attack on Ethiopia. Operating on a minuscule budget and without members who were inclined to forsake their individual interests for the common good, the League of Nations proved unable to forestall another hegemonic war.

Whereas collective security was based on the expectation of great-power collaboration, the immediate postwar world was marked by disarray. In addition to a defeated great power yearning to revise the structure of the global system (Germany), it contained victorious great powers that differed over how to preserve the status quo (Britain and France), other victors that were dissatisfied with their circumstances (Italy and Japan), and still others that were either excluded (Soviet Union) or abstained from participating in multilateral action (United States). Given these rifts, collective security's vision of great powers acting in unison seemed far-fetched. As Marshal Ferdinand Foch presciently observed, rather than delivering peace, the postwar world order would only yield a twenty-year armistice.

The Great War of 1914–1918 marked the end of an era. War was considered permissible in the balance-of-power system of the previous two and a half centuries so long as it was fought for narrow objectives and did not threaten the standing of any great powers. Cultural connections, technological limitations on firepower and mobility, and the crisscrossing of marriages among the royal and aristocratic families of Europe had further tempered the scope and intensity of warfare. Europeans believed that their countries belonged to a wider commonwealth. Rather than being a “confused heap of detached pieces,” explained the eighteenth-century Swiss jurist and philosopher Emer de Vattel, European states formed “a kind of Republic of which members—each independent, but all linked together by the ties of common interest—unite for the maintenance of order and liberty.”¹²

Unfortunately, things had changed by the end of the Great War. World politics came to be seen as a **zero-sum game** played by diabolical enemies. Whereas earlier diplomats would have interpreted the war as a tragic but inherent property of international life, the authors of the Versailles treaty framed it in moral terms, not just blaming the leaders of the defeated nations but their entire populations, holding them collectively responsible for the evil that had occurred. When work on the draft of a peace treaty began, Wilson himself shifted from magnanimity toward the Germans to the opinion that they had acted dishonorably and therefore would not be allowed to participate in the peace conference. Nor would they be welcomed into the League of Nations until they had redeemed themselves.

In retrospect, the vindictive nature of the Versailles settlement diluted the treaty's legitimacy in London and Washington, weakening its ability to underpin a new world order. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, a member of the U.S. delegation to the peace conference, reflected the opinions of many of

the younger British and American delegates when he described his response to the treaty as “one of disappointment, of regret, and of depression.”¹³ Demeaning an adversary’s national character, while useful for mobilizing the home front during a war, is a daunting obstacle to building workable arrangements for conducting great-power politics after the guns fall silent. To muzzle the losing side in armistice and peace treaty negotiations is to deny it a stake in the future world order; to deny it a stake is to ignore the possibility that yesterday’s enemy may be needed as tomorrow’s friend. So long as a country is not dealing with an utterly ruthless, sinister opponent, restraint and a readiness for reconciliation can encourage a positive spiral of tension-reducing reciprocation. Shared interests may not be immediately apparent, but ordinarily there are aspects of any peace settlement whereby the victors can satisfy some concerns of the vanquished without damaging significant interests of their own. Victors who couple firmness regarding their own interests with fairness toward the interests of the losing side encourage defeated powers to work within the postwar order.

Owing to the failure of the victorious great powers to construct a durable peace settlement after World War I, renewed emphasis was placed on building a framework of world order following World War II. In Chapter 3 we will examine what the victors did differently and whether they were any more successful than the delegates to the Versailles peace conference.

KEY TERMS

absolute gains 32	neutralization 30
arbitration 42	realpolitik 36
arms race 26	regime 34
balance-of-power theory 30	relative gains 32
collective security 32	reparations 38
demilitarizing 38	self-determination 34
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