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## Projecting American Power and Values (June to December 1941)

WHEN HITLER invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, he opened up what we now recognize as the decisive battlefront of the European war. But in mid-1941 Soviet survival seemed unlikely. Roosevelt's gamble that the Soviet Union would not succumb and his decision to provide material help were acts of presidential leadership, paralleling his bet on Britain in 1940. The policy of aid to Stalinist Russia, which ran contrary to America's inclusive image of totalitarianism, also obliged FDR to define more clearly his ideological vision—hence the “Atlantic Charter” of August 1941.

During the autumn the president was projecting American power as well as American values. In the Western Atlantic there developed something close to an undeclared naval war. In the Pacific, where the German attack on Russia gave Japan a freer hand, the president approved tougher “deterrent” measures, including oil sanctions against Japan and reinforcement of the Philippines. What the Americans conceived of as deterrence, however, Japan saw as encirclement. In Tokyo plans were completed for a series of combined operations across Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, which would turn Roosevelt's prediction of a world war into a reality.

## THE SOVIET UNION AND THE GLOBAL CRISIS

Hitler's buildup in Eastern Europe had been evident for months. It is, after all, hard to conceal 3.6 million troops, 3,600 tanks, and 2,500 combat aircraft. In addition the U.S. embassy in Berlin had a highly placed source who provided accurate information about Hitler's plans (codenamed Operation Barbarossa) for a short, decisive war. But the consensus in Washington was that Hitler would play the same game as he had over Czechoslovakia and Poland, using the buildup as part of a diplomatic war of nerves to force Soviet concessions. Few expected him to attack without warning, especially while still waging war against Britain.\* When he did so, with devastating success, few expected the Soviet Union to survive for long. Hitler's victories in 1940 had created an image of Nazi invincibility. By contrast, the Red Army had been decimated by Stalin's purges in 1937–1938; it had performed lamentably in 1939–1940 in the "Winter War" against Finland.

Most of the Soviet air force was destroyed on the ground, and the Wehrmacht advanced more than two hundred miles in the first five days. The U.S. ambassador in Moscow, Laurence Steinhardt, reckoned that the Soviet capital would fall in considerably less than sixty days; the War Department's prediction was between one and three months. Conveying this assessment to Roosevelt, Stimson urged him to use "this precious and unforeseen period of respite" to "push with the utmost vigor our movements in the Atlantic theater of operations." This was "the right way to

\*This was also Stalin's view. Ten days before Barbarossa he told his top generals: "Germany is busy up to her ears with the war in the West and I am certain that Hitler will not risk creating a second front by attacking the Soviet Union. Hitler is not such an idiot. . . ."

help Britain, to discourage Germany, and to strengthen our own position of defense."

But Roosevelt's gut instinct was more optimistic. "Now comes this Russian diversion," he wrote on June 26 to his ambassador in Vichy France. "If it is more than that it will mean the liberation of Europe from Nazi domination—and at the same time I do not think we need worry about any possibility of Russian domination." Contrary to the preferences of the War Department (and the British), he was ready to give more than token aid to the Soviet Union. Contrary to the advice of the State Department, he also hoped to build a working relationship with Stalin and the Russians. He did not share, for instance, the view of Ambassador Steinhardt that the psychology of Soviet policymakers recognized "only firmness, power and force, and reflects primitive instincts and reactions that are entirely devoid of the restraints of civilization." Roosevelt's military and political gamble on the Soviet Union proved to be a decisive moment in the war.

That was clearer in retrospect than at the time, however. Churchill spoke out on June 22 in a radio broadcast that was relayed to the United States. While arguing that Nazism was "indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism," he insisted that this consideration was secondary to Britain's "single, irrevocable purpose" which was "to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime." He went on: "It therefore follows that we shall give whatever help we can give to Russia and to the Russian people." Roosevelt made no similar statement. As the historian Ralph Levering has suggested, FDR seemed happy to hide behind Churchill, whose growing stature in America (and past record as a vehement anti-Communist) made him a far more compelling spokesman for aid to Russia than anyone in Washington. The State Department issued a press release the next day, expressing the same sense of priorities: given Hitler's "plan for universal conquest," the United States welcomed "any defense against Hitlerism" as a benefit to its security. The presi-

dent endorsed this statement, when asked, at a press conference on June 24. He said the United States would "give all the aid we possibly can to Russia," but evaded a question about including the Russians within lend-lease.

Roosevelt's public caution is explicable on two levels. One was simple pragmatism. Like other observers, he was waiting to see how Barbarossa would unfold. By early July it was clear that, despite appalling losses of men and territory, the Red Army would not surrender abjectly. On July 10 the president saw the Soviet ambassador, Konstantin Umansky (their first meeting to date in 1941), and promised to fill some of Moscow's most urgent requests for supplies, if Britain agreed. It was Russian resistance more than the German attack itself that opened up new policy opportunities for the United States.

Equally important, Roosevelt was waiting for public opinion to congeal. For two years, since the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the Soviet Union had been absorbed within America's image of totalitarianism. Some conservative commentators argued that the German invasion had changed nothing. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in a June 25 editorial entitled "Tweedledum and Tweedledee," the American people knew that "the principal difference between Mr. Hitler and Mr. Stalin is the size of their respective mustaches." The previous day Senator Harry Truman of Missouri had stated: "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible." But a Gallup poll published on July 13 indicated that only 4 percent of respondents wanted Germany to win, compared with 72 percent favoring Russia. Dr. George Gallup summed up their reasoning: "Russia is not imperialistic, but Germany is. Russia, even if she won, would not invade the United States, whereas Germany probably would."

This interpretation of the situation testifies to the success of Roosevelt and his supporters in establishing a new foreign policy

consensus based on the arguments that Hitler was bent on world conquest and that Britain and any other foes of Nazism constituted America's front line. Hitler had reinforced this argument by his brutal, unprovoked attack on the Soviet Union. At a deeper level there were also subtle differences in American perceptions of Russian and German totalitarianism, despite the horrors of both regimes. Put simply, in contrast to Nazi Germany the Soviet Union seemed to be moving away from expansionism and revolution. The Bolshevik coup of 1917, with its rhetoric of world revolution, was receding into history. Many American conservatives judged that the Soviet Union was becoming a personal dictatorship; liberals, including FDR, played up signs that it was evolving into a socialist state. On both sides there was a growing consensus that the USSR was maturing into a conventional great power, motivated mainly by concerns about national security. Hence the predominant use of the term "Russia" rather than "Soviet Union."

On the other hand, the image of "totalitarianism" still lurked in the background of opinion and debate. Roosevelt had used the term on occasions in 1940-1941, usually about Germany or Italy. After Barbarossa it disappeared from his political vocabulary and also, in large measure, from general public discussion. Yet as the historian Abbott Gleason has argued, "privately a strong residue of belief in Soviet totalitarianism remained in many circles," and this surfaced in literary newspapers and intellectual journals. This helps explain Roosevelt's repeated efforts to distinguish the Soviet Union from conventional indicators of totalitarianism. The question of religious persecution was particularly important, because the Catholic church was a leading opponent of Bolshevik atheism. In September 1941 FDR wrote a public letter to the pope asserting that "churches in Russia are open" and that freedom of religion was a "real possibility in Russia," unlike Nazi Germany.

As Russian resistance hardened and American opinion took

shape, Roosevelt began to move decisively. In mid-July Harry Hopkins flew to England to review the major war issues with Churchill and his advisers. It became clear that planning in many areas, including lend-lease, depended crucially on assessments of how long Russia could survive. Hopkins cabled Roosevelt on July 25 asking for permission to visit Moscow. (The British RAF had just opened a hazardous flying-boat route from Scotland around Norway to Archangel.) The president immediately agreed and sent Hopkins a letter for Stalin. As Roosevelt's personal emissary, Hopkins was able to go right to the top—just as he had on his first visit to England in January. Stalin rarely met foreign ambassadors, but on July 30 and 31 Hopkins had two long meetings with the Soviet leader. He saw nothing of the battlefronts but came back deeply impressed with Stalin—terse, controlled, and totally determined to win. "Give us anti-aircraft guns and the aluminum and we can fight for three or four years," was an exclamation that particularly stuck in Hopkins's memory. Stalin also employed language surely intended to fit Roosevelt's ideological framework, opening for instance with the need for "a minimum moral standard between all nations" and insisting that "the President and the United States had more influence with the common people of the world than any other force."

Once again Hopkins served as Roosevelt's eyes and ears. More than any formal intelligence data, his reports on Stalin persuaded the president to move decisively on aid to Russia. On August 1 FDR lectured his cabinet for forty-five minutes, accusing Stimson and the War Department in particular of foot-dragging on key Soviet supplies. "Get the planes off with a bang next week," he ordered. Stimson's resistance reflected the dilemmas of U.S. rearmament. War production in 1941 was a mere 10 percent of total output and only two-thirds of total British and Canadian munitions. Already forced to share this limited production with the British, Marshall and his colleagues objected strongly to a

three-way cut. When Morgenthau remarked that with Hopkins away there was no one able to cut through the red tape, FDR charged Wayne Coy of the Office of Emergency Management with a rare written directive: "Act as a burr under the saddle and get things moving."

Roosevelt's basic concern was clear. As long as Hitler was occupied in the East, he could not turn back against Britain and perhaps the United States. Yet Russia was also an Asian power. Operation Barbarossa also had profound implications for Japan, and thence the United States.

For months the foreign minister, Matsuoka Yōsuke, had been seeking to construct a full-scale alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan (already partners in the Tripartite Pact) and the Soviet Union. This would range them against Anglo-American hegemony. Matsuoka intended his visit to Berlin and Moscow in March–April 1941 to consummate this alliance. Hitler would not cooperate. While saying nothing about Barbarossa, he intimated that relations with the Soviet Union were deteriorating. In Moscow, however, Matsuoka found Stalin ready to conclude a neutrality pact. The Russians now feared a combined German-Japanese attack and were ready to recognize Japan's conquest of Manchuria. The neutrality pact was better than nothing for Matsuoka; it was signed on April 13. But then the opening of Barbarossa on June 22, about which Tokyo was not forewarned, destroyed what was left of the Japanese foreign minister's grand design.

It is worth reflecting for a moment on the implications of these events. Matsuoka, building on the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, envisaged an international divide along geopolitical lines, between the established hegemonial powers and the revisionists. What transpired in June 1941 looked more like the split on ideological lines that the left had urged in the mid-1930s—between the fascist powers and the anti-fascists. That was how it figured in Soviet war propaganda. From the American perspective,

1939–1941 was a period in which Roosevelt had gradually crystallized the image of a bipolar struggle between the forces of democracy and totalitarianism. After June 1941, “totalitarianism” slipped from the diplomatic lexicon, and FDR exaggerated signs of liberalism in the Soviet Union to make Stalin’s Russia fit the democratic stereotype. Geopolitically, Barbarossa’s impact on Europe and Asia vindicated FDR’s insistence that this was a global struggle—the “second world war.” U.S. policy in one theater clearly had implications in the other. Yet Barbarossa might also have called into question Roosevelt’s stereotype of a unified Axis. In June 1941, as in August 1939, Japan’s leaders were totally surprised by the twists of German policy toward the USSR. At a time when the Anglo-American common-law alliance was tightening, the Berlin-Tokyo Axis again showed its hollowness. But U.S. policymakers were now locked into their worldview.

Late June 1941 saw a great debate among Japan’s factionalized policymakers. Matsuoka, together with Prime Minister Konoe, favored a drive north against the embattled Soviet Union, in breach of the recent neutrality pact. The navy preferred renewed “southward advance” by diplomatic and, if necessary, military means to secure essential oil and raw materials from the colonial powers. Army strategists split between the two groups. At an imperial conference on July 2, a memorandum entitled “Outlines of Future National Policy” committed the country to both southward expansion and preparedness against the Soviet Union, while spelling out the southern strategy in more detail. Concretely, the Japanese got ready to take over southern Indochina during July while also concentrating up to 850,000 men in Manchuria for a possible Russo-Japanese war by September 1.

There was still support for reducing the chances of U.S. involvement. Since February, the new Japanese ambassador in Washington, Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō, had been engaged in talks with Hull to see if they could find the basis of an Asian settlement. Konoe, anxious to avoid war with the United States,

had encouraged these behind Matsuoka’s back as a counterbalance to the foreign minister’s pro-Axis policy. In July Konoe sought to resume the talks in an effort to keep the United States at bay, forcing out Matsuoka to show Washington that Tokyo was in earnest about improved relations. On July 18 a new Konoe cabinet was formed. But the southward advance continued. Japanese troops occupied southern Indochina, a colony of Vichy France, at the end of the month. The leadership in Tokyo assumed that U.S. warnings were merely rhetoric. That was a serious mistake.

In September 1940, U.S. army and navy cryptanalysts, in a rare display of cooperation, had cracked Japan’s high-grade diplomatic code, known as “Purple.” The successful team was dubbed the “magicians,” and the name stuck: “Magic” became the official codeword for Japanese decrypts. During July 1941 Magic showed how the Japanese were putting pressure on the Vichy authorities. It also gave an erroneous impression of single-minded Japanese policy; the flux of debate in Tokyo was impenetrable now that the U.S. embassy was shunned by almost all its influential Japanese contacts. In service jargon there was no humint to illuminate the sigint—no human intelligence to help interpret the signals intelligence.

During the winter of 1940–1941 the Japanese had been buying up oil in California. Once Magic made clear their intentions in Indochina, the pressure for oil sanctions became overwhelming. The cabinet “hawks”—Stimson, Morgenthau, and Ickes—who had secured a partial cutback in July 1940, now demanded a total embargo, confident that Japan would be cowed. Hull and the Navy Department still disagreed, fearing this would spark a Pacific war.

The president shared their caution: his core question about economic pressure was, would it work as a deterrent? At a cabinet meeting on July 24 Roosevelt announced that he would freeze Japanese assets in the United States, just as he had frozen

those of Germany and Italy in June. This meant that Japan would not only need an export license to purchase any product related to national defense (as had been required since July 1940), it would also have to secure another license to unblock dollars for payment. These dual controls would harass Tokyo, leaving it uncertain of what could be obtained, and they could be applied flexibly to reduce but not cut off Japan's oil. That, at least, was the president's intent. It was an extension of the existing, if controversial, policy of only limited sanctions. As FDR told a press conference that day: "There is a world war going on, and has been for some time—nearly two years. One of our war efforts, from the very beginning, was to prevent the spread of that world war in certain areas where it hadn't started." Southeast Asia was especially sensitive because its raw materials were essential to Britain and it lay astride Britain's imperial communications to Australasia. "If we had cut the oil off," Roosevelt added, the Japanese "probably would have gone down to the Dutch East Indies a year ago, and you would have had war."

To complement this deterrent policy, U.S. policymakers also intended to reinforce the Philippines. That same day, July 24, Roosevelt announced the formation of a full-scale Philippine army command, and called General Douglas MacArthur out of retirement to head it. This was a major reversal of earlier thinking, evident for instance in Stark's Plan Dog memorandum of November 1940, which favored a tactical withdrawal from the Western Pacific. The Philippines, a sprawling archipelago of seven thousand islands spread out over one thousand miles of ocean, had seemed both untenable and unnecessary. In part this policy shift was testimony to the intensifying ideology of all-or-nothing global war, in which retreat was tantamount to defeat. But it also reflected the growing faith in airpower. An improved version of the new B-17 heavy bomber (the Flying Fortress) was coming off the Boeing production line in Seattle. B-17Es, flying from the Philippines, could reach the southern Japanese home is-

land of Kyushu. Operating from a range of bases, from Manila to Singapore, they might deter attack on Southeast Asia. During August and September, army planners, previously skeptical about the Western Pacific, changed their minds. Stimson was a dramatic convert. He talked of airpower as the "big stick" that had "revolutionized" Pacific strategy. "From being impotent to influence events in that area," he wrote Roosevelt, "we suddenly find ourselves vested with the possibility of great effective power." The United States had found its technological "super-weapon." Stimson and his colleagues assumed Japan would be cowed.

But Stimson's strategic revolution could not be accomplished overnight. As usual, logistics was America's Achilles' heel. The buildup of B-17s in the Philippines, planned from July 1941, would be completed only in March 1942. By then 165 B-17s, about half of total U.S. strength, were scheduled to be based there, but the first one did not arrive until September 1941. Stimson, like Teddy Roosevelt before him, recognized that the United States needed to talk softly while preparing its big stick. In line with its new Pacific strategy, the War Department therefore now became one of the keenest supporters of the Hull-Nomura conversations. These had been terminated on July 23 in view of the Japanese move into Indochina. Stimson favored their resumption, if only to play for time until the deterrent was in place. The president agreed.

The end of July 1941 was therefore a turning point in U.S. diplomacy. As Soviet resistance made the USSR a significant factor in the war, Roosevelt was freed from the policy paralysis of May 1941. The Hopkins visit convinced the president that aid to Russia made strategic and political sense. Japan's response to the Soviet crisis prompted a new deterrent policy of oil sanctions and reinforcement of the Philippines, backed by a readiness to keep talking to gain time. The energy with which Roosevelt acted at the end of July also owed something to another international

event. On the evening of August 2 he slipped out of Washington, ostensibly bound for a fishing trip off New England. In fact he was en route for his first wartime meeting with Churchill. Firming up U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union and Japan was essential so that Roosevelt could deal effectively with his British partner.

#### THE "FIRST SUMMIT" AND THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

Roosevelt and Churchill had met only once before—in London in 1918—and by 1941 Churchill had forgotten their brief encounter. After Churchill became first lord of the admiralty in September 1939 they had developed a personal correspondence through telegrams and letters, totaling 110 from Churchill and 52 from Roosevelt by August 1941. But, as Roosevelt told Admiral Ernest King, "those friendly relations were not the same as a heart-to-heart talk." In January 1941 Harry Hopkins had flown to London to help FDR get the measure of Churchill. Hopkins said off the record that he was acting as "a catalytic agent between two prima donnas." The next step was a direct meeting. Both leaders keenly desired this, but it had to be postponed on several occasions, first because of the lend-lease debate and then due to the successive British crises over the Balkans, Libya, and Crete. Eventually they settled on a shipboard conference in Placentia Bay, off Newfoundland—British territory where the United States was building an air station as part of the destroyers-for-bases deal. Hitler's decision to go east gave them both an opportunity and a further reason for the meeting. Although Roosevelt and Churchill were both primarily interested in their personal encounter, they brought with them a range of military and diplomatic advisers who held their own specialist meetings.

On a personal level the Atlantic Conference (August 9–12) was a great success. The two leaders dispelled their lingering

doubts about each other and cemented their relationship. Close ties were also forged among the service personnel, especially between General George Marshall and his British counterpart, Sir John Dill. These helped lubricate the machinery of Anglo-American cooperation throughout the war. But the significance of the Atlantic meeting was as much symbolic. In Sunday worship on the sunlit quarterdeck of the British battleship *Prince of Wales*, British and Americans intermingled. They shared in readings from the King James Bible and sung familiar hymns in the same language, such as "Onward Christian Soldiers," while British and American chaplains read prayers from a pulpit draped with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack. Film of this service went around the world. Capping the whole edifice was the declaration of eight war aims. This was quickly dubbed the "Atlantic Charter"—a community of Anglo-American values to complement the new Atlanticist framework for U.S. security.

The global impact of the declaration was profound. In early August, Hitler was still rambling about an eventual combination of Britain and Germany against the United States. Shaken by the Atlantic Charter, he refused to let Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels publish it. But privately he reminded Goebbels of his January 1939 "prophecy" that if the Jews succeeded in starting a world war, the result would be the annihilation of European Jewry. In Japan the leading Tokyo newspaper, *Asahi*, said that the declaration aimed to maintain "a system of world domination on the basis of Anglo-American world views." Privately one senior Japanese staff officer commented that it was tantamount to America's declaration of war. Just as policymakers in Washington tended to exaggerate the unity of the Tripartite Pact, imagining secret military protocols whenever German and Japanese leaders met, so Axis leaders assumed that the Atlantic Charter was merely the public face of detailed war planning. For many Japanese policymakers, in particular, the Atlantic meeting

confirmed their sense of encirclement. Combined with the American freezing order, it had the effect of ending plans for an attack on the Soviet Union. Southward advance became the agreed strategy, by diplomacy if possible, by force if necessary.

The Anglo-American common-law alliance was, however, less cohesive than its opponents imagined. Churchill had come to Placentia Bay hopeful that FDR was ready to declare war. In consequence the British delegation was chiefly military, with Sir Alexander Cadogan from the Foreign Office added at the last minute. Churchill was therefore bitterly disappointed to return, almost like Neville Chamberlain, with little more than a piece of paper. That paper was indeed forced on him without warning. There had been no prior discussion about a statement of war aims. Roosevelt suggested the idea at one of the first meetings on August 9; Sumner Welles had already jotted down key American ideas before leaving Washington. Seeking to draw the British out, Roosevelt invited Churchill to offer a first draft. Cadogan hastily penned something next morning, on *Prince of Wales* notepaper, while eating his eggs and bacon before the Sunday worship. This was the unlikely genesis of one of the most important ideological documents of the war.

Motivating Roosevelt was the Wilsonian problem of associating the United States with a country whose aims, though similar when measured by global criteria of democracy versus totalitarianism, differed in signal respects from those of his administration. Although Roosevelt had aligned himself clearly with Churchill, he was also anxious to tie the British down to American goals, particularly now that Soviet Russia complicated the ideological picture.

Egged on by Welles, Roosevelt had two definite concerns, and probably one other. Each was about "imperialism." First, the two men wanted assurances that the British had not and would not sign "secret treaties" akin to those with France and Russia in 1914-1917. After Soviet entry into the war, rumors were rife

about clandestine territorial deals, for instance to acknowledge Soviet hegemony in eastern Poland and the Baltic states. Roosevelt had cabled Churchill on July 15 asking brazenly that Britain make "no secret commitments to any of its Allies" without "the agreement of the United States." The Americans had been disturbed to receive no reply.

Second, Roosevelt and Welles wanted to make progress on the lend-lease "consideration," which they intended should take the form of British commitments to a liberalized regime of international trade. During the summer this effort had become bogged down in bureaucratic discussions with the British, particularly the wily Keynes. In the flurry of activity in Washington in late July, before departure for the Atlantic meeting, Roosevelt had approved a tough new State Department draft about an end to trade discrimination, which Keynes strenuously opposed. At the Atlantic meeting Welles tried to pin down Churchill himself.

A third issue, certainly for Welles, was the American desire that Britain concede dominion status, or semi-independence, to India. Although couched as a concern about the effect of Indian discontent on the British war effort, it reflected underlying American animosity to formal empire. The issue was very likely in Welles's mind as he reworked Cadogan's draft.

Churchill was able to consult his own cabinet and the dominion governments by telegram. Sensing that Roosevelt would compromise on details rather than delay issuing the declaration, he was able to water down some of the contentious language. Nevertheless the eight-point statement of common principles became a benchmark for Anglo-American diplomacy throughout the war. The second article rejected territorial changes that did not "accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." The fourth contained a pledge that both governments would try to promote access by all states "on equal terms" to the world's trade and raw materials. (The British desire to retain Imperial Preference, at least until the nature of the postwar econ-



omy became clear, was safeguarded by the clause "with due respect for their existing obligations.") There were references to other Rooseveltian ideas, such as "freedom from fear and want," and to his qualified Wilsonian approach to disarmament as a long-term goal for all nations and an immediate necessity for the vanquished aggressors.

The potency of the declaration was demonstrated by international reaction to article three about the rights of national sovereignty and self-government. This was immediately seized on by nationalist politicians in India, Burma, and Ceylon in their battle against British imperial rule. Churchill insisted in Parliament that article three was intended to apply to the subject nations of Europe—"a quite separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions" within the British Empire. But soon after Pearl Harbor FDR was insisting publicly that the Atlantic Charter "applies not only to those parts of the world that border the Atlantic but to the whole world." It became the ideological basis of America's wartime globalism.

Many in London felt that Churchill had made sweeping pledges to Roosevelt and had gained little in return. With justification the prime minister told his cabinet that the readiness of the United States, "still technically a neutral," to join with a belligerent power in a commitment to "the final destruction of Nazi tyranny" was "astonishing." But it is likely that he regarded a declaration of war aims as a poor surrogate for a declaration of war. The British delegation at Placentia Bay was also sobered by news during the conference that renewal of America's draft beyond the first year had passed the House of Representatives by only one vote (203 to 202). Although owing much to poor Democratic management and the lack of a clear lead from the president, the vote seemed to confirm the strength of noninterventionist opinion.

In the Atlantic, all Churchill could extract was a promise that the U.S. navy would take over escort of all Allied convoys in the

area west of Iceland and the Azores. Repeatedly the president left Churchill with the impression that he hoped to provoke a naval "incident" that would justify asking Congress to declare war. According to Churchill, FDR said that "if he were to put the issue of peace or war to the Congress, they would debate it for three months. The President had said he would wage war, but not declare it, and that he would become more and more provocative. If the Germans did not like it, they could attack American forces." According to Churchill's account: "Everything was to be done to force an incident."

But then nothing seemed to happen. The president did not even implement the new escort policy, and Churchill cabled Hopkins plaintively on August 28 about a "wave of depression" in his cabinet. Hopkins in turn warned Roosevelt that Churchill and British policymakers assumed that "ultimately we will get into the war on some basis or other." If they came to doubt this assumption, said Hopkins, the result would be a resurgence of appeasement and "a very critical moment in the war."

On the other big issue, Japan, the British also felt that FDR had backtracked after the meeting. For months Churchill and his colleagues had been concerned at their exposed position in the Pacific: the United States was handling the diplomacy, particularly the Hull-Nomura talks, while sharing little information. If diplomacy failed and Japan went to war, British colonies, notably Malaya and Singapore, would be the main target, with no U.S. commitment to their defense. Churchill took up these concerns with Roosevelt at the Atlantic meeting. He wanted firm parallel warnings from the two governments that Japanese expansion in the Southwest Pacific could lead to war. He also sought a public guarantee that if another power (in other words Britain) were attacked by Japan, the president would ask Congress for war.

On both counts Roosevelt was unmoved. He considered a guarantee of support to be politically out of the question, and he

preferred to continue talking and gain time. Churchill left their meeting with what he believed to be a firm promise that Roosevelt would issue a private warning to Japan on the lines of a firm British draft, but the president, encouraged by Hull, emasculated that as soon as he returned to Washington. Meeting with Ambassador Nomura on August 17, the president made a general statement that further Japanese military action would oblige the United States to take such steps as it deemed necessary to safeguard *American* interests. He made no reference to other countries, and the impact of his remarks was further reduced because he went on to discuss the resumption of talks. When the British (with considerable difficulty) obtained details of the Roosevelt-Nomura meeting, this added to their despondency.

The momentum of U.S. policy picked up again in September, however. On the 4th a U.S. destroyer, the *Greer*, was attacked by a U-boat off Iceland. This gave Roosevelt a peg on which to hang the new policy in the Atlantic. His fireside chat on September 11 distorted the details of the incident. In emphasizing that the Germans fired first, FDR omitted to mention that the destroyer and British aircraft had been trailing the U-boat for several hours. The *Greer* was used as another piece in his jigsaw—further evidence that the Nazis wanted to “seize control of the oceans,” destabilize the Western Hemisphere, and ultimately establish “world mastery.” Consequently the U.S. navy would now protect merchantmen “of any flag” within “the waters we deem necessary for our own defense” and would no longer wait for Axis vessels to strike first. The press dubbed this the “shoot-on-sight” speech. Although he mentioned Iceland, the president did not make explicit that most of the Atlantic, up to about four hundred miles from the north coast of Scotland, was now defined as American waters. Escorts began on September 17.

With regard to Japan, policy had also hardened—though not as the British would have liked. The United States issued no warning to Japan and no guarantee to Britain; Hull resumed his

talks with Nomura. Behind the scenes, however, the oil sanctions imposed in late July had congealed into a total, if unofficial, embargo on all shipments to Japan. Some scholars, notably Jonathan Utey and Irving Anderson, claim that this embargo developed behind FDR's back through the covert efforts of hawks in the bureaucracy, particularly Dean Acheson in the State Department. They argue that when Roosevelt and Hull found out about the *de facto* embargo, in early September, it was too late to reverse the policy without a disastrous loss of face for the United States. Waldo Heinrichs, by contrast, believes that Roosevelt knew and approved of this hardening of policy. It fitted his preference for covert pressure rather than public confrontation.

Either way, the effects of the new policy are important as its origins. The July restrictions had prompted Tokyo to stop all plans for a buildup against the Soviet Union. The southward thrust, already implicit in the July 2 imperial conference, now became firm policy. Faced by a complete cessation of oil supplies, Japanese policymakers judged that they had no course but to secure the raw materials they needed for Southeast Asia by force. *De facto* or *de jure*, approved by Roosevelt or contrived behind his back, oil sanctions served not to deter Japan but to start the final planning for Pacific war.

#### STALEMATE IN THE ATLANTIC

In the fall of 1941, U.S. policy toward the European war revolved around the twin issues of aid to Britain and aid to Russia. The two were related: because of the limits of the American arsenal, there had to be a decision on priorities. And in either case the main casualty would be the U.S. military, whose own rearmament program was still in its infancy. The fall of 1941 saw major efforts to reconcile these three competing demands on U.S. production as the Nazi advance surged on across the Soviet Union.

By August the German high command recognized that its hopes of a quick victory in the Soviet Union were illusory. Its three-pronged offensive could not be maintained at the same intensity because of supply shortages, and Hitler decided to concentrate on destroying enemy strength in the north and south. Not until the beginning of October was Army Group Center allowed to resume its main thrust to Moscow. Its rapid success forced the Soviet government in mid-October to evacuate the capital for Kuibyshev, five hundred miles east. Even the mummified body of Lenin was moved from its resting place in Red Square and sent east in a refrigerated train. The official evacuation sparked panic among Muscovites: some fled, others looted the empty shops and offices. It took several days to restore order. Stalin, who himself had planned to leave, decided to stay put, rally morale, and bring his best commander, General Georgii Zhukov, from the embattled city of Leningrad in a last-ditch effort to defend the capital. There was, however, a glimmer of hope. Already the autumn rains were turning the ground into mud, and the first snow had fallen.

Compared with the combined efforts of General Zhukov and "General Winter" (historic savior of Russia against Napoleon), aid from the allies was of minuscule material significance in 1941. (Sixty percent of U.S. wartime supplies to the USSR did not arrive until 1943-1944, after the German tide had been turned at Stalingrad and Kursk.) But aid to Russia did matter in 1941-1942 as a boost to popular morale and as an earnest of diplomatic support. In Washington and London there were lingering fears that Stalin might once again make a deal with Hitler (indeed there are signs that he extended peace feelers through the Bulgarian government in the crisis of mid-October). In September 1941, therefore, Roosevelt sent his lend-lease "expediter," Averell Harriman, to London to thrash out a common policy on Soviet supplies. Harriman went on to Moscow as part of a joint Anglo-American mission, which concluded a supply protocol on

October 1. For the nine-month period to June 30, 1942, the two governments pledged about 1.5 million tons of supplies, ranging from tanks to army boots, worth about \$1 billion. Such was the state of U.S. rearmament that in the key areas of aircraft and tanks, the British and U.S. contributions were equal—each promised 200 planes and 250 tanks a month.

The War Department, desperate to complete its Protective Mobilization Plan (PMP) for a fully equipped combat force of 1.8 million by mid-1942, wanted aid to Russia to be at the expense of aid to Britain. The British fought strenuously against this—they were already diverting some of their own scarce munitions—and Roosevelt and Hopkins agreed. In a first effort at long-term logistical planning, the army and navy had produced what became known as the "Victory Program" in late September. The army assumed that victory over Hitler would require full-scale U.S. entry into the war and another major American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in Europe. Its initial estimates put the AEF figure at 5 million troops, and peak army manpower strength at 8.8 million. These figures were close to what were eventually needed by 1945.

Yet Roosevelt put the army's expansion, even for the PMP program, on hold all through the fall of 1941. That was mainly because he was still committed to his policy of using Britain (and now Russia) as America's front line of defense. But it also reflected his aversion to waging a ground war in Europe. Not only did he continue to believe that it would be politically impossible to send another AEF, he also hoped that strategic bombing would make land warfare on the scale of 1914-1918 unnecessary. At the Atlantic meeting Hopkins told the British that the president was "a believer in bombing as the only means of gaining a victory."

Moreover there were already signs, at least to Roosevelt and a few advisers, that a bomb of unprecedented power might eventually be available. In June 1941 the president had approved a

more effective organization for U.S. research into the military implications of atomic energy. This was the Office of Scientific Research and Development, headed by Vannevar Bush, a former vice president of MIT. But U.S. atomic research remained low-key; indeed the whole program was in danger in mid-1941. What saved it was a top-secret British report, which landed on Bush's desk on October 3 (though its conclusions had been foreshadowed in the summer). The British had passed on their radar secrets in 1940; now they shared their conclusions that an atomic bomb was scientifically feasible and "likely to lead to decisive results in the war."\* Bush took the report to Roosevelt on October 9, urging a major research and development program. The president established what became known as the "Top Policy Group," including Bush, Stimson, and Marshall. Two days later he wrote Churchill suggesting that future work on the project "be coordinated or even jointly conducted."

Although these were important decisions, preparing the ground for the wartime "Manhattan Project," their results lay years in the future. What mattered in October 1941 was not an atomic bomb but Soviet resistance. Under the terms of the Lend-Lease Act, the president could decide which countries were vital to the defense of the United States. Nevertheless FDR bided his time, hoping that opinion would move clearly in his direction. His efforts to play up religious freedom in the Soviet Union were part of this endeavor. Critics such as Representative Martin Dies of the House Un-American Activities Committee objected to his bid "to dress up the Soviet wolf in the sheep's clothing of the four freedoms." But on October 10 the House, voting on the second lend-lease appropriations bill, rejected by 217 votes to 162 an amendment banning the use of such funds for the USSR. This followed a more organized effort by Democratic managers than

\*A copy of the report was also provided to Moscow by a Soviet agent in the British Cabinet Office, John Cairncross.

over draft extension in August. The Senate rejected a similar amendment two weeks later, and on November 7 the president declared the Soviet Union to be eligible for lend-lease assistance. Stalin accepted an interest-free loan of \$1 billion to cover the supplies listed in the Moscow Protocol of October 1. This loan would be repaid over a ten-year period, starting five years after the end of the war. A tacit alliance with Russia was now taking shape.

Yet the United States was still formally operating under the framework of the 1939 Neutrality Act. A Gallup poll on October 5 indicated that 70 percent of the public thought it more important to defeat Hitler than to stay out of war, but noninterventionist opinion in Congress appeared to have hardened as America First mounted a new campaign to preserve the Neutrality Act. Roosevelt remained mindful that it took only a few lawmakers, under Senate rules, to filibuster a bill into oblivion. Consequently the administration tested the water by asking only for repeal of article six of the act, which banned the arming of U.S. merchant ships. Given the escort policy already under way, this change was the least contentious, and on October 9 FDR laid the matter before the House. It was, he insisted, not a declaration of war "any more than the Lend-Lease Act called for a declaration of war. This is a matter of essential defense of American rights." On October 17 the House approved repeal of article six by 259 votes to 138, largely on partisan lines.

The night before the House voted, a U.S. destroyer, the *Kearny*, lost eleven men in a torpedo attack off Iceland. The destroyer had gone to the aid of an eastbound convoy under U-boat attack off Iceland. In a Navy Day address on October 27, Roosevelt insisted that the *Kearny* "is not just a Navy ship. She belongs to every man, woman, and child in this Nation." He added that he had in his possession a secret Nazi map showing South America as Hitler proposed to reorganize it into five vassal states, including one that engrossed "our great life line—the

Panama Canal." (Although FDR apparently did not know it, this map was a forgery concocted by British intelligence.)

Emboldened by the House vote on article six, Democratic managers asked the Senate to repeal this and two other articles (prohibiting U.S. vessels from entering belligerent ports and allowing the president to proclaim combat zones around belligerent countries). But on October 31 the U.S. destroyer *Reuben James* was sunk by a U-boat near Iceland with the loss of 115 lives. The combined effect of Roosevelt's rhetoric and these two naval incidents made the noninterventionists more irreconcilable. The full package passed the Senate on November 7 by only 50 votes to 37—the narrowest administration victory on a foreign policy issue since the beginning of the European war. Although the House confirmed this resolution six days later, the margin was also very close (212 to 194), with more Democrats in opposition than over lend-lease.

Roosevelt had secured repeal of the key provisions of the Neutrality Act, but, conscious of the close votes, he did not rush to implement a new policy. Pressed by Hopkins and the navy, the president agreed on November 25 that U.S. merchant ships should go all the way to Britain "as they became available but that this procedure progress gradually with only a small number of ships being so routed in the beginning." No mention of it was made in public. Once again the president was proceeding by small steps, convinced that small steps were better than none. The voting figures over neutrality revision had made him more pessimistic about the mood on Capitol Hill. He had told Churchill in August that, if he asked Congress to declare war, it would debate the issue for three months. On November 3, according to the Canadian prime minister, Mackenzie King, FDR said that a war message would actually be defeated, possibly by a margin of two or even three to one. That same day, asked at a press conference whether maintaining diplomatic relations with

Germany was not "a form of dishonesty," he answered "completely off the record": "We don't want a declared war with Germany because we are acting in defense—self-defense—every action. And to break off diplomatic relations—why, that won't do any good. It might be more useful to keep them the way they are."

This was not mere rhetoric. FDR had several reasons for not rushing into formal war. As we have just seen, he believed that America's contribution would be as the provider of arms, not armies. This conformed with what seems to have been his genuine aversion to go down in history as a war president. Furthermore Roosevelt was convinced that if the United States became a full belligerent, public opinion would demand a massive cutback in foreign aid. This could have devastating consequences for Britain and thus, FDR believed, for the security of the United States. British leaders disagreed, believing that U.S. belligerency would be a massive boost to Allied morale. According to Churchill: "At the Atlantic Meeting I told his circle I would rather have an American declaration of war now and no supplies for six months than double the supplies and no declaration. When this was repeated to him he thought it a hard saying." Another reason for avoiding formal war was Roosevelt's interpretation of the Tripartite Pact. On November 3 he told the Canadian premier "that he was convinced that if the United States came into the war against Germany, Japan would enter the war immediately on Germany's side. That was a consideration which had to be carefully weighed in determining policy." A Pacific war ran directly counter to the policy of avoiding hostilities with Japan, or at least postponing them until Germany had been defeated. It would also arouse the domestic clamor he feared for a reallocation of supplies to U.S. forces instead of to Britain and the Soviet Union.

On all these grounds FDR was not anxious to force the issue

in the Atlantic in November 1941. Moreover he was still hoping to avoid war with Japan. But U.S. diplomacy in Asia was increasingly at odds with U.S. strategy.

#### COUNTDOWN IN THE PACIFIC

The de facto U.S. oil embargo had concentrated the minds of Japan's policymakers on the southward advance. But it had not totally ended the debate over peace or war. The navy still entertained hopes of achieving Japan's goals by diplomatic pressure on the European colonial powers. This was also the aim of Prime Minister Konoe, who now staked all on a summit with Roosevelt. An imperial conference on September 6 hammered out another convoluted policy compromise. Preparations for war with the United States and European powers would be completed by early October. If no diplomatic solution had been reached by then, Japan would take a decision for war.

The proposal for a Roosevelt-Konoe meeting was broached by Ambassador Nomura when he met the president on August 17, soon after his summit with Churchill. FDR initially accepted. The idea accorded with his predilection for personal diplomacy and also with his strategy of gaining time while the United States built up its deterrent strength in the Philippines. The U.S. ambassador in Tokyo, Joseph Grew, was also enthusiastic. But in the State Department, Hull and his Far Eastern specialists disagreed. They persuaded Roosevelt that no summit meeting should take place until agreement had been reached on basic principles.

Japan had clearly established its diplomatic bottom line at the imperial conference. The Anglo-American powers must stop aiding the Chinese Nationalists in their war with Japan. They must establish no military facilities in China, Thailand, and the Dutch East Indies. They must also restore trading relations with Japan and provide the country with essential resources. In return

for these concessions, Japan would promise no further military expansion in Asia. It would withdraw its troops from Indochina once a "just peace" had been achieved, and guarantee the neutrality of the Philippines.

These terms were totally unacceptable to the State Department. Hull was not willing to sacrifice his basic principles, the Wilsonian agenda of open trade and self-determination that had been his credo throughout his tenure as secretary of state. During 1938-1939 Roosevelt had taken control of European policy, believing that Hull's program of trade agreements was essentially irrelevant to a continent on the brink of war. But policy toward Japan remained largely in Hull's hands, with some critical exceptions (notably the oil sanctions tangle in July and August 1941). Although Hull had been marginalized from the European war, except on postwar planning issues, he remained central to the Asia-Pacific region, where diplomacy still had a role to play.

Hull's insistence on legalistic fundamentals was not the best way to gain time. Back in April, at an early stage in his talks with Nomura, the secretary of state had put on the table his basic "Four Principles." These comprised:

- respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every nation;
- noninterference in other countries' internal affairs;
- the principle of equality, including equal commercial opportunity;
- acceptance of the territorial status quo, except where changed by peaceful means.

These essentially Wilsonian principles were not unique to America's relations with Japan. Hull was also adapting them concurrently to Britain in proposals for the lend-lease consideration. They also featured in the Roosevelt-Welles drafts of the Atlantic Charter. But those documents were proposals to a quasi-ally about the postwar order. Hull's Four Principles were submitted to a potential adversary as part of an effort to stop, or at least,

postpone its declaration of war. Hard dogma is not the best tool for subtle diplomacy.

In talks with Nomura that fall, Hull kept reverting to the Four Principles. He also highlighted two corollaries. First, Japan must withdraw its one million troops from China. This was not simply a statement of principle (Hull was willing to concede Japan's presence in Manchuria). It was also intended to humiliate and discredit the Japanese military, a move that the State Department deemed essential for the "regeneration" of Japan as a liberal polity. The second sticking point was Japan's adherence to the Tripartite Pact. This, in Hull's view, aligned Japan clearly with an aggressive, expansionist power bent on establishing by force a New Order that was inimical to America's basic principles. In talks in the summer of 1941 Hull had targeted Foreign Minister Matsuoka, the main advocate of ties with Berlin. Even after Konoe squeezed him out, Hull wanted public renunciation of the Tripartite Pact.

In the fall of 1941 these two issues—China and the Tripartite Pact—marked out the great divide between Tokyo and Washington. What Hull considered essential, most Japanese policy-makers found intolerable. During September, in discussions about the preliminaries to a possible summit, the divide became clear. In a note dated October 2, the State Department told Japan that there was no point in a summit until it accepted America's fundamentals. Although Konoe urged the army to accept token troop withdrawals from China, Army Minister General Tōjō Hideki was implacable. To do so, he argued, would be a return to the 1920s when Britain and America determined the security order in the Pacific, thereby negating all the gains Japan had made in the 1930s by war in China. The army, Tōjō insisted, would not tolerate a return to "Little Japan before the Manchurian Incident." Here, for Japanese hawks, was an issue as fundamental as the Four Principles to Hull.

By now the grace period agreed at the imperial conference of

September 6 had long passed. On October 16 the Konoe cabinet fell. Next day Tōjō started forming a new government. In deference to the emperor, however, he continued to explore the diplomatic option while war plans were prepared. Both the army and the navy were now determined to bring matters to a head. A sixteen-hour liaison conference on November 1–2 agreed to give the new foreign minister, Tōgō Shigenori, until November 30. If no agreement were reached, war would follow soon afterward. Thus, in crabwise fashion, Japan's factional leadership continued to edge nearer to the brink.

Tōgō came up with a two-pronged approach. Plan A set out Japan's terms for a comprehensive settlement with the United States, including China. As expected, Hull would have nothing to do with it. On November 20 the Japanese therefore presented Plan B—essentially a return to the situation before July 26, namely an end to the U.S. freezing order and the oil embargo in return for Japanese withdrawal from southern Indochina. The "China Incident" was left for Japan and China to resolve (in other words by continued war).

The State Department was more responsive to Plan B. Hull's Far Eastern desk officers prepared their own *modus vivendi*—Japanese withdrawal from most of Indochina and a reduction in U.S. oil sanctions for a three-month trial period while efforts continued for a general settlement, including China. But hawkish bureaucrats in other interested departments watered down these concessions, and Chiang Kai-shek's emissaries were strident in their criticism. If America relaxed its pressure while Japanese troops remained in China, they said, the Chinese people would feel "completely sacrificed." This would show that America was ready "to appease Japan at the expense of China" and would encourage Chinese defeatists to urge "oriental solidarity against occidental treachery." Hull was shaken by China's warnings, to which Churchill also lent his voice. At this stage in the war, when the Red Army had been driven back to the gates of

Moscow, a Chinese collapse would be disastrous. Hull did not feel inclined to call Chiang's bluff.

With the proposal already leaking to the U.S. press (courtesy of the Chinese), Hull abandoned the *modus vivendi*. Yet it was still in America's interests to buy time. The buildup in the Philippines was far from complete, and most of the B-17s still had not arrived. But Hull was ill and exhausted: the storm of criticism that greeted his *modus vivendi* draft was too much. In any case, he knew from Magic intercepts that Plan A would be followed by Plan B and that Tokyo had set a deadline for further negotiations. By November 25 it was also clear that a large Japanese expeditionary force had embarked at Shanghai and was now moving south toward Indochina and the Malay peninsula. Faced with this evidence of Japanese perfidy, Hull threw in the towel. On November 26 he gave the Japanese an unyielding ten-point program for a comprehensive settlement, centered on China. Next day he told Stimson that he had washed his hands of the Pacific: "It is now in the hands of you and Knox—the Army and the Navy." Although Roosevelt still toyed with the idea of a final appeal to the emperor, in practice the administration now braced itself for a Pacific war. But where would it break out? And what would be the U.S. reaction?

At noon on Tuesday, November 25, a major policy meeting convened at the White House. It included Hull, Stimson, Knox, Marshall, and Stark. According to Stimson's diary, the president said "that we were likely to be attacked perhaps next Monday for the Japanese are notorious for making an attack without warning, and the question was what we should do. The question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves."

That last sentence has been the centerpiece of conspiracy theories ever since it was revealed to the 1946 congressional inquiry into Pearl Harbor. It provided the title for the culminating chapter of Charles Beard's massive indictment of *President Roosevelt*

and the *Coming of War 1941*, published in 1948. As a variant on the persistent charges, particularly in popularized histories, that FDR permitted the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in order to get the United States into war, there is the more recent claim that Churchill was the culprit. According to James Rusbridger and Eric Nave in 1991, he concealed intelligence about the imminent attack on Pearl Harbor from the president in order to consummate the Anglo-American wartime alliance.

What did Roosevelt mean when he talked of maneuvering the Japanese into firing the first shot? What did he and Churchill know of Japanese intentions, and what plans had they made? Although there remain many dark corners to the Pearl Harbor story, the evidence points to confusion and complacency, not conspiracy, in Washington. But the confusion and complacency are deeply revealing.

When Roosevelt and Churchill braced themselves in early December for Japanese belligerency, their eyes were firmly on Southeast Asia. From its new stronghold in Indochina, Japan could move west into nearby Thailand and south into Malaya and the Dutch East Indies—all sources of vital raw materials. Magic intercepts, such as those about the troop convoy from Shanghai, clearly indicated a thrust into Southeast Asia. Yet none of these were U.S. possessions. For months U.S. policymakers had avoided any promise to fight if European colonies in Asia were under attack. In line with the ABC-1 agreement on strategy, back in March, the U.S. movements of ships to the Atlantic would allow the British to reinforce their own defenses in Southeast Asia. This was now taking place: in November 1941 a small British Far Eastern Fleet was steaming to Singapore. On land, plans were in place for a preemptive British move into Thailand to strengthen the defenses of Malaya.

But Churchill would not sanction the implementation of these plans without pledges of U.S. support. Otherwise Britain might have to fight Japan on its own. By the end of November 1941,



Roosevelt could sit on the fence no longer. Just as Hull judged that showing solidarity with China was more important than buying time with Japan, so Roosevelt felt obliged to make clear military commitments to Britain. On December 1 the president (with studied casualness) mentioned to Lord Halifax, the British ambassador, that in the event of an attack on British and Dutch possessions, "we should obviously be all together." According to Ambassador Halifax, he added later that if Japan attacked Thailand, Britain "could certainly count on their support, though it might take a short time, he spoke of a few days, to get things into political shape here." Churchill and his Defence Committee were still wary. Two decades of British suspicions about American grandiloquence could not be dispelled overnight. Did the president mean "armed support"? Yes, FDR told Halifax on December 3, he did. In such eventualities, he had no doubt "you can count on [the] armed support of [the] United States."

On November 28 Roosevelt had already agreed on this position with his principal military and naval advisers. But he could only propose war; the Congress had to declare it. From a purely diplomatic point of view, Pearl Harbor was therefore a godsend. That is why some writers have convinced themselves that Roosevelt allowed it to happen. As the intelligence archives have been opened, a fuller picture has emerged. It confirms, in modified form, the orthodox account of intelligence failure.

It is now clear that U.S. and British cryptanalysts had achieved some success with the Japanese naval code JN-25. From that cable traffic the attack on Pearl Harbor *could* have been deduced. But the decisive messages were in the improved JN-25b code, which remained largely impenetrable to both governments. U.S. intelligence had concentrated on the diplomatic messages, which generated the Magic intercepts. At the end of 1941 only eight cryptanalysts were working on JN-25b. The material was available but not the resources to penetrate it.

Even the Magic intercepts could have been exploited more ef-

fectively had U.S. intelligence been better organized. Because of interservice rivalry, an absurd arrangement developed whereby the army would decode material on days with an even-numbered date and the navy on odd-numbered days. For a time in 1941 the president was getting Magic from the navy one month and the army the next. That nonsense ended in early November, but the army-navy division of labor for daily decoding continued to the very end. It delayed transmission to FDR of intercepts of Tokyo's final messages to Ambassador Nomura. These rejected Hull's note of November 26, indicated there was no point in further negotiations, and instructed Nomura to deliver them to Hull exactly at 1 p.m. on Sunday, December 7. This was just after dawn on December 8 in Hawaii, and roughly forty-five minutes before the attack was due to begin.

Greater attention to naval codes and better coordination of intelligence would have helped immensely. But, as many historians have concluded, the failure was as much a matter of perceptions as information. Preoccupied with East Asia, Washington policymakers simply did not expect an attack on Pearl Harbor—five thousand miles from the Philippines. Indeed, they thought it unlikely that Japan, already bogged down in the China war, would also take on the United States and Britain in simultaneous attacks. Churchill referred to the Japanese privately as the "Wops of the Pacific"—adapting the derogatory term used by the British about the Italians. In other words, if the Japanese went to war, they would be a nuisance but not a real threat. U.S. policymakers thought in a similar vein. When General Douglas MacArthur heard the news that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by carrier-based aircraft, he assumed that the pilots must have been white mercenaries. At Pearl Harbor most of the fleet rode at anchor in " Battleship Row." U.S. commanders reckoned that the main security threat was sabotage, not bombing, and concentrated their planes in the middle of airfields, away from the perimeter fence.

For many in the U.S. army and navy in November 1941, the looming conflict was not between America and Japan but between themselves. The annual bitterly fought Army-Navy football game was scheduled for November 29. The game program pictured a battleship with the caption: "A bow-on view of the U.S.S. *Arizona* as she plows into a huge swell." The caption added: "It is significant that despite the claims of air enthusiasts, no battleship has yet been sunk by bombs." Eight days later the 600-foot, 31,000-ton *Arizona* lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor, sunk in less than ten minutes by Japan's airborne task force.

### WORLD WAR

In 1946 a joint congressional investigating committee described Pearl Harbor as "the greatest military and naval disaster in our Nation's history." Many commentators and scholars have echoed its language. Yet as the historian John Mueller has noted, in military terms Pearl Harbor was not a catastrophe. The fleet's vital aircraft carriers were out on patrol. Although all eight battleships were hit, three were returned to service within three weeks and three more within three years. In any case, all were World War I vessels whose useful days were already numbered. Four new, state-of-the-art battleships were commissioned in 1942 alone. Similarly, in cruisers and destroyers, bombers and fighters, the United States soon eclipsed with new production what it had lost on that Sunday morning.

But 2,400 servicemen and civilians could not be replaced. And the sense of national humiliation was indelible. That evening the cabinet convened in the president's study. Labor Secretary Frances Perkins recalled that Roosevelt's face had "a queer gray, drawn look." Such was his pride in the navy that, said Perkins, "he was having actual physical difficulty in getting out the words" and admitting "that the Navy was caught unawares." On the other hand, FDR now had an unequivocal *casus belli*. Ac-

ording to Hopkins, on hearing the news about Pearl Harbor he said it took the matter "entirely out of his hands, because the Japanese had made the decision for him." At Yalta in 1945 he told Churchill and Stalin that but for the Japanese attack, "he would have had great difficulty in getting the American people into the war."

On December 8 FDR addressed a special joint session of the Congress, emphasizing not merely the gravity of Japan's attack but its "unprovoked and dastardly" character, before negotiations had been formally broken off. Little more than half an hour later both houses had approved his request for a declaration of war against Japan. There was only one dissenter—Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin of Montana, a pacifist who had also voted against war in 1917. Most of Roosevelt's opponents followed the lead of the America First Committee and rallied around their commander-in-chief. Senator Arthur Vandenberg was a representative example. He wrote in his diary that "we may have *driven* her [Japan] *needlessly* into hostilities through our dogmatic diplomatic attitudes" but that was now irrelevant. "Nothing matters except VICTORY. The 'arguments' must be postponed."

The United States was now a belligerent in the war that Roosevelt had hoped to avoid, or postpone, with Japan. But the United States was not formally a belligerent in the war that he regarded as central, with Germany. It is too strong to say, with the historian Stephen Ambrose, that on December 10 the president's policy was "a dismal failure." But Ambrose is surely right that "what saved him and his policy was nothing he did, but Hitler's act of lunacy."

At the cabinet meeting on December 7, Stimson urged the president to ask for a declaration of war on Germany as well as Japan, since Hitler was undoubtedly the instigator. But no one supported him. Afterward Roosevelt told Stimson that he would "present the full matter two days later." In his fireside chat on

December 9 he insisted that Japan's attack "without warning" was part of a global Axis pattern that stretched back through Belgium in 1940, Czechoslovakia in 1939, and Ethiopia in 1935, to Japan's invasion of Manchuria a decade before. In 1941, he claimed, Axis collaboration was "so well calculated that all the continents of the world, and all the oceans" were now considered by their strategists as "one gigantic battlefield." He told the American people: "We know that Germany and Japan are conducting their military and naval operations in accordance with a joint plan," and "Germany and Italy, regardless of any formal declaration of war, consider themselves at war with the United States at this moment." But the president made no request to move from de facto to open war against the European Axis.

The Tripartite Pact of 1940 was a hollow alliance. Despite public statements of solidarity, a secret exchange of letters had preserved Japan's freedom of action to interpret whether and how the treaty obligations should be honored. Moreover the pact was a defensive alliance and did not apply if one of the signatories embarked on aggression of its own. Thus Japan had no obligations to join in Hitler's war on Russia, nor would Germany be obliged to participate if Japan attacked the United States. None of this was known in Washington.

During November 1941, however, Japan asked Germany to join in any future hostilities against the United States. Ribbentrop, the foreign minister, said that Germany would sign a no-separate-peace agreement "if Japan and Germany, regardless of the grounds, becomes involved in a war with the USA." At the beginning of December he was asked to confirm this in writing. Hitler agreed and a draft was prepared. But just as Tokyo had no advance warning of Barbarossa, so Ribbentrop learned of Pearl Harbor from the British Broadcasting Corporation (and initially dismissed the radio report as Allied propaganda). Nevertheless, on December 9 Hitler ordered unrestricted U-boat attacks on U.S. shipping. After the no-separate-peace agreement

was signed on the 11th, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

Hitler's motives have been the subject of endless debate. He had often spoken of the United States as Germany's ultimate enemy, though usually adding that this battle would be for the next generation, after Europe had been won. His restraint in the Atlantic in 1941 was therefore a matter of tactics. He may have concluded that FDR would provoke war in the next few months and that it was better for domestic morale if he moved first. As Ribbentrop noted: "A great power does not allow itself to be declared war upon; it declares war on others." Hitler definitely did not want Tokyo to conclude a deal with Washington, because that would leave Roosevelt with a freer hand in Europe. Conversely he believed that if Japan went to war, it would tie down U.S. forces in the Pacific. At root, in fact, Hitler did not consider the United States a formidable foe. True to his racist ideology, he viewed the Americans as a degenerate, mongrel race whose bark was worse than its bite. And there was a grim racist corollary. On December 12 Hitler reminded top officials of his "prophecy" in January 1939 that if the Jews brought about another world war, they would be annihilated. "That was no empty talk," said Hitler. "The world war is there. The annihilation of the Jews must be the necessary consequence."

The events of December 8-11 must therefore be seen as a sequential whole. Japan had vindicated Roosevelt's globalist ideology. While Americans had been consistently wary about another European war, their antipathy to Japan was unequivocal and their outrage after Pearl Harbor was intense. Isolationists spoke of Pearl Harbor as the backdoor to European war, but for internationalists like Roosevelt, as the historian Frank Ninkovich observes, it was the front door to global conflict. Pearl Harbor justified FDR's insistence that this was the Second World War. That would not have been enough, however, if Hitler had not played into Roosevelt's hands strategically. By declaring war on

the United States, he saved FDR from being forced to concentrate on an unwanted Pacific war, thereby salvaging the president's Germany-first strategy.

Despite this fateful convergence in December 1941, the Axis remained a hollow alliance. Although the German and Japanese navies wanted to concert their strategies, targeting British India from two sides, the two leaderships in Berlin and Tokyo went on to fight separate wars. The Allied partnership, for all its flaws, proved stronger and more effective. Within days of Pearl Harbor, Churchill was braving Atlantic storms en route to Washington to concert Anglo-American war plans. Although Hitler was at the gates of Moscow, U.S. aid was now beginning to flow to the Soviet Union. And, as the November crisis showed, the United States had also stuck by China. American perceptions of a cohesive totalitarian plot helped ease the United States into world war. But the reality of Axis divergence helped ensure eventual Allied victory.

## 7

### From Munich to Pearl Harbor

IN THE INTRODUCTION I set out three main objectives: to provide an interpretive overview of U.S. policy from Munich to Pearl Harbor, to show how Roosevelt led Americans into a new global perception of international relations, and to suggest how some of the essentials of America's cold war worldview were formed in this period. Policy, perceptions, and precedents form the substance of this concluding chapter.

#### POLICY

Roosevelt's Washington was riven by bureaucratic politics. But, to a large extent, foreign policy was made by the president. That policy was mainly reactive—to the challenges posed by international events and to the limitations of domestic politics. These have been the two central themes of my account. Yet FDR's own inclinations mattered enormously because his interpretations of events and his assessments of politics often differed markedly from those of his advisers. Moreover his reactions were also shaped by certain basic assumptions about the United States and the world.

By the fall of 1937 the New Deal was on the defensive. The fiasco of Supreme Court reform and the onset of what Republicans dubbed "the Roosevelt recession" had squandered the

massive electoral victory of November 1936. The international scene also darkened dramatically during 1937, with Japan's brutal aggression in China and great-power involvement in the civil war in Spain. Unnerved by the depression and preoccupied by economic recovery, many Americans now believed that entry into the European war in 1917 had been a profound mistake. Successive Neutrality Acts from 1935 were an attempt to avoid that mistake again by minimizing the danger of U.S. economic and emotional entanglement in a future European war.

In the mid-1930s Roosevelt accepted the basic framework of the new neutrality. He shared the national aversion to another war. But he still believed that the United States should play a constructive role in world affairs. Although repudiating the League of Nations, he retained the essentials of a Wilsonian worldview, convinced that imperialism, militarism, and economic nationalism were at the root of most international problems. Influenced by his kinsman, Teddy Roosevelt, and by Wilson's experiences in 1917-1919, he also believed that great-power cooperation was essential to peace and security, particularly cooperation with Britain, the premier sea power.

In 1937-1938 he began to express these underlying ideas in more concrete form. His "quarantine the aggressors" speech in October 1937 was a globalist diagnosis of world problems, likening international lawlessness to a contagious disease. In private he talked of naval pressure and economic sanctions as instruments of quarantine, laying the intellectual basis for his attempted containment of Japan. In Europe, Roosevelt had less to offer, because the great-power structure was still firmly in place. At times in 1937-1938 he picked up the Wilsonian ideas of his close adviser, Sumner Welles, for a new international conference to establish principles of disarmament and freer trade. But during the Czech crisis of September 1938 he was largely a bystander.

Nevertheless the crisis proved a turning point in Roosevelt's

thinking, in several respects. Insider reports of the European summit conferences convinced the president that there could be no negotiation with Hitler. He never took that view of the other dictators, Mussolini and Stalin, let alone the leaders of Japan. Hitler's bloodless victory, handed to him by Britain and France, also shook FDR's assumption that the established powers of Western Europe would take the lead in stabilizing the Old World. Henceforth he envisaged a larger U.S. role in Europe, albeit well short of war. Privately he talked of a massive campaign of air rearmament to give him the clout he needed in international diplomacy.

Roosevelt told his advisers in November 1938 that he wanted to "sell or lend" planes and other munitions to Britain and France. Here, at the level of gut instinct, was the essential theme of his policy toward Europe over the next three years. But FDR's attempt to mobilize consent for his ideas in the spring and summer of 1939 was an abject failure. His rhetoric was too alarmist; his attempts to amend the Neutrality Act were ineffectual. A strong bipartisan coalition had now been mobilized in Congress. Although formed around opposition to the New Deal, it was inspired by general suspicion of the president and his "dictatorial" tendencies. In mid-1939 FDR was unwilling to test its cohesion on foreign affairs by a head-on confrontation. Nor was the international situation propitious. War scares in Europe had come and gone. There seemed no clear and immediate danger to the United States.

Once war broke out in Europe in September 1939, however, the situation changed dramatically. American opinion turned more amenable to Roosevelt's policy of biased neutrality, and this time Democratic managers were more effective than in the summer. In November Congress repealed the embargo on selling arms to countries at war, and placed all trade with belligerents on a "cash-and-carry" basis. This benefited Britain, with a large navy and financial reserves, while preserving Americans' insula-

tion from direct contact with the billigerents. Although FDR made clear that his countrymen should not feel "neutral in thought," he still talked the language of legal neutrality. He reiterated his determination to keep America out of the war and his confidence that he could do so. But at that stage his presidency was scheduled to end in January 1941.

If Munich was the first major turning point in the evolution of Roosevelt's foreign policy, the fall of France was the second. In the autumn of 1939 it seemed reasonable to anticipate a long struggle, akin to that of 1914-1918. No one—certainly not Roosevelt, and not even Hitler—expected the stunning German successes of May and June, which left Britain alone, fighting for survival. Munich had cracked the American image of European power; the fall of France shattered it. U.S. policy was never the same again.

There were two plausible responses from the U.S. perspective. One was to accelerate America's limited rearmament and concentrate on defending the Western Hemisphere. A large body of opinion, spearheaded by the America First Committee, advocated this policy. The other response was to extend aid to Britain alone. Given the fate of France and the state of Britain's defenses, that was a real gamble. But, after some hesitation, FDR took the risk, against the preferences of the War Department and the inclinations of many in his administration. International events by themselves were not decisive: much depended on Roosevelt himself.

His motives for backing Britain were typically mixed. He believed that British resistance bought time for American rearmament. He undoubtedly felt some measure of kinship with Britain. And he could not envisage Europe, the cradle of American civilization, being dominated by alien values. But he responded to Churchill's pleas for U.S. destroyers only when he was confident of Britain's survival and was advised that he could act without congressional approval. Characteristically he also

tried to strengthen America's own defenses with bases in the Western Atlantic and an assurance that the British fleet would never be surrendered.

Although carefully balanced, the destroyers-for-bases deal of September 1940 was a milestone in U.S. policy. It signaled a new commitment to Britain Alone as America's front line. The RAF's success in the Battle of Britain helped validate Roosevelt's geopolitical gamble, while the new images of British heroism and egalitarian sacrifice during the Blitz confirmed the impression he wanted to convey of the country's ideological compatibility with the values of Americanism. The American image of Britain was changing from empire to democracy.

The destroyers deal also deepened the global divide. Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo responded with their Tripartite Pact, intended to deter the United States from further commitments to Britain in Europe or Asia. In private, unknown to Roosevelt, the Japanese retained the freedom to judge when and whether to enter a war with Germany. But the public appearance of Axis solidarity strengthened the American perception of a global totalitarian threat.

The summer of 1940 redefined American politics as well as the country's geopolitical position. The fall of France persuaded FDR to seek reelection instead of retirement. In November 1940 he became the first U.S. president to breach the no-third-term tradition. With four more years ahead of him, he enjoyed a freedom of political maneuver undreamed of in the dog days of 1939.

First fruit of the new politics was the Lend-Lease Act of March 1941. This implemented ideas that Roosevelt had enunciated, albeit vaguely, back in November 1938. The United States would lend munitions to those countries, particularly Britain but also China, whose survival was deemed to be in the national interest. It took FDR two months to secure congressional assent, but he could now claim that he had a legislative mandate for a policy that had previously been handled by executive authority.

Since the munitions had to be produced, the act was also a way of galvanizing domestic rearmament through substantial government investment.

But it was no use producing and lending supplies if they did not arrive safely. The United States had to help carry the goods as well as provide the cash. During the spring and summer FDR extended U.S. naval operations in the Atlantic, taking in Iceland in July and operating what became a "shoot-on-sight" policy from September onward. Ignoring some of his advisers, he did this without going to Congress, using his powers as commander-in-chief. From the autumn the U.S. navy was helping escort British and Canadian convoys across most of the Atlantic. In November the president secured repeal of some of the key remaining provisions of the Neutrality Act, including those that banned American vessels from entering British ports. But despite incidents with German U-boats, he remained wary of forcing the issue.

One reason why Roosevelt maintained an undeclared naval warfare in the Atlantic was the changed international situation. Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941 constituted the third great turning point of the years 1938-1941. It took some of the heat off Britain and therefore the United States. FDR decided to extend aid to the Soviet Union because its continued resistance diverted Hitler from Western Europe and the Atlantic. As in the summer of 1940 with Britain, he took a gamble—and one that was again strongly opposed by the War Department, still struggling with U.S. mobilization. But the gamble paid off. Russia's survival into the winter, despite massive losses, marked a major respite in the war in the West.

There were other reasons for Roosevelt's caution in the Atlantic. He judged that U.S. public and congressional opinion had, if anything, hardened against full belligerency since the Soviet entry. He also feared that if the United States formally declared war, Americans would demand that aid to Britain and

Russia take second place to the needs of U.S. forces. In addition he intended that America's main role in a war, declared or not, should be as the provider of arms rather than armies. His new passion for airpower reflected the hope that, in modern warfare, technology could replace manpower. Budgets were politically less contentious than body bags. FDR also feared that a formal war with Germany would precipitate Japanese belligerency in the Pacific. Although a mistaken reading of the Axis pact, that fear reflected his conviction that America faced a cohesive global threat. During 1940-1941 the administration's aim was to contain Japan without war, yet opinions differed as to which measures would deter and which would provoke. FDR was less in command of policy toward Asia, partly because he was preoccupied with Europe but also because the splits over Japan were more serious. Hull wanted to keep talking while reiterating Wilsonian principles. The "hawks," led by Morgenthau and Stimson, favored tougher economic controls.

Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941 removed a major restraint on Japanese policymakers. They decided to continue their "southward advance" and occupy the whole of Indochina. FDR responded by tightening controls over Japanese oil imports, but, perhaps without his full knowledge, administration hawks developed these into a full oil embargo. This pushed Japanese leaders toward a final decision for war. America's putative deterrents—the main fleet left uneasily at Pearl Harbor, the new buildup of airpower in the Philippines—were ineffectual and even counterproductive. In other ways, too, the implementation of U.S. policy was faulty. Roosevelt was fascinated by human intelligence—firsthand reports had decisively influenced his policy after Munich, the fall of France, and the invasion of Russia. Unlike Churchill, he was much less interested in signals intelligence and failed to ensure its proper provision and analysis. For that Americans paid a high price on December 7, 1941.

But Pearl Harbor was ultimately the result of mistaken as-

sumptions. Roosevelt's focus was on Europe: he naturally assumed that the powers of the Old World and the New were the movers and shakers of world affairs. Like most of his advisers, he underestimated Japan's desperation and its capacity. By December 1941 he was expecting a war in Southeast Asia but not a daring air attack on the U.S. fleet more than five thousand miles to the east. This plunged America into a Pacific war that the administration had tried to avoid and for which it was woefully unprepared. If Germany had not declared war on the United States, the whole balance of Roosevelt's Germany-first policy would have been upset. After the humiliation of Pearl Harbor, domestic pressure for a Japan-first policy would have become overwhelming. Hitler saved Roosevelt from that predicament.

#### PERCEPTIONS

Japan's attack and Hitler's declaration of war were just the latest of a series of unexpected international events going back to Munich that shook the foundations of U.S. policy. But, as I have suggested, FDR might have reacted very differently to these events, notably the fall of France and the invasion of Russia. In both cases he could have intensified a policy of Western Hemisphere defense, as many Americans wished. He did not do so, but nor did he challenge the proponents of hemisphere defense head-on. Instead he and his internationalist supporters gradually "educated" (in their phrase) the American public into a new globalist conception of international affairs. This developed at two levels—the geopolitical and the ideological.

Franklin Roosevelt, like TR, was a disciple of Admiral Mahan. He was alert to the significance of sea power in world affairs and, for most of his life, an advocate of Anglo-American naval cooperation. Munich opened his eyes to airpower. This then became an obsession. He believed that the bomber had made America's oceanic barriers obsolescent and had invalidated

the concept of a secure Western Hemisphere. German subversion in Latin America might enable Hitler to build air bases within range of U.S. cities. If he gained control of West Africa or European colonies in the Caribbean, these might become jumping-off points for an attack on the United States. Hence the importance of the British Isles and the British fleet. They had become, for Roosevelt, America's front line. Given the new geography of power in the air age, the front line might well prove the last line of defense.

In keeping with his cautious view of U.S. opinion, Roosevelt stuck with the traditional conceptual framework of a discrete Western Hemisphere. He simply stretched it farther and farther eastward. By 1941, however, pro-administration intellectuals such as Walter Lippmann were promulgating the concept of an "Atlantic Area." This offered a new "mental map" to conceptualize Roosevelt's expanded definition of U.S. interests. Also entering circulation was the concept of "national security"—a term used by the president himself though particularly associated with Edward Mead Earle of Princeton. Unlike traditional concepts such as "defense," national security was active rather than passive—a combination of diplomacy and strategy to preempt trouble rather than simply respond to attack. This was what FDR was doing as he pushed the Western Hemisphere eastward by extended naval patrolling or the occupation of Iceland.

Although the Atlantic was deemed the center of danger, Roosevelt and his allies saw the threat as global in scope. From the spring of 1940 the main U.S. fleet was kept halfway across the Pacific at Hawaii in an attempt to deter Japan. By the fall of 1941 the United States was reinforcing the Philippines rather than planning their evacuation. Moreover the administration saw the Atlantic and Pacific challenges as interconnected. The Tripartite Pact of September 1940 strengthened its fears of an interconnected Axis, and the combined declarations of war in December 1941 served to confirm them.



Each Axis power sought an empire of its own, built around the principles of self-sufficiency. The Roosevelt administration was convinced that, to survive in such a world, the United States would have to change fundamentally its trading patterns and set itself on a permanent war footing, even if it remained nominally at peace. The term for this, already used by academics such as Harold Lasswell, was "the garrison state." The administration argued that the United States could avoid such an outcome only by preempting Axis imperialism through aid to countries such as Britain and China. In direct contrast, noninterventionist critics argued that a policy of hemisphere defense was the answer. In their view it was Roosevelt's "war policy" that would turn America into a garrison state.

Although a new geopolitics was at the heart of FDR's reconceptualization of U.S. foreign policy, it was not axiomatic. As Lindbergh and others insisted, the air age had the potential to make the United States stronger, not weaker, if air rearmament for *defense* was given priority. Moreover the Axis were much less cohesive than Washington believed. Although the secret protocols of the Tripartite Pact were unknown to the administration, it was clear, for instance, that Japan had been totally surprised in August 1939 and again in June 1941 by the zigzags of Hitler's policy toward Russia.

The president's new foreign policy was in fact founded on ideology as much as geopolitics. FDR's speeches in 1940 and 1941 were replete with statements of ideals and values. Roosevelt believed, and was at pains to say, that the Axis stood for principles inimical to those of America's liberal capitalist democracy rooted in Christian values. Ideologically his Wilsonianism remained profound. It provided the basis for major wartime statements such as the Four Freedoms. But FDR was applying Wilsonian values to new international circumstances.

In the late 1930s the most influential ideological conceptualization of world affairs emanated from Moscow. This centered

on a divide between the "fascists" and the "anti-fascists" which the Comintern expounded as part of the Soviet attempt to build a Popular Front against Hitler. The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 exploded that idea. In the United States the term "totalitarianism"—already in use to cover Germany, Italy, and Japan—was now extended to embrace the Soviet Union as well. This helped Roosevelt set out a stark bipolar ideological divide. The totalitarians, seeking to bring all of society under the control of the state, were depicted as antithetical to the basic freedoms embodied in the United States.

There were other ways of conceptualizing the world, however. Wilsonianism was an amorphous ideology, but one of its central tenets was the condemnation of imperialism. Britain, France, and Russia were three of the world's leading empires, and Wilson's ambivalence about them was reflected in his description of the United States in 1917 as an "associate" power rather than an "ally." Roosevelt shared some of that ambivalence, but the crisis of 1940 was far worse than 1917. British imperialism became a minor concern. During the Blitz of 1940–1941 the administration and a sympathetic media helped portray Britain in a more favorable light. The erosion of class barriers under Hitler's aerial pounding was taken as evidence of a social revolution. The new image of Britain was that of democracy, not empire—a country belatedly moving toward the American way.

The repackaging of Stalin's Russia after June 1941 was much more difficult. On security grounds, Roosevelt welcomed the Soviet Union to the American camp, and most Americans concurred. For the moment the language of totalitarianism was dropped. But the idea lurked under the surface of political discussion. Roosevelt's efforts to turn the USSR into a proto-democracy, particularly by talking up freedom of religion, were not convincing. There seemed a danger in the summer of 1941 that agreements between Britain and the Soviet Union might preempt Roosevelt's vision for a postwar world. In August,

therefore, Roosevelt pinned Churchill down to a major statement of war aims—the Atlantic Charter. This eschewed secret treaties of the sort that the administration feared might be brewing in London and Moscow. It also committed the evasive British to a Wilsonian agenda. Churchill ensured plenty of loopholes, but in a broad sense he had signed up to American goals. Although Moscow revived the concept of an anti-fascist coalition, Washington continued to describe the emerging alliance in the language of democratic values. Roosevelt did not talk of making the world safe for democracy, but that was his intention.

“World” is the operative term, for the new geopolitics and ideology constituted a statement of American globalism. This can be seen clearly in the evolution of the term “Second World War,” which we now use without a moment’s thought.

In the 1920s and 1930s the British had referred to the European conflict of 1914–1918 as “The Great War”—a term first used of their titanic, quarter-century conflict with France in the era of Napoleon. A few, notably Winston Churchill, situated the Great War within what he called “The World Crisis,” but the term “World War” was largely a German and American invention. For the Germans it connoted a war in which the British and Americans were involved, unlike the continental European conflicts of the Bismarck era. From an American viewpoint, Europe was at least three thousand miles from Washington, D.C., and the conflict of 1914–1918 also had reverberations in Asia and Africa as well as reordering the Near East. The term “World War” was therefore apt. It lodged in American political terminology, even though Wilsonian globalism was soon discredited.

For much of the 1930s FDR considered it essential to distance himself from Wilson. He accepted the basic framework of neutrality legislation and came close to saying that U.S. belligerency in 1917 had been a mistake. In 1938, 1939, and 1940 his more forward policy in Europe was presented as an effort to *avoid* war, not to enter it. But by the spring of 1941 his line had begun to

change. He had redefined America’s national security to include much of the Atlantic and (more covertly) the Pacific. He was citing the Tripartite Pact as evidence of a global conspiracy, and the looming invasion of Russia accentuated the global ramifications of the European conflict. In the spring of 1941 he therefore began talking publicly about “this second World War”—picking up a phrase that had been bandied about in the United States and China in the mid-1930s. At the same time, by aiding Britain and Russia, by pressuring Japan and not abandoning China, he inserted the United States into the widening conflict at critical points. Because of its hinge position as an emerging power in the Atlantic *and* the Pacific, the United States was crucial to the fusion of the separate regional conflicts. Of course it was in large measure decisions made in Berlin and Tokyo that turned the European war of September 1939 into a global conflagration by the end of 1941. But Roosevelt’s discourse and his policies also contributed. In both respects one can say that “the Second World War” was partly an American construction.

#### PRECEDENTS

During the cold war, World War II slipped from the gaze of many U.S. diplomatic historians. Understandably, their prime concern was Soviet-American relations. Roosevelt figured to the extent that scholars debated whether or not he was an “appeaser” who had laid the basis for Soviet hegemony in postwar Eastern Europe. U.S. entry into the war was largely irrelevant to this debate. Although conspiracy theories about Pearl Harbor persisted, the general consensus about World War II as “the good war” discouraged close analysis of U.S. intervention.

The cold war is now history, however. As it recedes into the distance, one can look past it and discern more easily the meaning of World War II. From this vantage point the redefinition of U.S. policy and discourse about foreign affairs in 1940–1941 may

be seen as an important and neglected stage in the emergence of America as a superpower and in the delineation of its cold war worldview. Of course 1941 was not 1945 or 1950. The transformation of the Soviet Union from ally to enemy occurred slowly in the mid-1940s; the formation of a vast peacetime defense establishment was a product of the Korean War more than World War II. But key concepts had been formed, basic practices established, in 1940–1941, *long before* they were applied to the Soviet Union.

The new globalism was particularly influential. As early as 1943 Walter Lippmann was writing about “the Atlantic Community.” That term became fundamental to U.S. strategy after 1949 with the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The basic concepts of Atlanticism—about the geopolitical and ideological significance of a friendly Western Europe for the United States—were outlined in the months before Pearl Harbor. By this time the term “national security” had entered the vocabulary of Roosevelt and other internationalists. In due course, historians such as Daniel Yergin and Michael Hogan would depict the national security state as the defining structure of America’s cold war. Moreover the concept of totalitarianism, though sublimated after Russia entered the war, had already been firmly lodged in American thinking. Roosevelt’s attempt to detach the USSR from it did not succeed, and by 1947 the Truman Doctrine equated Stalinism with totalitarianism once again. Atlanticism, national security, and totalitarianism all became part of the cold war worldview of bipolarity. But that bipolar framework was established by Roosevelt, not Truman. In speech after speech in 1939, 1940, and 1941, FDR depicted a world polarized between the forces of light and darkness. Bipolarity was not a product of the cold war but a precedent. Roosevelt had predisposed Americans to think in terms of a world divided into two ways of life.

The new globalism was only one of the legacies of these years.

Roosevelt’s bypassing of Congress on some crucial issues in 1940–1941 was another harbinger of things to come. The destroyers deal was couched as an executive agreement, exploiting Supreme Court decisions in the 1930s. The president conducted his undeclared naval war in the Atlantic under his powers as commander-in-chief. Here were the origins of what would later be called the Imperial Presidency, enabling Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon to wage a massive, undeclared war in Vietnam.

An important facet of the Imperial Presidency was a vast network of military intelligence. Here the era of 1938–1941 also set precedents, albeit more of a negative kind. Roosevelt’s neglect of signals intelligence had contributed to the Pearl Harbor debacle. Although he continued to be more interested in spies than signals, the handling of sigint was transformed over the next few months. Roosevelt also recognized the need for a more integrated management of intelligence: hence the Office of Strategic Services established in June 1942. True to form, he refused to give OSS real autonomy, and bureaucratic turf wars continued to bedevil U.S. intelligence gathering and analysis. But OSS was the precursor of the cold war CIA.

Roosevelt’s conception of war was also significant. After November 1938 he imagined airpower as a potent deterrent, a way of averting war. That doctrine was applied in earnest in late 1941 with the reinforcement of the Philippines by B-17s. He also envisaged airpower as a war-winning weapon—one that might even obviate the need for large and politically sensitive armies. The War Department contested that idea in its “Victory Program,” rightly predicting the need for large land forces slogging their way across Western Europe. Although exaggerated, FDR’s hopes for airpower were a foretaste of things to come. B-17s became the prime instrument of wartime strategic bombing; the research into atomic energy that FDR commissioned in October 1941 laid the foundations for the atomic bomb. After 1945 cold

war strategy centered on aerial bombing, especially using nuclear weapons. Roosevelt was the pioneer of technowar: massive firepower applied with the intent of minimizing U.S. casualties.

Modern war was total war, requiring the mobilization of the whole of society. By aiding the Allies Roosevelt sought to avoid "a garrison state"; the political scientist Aaron Friedberg has argued that what actually emerged was a "contract state"—one that was less burdensome and directive than the totalitarian system and relied on contracts rather than coercion to harness private resources. Both the enhanced mobilization of resources and the contract mechanism were pioneered in the era between Munich and Pearl Harbor.

One early example was the decision for a peacetime draft: the Selective Service Act of September 1940. Truman tried to dispose of the draft in 1947 but then restored it in 1948 as the cold war deepened. Thereafter it was part of American life for three decades. Yet FDR had rejected the idea of Universal Military Training for all citizens, as advocated by Henry Stimson and other veterans of the World War I Plattsburg movement. That would have entailed a more radical militarization of American life. A second example was the galvanizing of American industry for air rearmament. Roosevelt's targets of 10,000 planes a year (November 1938) and 50,000 a year (May 1940) were pulled, as it were, from the air, and soon had to be brought down to earth. But in 1942 U.S. industry produced 48,000 planes, and in 1943 another 86,000. Dreams were exceeded by reality. In 1938 FDR had talked of building planes in government plants paid for by New Deal programs, but by the summer of 1940 he accepted that rearmament on such a scale would depend on private industry operating on favorable contracts.

An active policy of national security, even if operated on a contract basis, also required an activist state. During the 1940s the U.S. government gradually assumed a far greater role in the macro-management of the economy. The New Deal had

breached the norms of balanced budgets, but in a limited and temporary way. The deficit spending that got under way seriously with lend-lease marked a major shift in the U.S. political economy. Expanded after Pearl Harbor, this military Keynesianism legitimated government spending and helped promote economic recovery. It also had larger political significance. As the historian Alan Brinkley has argued, the era of "reform liberalism" was waning. Since the Progressive Era, American reformers had been preoccupied with economic structures, especially the danger of monopolies. Now their focus shifted to fiscal policy and the gospel of growth. The pioneering application of Keynesianism to national security rather than social security helped ensure acceptance of this radically new economic philosophy.

The 1930s were a time of depression, economically and psychologically. The war years were an era of boom and renewed confidence. The historian Mark Leff has observed: "War is hell, but for millions of Americans on the booming home front, World War II was also a hell of a war." The years 1940–1941 are the cusp of that transition. Rearmament and full employment (in war industry and the armed forces) boosted economic recovery, which in turn inspired a new confidence. This was enhanced by the astounding collapse of the European powers, which had dominated world politics and haunted the American imagination for centuries. It was a time of threat, yes, but also a time of promise. For internationalists, the New World had an opportunity and a duty to reform the Old, to redeem the West and the Rest. Here was a decisive moment in the ideologizing of what Henry Luce called the American Century.

Roosevelt, Lippmann, and Luce were not Lindbergh, Wheeler, and Vandenberg. The active proponents of the new American globalism were a minority in 1940–1941. But, as historians have shown, the reshaping of U.S. policy in the early cold war was also the work of a small minority of Washington insiders who managed to build a consensus around what they wanted.

In the summer of 1939 a small group of obdurate congressmen, particularly in the Senate, were able to stymie Roosevelt's attempts at neutrality revision. In the summer of 1940 even smaller groups of determined internationalists promoted the destroyers deal and the peacetime draft. They helped give a cautious president the intellectual arguments and political momentum he needed to shift policy and change attitudes. Despite all the larger international, economic, and social pressures, the making and re-making of foreign policy is disproportionately an elite activity.

There was also continuity in America's foreign policy elite in the 1940s. Some of those who helped create the national security state in the early cold war had participated in the policy reorientation of 1940–1941. They included the diplomats Dean Acheson and Averell Harriman; Robert Lovett, Robert Patterson, and John J. McCloy in Stimson's War Department; and James Forrestal as Knox's undersecretary of the navy. For all these policy-makers—the so-called Wise Men of America's cold war establishment—the eighteen months before Pearl Harbor constituted a turning point in their careers and their outlook.

That moment is also embodied in the architecture of America's capital. At the beginning of 1939 the Department of State, the War Department, and the Navy Department were all accommodated in a single building immediately west of the White House. In the summer of 1939 the War Department moved down to the Munitions Building on Constitution Avenue. As its civilian employees swelled to manage rearmament and the draft, so the department colonized another twenty buildings all over the District of Columbia. The Navy and State departments were also expanding, albeit less dramatically. In early 1941 the army was allocated a new federal office building, near completion, in a southwest backwater of the city known as Foggy Bottom. But Henry Stimson considered it too pokey: the façade, he said, looked like the entrance to a provincial opera house. On August 14—just as the Atlantic Charter was being broadcast to the

world—Congress voted appropriations for a new, purpose-built War Department across the Potomac. On September 11—the day FDR delivered his “shoot-on-sight” radio address about the attack on the *USS Greer*—construction began on this massive, five-sided edifice, a mile around its perimeter.

Roosevelt was deeply unhappy. In August he had moved the site three-quarters of a mile downriver to avoid impeding the view of the nation's capital from Arlington National Cemetery. Nor did he like the design, proposing unsuccessfully a square, windowless monolith with artificial light and ventilation. After the war, he said, when the military had shrunk back to its proper size, the building could be used for storage. As we now know, it wasn't. Over the next decade the Pentagon became the permanent home for an integrated Department of Defense, the State Department took over Stimson's reject in Foggy Bottom, and the president's new National Security Council moved into the old State-War-Navy building. None of this FDR had imagined, let alone desired. But this architectural footnote is another reminder that Franklin Roosevelt helped lay the foundations of America's national security state.