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Counterfeit Diplomacy and Mobilization in Democracies

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How do policymakers in democratic nations mobilize support for hard-line strategies? Existing answers to this question emphasize the exaggeration of external threats. Yet this overlooks an important dilemma: because democratic citizens expect their leaders to explore peaceful solutions or less aggressive alternatives when foreign dangers are ambiguous, the same conditions that make threat inflation necessary also make it difficult to employ successfully. To mobilize support for hard-line measures when the public wants its leaders to demonstrate restraint, policymakers may therefore attempt to shift blame onto an adversary by using "counterfeit diplomacy." Specifically, democratic leaders may adopt more cooperative or less coercive options than they believe are necessary, but which they anticipate will fail. This approach can be a risky one, however, because an opponent might accept a nation's demands, accede to its conditions, or offer counterproposals in the hope of diffusing support for more confrontational measures.

How do policymakers in democratic nations mobilize support for hard-line strategies such as containment, coercion, and war?[1] Existing answers to this question share a common theme, namely that leaders exaggerate the severity or imminence of foreign threats to gain popular, political, and international backing for their preferred policies. By distorting information and resorting

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[1] Hard-line measures typically include balancing behavior (namely building arms and forming alliances), the threat of military force, and the use of force.

to bellicose or ideological rhetoric, policymakers can frighten the general public, silence their political rivals, rally overseas allies, and ultimately gain broad approval for measures that might otherwise provoke significant opposition.[2] Arguments that emphasize this type of threat inflation present an overly narrow view of the mobilization process, however. In particular, they neglect two important and closely related dynamics. First, while democratic leaders may resort to alarmism when attempting to marshal support for confrontational and potentially costly strategies, in many of these cases they also adopt much less bellicose measures than their language would seem to warrant, even if doing so might appear inconsistent with their warnings. Second, because soft-line options are often viewed as a necessary precursor to hard-line alternatives, the former can actually help to build support for the latter, although only if they do not succeed.

Consider, for instance, the George W. Bush administration's effort to generate support for military action against Iraq, which is widely considered an example of threat inflation.[3] On 12 September 2002, President Bush addressed the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, expressed a preference for diplomacy rather than force, and declared that the United States would work with the UN Security Council to disarm Saddam Hussein's regime.[4] Just weeks earlier, however, Vice President Richard Cheney had argued that the "return of inspectors would provide no assurance whatsoever" that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Less than one month after speaking to the UN, President Bush also detailed the threat posed by Iraq and suggested that diplomacy would likely prove insufficient.[5] Nevertheless, the administration continued to advocate a new Security Council resolution and renewed inspections. In short, policymakers openly committed to a strategy that, according to their own arguments, was an inadequate response to a growing Iraqi threat. Not surprisingly, though, many view US efforts to work

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[2] The exaggeration of foreign threats by democratic and nondemocratic regimes is a central theme in a number of important works, including Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[3] See in particular Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 5–48; Lawrence Freedman, "War in Iraq: Selling the Threat," *Survival* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 7–49; Douglas C. Foyle, "Leading the Public to War? The Influence of American Public Opinion on the Bush Administration's Decision to Go to War in Iraq," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 269–94; James P. Pfiffner, "Did President Bush Mislead the Country in His Arguments for War with Iraq?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (March 2004): 25–46; and the essays in *American Foreign Policy and the Politics of Fear: Threat Inflation since 9/11*, eds., A. Trevor Thrall and Jane K. Kramer (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[4] George W. Bush, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City," 12 September 2002, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64069&st=united+nations&st1=.

[5] Elisabeth Bumiller and James Dao, "Cheney Says Peril of a Nuclear Iraq Justifies Attack," *New York Times*, 27 August 2002; George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation on Iraq from Cincinnati, Ohio," 7 October 2002, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=73139&st=&st1=.

through the United Nations as, in one author's words, "a faithless exercise; an exercise *for show.*"[6]

This case is just one example of a broader pattern of behavior that remains largely unexplored by existing theories of mobilization. To provide a more complete account of how democratic leaders mobilize their citizens at home and their allies abroad, this paper makes three arguments. First, while institutional and normative constraints can make it difficult for democratic leaders to obtain support for hard-line policies, they can also prevent leaders from mobilizing support through threat inflation alone. In democratic nations, policymakers are expected to reflect the preferences of the public, and the public—absent an immediate or unambiguous threat—is often reluctant to condone forceful measures over less costly alternatives and unwilling to tolerate wars that are not options of last resort. As a result, democratic leaders are frequently concerned with presenting an image of moderation and restraint, which can be undermined by relying solely on aggressive rhetoric to gain public, political, and international support. For example, despite their efforts to highlight the Iraqi threat before the March 2003 invasion, US officials did not want to appear anxious for war. As then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice explained, "It is important for the American people to see that before you order their sons and daughters into battle, you have done everything you can to find a solution."[7] Secretary of State Colin Powell similarly concluded that "even if anyone felt that war was the only solution," the United States "could not get to war without first trying a diplomatic solution." It was, he maintained, "the absolute necessary first step."[8]

Second, to mobilize support for hard-line strategies without appearing overly aggressive, leaders sometimes choose less forceful measures than they believe are truly needed, but which they expect—or hope—will fail. This might include, for example, pursuing engagement despite a preference for containment, exploring a negotiated settlement to a conflict despite a preference for coercion, or using coercive diplomacy to secure concessions from an adversary despite a preference for war. These efforts, which I refer to as counterfeit diplomacy, are intended to shift responsibility for a confrontation onto the adversary. By allowing democratic leaders to appear as reluctant belligerents, unsuccessful efforts to engage a rival or resolve a crisis short of war can enable them to avoid blame for escalation, cast it onto the opponent, and subsequently adopt more forceful measures with greater support. Thus the Bush administration was willing to go to the United Nations because most officials believed that Iraq was unlikely to comply with the demands

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[6] Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies Since 9/11* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 171 (emphasis in original).

[7] Quoted in Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, "Trust Me, He Says," *Time*, 11 November 2002.

[8] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 156–57.

outlined in the president's September 2002 speech.[9] It was widely assumed that Saddam Hussein would refuse to cooperate with renewed inspections or, if he did, that illicit weapons would quickly be discovered, revealing his continued deception. Either outcome could then be used to justify military action.[10]

Finally, counterfeit diplomacy can be a risky strategy, particularly if democratic leaders want their efforts to be viewed as sincere. In particular, coercive diplomacy might succeed unexpectedly or cooperative gestures might actually be reciprocated. Alternatively, an adversary could make counteroffers or concessions that do not satisfy policymakers but do appear reasonable to key audiences. Any of these outcomes would leave democratic leaders with a choice between accepting a course of action that avoids the dangers of escalation but fails to achieve their primary objectives or instead pursuing hard-line policies regardless of the adversary's response and endangering public, political, and international support. For instance, although it was not considered likely, in 2002 the possibility did exist that coercive diplomacy would actually succeed; Saddam could reveal his hidden weapons, acquiesce to renewed inspections, and perhaps remain in power—an outcome most US officials considered unacceptable. Secretary Powell raised this possibility with the president, telling him, "If you take it to the U.N., you've got to recognize that they might be able to do it. In which case there's no war. That could mean a solution that is not as clean as going in and taking the guy out." Ultimately, Powell cautioned, "The international cover [of the UN] could also result in a different outcome."[11] In fact, Saddam's apparent willingness to accept renewed inspections gave the administration's critics at home and abroad one of their strongest arguments against the need for war, even if it did not prevent the United States and its coalition partners from removing his regime.

The remainder of this paper is divided into five sections. The first section reviews the significance of domestic and international support for policymaking, the use of threat inflation to increase that support, and the limits of this mobilization strategy in democratic nations. The second section elaborates the concept of counterfeit diplomacy and offers several empirical examples. The third section describes the potential risks associated with counterfeit diplomacy. The fourth section presents two case studies: the American offer

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[9] David E. Sanger, "Bush Declares U.S. Is Using Diplomacy to Disarm Hussein," *New York Times*, 22 October 2002.

[10] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 222–23; Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, rev. ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2005), 139.

[11] Quoted in Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 151. This concern was not unreasonable. According to reports, in the fall of 2002 Saddam "told a group of officers that Iraq would provide UN inspectors with the access they needed, thus denying President George W. Bush and the Americans any excuse for starting a new conflict." Kevin M. Woods with Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership* (Norfolk, VA: Joint Center for Operational Analysis, 2005), 29.

of Marshall Plan aid to the Soviet Union in 1947 and US efforts to mobilize support for the Persian Gulf War in 1990–91. The fifth section summarizes the paper's main arguments and suggests implications for theory and policy.

HARD-LINE POLICIES AND THE POLITICS OF MOBILIZATION

Domestic consent is a critical element of national power and a virtual pre-requisite for a successful grand strategy.[12] If leaders cannot convince a large portion of the population to support and sacrifice for their policies, then they may be unable to implement them in the first place or sustain them over time. As Thomas Christensen aptly summarizes, "without a healthy degree of consensus behind security strategies, no state can harness its population and project national power abroad."[13] Although policymakers in virtually all nations must obtain at least tacit consent from some portion of society (whether key interest groups, politicians, or the wider public) before enacting major policy decisions, leaders in democratic nations must obtain broad popular approval for their policies, especially those dealing with issues of war and peace, or risk being removed from office.[14] At the same time, international support can prove equally important for democratic nations, not only by providing them with additional economic and military resources, but also because of its potential influence on domestic opinion. On the one hand, the assistance of allies can confirm the merits of a nation's cause, helping to bolster public support for its policies. On the other hand, the conspicuous absence of international support can have a negative impact on public and elite opinion by causing domestic audiences to lose confidence in their leaders' goals or methods.[15]

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[12] See, for example, Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition," in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, ed. Paul Kennedy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 5; Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 5 (Summer 1979): 997; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 135.

[13] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 11.

[14] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith, "An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (December 1999): 791–807; T. Clifton Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell, "Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints, and War: So Why Kant Democracies Fight?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, no. 2 (June 1991): 187–211.

[15] Barry M. Blechman and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Defining Moment: The Threat and Use of Force in American Foreign Policy*,*" *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 8; Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 154–58.

Mobilization and Threat Inflation

As both liberal international relations theorists and neoclassical realists have observed, structural theories such as neorealism often assume that states have the ability to gain support and extract resources without difficulty, yet in reality a host of factors can impede mobilization and extraction, including insufficient public, political, or international support.[16] When opposition to hard-line measures is strong or support is tenuous, then, how can policymakers "foster the people's willing spirit" and gain approval for their preferred strategies?[17] The existing literature suggests a number of ways to avoid public criticism or establish a consensus in favor of more aggressive options. For example, policymakers can simply act, presenting their audiences with a fait accompli and counting on a rally effect to bolster support, at least in the short term.[18] They might instead resort to salami tactics, breaking down new strategies into a series of less controversial policies.[19] Alternatively, they can seize upon or provoke incidents to justify escalation.[20] In some cases, they might even incite an opponent into declaring war or striking first.[21] Finally, they can adopt hard-line measures covertly to preclude any public debate at all and to avoid being held accountable if controversial policies ultimately fail.[22]

Perhaps most importantly, policymakers may also attempt to sway key audiences by inflating threats.[23] By employing aggressive and ideological

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[16] Andrew Moravcsik, "Introduction: Integrating International and Domestic Theories of International Bargaining," in *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*, eds., Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson, and Robert D. Putnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 10–11; Michael Mastanduno, David A. Lake, and G. John Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action," *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (December 1989): 457–74; Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, "Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy," in *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*, eds., Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 464–95.

[17] B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (New York: Praeger, 1954), 336.

[18] Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 666–72.

[19] Zeev Maoz, "Framing the National Interest: The Manipulation of Foreign Policy Decisions in Group Settings," *World Politics* 43, no. 1 (October 1990): 90–92.

[20] Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crises* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), chap. 2.

[21] Ibid., 37–39; Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War," *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 89.

[22] David L. Rousseau, A. Trevor Thrall, Marcus Schulzke, and Steve S. Sin, "Democratic Leaders and War: Simultaneously Managing External Conflicts and Domestic Politics," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 66, no. 3 (June 2012): 354.

[23] Ibid., 358–59; Theodore J. Lowi, "Making Democracy Safe for the World: National Politics and Foreign Policy" in *The Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy*, ed. James Rosenau (New York: Free Press, 1967), 295–331; John A. Thompson, "The Exaggeration of American Vulnerability: The Anatomy of a Tradition," *Diplomatic History* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 23–43; John Mueller, "Simplicity and Spook: Terrorism and the Dynamics of Threat Exaggeration," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (May 2005): 208–34.

rhetoric as well as arguments based on selective or disingenuous information, leaders can exaggerate the danger posed by other actors, to include overstating their level of hostility, the scope of their capabilities, or the extent of the state's own vulnerability. Because increased intergroup conflict may cause a corresponding increase in intragroup cohesion and morale, leaders that successfully embellish external threats should find it easier to gain widespread support for more forceful measures.[24] There is, however, a risk associated with threat inflation, namely that policymakers can become entrapped by their rhetoric. As Charles Kupchan notes, "elites may find it costly in political terms to refute precisely those images that they had previously been championing. By seeking to reverse course, decision makers may be discredited and viewed as opportunists by the public."[25] Policymakers who determine that less confrontational measures are preferable might therefore be compelled to adopt or persist with more forceful strategies than they would like.

Democracy and the Limits of Threat Inflation

Theories emphasizing threat inflation undoubtedly capture an important element of the mobilization process. Nevertheless, they do not fully explain how democratic political institutions and liberal norms can influence mobilization. Although gaining and maintaining domestic support is often a priority for leaders across different regimes, a number of factors make these concerns particularly acute in democracies, including the ability of citizens to express dissent and hold their leaders accountable through elections, as well as the ability of legislatures to restrict or veto policy decisions. Obtaining broad popular and political approval for hard-line policies can be challenging in democratic nations, however, even when these measures are a necessary response to genuine threats.[26] For example, the general public is often reluctant to sacrifice blood and treasure, and thus may be hesitant to support costly and risky strategies such as containment, coercive diplomacy, and war. At the same time, citizens are unlikely to condone policies they consider morally unacceptable, a standard that hard-line options may not meet under some conditions. Because democratic leaders are responsible to the electorate, moreover, they cannot simply ignore these views.[27]

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[24] Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1956), 104–6.

[25] Kupchan, *Vulnerability of Empire*, 98.

[26] See in particular Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[27] Randall L. Schweller, "Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?" *World Politics* 44, no. 2 (January 1992): 245–48; John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 1994).

Consequently, policymakers may have an incentive to manipulate key audiences when the strategies they prefer are widely considered unnecessary, inappropriate, or both.[28] John Mearsheimer, for one, argues that threat inflation "is more likely in democracies than autocracies, because leaders are more beholden to public opinion in democratic states."[29] Yet the same factors that make democratic publics hesitant to condone forceful measures can also prevent democratic leaders from relying on threat inflation alone when attempting to marshal support for those measures.

Due to the combination of cost aversion and normative opposition, backing for aggressive strategies is likely to be highest when threats are direct and unambiguous, or when less forceful measures appear unlikely to succeed. Consider, for example, popular views on the use of military force within the United States. According to Bruce Jentleson, the American public is most willing to support military action in response to "active" threats, which involve "actual and not just potential aggression" against the United States, its allies, or its interests abroad.[30] This fits with the straightforward logic that as threats become increasingly obvious and urgent, domestic constraints will correspondingly become less influential, and the public will progressively view military force as a necessary and legitimate policy option. If threats are neither obvious nor urgent, however, the public will want to see that less aggressive options have been given an opportunity to succeed before consenting to the use of force. As one study observes, "there typically is much higher support for diplomatic solutions than for military solutions, and higher support for military operations when a majority believes that all reasonable diplomatic avenues have been exhausted."[31]

These considerations have important implications for the mobilization process. In particular, they suggest that democratic leaders must demonstrate restraint as well as resolve when threats are ambiguous, unless the expected

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[28] John Schuessler, "The Deception Dividend: FDR's Undeclared War," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (Spring 2010).

[29] John Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 58–59. By contrast, a number of authors maintain that threat inflation is inhibited in a democracy due to the existence of a well-functioning marketplace of ideas that exposes false or exaggerated claims. Yet the significance and reliability of this mechanism are debatable. As Jack Snyder acknowledges, the marketplace of ideas does not necessarily prevent the use or even the success of threat inflation in democracies, but rather generates eventual pressure for retrenchment when the resulting policies have clearly negative consequences. Moreover, Chaim Kaufmann notes that democratic nations may be particularly susceptible to issue manipulation. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 146; Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 49–52, 256–57; Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas," 32–37.

[30] Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force, *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): 53.

[31] Daniel Byman, Eric Larsen, and Matthew Waxman, *Air Power as a Coercive Instrument* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1999), 72. See also Byman and Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion*, 134; Bruce W. Jentleson and Rebecca L. Britton, "Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August 1998): 415.

costs of their preferred hard-line measures are negligible or key audiences are ideologically predisposed to hawkishness for some reason.[32] As Mearsheimer also observes, when strategic imperatives and liberal norms collide, democratic leaders "will usually act like realists and talk like liberals."[33] If the public or politicians are skeptical that hard-line strategies are necessary, they will expect policymakers to search for peaceful solutions or explore less costly and less dangerous methods to address ambiguous threats. By relying on threat inflation to make alleged dangers appear more urgent, however, leaders risk violating these expectations, appearing unnecessarily aggressive, and ultimately losing public, political, and even international support. In sum, it is precisely when threat inflation is supposedly necessary—when support for hard-line options is weak because threats are indirect, geographically or temporally remote, or generally uncertain—that key audiences in democratic nations may demand behavior that is sharply at odds with the aggressive or ideologically charged rhetoric that characterizes this mobilization strategy.

THE STRATEGY OF COUNTERFEIT DIPLOMACY

When threats are unclear, how can democratic leaders mobilize support for hard-line measures without appearing overly aggressive or too quick to abandon less forceful alternatives? To guard against charges of aggression, leaders generally employ more balanced rhetoric than arguments emphasizing threat inflation would suggest. Although they invariably call attention to an adversary's apparent hostility, they frequently emphasize their own preference for a peaceful solution as well. Yet neither of these assertions is inherently credible; to gain support for the hard-line policies they prefer, leaders have an incentive to make these claims whether they are true or not.[34] To lend credibility to both arguments, leaders may resort to "counterfeit diplomacy": adopting less forceful measures than they believe are necessary, but which they hope or expect will fail.[35] Specifically, unsuccessful efforts to reach a peaceful settlement or resolve a dispute without resorting to the threat or use of force can enable leaders to place the onus for a confrontation onto

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[32] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting important caveats to this observation.

[33] Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie*, 81.

[34] Terrence L. Chapman and Dan Reiter, "The United Nations Security Council and the Rally 'Round the Flag Effect," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (December 2004): 889–91.

[35] The difference between hoping and expecting that a policy will fail is largely one of degree rather than kind. Although leaders may prefer a settlement that avoids the risks and costs of competition, oftentimes the only terms they would find acceptable are so expansive that the adversary will not agree or would be unlikely to uphold them if it did. In this situation, as with the situation in which leaders want no agreement under any conditions, the primary purpose of diplomacy is not to reach a settlement but to appear willing to do so.

the adversary and avoid blame for the continuation of hostilities or any sub-sequent escalation.[36] These efforts can, therefore, function as a catalyst that increases popular support, a shield that defends leaders against charges of unnecessary aggression, or both. I describe this strategy below and provide several empirical examples, focusing on the use of soft-line policies such as negotiation, which are especially puzzling when leaders view hard-line measures as necessary or desirable.

Counterfeit Diplomacy as Avoidance Bargaining

Negotiation and bargaining are important elements of international diplo-macy, particularly when policymakers hope to settle conflicts or limit their scope. Moreover, the conventional wisdom suggests that democratic lead-ers in particular will go to great lengths to ensure that negotiations succeed because unreciprocated cooperation can lead to electoral punishment.[37] Yet policymakers do not always engage in diplomacy because an agreement is likely or even desirable. Instead, when hard-line policies are considered necessary, leaders may pursue a diplomatic track largely in response to pres-sure from domestic or international audiences and despite a preference for stronger measures. As Gordon Craig and Alexander George have observed, "governments sometimes enter into negotiations even when they are aware that there is no shared basis of interest," because the failure to do so "may be politically damaging at home or present an image of inflexibility abroad that may harm relations with allies and neutrals." Moreover, "even though the in-terested parties do not expect or want an agreement, they may nonetheless begin talks with the goal of gaining propaganda advantages at the expense of the opponent."[38]

At times, then, international diplomacy is best characterized as a form of "avoidance bargaining," which is illustrated in Figure 1. In typical negoti-ations, parties engage in persuasion or exchange demands and concessions to revise the status quo. In avoidance bargaining, however, "a party prefers the status quo or some other non-negotiation alternative to any possible gains from negotiation and would, on this basis alone, shun negotiation." At the same time, "the would-be avoider faces an external demand to negotiate in good faith."[39] In the language of game theory, although leaders may

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[36] On the importance of this dynamic see especially Schuessler, "The Deception Dividend," 143. For an alternative view on how democratic leaders use blame to achieve their policy goals, see Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies: The Effect of State Autonomy on the Post-World War Settlements* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 58–59.

[37] See, for example, Michael Colaresi, "When Doves Cry: International Rivalry, Unreciprocated Co-operation, and Leadership Turnover," *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 3 (July 2004): 555–70.

[38] Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 164.

[39] James Wallihan, "Negotiating to Avoid Agreement," *Negotiation Journal* 14, no. 3 (July 1998): 259. See also Fred Charles Iklé, *How Nations Negotiate* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 53–55, 112–14; Richard Ned Lebow, *The Art of Bargaining* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 12–13.
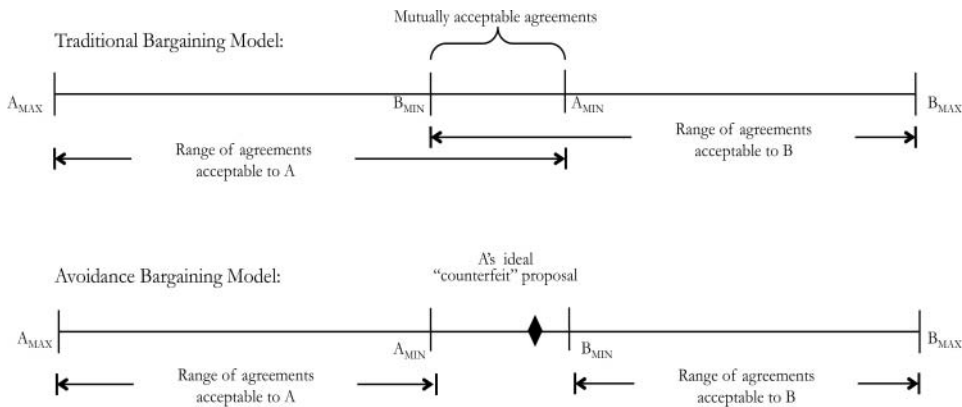
FIGURE 1 Traditional Bargaining Versus Avoidance Bargaining

effectively have "deadlock" preferences, they cannot always act like it.[40] Instead, for policymakers who believe that hard-line measures are necessary but also hope to deflect criticism that they are failing to give cooperation a chance to succeed, diplomatic avenues such as negotiations can be valuable precisely because an acceptable agreement cannot be reached. In this case, diplomacy is undertaken primarily for the sake of appearances, and success—greater support for the continuation of existing hard-line policies or broad approval for more aggressive options—derives from the attempt itself and the subsequent failure to achieve a settlement.

These considerations can be illustrated by American views on negotiating with the Soviet Union. During the Second World War, Washington participated in a series of conferences with Moscow despite skepticism that an acceptable agreement on the postwar landscape could be reached with Joseph Stalin. Nevertheless, a number of US advisors insisted on making an effort to secure Soviet cooperation.[41] Though largely opposed to those efforts at the time, George Kennan later concluded that subsequent criticism, particularly of the Yalta Conference, was unfounded. The meetings, he wrote, "had a distinct value as practical demonstrations of our readiness and eagerness to establish better relations with the Soviet regime and of the difficulties we encountered in our effort to do so. Like other evidences of

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[40] This strategy is perhaps most familiar as an explanation for veto bargaining in American politics. In cases of divided government, Congress may pass bills that it knows the president will veto. It does so with the expectation that passing a bill will make Congress appear moderate in the eyes of the electorate, while vetoing the bill will make the president appear more extreme, reducing his or her popularity. See John B. Gilmour, *Strategic Disagreement: Stalemate in American Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); Tim Groseclose and Nolan McCarty, "The Politics of Blame: Bargaining Before an Audience," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (January 2001): 100–19.

[41] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 14–15.

patience and good will, they were important for the record. Had we not gone into them, it is my guess that we would still be hearing reproachful voices saying: 'You claim that cooperation with Russia is not possible. How do you know? You never even tried.'"[42]

Similarly, during the preparation of NSC-68, which laid the foundation for America's Cold War strategy of containment, US officials again debated the merits of negotiating with the Soviet Union. Despite a general consensus that negotiations would not achieve the kind of drastic changes in Soviet policy deemed necessary, there were those who believed that attempting to settle the main issues of contention would have significant value both at home and abroad. As a report produced by the State Department's Office of Public Affairs observed, although the American public was prepared for continued antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union, it also wanted the government "to take every initiative which offers a possibility of relieving the mounting tension."[43] The main argument in favor of renewed negotiations was, therefore, "not that it would make any real impression on the Soviets, but that it might help to convince waverers in the West that we have exhausted every possible means for a peaceful settlement."[44] This argument was also raised by outside consultants such as Harvard University President James B. Conant and Henry D. Smyth of the Atomic Energy Commission. Conant, for example, suggested that the "failure to arrive at a settlement would be a very strong argument for the necessary sacrifices on the part of the United States," while Smyth argued that "unsuccessful negotiations would in fact clarify the situation for the American people."[45]

NSC-68 ultimately concluded that "the public in the United States and in other free countries will require, as a condition to firm policies and adequate programs directed to the frustration of the Kremlin design, that the free world be continuously prepared to negotiate agreements with the Soviet Union on equitable terms." It also suggested that once the United States had increased its economic and military capabilities and could bargain from a position of strength, negotiations could be used to gain Soviet acceptance of US dominance. If not, "the unwillingness of the Kremlin to accept equitable terms or its bad faith in observing them would assist in consolidating popular opinion in the free world in support of the measures necessary to sustain the [US] build-up."[46] A policy paper written shortly afterward was

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[42] George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, expanded ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 86.

[43] Francis Russell to Edward Barrett, 6 March 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter *FRUS*] *1950*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 186.

[44] Paper prepared by the director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs, 15 February 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 158.

[45] Record of the Meeting of the State-Defense Policy Review Group, 2 March 1950; Record of the Meeting of the State-Defense Policy Review Group, 10 March 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 180, 192.

[46] NSC-68, 14 April 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 273–74, 291.

even more blunt. Although negotiations with the Soviet Union were clearly undesirable, "it may prove that Western opinion will not support the drastic measures necessary to establish a position of strength ... until it has once more been demonstrated that settlement by negotiation is at this stage impossible."[47] An apparent willingness to negotiate was therefore considered a useful and perhaps necessary method to gain public support for the strategy of containment in general and NSC-68's chief recommendation of a significant military buildup in particular. As historian John Lewis Gaddis notes, this was a "devious" negotiating posture, "since the appearance conveyed was quite opposite to what was actually intended."[48]

Counterfeit Diplomacy and Signaling

As these examples indicate, counterfeit diplomacy is an attempt by a nation's leaders to cast blame onto the opponent for their decision to adopt or maintain hard-line policies. To be more specific, proponents of this strategy can have two distinct but interrelated objectives in mind. The first goal is to demonstrate restraint. Counterfeit diplomacy is a signal to uncertain audiences, whether domestic or foreign, that a state's leaders are moderate actors who are resorting to forceful measures as a last resort rather than aggressive actors who are unnecessarily adopting hard-line policies.[49] By choosing to pursue diplomacy, therefore, democratic leaders lend credibility to their claims that they would prefer to avoid escalation if possible. For example, former US National Security Advisor Sandy Berger explained that American participation in the Rambouillet Conference that preceded Operation Allied Force in Kosovo was motivated by the need "to demonstrate a real commitment to get a peaceful resolution in order to get the allies to go along with the use of significant force."[50]

A second goal of counterfeit diplomacy is to make the adversary appear more aggressive. Despite pressure to exercise restraint when confronting uncertain threats, democratic leaders can still be expected to argue that an

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[47] Policy paper, Department of State, 20 April 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1980), 1,156.

[48] Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 104. Ultimately, the onset of the Korean War removed domestic obstacles to implementing NSC-68's key recommendations and therefore diminished the need for this type of counterfeit diplomacy. See Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 109–10; Samuel F. Wells Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC-68 and the Soviet Threat," *International Security* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1979): 116–58.

[49] On signaling restraint, see especially Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (October 1997): 171–201; Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006); Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[50] Quoted in Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2000), 89.

adversary is hostile. Like their claims of moderation, however, these accusations are essentially cheap talk; even if hard-line policies were not necessary, leaders who wanted to adopt them would have an incentive to make the same arguments to gain greater support. In fact, whether mobilization efforts succeed or fail depends in part on whether an adversary's behavior appears to corroborate or undermine claims that it is aggressive.[51] These accusations may, however, influence how the public judges the adversary's subsequent actions. As James Wallihan notes, parties engaged in avoidance bargaining may first adopt a "pre-negotiation strategy" that includes "demonizing the other side, in effect warning audiences that one's counterpart is so irrational or inhumane, so averse to keeping his word, that negotiations would be fruitless."[52] With audiences primed to expect uncooperative behavior on the part of the adversary, unsuccessful diplomatic efforts may place that adversary "in the wrong" and alter public perceptions of its motives.[53]

By spurning cooperative offers or rejecting demands, therefore, an adversary may demonstrate its apparent unwillingness to resolve a dispute peacefully. In effect, policymakers may believe they can compel a rival to send a signal of its own, one that confirms their assertion that it is hostile. In April 1939, for example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a public message calling on Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini to renounce further territorial expansion for the next ten years, and proposed commencing negotiations on issues such as disarmament and international trade.[54] Roosevelt did not anticipate a positive response, however. Instead, as he explained to Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, "If we are turned down the issue becomes clearer and public opinion in your country and mine will be helped."[55] According to Robert Dallek, Roosevelt believed that a refusal to negotiate "would make clear to people everywhere, and especially to Americans, that the dictators were not intent on limited national gains but on the conquest of Europe."[56]

THE RISKS OF COUNTERFEIT DIPLOMACY

It is hardly surprising that nations propose agreements largely for their propaganda value. Nevertheless, counterfeit diplomacy has the potential to be

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[51] Rui J. P. de Figueiredo Jr. and Barry R. Weingast, "The Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," in *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, eds., Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 261–98.

[52] Wallihan, "Negotiating to Avoid Agreement," 263.

[53] Iklé, *How Nations Negotiate*, 55.

[54] For the text of Roosevelt's message, see *FRUS 1939*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1956), 130–33.

[55] Quoted in David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 54.

[56] Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 185–86.

an extremely risky strategy. Democratic publics that are skeptical of the need for hard-line strategies will often expect their leaders to pursue less dangerous solutions, to practice diplomacy in good faith, and to respond positively to seemingly reasonable counteroffers. Rather than simply rejecting diplomatic efforts outright, a clever adversary could therefore undermine support for more aggressive policies through skillful rhetoric or cooperative actions of its own. In short, while counterfeit diplomacy may be a useful tool for democratic leaders who cannot rely solely on threat inflation to mobilize support, it may also be particularly dangerous for them.

There are two potential risks associated with counterfeit diplomacy. The first is that softer-line policies could be a complete (although unexpected) success. That is, an adversary might accept the nation's offer, meet its conditions, or accede to its demands. As noted above, however, democratic policymakers may resort to counterfeit diplomacy not only when the prospects of reaching an acceptable agreement are extremely low, but also when they do not want any agreement at all. Even if the adversary does cooperate or concede, the nation's leaders may doubt that it will adhere to an agreement over time. Instead, if the adversary is considered a long-term strategic threat, even short-term agreements on seemingly favorable grounds may be considered undesirable; leaders might suspect that cooperation is merely a ploy to buy time, thus postponing rather than resolving the underlying conflict.

Of course, to guarantee that diplomacy fails, policymakers could simply make demands or add conditions that an adversary is almost certain to decline.[57] John Schuessler, for example, notes that democratic leaders determined to go to war may attempt to obscure their intentions by "conducting talks with the adversary in such a way that they are likely to break down."[58] Nevertheless, deliberately undermining negotiations in this way can be difficult if the public expects its leaders to make a genuine effort to avoid confrontation or conflict. Although there may be a direct relationship between the scope of leaders' demands and the likelihood that an adversary will refuse them, there is also an inverse relationship between the extent of those demands and the credibility of leaders' professed support for diplomacy. That is, the more policymakers require of an adversary, the greater the likelihood that they could be accused of practicing diplomacy in bad faith. For example, when President Bush agreed to give a speech to the United

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[57] This tactic is often associated with one particular form of counterfeit diplomacy: coercive threats that are not meant to succeed. As a number of authors have noted, leaders determined to go to war have at times issued demands that are so extensive they were certain to be rejected. A rejected ultimatum can then provide a casus belli that can be used to rally domestic and foreign support for war. See in particular Lebow, *Between War and Peace,* chap. 2; Paul Gordon Lauren, "Coercive Diplomacy and Ultimata: Theory and Practice in History," in *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2nd ed., eds., Alexander L. George and William E. Simons (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994), 41–42; and K. J. Holsti, who refers to this behavior as "faux diplomacy" in "Dealing with Dictators: Westphalian and American Strategies," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 1, no. 1 (January 2001).

[58] Schuessler, "The Deception Dividend," 143.

Nations on the subject of Iraq in September 2002, he instructed his advisors that it "should not be too shrill ... or require so much of Iraq that it would look as if they [US policymakers] were not serious."[59] Ultimately, for counterfeit diplomacy to be viewed as a credible signal of moderation, leaders must propose an agreement or conditions that are "just beyond the breakpoint, but not obviously so," to preclude reaching a settlement without appearing to do so deliberately.[60] Yet the need to make offers or demands that appear reasonable creates the possibility that leaders will propose agreements or set conditions that an adversary might actually find acceptable.

A second risk is that an adversary could exploit the opportunity to make a counterproposal. Specifically, it might consent to only some conditions, or it could express a willingness to cooperate or comply on different terms. Although these counteroffers might be unacceptable to policymakers, they could appeal to segments of the public at home or allies abroad, and might undermine leaders' claims that an adversary is truly hostile. As Suzanne Werner argues, nations intent on challenging the status quo have a strategic incentive to limit the scope of their demands in order to reduce the likelihood that outside parties will intervene against them.[61] Even a truly hostile actor might therefore seek to disguise its intentions and could perhaps suggest a compromise to combat accusations that it is aggressive. During the development of NSC-68, for example, one argument against pursuing negotiations with the Soviet Union was a concern that "the U.S.S.R. would follow its usual tactics of making a response that would sufficiently 'fuzz up' the situation as to cause differences between us and our allies and dissension at home."[62]

In either case, the failure of counterfeit diplomacy could present democratic leaders with a difficult dilemma. By publicly expressing a preference for cooperation or a resolution that avoids the use of force, policymakers may generate audience costs; that is, the general public, political elites, or foreign allies (particularly those reluctant to support hard-line measures in the first place) might punish leaders who fail to live up to their commitments.[63] On the one hand, then, unsuccessful attempts at counterfeit diplomacy could lead to entrapment. Specifically, policymakers could be compelled to take "yes" for an answer, adopting or persisting with less forceful measures than they prefer. While this would avoid the risks of escalation or continued

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[59] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 161.

[60] Wallihan, "Negotiating to Avoid Agreement," 260.

[61] Suzanne Werner, "Deterring Intervention: The Stakes of War and Third-Party Involvement," *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 4 (October 2000): 720–32.

[62] John D. Hickerson to Dean Acheson, 5 April 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 217.

[63] James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 577–92; Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations," *International Organization* 50, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 109–39; Brett Ashley Leeds, "Domestic Political Institutions, Credible Commitments, and International Cooperation," *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 4 (October 1999): 979–1,002.

competition, it would also prevent leaders from realizing the very objectives that more confrontational policies were intended to achieve. On the other hand, abandoning their own diplomatic efforts and maintaining or adopting hard-line policies despite an adversary's apparent moderation could lead to blowback, namely a loss of public, political, or international support. Paul Nitze, for example, agreed that the Soviets would likely respond to any negotiations by offering "a number of proposals which superficially would seem to be in our interest." He feared, however, that "in rejecting them we would be increasing the divisive factors in the United States."[64]

Indeed, there are cases where counterfeit diplomacy not only failed but also led to entrapment or blowback. An example of entrapment, for instance, is President Franklin Roosevelt's message to Hitler and Mussolini in 1939, in which he called on Germany and Italy to foreswear territorial conquest for ten years and suggested holding international negotiations on disarmament and trade. As noted above, Roosevelt expected Hitler and Mussolini to decline his proposal, demonstrating their hostile motives and reducing the domestic barriers to American intervention in the European balance of power. Two weeks after Roosevelt's message was delivered, however, Hitler gave a speech to the Reichstag that "shrewdly appealed to American isolationists" by restating Germany's limited aims and framing its actions as "simply the righting of past wrongs." As Dallek notes, "Instead of persuading opponents that a European conflict was imminent, Roosevelt's exchange with Hitler simply strengthened their fears that he wished to overcome problems at home by meddling abroad."[65] Thus the president's gambit failed to increase support for more robust efforts to deter a major war in Europe, and arguably increased the challenges of overcoming isolationist sentiment within the United States.

An example of blowback can be observed in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In early 1989 Israeli Prime Minister and Likud party leader Yitzhak Shamir launched a peace initiative, which called for Palestinians living in the occupied territories to elect a delegation that would negotiate an agreement with Israel on an interim, autonomous government for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Under pressure from Labor party ministers in his governing coalition, a new administration in the United States, and a Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that had renounced terrorism and accepted Israel's right to exist, Shamir was persuaded that diplomacy could not be avoided entirely. For a number of reasons, though, his plan was widely viewed as unacceptable by the Palestinians as well as their Arab interlocutors in Egypt and Jordan. As one study notes, "with Shamir and

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[64] Record of the Meeting of the State-Defense Policy Review Group, 10 March 1950, *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, 192.

[65] Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 186–87.

other Israeli officials reaffirming their country's rejection of all peace formulas based on land for peace, Palestinians insisted that the Israeli plan was not a sincere effort to resolve the conflict but rather an attempt to divert attention away from the PLO's peace program."[66] In fact, shortly after leaving government in 1992, Shamir appeared to confirm suspicions that he was not genuinely interested in negotiations when he told a reporter that he "would have conducted the autonomy talks for ten years" while the construction of additional settlements and the influx of Jewish émigrés from the former Soviet Union swelled the number of Israelis living in the West Bank.[67] At the time, however, Shamir's initiative prompted counterproposals by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and later Secretary of State James Baker, both of whom sought to transform the prime minister's unacceptable terms into a workable basis for Israeli-Palestinian talks. Moreover, these alternatives had the support of Israeli moderates. With his initial peace initiative "hijacked," Shamir and other Likud party officials refused to pursue the American and Egyptian plans.[68] As a result, the Israeli government collapsed: Shamir fired Deputy Prime Minister and Labor leader Shimon Peres, the remaining Labor cabinet ministers resigned, and the Knesset ultimately passed a motion of no confidence in the government for the first time in Israel's history.[69]

With the need for diplomatic efforts to be viewed as sincere by key audiences, as well as the possibility that an adversary could respond to those efforts in a way that undermines the case that harder-line policies are actually necessary, democratic leaders adopting a strategy of counterfeit diplomacy are ultimately engaging in a form of brinkmanship, albeit in a much different way than Thomas Schelling had in mind when he first elaborated on the concept. Brinkmanship, according to Schelling, is "a competition in risk-taking," which "involves setting afoot an activity that may get out of hand, initiating a process that carries some risk of unintended disaster."[70] Convincing an opponent to back down in a crisis therefore requires taking actions that escalate that crisis and increase the likelihood of war breaking out, often through some unforeseen development not fully under the control of either party. In his seminal work on crisis bargaining and costly signaling,

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[66] Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 728.

[67] Cited in Mark Perry, *A Fire in Zion: The Israeli-Palestinian Search for Peace* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 161.

[68] Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam, 2008), 71.

[69] On these events, see also Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising—Israel's Third Front,* trans. and ed. Ina Friedman (New York: Simon & Schuster 1989), 318–25; Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 461–72. Shamir ultimately returned to power at the head of a more right-wing government because Peres failed to form a Labor-led coalition in the aftermath of the Knesset's no confidence motion.

[70] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 91.

James Fearon notes the inherent paradox of this argument: to obtain a favorable settlement of an issue in dispute, a nation's leaders must demonstrate that they are willing to fight if the opponent does not concede; yet actions that credibly indicate a willingness to fight also increase the probability of a costly war that leaders do not want.[71] With counterfeit diplomacy the logic is similar but reversed. Rather than risking an unwanted war to achieve a favorable peace, leaders may take actions that could result in a peace they do not want in order to mobilize support for a more forceful strategy that they believe is necessary.

COUNTERFEIT DIPLOMACY IN PRACTICE

The following section presents two case studies: the Harry S. Truman administration's decision to invite the Soviet Union and its East European satellites to participate in the Marshall Plan in 1947, and the George H. W. Bush administration's efforts to mobilize support for the Persian Gulf War in 1990–91. These cases are not intended to test a complete theory of mobilization in democracies. Rather, they are meant to illustrate one specific aspect of mobilization that has thus far remained unexplored.

At the same time, these cases were selected for two reasons. First, they are intrinsically important historical events. The Marshall Plan, for example, marked the beginning of greater economic integration in Western Europe and the division of the continent into rival blocs, which was formalized with the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization only two years later. Likewise, the 1991 Gulf War represented the transition from the bipolar Cold War era to a post-Cold War unipolar world, as the United States secured Soviet cooperation to oppose Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and then demonstrated its unparalleled military advantage by swiftly defeating one of the world's largest land armies. Understanding how policymakers in Washington were able to generate support for these policies (which were not widely popular at the time), the risks they were willing to run to gain that support, and the very real possibility that less capable or less fortunate diplomats might have failed in their efforts are important areas of inquiry.

Second, these historical events clearly highlight the paper's main arguments. In each case, American policymakers adopted diplomatic measures that they hoped would fail in an effort to placate domestic and international audiences that were reluctant to support more aggressive measures, namely a containment strategy that would necessitate the permanent division of Europe (in the case of the Marshall Plan) or a major conventional conflict that could lead to significant American casualties (in the case of the Persian

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[71] James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 395–400.

Gulf campaign). Moreover, in both instances US officials were keenly aware that their efforts to mobilize support through counterfeit diplomacy could backfire. The Soviet Union, for example, could have participated in the Marshall Plan, reducing the likelihood that the effort would receive congressional support and corrupting the plan from within if it did, whereas Iraq could have proposed a partial or conditional withdrawal from Kuwait that might have undermined domestic support for war and fractured the international coalition that stood alongside the United States. Nevertheless, policymakers were willing to assume these risks to gain the support they needed to carry out the policies they preferred.

"A Hell of a Big Gamble": The Marshall Plan and the Soviet Union

On 5 June 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall delivered a speech at Harvard University's commencement ceremony in which he called attention to the dramatically worsening conditions across Europe and noted that without increased aid the continent would soon be faced with "economic, political, and social deterioration of a very grave character." It was, therefore, "logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."[72] Marshall's speech marked the informal beginning of the European Recovery Program (ERP), better known as the Marshall Plan, which remains one of the most celebrated undertakings in the history of US foreign relations.

The need for a massive assistance program was driven by a compelling strategic rationale, namely the belief that Western Europe and its industrial resources had to be kept out of the Soviet orbit, and that growing economic hardship would discredit ruling governments and benefit indigenous communist movements, which American officials viewed as subservient to Moscow. From the perspective of key policymakers in Washington, therefore, economic recovery was intended to "help control German nationalism, reconcile Germany's recovery with France's economic and security concerns, and thus create a balance of power in the West sufficient to contain Soviet power in the East."[73] As Adam Ulam wrote, the effort was "a watershed in the

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[72] Text of Marshall's speech, http://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/MarshallPlanSpeechfrom RecordedAddress_000.html.

[73] Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 27. See also Melvyn P. Leffler, "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," *Diplomatic History* 12, no. 3 (July 1988); Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 157–64.

Cold War," which subsequently assumed "the character of positional warfare."[74] At its inception, however, the fate of the ERP rested on the outcome of a controversial choice, one that had the potential to influence whether the program would gain widespread acceptance both at home and abroad: the decision to offer American aid to the whole of Europe, including the Soviet Union and its East European satellites.

In late April 1947, Secretary Marshall returned to Washington after spending six weeks in Moscow for a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. According to George Kennan, Marshall was "shaken by the realization of the seriousness and urgency of the plight of Western Europe" and had also determined that "the idea of approaching the solution to Europe's problems in collaboration with the Russians was a pipe dream."[75] The Soviets, in Marshall's opinion, were operating under the assumption that they would benefit if the situation failed to improve; they were, therefore, interested only in "compromise through exhaustion," or delaying tactics rather than a cooperative solution.[76] Based on these two conclusions, Marshall tasked Kennan and his newly created Policy Planning Staff to analyze what might be done to provide assistance to Europe. The following month, senior State Department officials met to discuss the situation in Europe, whether the United States should respond, and if so, how. According to Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, although Marshall was adamant that something needed to be done to assist Europe, "his principal concern was whether any proposal we might make should be addressed to all of Europe or to Western Europe only."[77]

This question highlighted an important dilemma. On the one hand, any offer of assistance that excluded the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would be perceived as an unnecessarily hostile move both at home and abroad, and therefore would be unlikely to gain widespread support. In general, policymakers did not want the United States to be blamed for the division of Europe into two opposing camps, a consideration that was in part a reaction to the strongly ideological rhetoric used by President Truman earlier that year when requesting aid for Greece and Turkey. On the other hand, while opening the door to Soviet involvement in a US-funded recovery program may have been necessary to secure international support and placate domestic critics of the Truman Doctrine, Marshall and his advisors also anticipated a significant backlash in Congress and among the wider public if the

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[74] Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1974), 437.

[75] George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1967), 324.

[76] On Marshall's growing skepticism that cooperation with the Soviet Union was possible, see ibid., 324; Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History: 1929–1960* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 263; Forrest Pogue, "George C. Marshall and the Marshall Plan," in *The Marshall Plan and Germany: West German Development within the Framework of the European Recovery Program*, ed. Charles S. Meir (New York: Berg, 1991), 49. The quotation is from Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 229.

[77] Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 232.

Soviets chose to participate. According to Charles Bohlen, Marshall's special assistant, "any American plan that appeared to exclude the Soviet Union would have very little chance of being accepted in the world," while "Soviet acceptance might easily kill the plan in Congress."[78]

Specifically, in his speech to Congress announcing the Truman Doctrine, the president had painted a stark portrait of a world faced with a choice between two ways of life: one that emphasized personal freedom and democratic institutions, and another that relied upon terror and centralized control to perpetuate minority rule.[79] Although the rhetoric may have helped win the support of key Republican legislators, it also met with disapproval in some quarters. According to Charles Kindleberger's recollection, "The Truman Doctrine was making heavy weather of it, both on Capitol Hill and in the country as a whole." In particular, the "implications for economic and ultimately military warfare" contained in the president's remarks "were regretted."[80] Likewise, Bohlen noted that both he and Marshall felt "that there was a little too much flamboyant anti-Communism in the speech."[81] The ERP was ultimately framed with this criticism in mind.[82] As Acheson explained, Marshall's Harvard speech "was designed to win over the critics of the Truman Doctrine both at home and abroad, who deprecated its stress on the confrontation with the Soviet Union strategically and ideologically."[83] This would have been much more difficult, however, if Marshall's offer had deliberately excluded the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from the start. To

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[78] Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 264. In addition to the possibility of domestic opposition, Soviet participation might have threatened the success of the ERP through obstructionism. As Acheson later recalled, "If [the Soviets] had come in, they could have gone far toward killing the whole program not so much by direct opposition as by endless questioning and argument over one point, then another, then another." Interview with Dean Acheson, 20 October 1953, George C. Marshall Research Library, Harry B. Price Papers, Box 3, Folder 45, http://marshallfoundation.org/library/documents/Secretary_of_State_Dean_Acheson.pdf.

[79] The text of Truman's speech is available at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5–9.pdf#zoom=100.

[80] Memorandum by Mr. Charles P. Kindleberger, 22 July 1948, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 242.

[81] Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 261. See also Pogue, "George C. Marshall and the Marshall Plan," 54. Notably, subsequent efforts to mobilize public and congressional support—led by the Citizens Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery, a private group that acted on behalf of the State Department—emphasized the humanitarian, economic, and idealistic virtues of the ERP while deliberately eschewing anti-Communist rhetoric. Michael Wala, "Selling the Marshall Plan at Home: The Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery," *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 3 (July 1986); Barry Machado, *In Search of a Usable Past: The Marshall Plan and Postwar Reconstruction Today* (Lexington, VA: George C. Marshall Foundation, 2007), chap. 2.

[82] William Cromwell, "The Marshall Non-Plan, Congress, and the Soviet Union," *The Western Political Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (December 1979): 453; Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1949–1959* (New York: Viking, 1987), 207; Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 73.

[83] Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 233. For example, Western European nations with large communist parties would have found it extremely difficult to participate in the ERP if the Soviet Union had been excluded from Marshall's initial proposal. Leffler, "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," 283.

some extent, then, the use of threat inflation to gain support for the Truman Doctrine created the need for some type of diplomatic outreach to the Soviet Union.

At the same time, Soviet participation in the Marshall Plan would have created another set of problems. Even if the ERP were limited to Western Europe, there were still concerns that Congress would refuse to allocate the resources necessary to spur economic recovery overseas, due to popular opinion as well as political trends. By 1947 there was already "an intense national fatigue with foreign aid."[84] Moreover, during the previous year the Republican Party had won majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate by calling for "shrinking big government, slashing federal spending, cutting taxes, and rolling back the New Deal." Given this sentiment, as well as an influential isolationist faction within Congress, "a Democratic administration faced a daunting task in winning approval for its unexampled foreign aid program."[85] These considerations help to explain many of the key features of Marshall's Harvard speech, in particular his suggestions that European nations should jointly determine their needs, collectively request American assistance, and develop a plan that would "provide a cure rather than a mere palliative."[86] If the Soviets were offered the opportunity to participate and actually accepted, however, domestic resistance to the program would almost certainly have been far greater.

Confronting this dilemma head-on, Marshall's advisors concluded that the Soviet Union should be given the opportunity to join the ERP. Admittedly, Moscow's response could not be known in advance, and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal for one believed that "there was no chance of Russia's not joining in this effort."[87] Nevertheless, Acheson, Kennan, Bohlen, and others calculated that the Soviet Union was unlikely to participate in any program that would require it to declare the full scope of its economic needs and submit to verification of how any funds or goods received were put to use. Moreover, Soviet participation could even undermine Moscow's control over its East European clients.[88] In fact, the potential to "drive a wedge into the emerging Soviet bloc of satellite states in Eastern Europe" was one of the considerations behind the Marshall plan, although it was clearly a secondary goal.[89] As Bohlen explained, American policymakers "did not think the Soviet Union would be able to maintain control over

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[84] Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and How America Helped Rebuild Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 76.

[85] Machado, *In Search of a Usable Past*, 15.

[86] On the role of domestic political considerations in the formulation of the Marshall Plan's conditions, see especially Cromwell, "The Marshall Non-Plan, Congress, and the Soviet Union," 424.

[87] Cited in Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 44.

[88] Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 264–65.

[89] Leffler, "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," 277. This objective was favored by Kennan, who argued in his first Policy Planning Staff Memorandum on the subject that any proposal for economic assistance to all of Europe should "be done in such a way that the Russian

Eastern Europe if those countries were able to participate in the cooperative venture."[90]

Ultimately, Marshall and his advisors chose to "play it straight," in Kennan's words. If the Soviets accepted an offer of economic assistance, the United States "would test their good faith by insisting that they contribute constructively to the program as well as profiting from it." Alternatively, if they were unwilling to abide by Washington's terms, "we would simply let them exclude themselves." What the United States would not do, however, was "draw a line of division through Europe" by excluding the Soviet Union from the outset.[91] In his speech at Harvard several days later, Marshall would declare that any assistance program "should be a joint one, agreed to by a number, if not all European nations," and confirmed shortly afterward that participation in an assistance program would indeed be open to the whole of Europe.[92] It was, as Bohlen recalled, "a hell of a big gamble."[93]

Although US officials decided not to exclude the Soviet Union from the start, it remained unclear how Moscow would react to the American offer. In fact, the possibility of Soviet participation was hardly trivial. As Ulam explained, "How could Russia lose by such a step? Her adherence to the plan might cause the Congress to shelve or at least severely limit the program. In this case, West European recovery would be impeded, Britain's economic situation would grow desperate, and Russia would certainly gain. Or, the Marshall plan might be voted through intact and Russia's economy would receive much needed foreign help."[94] The Soviet position would become clear over the following month as the European powers convened to determine a way forward. As this process unfolded, moreover, the British and the French engaged in counterfeit diplomacy of their own; like the Americans, both sides hoped that the Soviets would not participate, but neither wanted to be viewed as responsible for their exclusion.

As a first step, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault consulted with one another soon after Marshall's speech. Both agreed that it would be best if the Soviet Union did not join the ERP; for appearances' sake, however, Moscow would have to be included in the initial deliberations. On 18 June the American ambassador to France, Jefferson Caffery, cabled Marshall and informed him that Bevin and Bidault

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satellite countries would either exclude themselves by unwillingness to accept the proposed conditions or agree to abandon the exclusive orientation of their economies." Kennan to Marshall, 23 May 1947, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 228.

[90] Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 264–65.

[91] Kennan, *Memoirs*, 342. See also Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 232; Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 264.

[92] Pogue, "George C. Marshall and the Marshall Plan," 56.

[93] Interview with Charles E. Bohlen, 16 February 1953, George C. Marshall Research Library, Harry B. Price Papers, Box 3, Folder 32, http://marshallfoundation.org/library/documents/Charles_E_Bohlen_000.pdf.

[94] Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 433.

had privately confided their hope that the Soviets would not participate. Moreover, they also declared that the British and French were willing "to go ahead full steam" without the Soviet Union.[95]

Later that month, Bevin, Bidault, and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov met in Paris to discuss possible terms for a European recovery effort.[96] Not surprisingly, the three leaders disagreed on how to pursue the program, with Molotov not only insisting that individual nations determine their own needs and then submit requests for credits to the United States, but also objecting that any assessment of national resources would be an unacceptable violation of sovereignty—views that did not accord with Marshall's initial proposal and were therefore opposed by the British and French. Expecting the Paris conference to break up as a result of these disagreements, Caffery cabled Marshall and explained that the "French believe that their efforts to include the Soviets were worthwhile particularly since it should establish clearly to everyone that it is Moscow which has refused to cooperate."[97] Similarly, Bevin told Caffery that he was "glad that the cards had been laid on the table and that the responsibility will be laid at Moscow's door." Bevin noted, however, that it would be difficult for France to accept an early end to the talks given the strength of the French communist party.[98]

Due in large part to this domestic pressure, the French did present a slightly revised proposal to the Soviets shortly before the conference ended. According to Caffery, however, their decision to do so "was dictated not in the belief that it would be acceptable to the Russians but for reasons of French internal politics." In Bidault's view, one final effort to reach an agreement—particularly one that did not involve any substantial revision to the terms already agreed upon by the British and French and rejected by the Soviets—would "greatly strengthen the French Government with French public opinion; will tend to disarm the French Communists who may be expected to attack the plan; and will make it much easier to proceed with the British to draw up a European plan without the Russians."[99]

Ultimately, the Soviets walked out of the conference, declined to take part in the Marshall Plan, and eventually forbade their satellites from participating as well. Thus the decision not to exclude the Soviet Union from the initial offer paid off: the United States was able to avoid direct responsibility for the further division of Europe and did not have to defend Soviet participation to Congress; the French government was shielded from domestic communist opposition; and, from the perspective of the Policy Planning

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[95] Caffery to Marshall, 18 June 1947, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 260.

[96] For an account of the negotiations, see Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure*, chap. 4; Thomas G. Paterson, *Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 215–19.

[97] Caffery to Marshall, 1 July 1947 (11:00 am), *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 304.

[98] Caffery to Marshall, 1 July 1947, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 302–3.

[99] Caffery to Marshall, 2 July 1947, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 305.

staff, the Soviets had also been "smoked out in their relations with satellite countries" by preventing them from joining the ERP.[100] According to Michael Hogan, "At best, American officials saw Marshall's plan as a way to break Soviet influence in Eastern Europe; at worst, they were counting on Soviet opposition to galvanize support for the plan in Congress."[101]

As one subsequent State Department memorandum observed, however, the Soviet decision to shun the Marshall Plan "was somewhat fortuitous."[102] Throughout this brief period, there were serious concerns that the Soviets might participate, even if high-level US officials viewed this possibility as unlikely. In fact, there was genuine puzzlement in some circles that the Soviets chose not to become involved.[103] Marshall, for one, believed that the Soviet Union and its East European satellites "came close to associating themselves with the ERP."[104] In this instance, however, American policymakers were fortunate. The Soviet Union, then-Commerce Secretary Averell Harriman later noted, "could have killed the Marshall Plan by joining it."[105]

"Going the Extra Mile for Peace": The Diplomacy of the 1991 Persian Gulf War

On 2 August 1990, Iraqi forces entered Kuwait and quickly overran the country. Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iraq's small but oil-rich neighbor immediately triggered a standoff with the international community, led by the United States, that culminated in the First Gulf War almost six months later.[106] Throughout the period leading up to Operation Desert Storm in January 1991, President George H. W. Bush and his key advisors, in particular Secretary of State Baker, were preoccupied not only with military strategy, international diplomacy, and alliance politics, but also with gaining the necessary domestic support for a military operation to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. As the months passed by, however, public and political support for the growing US military presence in the Persian Gulf became

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[100] "Memorandum Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff," 21 July 1947, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 335.

[101] Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 52.

[102] H. Freeman Matthews to Robert Lovett, 11 July 1947, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 3, 719.

[103] Leffler, "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," 283; Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 44; Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure*, 89.

[104] Interview with George C. Marshall, 30 October 1952, George C. Marshall Research Library, Harry B. Price Papers, Box 3, Folder 24, http://marshallfoundation.org/library/documents/George_C_Marshall_Oct_30_1952.pdf.

[105] Quoted in Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 415.

[106] Overviews of the Gulf War and the diplomacy that preceded it include Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990–1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990–91: A Failed or Impossible Task?" *International Security* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1992); Richard Herrmann, "Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait, 1990–1991," in *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*.

increasingly tenuous, while senior American officials simultaneously came to view a large-scale military operation as the only way to restore Kuwait's sovereignty and minimize the Iraqi threat to American interests in the region. In the end, to mobilize the support they required, policymakers were willing to take actions that they hoped would demonstrate a desire for peace, but that also risked undermining their case for a war they reluctantly preferred.

Almost from the beginning of the crisis, the president and his advisors were skeptical that the international community's initial reaction—diplomatic condemnation combined with economic sanctions—would be sufficient to end Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. In late August, for example, Bush noted that he "could not see how we were going to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait without using force."[107] Although the United States quickly spearheaded the formation of a large international coalition that opposed the Iraqi invasion, there were persistent concerns that this alliance would fracture before economic sanctions could have a significant impact. As President Bush's national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, later recalled, "I never had any faith in sanctions and I don't think the President did either. I think he made up his mind early on that if Saddam did not withdraw on his own accord that we would force him out."[108] At various points over the next several months, Secretary of State Baker and Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney reached a similar conclusion.[109] Despite these doubts, senior officials expressed little disagreement over the merits of sanctions, particularly during the first few months of the crisis as US forces were being deployed to the Persian Gulf for Operation Desert Shield, the defense of Saudi Arabia. In part, this was due to their preoccupation with maintaining domestic and international support.

As historian H. W. Brands notes, "From the moment in early August when he decided that force might ultimately be necessary to deal with Saddam, Bush devoted almost as much attention to the domestic politics of the crisis as to the international diplomacy."[110] In fact, the former was arguably a greater concern. In general, the president "hoped to avoid force until we had the domestic and international support to follow through with it to the end." While he "was comfortable and confident about handling the coalition," the challenges of maintaining a high level of domestic backing

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[107] George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 353.

[108] Brent Scowcroft interview, *PBS Frontline*: *The Gulf War*, oral history, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/scowcroft/1.html.

[109] Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 300; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 394.

[110] H. W. Brands, "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (March 2004): 127.

"were more complicated."[111] By mid-September the surge of support that followed his initial reaction to the Iraqi invasion began to dissipate, and the president grew concerned about the erosion of public and political consensus at home.[112] One reason for this decrease in support was a battle between the administration and Congress over the federal budget that took place in October. Then, following Bush's 8 November announcement that US force levels in the Gulf would more than double to approximately five hundred thousand troops, enough to not only defend Saudi Arabia but also to engage in large-scale offensive operations, the Senate Armed Services Committee held public hearings that "revealed broad-based national support for coercion through sanctions and a serious uneasiness over the idea of threatening a war to induce Iraqi compliance."[113] It became clear by this point that the administration would confront "serious domestic opposition" if it sought to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and that President Bush would have to "gin up the public" and make a convincing case "that this was an event that had to be dealt with."[114]

Given the tide of domestic opinion as well as the fragile nature of the international coalition, the administration had to "demonstrate reasonableness" in its diplomatic efforts.[115] Or, as Secretary Baker argued, US officials "would have to demonstrate that we had first pursued all nonlethal remedies" before using military force.[116] Economic sanctions were useful in this regard; not only did Washington have few military options available at the outset of the crisis, but sanctions would show that the United States was not rushing into a conflict without first exploring less aggressive alternatives. According to Richard Haass, the senior director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the National Security Council, economic sanctions were "an important box to check" as officials sought to lay the groundwork for stronger measures. "The only chance you had to drum up significant support for using military force," Haass recalled, was to show "that you explored the alternatives, that diplomacy couldn't work, sanctions couldn't work, that you were not rushing to go to war."[117]

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[111] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 357. Likewise, Secretary Baker encouraged the president to take steps that would "stop the bleeding" as public support at home declined during the crisis. Woodward, *The Commanders*, 337.

[112] John Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 23; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 372.

[113] Herrmann, "Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait, 1990–1991," 246.

[114] Dennis Ross, *Statecraft and How to Restore America's Standing in the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007), 93; Robert M. Gates interview, Miller Center, University of Virginia, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 23–24 July 2000, 56. At the time, Ross was the director of Policy Planning at the Department of State and Gates was deputy national security advisor to the president.

[115] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 212.

[116] James A. Baker III, with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 278.

[117] Richard Haass interview, Miller Center, University of Virginia, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 27 May 2004, 50. See also Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 356.

The importance of maintaining domestic support influenced policy in other ways as well. For example, in the early stages of the crisis President Bush repeatedly compared Saddam Hussein to Hitler, a rhetorical choice that Scowcroft viewed as "a bit counterproductive."[118] At the same time, Bush also considered instigating a provocation to justify the use of force, namely an effort to rescue US citizens held hostage at the American embassy in Kuwait City.[119] According to Scowcroft, Bush's willingness to contemplate this step was driven by the need to resolve a crucial dilemma: "How could we act without it appearing as aggression on the part of the coalition?"[120] Although the provocation idea was abandoned, the underlying question still remained. In an effort to address this constraint, President Bush adopted a course of action that was designed to placate domestic and international critics, but that also risked undermining the case for war.

On 29 November 1990, the United Nations Security Council voted in favor of resolution 678, which authorized members to use "all necessary means" to restore Kuwait's sovereignty if Iraqi forces did not withdraw by 15 January 1991. In Bush's view, one advantage of pursuing a UN resolution that implicitly sanctioned the use of force was "to take away from people the argument that we did not give diplomacy a chance."[121] While the resolution may have helped keep the international coalition together, however, the American public remained skeptical of the need for war. Moreover, it remained unclear whether the administration would pursue a congressional resolution authorizing the president to use force, largely because it was uncertain whether such a resolution would pass both houses of Congress. Motivated by these concerns, the following day the president announced his intention to send Secretary Baker to Baghdad and to receive Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in Washington before the 15 January deadline. Although there were suspicions among some US allies that the United States was prepared to offer concessions in exchange for Saddam's withdrawal from Kuwait, Bush declared that the meetings were not intended to be forums for negotiations, but were instead a final opportunity to explain the consequences of Iraqi intransigence face-to-face.[122] Secretary Baker noted the other purpose behind the proposal: "to show Congress, the American people, and history that we were still looking for ways to avert war, not to start one."[123] Or, as the president himself noted, he "wanted to show that we were going the extra mile for peace."[124]

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[118] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 389. See also Gates interview, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 55–56.

[119] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 381–83, 386, 393, 407.

[120] Ibid., 383.

[121] Ibid., 386.

[122] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 235, 241.

[123] Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, 344.

[124] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 419. The meetings were also necessary to secure Soviet support for the UN resolution. R. W. Apple Jr., "Bush Offers to Send Baker on a Peace Mission to Iraq, But Vows Resolve in a Surprise Overture," *New York Times*, 1 December 1990.

For more than a month the two sides failed to agree on dates for the proposed meetings, due to Saddam's efforts to push for a date closer to the 15 January deadline. During this period, however, Scowcroft revealed to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, that the president had already determined that a war against Iraq was necessary, and that diplomatic efforts in the interim were "just exercises."[125] Still concerned about flagging domestic support and particularly about congressional opposition to a resolution for war, however, on 3 January 1991 President Bush again proposed a face-to-face meeting, this time between Baker and Aziz in Geneva, Switzerland. The president later explained that the meeting would be "a good way to persuade reluctant members of Congress that we had exhausted the diplomatic avenues, something we would need if we were going to get the [congressional] resolution through."[126]

This new offer came with the same conditions as the first proposal: "No negotiations, no compromises, no attempts at face saving, no rewards for aggression."[127] Yet the decision to send Baker to Geneva was still an extremely risky one. As the crisis wore on, there was a growing concern among senior US officials that they might be confronted by a partial Iraqi pullout from Kuwait, or perhaps some other half-measure that could dampen support for war in the United States and throughout the international community.[128] Not surprisingly, then, there were fears in Washington that a last-minute meeting between the two sides would provide the Iraqis with a final opportunity to diminish the stakes of any conflict and undercut the administration's rationale for war. The president himself realized that the meeting "was a risk," while Scowcroft recalled that, at the time, he envisioned "any number of deceptively attractive, purposely vague proposals and ploys Saddam could put forth which could result in severe strains on the coalition and accentuate divisions within the United States."[129] Likewise, Haass was deeply concerned that Saddam would "throw out half a loaf" and either withdraw from a portion of Kuwait or offer to withdraw under certain conditions. In his view, this would "excite or attract the antiwar elements around the world that could make it difficult or impossible for Arab governments to cooperate with us and that could potentially influence our own domestic politics."[130]

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[125] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 345.

[126] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 436.

[127] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 249.

[128] Thomas Friedman, "A Partial Pullout by Iraq is Feared as Deadline 'Ploy,'" *New York Times*, 18 December 1990; R. W. Apple Jr., "U.S. 'Nightmare Scenario:' Being Finessed by Iraq," *New York Times*, 19 December 1990; Dennis Ross interview, Miller Center, University of Virginia, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 2 August 2001, 27; Haass interview, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 42.

[129] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 437.

[130] Haass interview, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 42. The administration even feared that Saddam would offer to comply with Washington's demands in full. Although this would have avoided war and left Iraq without any tangible gains, there was still the possibility that the offer would

In sum, administration officials realized that a partial or conditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait at any point, but particularly during the face-to-face meeting between Baker and Aziz, would put the United States "in an impossible position."[131] Nor were these concerns unreasonable. According to John Mueller, public opinion data suggests that, "at any time—even on the eve of war—the public would have bought a reasonable, properly packaged settlement (including even the sort of negotiated compromise Bush held to be totally unacceptable) as an alternative to the initiation of military action."[132] By this point, however, key officials concluded that war was actually the preferred outcome; even a total and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait would have been viewed as a missed opportunity for the United States because it would not have reduced or eliminated the long-term Iraqi threat to American interests in the Persian Gulf region (although the United States certainly would have found it extraordinarily difficult if not impossible to go to war in the wake of full capitulation by Iraq). Scowcroft, for example, made the case that "a diplomatic solution would in fact bring about a larger crisis" because it would leave Saddam's army intact, allowing him to threaten the region again in the future and compelling the United States to maintain a substantial military presence there. This, in turn, would impose a financial burden on the United States, strain its relationships with partner nations in the Persian Gulf, and restrict its ability to respond to crises elsewhere.[133] Richard Cheney, the secretary of defense, also recalls that he "didn't want to see [Saddam] pull out," because the Iraqi dictator would still retain "the biggest force in the Gulf" and would be able to "intimidate all of his neighbors."[134]

Fortunately for administration officials, their gamble paid off. Aziz did not offer to withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait, nor did he present any alternative proposals that might have eroded domestic and international support for war. Therefore, when Baker reported that Aziz refused to capitulate, President Bush "had to suppress his relief."[135] Not only had US officials avoided the impossible situation they feared, but the prospects for a congressional resolution sanctioning the use of force also appeared much brighter in the wake of the Geneva talks.[136] Despite the concerns of senior policymakers

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be a bluff designed to buy time for the international coalition to fracture and American resolve to wane. US officials therefore prepared in advance a series of "extremely demanding tests" to ensure that the Iraqi leader "was not pulling our chain." Haass interview, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 42.

[131] Ross interview, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 37; and Ross, *Statecraft*, 95–98.

[132] Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War*, 23.

[133] Bob Woodward, *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 185.

[134] Richard B. Cheney interview, Miller Center, University of Virginia, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 16–17 May 2000, 71.

[135] Woodward, *Shadow*, 185.

[136] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 443.

like Scowcroft, who later maintained that Saddam "could have just given us fits" had he offered to relinquish even part of Kuwait, the meeting "further reinforced the administration's message that this was a war that Saddam brought upon himself."[137] It was, therefore, a "turning point" in the administration's efforts to gain public support. Baker, for example, maintained that "only by offering those meetings could we ever hope to obtain the domestic consensus necessary to wage war."[138] Not only was it clear that the administration had gone the extra mile to avoid conflict, but it was also clear that Saddam was unwilling to back down or even compromise. On 12 January 1991, the Senate voted to authorize the use of force by a margin of only five votes, fifty-two to forty-seven. According to Baker, "We would not have won the vote without Geneva."[139] It is important to note, however, that adept American diplomacy benefited from no small amount of luck; had Saddam withdrawn some of his forces from Kuwait before 15 January 1991, or authorized Tariq Aziz to offer counterproposals at Geneva, then American policymakers would have been left with a difficult choice between waiting indefinitely for economic sanctions to take effect, launching a potentially unpopular war before seeking a congressional resolution, or waging war despite active disapproval on the part of Congress. As Richard Haass concluded, "It helps when one has an adversary as blind and as stubborn as was Saddam."[140]

MOBILIZATION REVISITED

Understanding how leaders in democratic nations gain support for hard-line policies has long been an important issue for international relations theory, one that has received even greater attention since the Bush administration's controversial efforts to shape opinion in advance of the 2003 war against Iraq. To date, assessments of this topic have focused almost exclusively on the use of threat inflation. Yet this perspective overlooks an important dilemma: because democratic citizens will expect their leaders to explore peaceful solutions or less aggressive alternatives when foreign dangers are ambiguous, the same conditions that make threat inflation necessary also make it difficult to employ successfully on its own.

To mobilize support for hard-line measures when key audiences want leaders to demonstrate moderation and restraint, policymakers may attempt

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[137] Scowcroft interview, *PBS Frontline*; and Haass interview, *President George H. W. Bush Oral History Project*, 42.

[138] Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, 350.

[139] Baker interview*, PBS Frontline: The Gulf War*, oral history, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/baker/1.html.

[140] Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 104.

to shift blame for a confrontation onto an adversary by using counterfeit diplomacy. Specifically, democratic leaders may adopt more cooperative or less coercive policies than they believe are necessary, but which they hope or anticipate will fail. The unsuccessful pursuit of softer-line measures can lend credibility to arguments that an adversary is unwilling to accept a peaceful solution to a dispute, that less forceful policies are unlikely to be sufficient, and that harder-line options are a last resort. This approach can be a risky one, however, because an opponent might accept a nation's demands, accede to its conditions, or offer seemingly attractive counterproposals in the hope of diffusing support for more aggressive policies. Not only are democratic nations expected to negotiate in good faith (meaning leaders cannot easily propose terms that have no chance of being accepted), but their efforts at diplomacy are also likely to generate audience costs (meaning policymakers cannot abandon diplomatic efforts and adopt harder-line policies when an adversary responds positively without courting a backlash at home or abroad). Thus a clever opponent could respond in ways that foil any consensus in favor of more forceful measures.

These arguments yield several implications for theory and policy. Most importantly, they begin to provide a more complete account of the mobilization process within democratic nations. Most studies of mobilization implicitly assume that leaders emphasize one particular method to generate support when in fact they frequently use a variety of techniques to gain domestic and international approval for their policies. For example, despite being antithetical at first glance, threat inflation and counterfeit diplomacy can be mutually reinforcing, particularly if the failure of diplomatic efforts appears to confirm leaders' provocative rhetoric about an adversary's hostile intentions. At the same time, these arguments also serve as a reminder that mobilization outcomes are the product of strategic interaction. In many cases, existing approaches to this issue assume that success or failure is principally a function of domestic political factors; for instance, whether the marketplace of ideas is sufficiently robust to disprove false or unsubstantiated claims made by policymakers. Yet whether mobilization efforts succeed or fail rests in part on the behavior of adversaries, whose reactions can strengthen or weaken the case for more aggressive measures. This is particularly true when leaders resort to counterfeit diplomacy, which gives the opponent an opportunity to take half-measures or make counterproposals that can undermine the case that harder-line policies are warranted.

The theory and evidence presented above also raise questions that merit additional research. In particular, while there are instances of this mobilization strategy leading to blowback or entrapment, there seem to be relatively few prominent cases where counterfeit diplomacy had such negative consequences. If this observation is correct, two possible explanations stand out. First, counterfeit diplomacy almost always succeeds; that is, adversaries may not exploit the inherent risks of this strategy, enabling democratic

leaders to mobilize support for the hard-line measures they prefer. Notably, in 1947 Stalin refused to take steps that might have complicated American policymaking, despite the apparent opportunity and incentive to do so, and in 1991 Saddam made a similar miscalculation. Second, unsuccessful attempts at counterfeit diplomacy have few negative consequences; that is, even if adversaries do cooperate or concede to reduce the likelihood of escalation, democratic leaders are able to ignore these responses and adopt hard-line policies without experiencing a significant loss of support at home or abroad. The Bush administration, for instance, was not seriously inhibited from going to war in 2003, even though Iraq allowed weapons inspectors to return. More generally, the fact that policymakers can combine threat inflation and counterfeit diplomacy suggests that they are not always punished when there is a gulf between their rhetoric and their actions.

Of course, the empirical examples and case studies cited above demonstrate that policymakers do consider the risks of entrapment and blowback quite real. Moreover, democratic leaders are unlikely to bother with counterfeit diplomacy in the first place unless gaining domestic and international support (or avoiding domestic and international opposition) is a critical objective. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring whether and why autocratic nations might be prone to rigid and self-defeating diplomacy, despite the widespread assumption that they can alter their policies on a whim, as well as the conditions under which democratic leaders are actually held accountable for adopting measures that are inconsistent with their public declarations, despite the conventional wisdom that they will suffer a penalty for engaging in erratic behavior.[141]

Finally, the ongoing debate within the United States over the relative merits of diplomacy, economic sanctions, and military force with respect to Iran has once again brought the issue of mobilizing support for hard-line measures to the forefront. It is difficult to assess the underlying intent behind recent policy decisions given the absence of documentary evidence. Nevertheless, it does appear that aspects of counterfeit diplomacy can be discerned. For instance, shortly after taking office President Barack Obama engaged in a widely publicized diplomatic campaign toward Iran in the apparent hope of improving relations between Washington and Tehran and perhaps finding a solution to the problem of Iran's nuclear ambitions without heightening antagonism between the two sides. Although these efforts failed,

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[141] Interestingly, a recent body of literature maintains that some autocracies can generate significant audience costs while democracies may not be highly constrained by them. These conclusions suggest that the former can become entrapped by their public positions and that the latter enjoy more diplomatic flexibility than is typically assumed. See in particular Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (Winter 2008); Jack Snyder and Erica D. Borghard, "The Cost of Empty Threats: A Penny, Not a Pound," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (August 2011); and Marc Trachtenberg, "Audience Costs: An Historical Analysis," *Security Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 2012).

that failure was neither unanticipated nor unbeneficial. As then-Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg noted at the time, "In the event that Iran passes up this opportunity, our engagement will make it possible to mobilize international action more effectively. By our openness to a negotiated resolution, we can clearly increase our ability to persuade others to stand by with us, if more forceful action is needed."[142] Likewise, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton later recalled that the American diplomatic outreach to Iran was not undertaken "because we thought it would necessarily work," but rather "because we knew that without trying, we'd never get the allies to sign on to a much, much tougher approach."[143] Since that time the United States has adopted an increasingly hard-line stance toward Iran. Moreover, it has obtained greater international support for tightening economic sanctions, an outcome that may not have been possible without these diplomatic efforts.

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[142] James B. Steinberg, "Opening Statement Before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee," 6 October 2009, http://www.state.gov/s/d/former/steinberg/remarks/2009/169329.htm.

[143] Quoted in David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2012), 157.