

Correspondence

Debating British Decisionmaking toward
Nazi Germany in the 1930s

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To the Editors (Andrew Barros and Talbot C. Imlay write):

In their article "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time? The Logic of British Appeasement in the 1930s," Norrin Ripsman and Jack Levy argue that a rational calculation underpinned British policy toward Nazi Germany: the need to postpone a conflict until Britain was better prepared to address the German threat. Convinced of Adolf Hitler's hegemonic ambitions, British decisionmakers recognized that Nazi Germany would eventually have to be confronted. The problem, however, was that Britain lacked the military capabilities to deter the Germans or, in the increasing likelihood that deterrence would fail, to wage and win a war. Hence the logic of buying time for rearmament to take effect either by not resisting aggressive moves, as in the case of the 1936 Rhineland crisis, or by giving in to demands in advance, as occurred during the 1938 Czechoslovak crisis. Rather than being based on naïve or cowardly thinking, Ripsman and Levy assert, appeasement was the product of "strategic balance-of-power calculations."¹

Ripsman and Levy's argument merits attention for at least two related reasons. The first is the renewal of interest in appeasement within the international relations and security studies fields. Piqued by the repeated use (or misuse) of the appeasement analogy by the administration of George W. Bush, several scholars have recently turned their attention to the international politics of the 1930s to assess what lessons should be drawn from the events of the period for today's decisionmakers.² More specifically, they question whether appeasement is sometimes justified or is always misguided. The second reason is that many of these scholars embrace what might be called a "rational

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1. Norrin Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time? The Logic of British Appeasement in the 1930s," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 150–151.

2. Christopher Layne, "Security Studies and the Use of History: Neville Chamberlain's Grand Strategy Revisited," *Security Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 2008), pp. 397–437; Norrin M. Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "The Preventive War That Never Happened: Britain, France, and the Rise of Germany in the 1930s," *Security Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 32–67; Steven E. Lobell, "The Second Face of Security: Britain's 'Smart' Appeasement Policy towards Japan and Germany," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 73–98; and Daniel Treisman, "Rational Appeasement," *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 345–373.

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strategic actor” model: decisionmakers coldly weigh the present and future strategic balance and take decisions about war and peace accordingly. As presented in Ripsman and Levy’s article, this model is not so much wrong as it is incomplete. One key factor missing from the model is changing assumptions and beliefs about Germany’s ultimate aims—assumptions and beliefs that profoundly influenced the importance that British leaders attached to assessments of the strategic balance. The model is also incomplete in that it considers too few possibilities. According to Ripsman and Levy, British decisionmakers opted for confrontation/war when they judged the present strategic balance to be favorable and opted against confrontation/war when they judged the present and future balance to be unfavorable. But what of the case in which both the present and the future balances appear unfavorable? The question is pertinent, because it was this scenario in which the British (and French) found themselves in 1939 when they decided to oppose Germany’s forceful expansion, if necessary through war. Considering not only why Britain opted against confrontation/war in 1938, but also why it opted for confrontation/war in 1939, provides a better understanding of British policy during the 1930s. Equally significant, it draws attention to an interesting case: a country that decides to go to war not because of, but in spite of, assessments of the strategic balance.

What follows is divided into three sections. In the first section, we reexamine the reasons why British policymakers chose to avoid confrontation/war with Nazi Germany during the Czechoslovak crisis, focusing on the inherent uncertainty surrounding German aims. A supplementary argument is that, given what was and what could be known at the time, it was reasonable to wager that Hitler’s aims were limited. In the second section, we examine why, shortly after the Munich Conference, the British chose to oppose future German expansion, even at the price of a European war, and why they remained committed to this decision in September 1939, notwithstanding the unfavorable present and future strategic balance confronting them. In the third section, we briefly discuss the evolution of Anglo-French military planning during 1939–40, which highlights the potential dangers of a situation in which a country goes to war without a convincing strategy for victory.

AVOIDING WAR

Ripsman and Levy argue that, during the Czechoslovak crisis, assessments of the strategic balance played a decisive role in British decisions. It is more accurate, however, to say that British decisionmakers viewed the balance through the lens of their assumptions and beliefs about Nazi Germany’s aims. Throughout the crisis, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain remained convinced that Germany’s aims were limited or, perhaps more precisely, that they could be steered in a direction that did not fundamentally threaten Britain. “Hitler’s objectives,” Chamberlain announced to the Cabinet in September 1938, “were strictly limited.” Soon afterward, the prime minister claimed that he had established “an influence” with Hitler that presented “a wonderful opportunity to put an end to the horrible nightmare of the present armament race.”³ For Chamberlain the strategic balance was largely irrelevant, because he was convinced

3. The National Archives [hereafter TNA], Kew Gardens, Britain, CAB 23/95, Cabinet minutes, 39 (38), September 17, 1938; and CAB 23/95, Cabinet minutes, 42 (38), September 24, 1938.

that war could be and should be avoided through diplomacy. When he mentioned the strategic situation during the heated Cabinet debates in September 1938, it was merely to insist that neither Britain nor France could offer any immediate military support to the Czechs. To be sure, some Cabinet members asked whether it might be wiser to wage war now rather than later, when Germany, having mastered central and eastern Europe, would be considerably stronger. But Chamberlain skillfully side-stepped this question, insisting that the fundamental issue concerned the nature of Hitler's aims. And here Chamberlain could point to the inherent uncertainty surrounding the issue. No one could be sure what Hitler's intentions really were, which meant that the choice was not between certain war now and certain war in the future but between almost certain war now and a possible but far from inevitable war in the future. Given the consensus inside and outside the Cabinet that Britain had nothing to gain and much to lose from a European war, one had to be extremely confident that Nazi Germany did indeed seek continental hegemony before deciding on confrontation. Significantly, in the end every British Cabinet minister proved unwilling to accept the choice of war now. The most striking example is that of Lord Halifax, the foreign secretary. Following the Bad Godesberg meeting in which Hitler had upped his demands, Halifax openly challenged Chamberlain's view of Hitler's intentions, questioning whether Britain could ever live peacefully with Nazi Germany. But having gazed into the abyss of a European war, Halifax quickly stepped back, throwing his support behind Chamberlain. As for Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty who resigned over Munich, he too shrank from accepting war now, insisting (as did Winston Churchill) that Hitler would be deterred by a show of Anglo-French resolve—a possibility Chamberlain dismissed as highly unlikely and, in any case, too dangerous to risk.

One might reply that Chamberlain was wrong about Hitler's intentions, and this is obviously true. Nevertheless, there is the question of whether it was reasonable in 1938 to reject the worst-case scenario, namely that Nazi Germany's aims were unlimited. We would suggest that it was entirely reasonable to do so and, indeed, that the contrary would have been unreasonable. One problem is that of hindsight: much of the criticism of Chamberlain and British policy is influenced by what happened afterward. We now know that Nazi Germany embarked on a project of continental conquest, but it is worth recalling that contemporaries did not know this. But we would go further and suggest that Chamberlain and his contemporaries could not grasp the scope and nature of Nazi Germany's eventual ambitions because they were simply inconceivable beforehand. Helpful here is the massive scholarship on Nazi Germany and the war it waged that has appeared over the last two to three decades.⁴ One point that clearly emerges from this work is the truly revolutionary nature of the regime: Nazi Germany was not a particularly nasty version of a great power, but something unprecedented. It was a nation, government, and society equipped with an industrially advanced economy; a skilled, disciplined, and cohesive population; and an impressive military machine—all of which would be directed toward redrawing the political, geographic, and ethnic map of Europe through war, conquest, and violence. At the regime's heart was a radicalizing dynamic, highlighted in different ways by the work of Ian Kershaw and Christopher

4. A useful introduction to the vast literature is Richard Bessel, *Nazism and War* (New York: Modern Library, 2004).

Browning, among others, that propelled Nazi Germany into taking ever-greater risks and using ever-greater violence, both at home and abroad.⁵

At first glance, the picture of Nazi Germany that emerges from this scholarship seems to confirm the folly of Munich. If Nazi Germany could not be appeased, what could be more misguided than attempting to do so? But further reflection suggests that the opposite is perhaps closer to the truth. It is not only that in 1938 Nazi Germany's war lay in the future; it is also and even more so that the truly radical, revolutionary nature of the regime could not be understood at the time because contemporaries lacked both the information and the conceptual tools to do so. True, there were voices in Britain and elsewhere warning of the threat posed by Nazi Germany—voices that included some of the Nazi regime's early victims who now found themselves in exile. But it is debatable whether even they understood the true potential of Hitler's Germany, for the regime's own leaders did not fully foresee where their ideology and actions would take them. Here, some of the more recent scholarship on the Holocaust is particularly instructive. Browning, for example, has convincingly shown that genocide was inconceivable in 1938–39 even to the regime's most obsessed and violent anti-Semites. The Final Solution was the end product of a lengthy process of radicalization in which each step rendered imaginable and thus possible the following step without, however, making the ultimate result predictable—or inevitable. Only the combination of time and unfolding events in the context of war would reveal what we now know and what, in retrospect, seems clear from the beginning.

The implications of this point are important for understanding Munich and appeasement. During the Czechoslovak crisis, Chamberlain presented the stakes in terms of a wager that Hitler's aims were limited. That he could brandish the certainty of a European war as the price for refusing to take up his wager certainly helped his case. But so too did the fact that the wager appeared to be a reasonable one in light of what could be known about Hitler's Germany at the time. British leaders accepted that the Nazis were bullies and that Nazi Germany would increasingly throw its weight around, particularly in central and eastern Europe. Indeed, many Foreign Office officials were prepared to concede to Nazi Germany an extensive sphere of influence.⁶ But to jump to the conclusion that Nazi Germany would seek not some loosely defined dominance but physical mastery of the continent, that it would construct an unprecedentedly brutal and exploitative empire through conquest, was too far a stretch for almost everyone in 1938. It was not only that, by any objective calculation, Germany lacked the resources to undertake such an endeavor, as Adam Tooze recently reminded us.⁷ It was also that the insight into the regime needed to grasp the extent of its future ambitions was not and could not be available at the time. From this perspective, to reject Chamberlain's wager, to choose war in 1938, would have been unreasonable.

5. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); and Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

6. On this point, see Donald Lammers, "From Whitehall after Munich: The Foreign Office and the Future Course of British Policy," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (December 1973), pp. 831–856.

7. Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

CONFRONTING WAR

Further evidence that British leaders filtered their assessments of the strategic balance through the lens of their beliefs about Germany's aims is provided by their decision in 1939 to oppose future German expansion, if necessary by war. Although the Prague coup in March 1939 confirmed and strengthened London's growing determination to resist Germany, British policy had been moving in this direction since the end of 1938. The initial hopes that Munich would usher in a period of Anglo-German and even European rapprochement quickly evaporated as the signs multiplied of Nazi Germany's growing radicalism both at home and abroad. At the same time, rumors of an imminent German attack in western Europe produced a British commitment to the defense of France and of western Europe in the opening months of 1939. Interestingly, the French played a critical role in shifting British policy. Not only did French political and especially military leaders manipulate evidence of a possible German attack in the west, but they also deliberately played on British doubts concerning French determination to resist German aggression.⁸ In any case, by the spring of 1939 both Britain and France were committed to opposing German military expansion in western and eastern Europe.

If the story of Britain's decision to oppose Germany in 1939 is well known, it is often overlooked that the strategic balance in 1939 was considerably less favorable to the British (and the French) than it had been in 1938.⁹ In the military realm, the Allies had no means of helping the Poles, who increasingly appeared to be Germany's next victim. More important still, Poland's vulnerability, together with Czechoslovakia's elimination from the military map, meant that the Allies had no second front against Germany and therefore would have to bear the full brunt of German military might. This situation was especially worrisome for the French, whose strategy for a war against Germany had always assumed the existence of a strong second front in eastern Europe. As planners in Paris knew, France would not have been among the victors in 1918 without the contribution of their Russian ally during 1914–17. As for the British, it is true that their air defenses were slightly improved in 1939 over 1938 and that the Royal Navy would dominate the seas in any conflict. But the more important point is that neither the British nor the French could attack Germany directly. French strategy as well as force structure ruled out any offensive against Germany for an indeterminate period. Britain was equally incapable of military action: its crash program of army expansion in 1939 would take several years to bear fruit, while the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command reluctantly admitted in the spring of 1939 that it lacked the means to undertake a sustained bombing offensive against Germany. On the outbreak of war, the Allies

8. For rumors of a German attack in the west, see Talbot C. Imlay, "The Making of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1938–39," in Martin S. Alexander and William J. Philpott, eds., *Anglo-French Defence Relations between the Wars* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 92–120. The growing importance of France in British calculations of the strategic situation in 1938–39 calls into question Ripsman and Levy's claim that the British decided "early on to calculate the balance of power based solely on Britain's military capabilities, excluding those of its allies." Ripsman and Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time?" pp. 180–181.

9. This is a basic argument of Williamson Murray's important study, *The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1938–1939: The Path to Ruin* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

could do little aside from imposing a naval blockade on Germany, the effects of which would take a good deal of time to materialize.¹⁰

Economically, the situation in 1939 hardly appeared more promising for the British and French. Although Britain's rearmament effort was beginning to pay dividends, especially in terms of aircraft production, its financial resources—the proverbial fourth arm of defense—were rapidly declining, prompting musings that it might be better to face war now before bankruptcy. In the case of France, its financial prospects were arguably better in 1939 than in 1938, but its rearmament continued to suffer from serious organizational difficulties, among others. More generally, as World War I had demonstrated, in a protracted European war the British and French would be increasingly dependent on U.S. financial, industrial, and military aid. The problem, of course, is that in 1939 the United States was anything but a reliable factor. Although Franklin Roosevelt's administration clearly sympathized with Britain and France, there were any number of political obstacles to furnishing considerable—and timely—help. If the Allies' economic situation was shaky in 1939, that of Germany was arguably stronger than it had been in 1938. In addition to benefiting from the economic and industrial resources of Czechoslovakia, the Germans were extending their influence in central and eastern Europe. To be sure, in 1939 British and French intelligence began to identify what they interpreted as signs of German economic and financial weakness, as rearmament ran up against the limits of Germany's own resources.¹¹ At the same time, however, the economic intelligence assessments drawn up in London and Paris were by no means unanimous. Not only was reliable information often in short supply, but British and French analysts disagreed over how to interpret the information they did have.¹² More to the point, judgments concerning Germany's economic vulnerability assumed that the Germans would not have significant access to external resources. Yet this assumption appeared extremely fragile, given that the Allies had little means of preventing Germany from extending its influence in central and eastern Europe either in peacetime or in wartime.

The unfavorable strategic situation in 1939 is important given that Britain and France's wartime strategy was based on the principle that time was an ally. Given Germany's initial military advantage, the Allies would avoid premature offensives at the start of a war, husbanding their strength while mobilizing their economic resources and waging economic warfare, principally by blockade. As Germany grew relatively and absolutely weaker, the balance of overall strength would shift decisively toward the Allies, allowing them to take the military offensive and win the war. During 1939, however, the very basis of this strategy appeared increasingly dubious. Not only was it impossible to say how long it would take before the balance shifted, but British

10. Significantly, German military leaders were not particularly concerned about an Allied blockade. See the comments of Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, in Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RW 4/764, "Aussprache mit Generaloberst Keitel am 17.8.39" [Discussion with General Keitel on 17.8.39].

11. On this point, see Wesley K. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 179–187; and Peter Jackson, *France and the German Menace: Intelligence and Policy Making, 1933–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 3373–3378.

12. For more on this subject, see Talbot C. Imlay, "Anglo-French Economic Intelligence and Strategy during the 'Phony War,'" *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1998), pp. 107–132.

and French planners began to question whether time would, indeed, be an ally. The fear quickly grew that, by waiting, the Allies would provide Germany with the time needed to consolidate and strengthen its influence on the continent.

Nothing better illustrates the growing doubts about the wisdom of the long-war strategy than the determined Anglo-French campaign during the spring–summer of 1939 to ally with the Soviet Union. Significantly, before 1939 the British had sought to exclude the Soviets from deliberations over Europe’s future—a goal the French and Germans both supported. The result was Moscow’s absence from the Munich Conference, despite Soviet alliances with the Czechs and the French. Following the Prague coup, however, this cold-shouldering quickly gave way to a concerted Anglo-French effort to court the Soviets, culminating in negotiations aimed at constructing a grand alliance—negotiations, moreover, marked by a series of British and French concessions to Moscow’s demands. The determination, not to say desperation, of the British and French to win over the Soviets stemmed from the growing realization that the Soviet Union would be a critical factor in a European war. Only with the Soviets as an ally could the British and French construct a viable second front in eastern Europe against Germany; and only with the Soviets as an ally (or at least as a benevolent neutral) could the British and French deny Germany access to the region’s economic resources.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939 was thus a strategic disaster for the Allies. Put simply, the bottom effectively fell out of the Allies’ strategy: the British and French lost all hopes of constructing an eastern front and of denying Germany significant access to external resources. Indeed, the pact included important economic provisions favorable to Germany.¹³ And yet, despite this strategic disaster, the British and French both remained committed to opposing future German expansion, effectively accepting a European war. The obvious question is why? Domestic political considerations certainly played a part. Chamberlain’s government clearly would not have survived the continued pursuit of appeasement. But changing beliefs about Nazi Germany’s aims following Munich were as—if not more—important. It is not that British leaders fully grasped the radically destructive nature of the Nazi regime. But by early 1939 the grounds for doubting the limited nature of Hitler’s aims appeared much stronger, which in turn weakened the attractiveness of a wager such as the one Chamberlain offered at Munich. Increasingly, the choice seemed to be between war now (or in the very near future) and the growing likelihood of war later. In August 1939, with the Wehrmacht set to attack Poland, the British and French reconfirmed their determination to oppose German expansion, effectively opting for war now.

In light of Ripsman and Levy’s emphasis on “strategic balance-of-power calculations” in British policy, it cannot be stressed enough that the choice for war now was not based on an optimistic reading of the present and future strategic situation. The French were arguably the most pessimistic, but British assessments were hardly brighter. Already in March 1939 the chiefs of staff had asserted that, without a second front in eastern Europe, the outcome of a war “would be problematical.” Three months later the chiefs underscored the need for the Soviets to enter “the war on our side.”¹⁴

13. See Karl-Heinz Blumenhagen, *Die deutsch-sowjetischen Handelsbeziehungen, 1939–1941* [German-Soviet commercial relations, 1939–1941] (Hamburg: Kovac, 1998).

14. TNA CAB 53/10, COS 283d meeting, March 18, 1939; and CAB 53/49, COS 905, “Anglo-French Action in Support of Poland,” June 3, 1939.

Little wonder, then, that British leaders were less than enthusiastic about Allied prospects at the start of the war. Speaking in early September 1939, Winston Churchill, newly installed as First Lord of the Admiralty, described the strategic situation as “extremely gloomy.” Gen. Edmund Ironside, chief of the Imperial General Staff, was even more dispirited, noting in his diary in December 1939: “Time is no use to us if we are not making use of it. I am sure that the Germans are making full use of it and we appear to be buoying ourselves by false hopes of the war coming to an end.” The Allies, he added the following month, cannot win the war simply “by trying not to lose it.”¹⁵

Thus the British and French chose war in 1939 not because of, but in spite of, their assessment of the strategic balance. But this is not to say that their decision was irrational. The Allies arguably had little choice. If the strategic balance was little short of disastrous in September 1939, to wait—to postpone war—would likely only make things worse. Having defeated Poland, Germany, with Soviet help, would extend its reach over central and eastern Europe, building a military-economic-industrial juggernaut that would overwhelm the British and French. The choice, in short, was between bad now and worse later. The problem for the Allies, however, was that, having chosen bad now, they had no obvious means of preventing worse later.

WAGING WAR

Having opted for war in September 1939, the British and French found themselves in a difficult position.¹⁶ The present strategic situation was unfavorable, which helps to explain why the Allies refrained from any direct attacks on Germany. At the same time, the future situation appeared no brighter and perhaps even worse. Time, in short, might be more an enemy than a friend. As a result, the British and French soon began to consider what could be done to weaken Germany. One possibility, discussed in the fall of 1939, was to land a small Allied force somewhere in the Balkans, most likely in Greece, with the aim of rallying the Balkan states (including Turkey) and creating a second military front against Germany. But the operation quickly proved unworkable, prompting the British and French to turn their attention to Scandinavia and to the idea of landing an Allied expedition in the region to occupy the Swedish iron ore mines, an important source of supplies for Germany. Despite a great deal of uncertainty regarding Germany’s dependence on foreign iron ore, the British and the French convinced themselves that, if denied Swedish iron ore, the German war economy would suffer a grave and perhaps fatal blow. The result was the Scandinavian campaign in the spring of 1940, which quickly turned to disaster when Germany, preempting the Allies, invaded Norway and Denmark and then defeated the small Anglo-French forces sent in re-

15. Churchill College Archives, Cambridge University, Alexander of Hillsborough Papers, AVAR 5/3, ms. notes of conversation with Churchill, September 19, 1939. For Ironside in December 1939, see Talbot C. Imlay, “A Reassessment of Anglo-French Strategy during the Phony War, 1939–1940,” *English Historical Review*, Vol. 119, No. 481 (2004), p. 360. For Ironside in January 1940, see TNA CAB 79/3 COS(40)15, January 25, 1940.

16. What follows is based on Talbot C. Imlay, *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics, and Domestic Politics in Britain and France, 1938–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 50–75, 105–127; and Talbot C. Imlay, “A Reassessment of Anglo-French Strategy during the Phony War, 1939–1940,” pp. 333–372.

sponse. More important than the failure of the campaign is what the efforts to cut German imports of Swedish iron ore reveal about Allied strategy. Convinced that some means had to be found to weaken, if not defeat, Germany in the short term, the Allies began to search for panaceas—for quick, easy, and indirect ways to strike at Germany. In the process, they increasingly ignored the risks involved in their proposals.

The growing riskiness of Allied strategy is clearly evident in plans to attack the Soviet Union. At the very beginning of the war, the British and French adopted a relatively flexible attitude toward Moscow based on the calculation that the supposedly irreconcilable ideological differences between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union would eventually lead the two to fall out. Flexibility, however, soon gave way to hostility as the Allies began to consider the Soviet Union not as a potential future ally but as a likely enemy. Rather than falling out, the argument was reversed as the Germans and Soviets came to be seen more as likely partners, drawn together by the prospect of continental conquest and exploitation. It was in this context that British and French planners and decisionmakers began to consider military action against the Soviet Union—the infamous Baku project. The project's proponents argued that air strikes against the Soviet oil industry in the Caucasus not only would deal a crippling blow to the Soviet Union, but also would have a debilitating effect on Germany's war effort. The reasoning was largely psychological: because the Germans supposedly counted on supplies of Soviet resources, any major interruption to these supplies would prove deeply demoralizing. To be sure, the Allies never carried out the Baku project, but this arguably had more to do with the German offensive in May 1940 that changed everything than it did with any insurmountable opposition in London or Paris to attacking the Soviets. Aside from the tortured logic of its proponents, what is striking about the project is how little attention was paid to the folly of provoking the Soviet Union at a time when the Allies had their hands full with Nazi Germany. Yet the Baku project makes sense if seen as a symptom of the desperate strategic straits in which the Allies found themselves during 1939–40: engaged in a war in which the present strategic situation appeared unfavorable and the future one even more so.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in briefly discussing British policy and strategy during 1938–40, we want to suggest that the “rational strategic actor” model adopted by Ripsman and Levy is not so much wrong as it is incomplete. One important missing element is the changing beliefs about the adversary's aims, which powerfully influenced calculations about the likelihood of war. Put simply, the greater the perceived probability of war, the more important became assessments of the strategic balance. When it comes to the strategic balance, moreover, there were more possibilities than the two identified by Ripsman and Levy: opting against confrontation/war when the present balance is judged to be unfavorable and opting for war/confrontation when it is judged to be favorable. In fact, the British and French chose war in 1939 even though the present strategic balance appeared unfavorable and the future balance no better, and likely even worse. This is not to say that assessments of the strategic balance were irrelevant, but rather that the British and French chose war because, strategically speaking, there was no better option. As the evolution of Allied strategy during 1939–40 suggests, however, going to war in such circumstances can be a recipe for disaster. Lacking a convincing strategy for

victory, the British and French desperately searched for some means to transform the strategic balance in their favor, producing in the process a dangerous radicalization of military planning.

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—Talbot C. Imlay
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To the Editors (Evan Resnick writes):

In their recent article, Norrin Ripsman and Jack Levy argue that scholars have inadequately conceptualized appeasement as a tool of statecraft, and that they have tended to claim inaccurately that Britain's appeasement of Nazi Germany during the 1930s was aimed primarily at sating German grievances, rather than buying time for British rearmament.¹

In this comment, I examine the conceptual aspect of Ripsman and Levy's argument. The authors discard previous attempts by scholars to define appeasement, asserting that all of these definitions suffer from at least one of three serious defects: (1) unfairly prejudging the morality or effectiveness of the policy; (2) narrowly stipulating that the aim of appeasement is to satisfy the grievances of the party being appeased (i.e., the target); and (3) failing to distinguish appeasement from other negotiating strategies involving mutual concessions that are intended to satisfy grievances and avoid war. In their place, the authors propose the following definition: "a strategy of sustained, asymmetrical concessions in response to a threat, with the aim of avoiding war, at least in the short term" (p. 154).

Ripsman and Levy's reconceptualization of appeasement, however, is itself vitiated by three weaknesses: (1) it is prohibitively difficult to operationalize; (2) it conduces to selection bias; and (3) it is so vague that it lumps together substantively distinct policy approaches that would be more usefully assessed separately.

PROBLEM #1: DIFFICULTIES IN OPERATIONALIZATION

Ripsman and Levy's definition of appeasement violates a cardinal precept of conceptual development, namely that concepts should be "operational in the broadest sense."² Difficulties in operationalization afflict both of the conditions that the authors claim distinguish appeasement from other positive sanctions, namely that appeasement involves the provision of concessions on a sustained and asymmetrical basis.³ With

1. Norrin M. Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time? The Logic of British Appeasement in the 1930s," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 148–181. Additional references to this article appear in parentheses in the text.

2. Felix E. Oppenheim, "The Language of Political Inquiry: Problems of Clarification," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 1: *Political Science: Scope and Theory* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), p. 297.

3. David A. Baldwin defines "positive sanctions" as "actual or promised rewards." Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," in Baldwin, ed., *Paradoxes of Power* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 63.

respect to the former condition, the authors refrain from articulating a clear threshold—that is, the amount of time expended on the influence attempt or a specific number of unreciprocated concessions—that can be used to precisely gauge whether a given influence attempt meets the standard of being sustained. By contrasting appeasement with a tit-for-tat policy (p. 154), Ripsman and Levy imply that if a target does not symmetrically reciprocate a sender's initial concession and the sender proceeds to deliver a second concession, this would meet the criterion of being sustained. However, in light of the standard connotation of the word "sustained" as denoting something that is prolonged in some measure, this appears to be a somewhat loose standard.⁴

The authors' second condition—that concessions must be asymmetrical—is considerably more problematic on operational grounds. The stipulation raises the question of whether an influence attempt should be categorized as appeasement if the sender and the target agree to symmetrical exchanges of concessions *ex ante*, but the target proceeds to renege on its pledges. The authors address this hypothetical dilemma by elaborating that "appeasement is based on the expectation that the adversary will probably not reciprocate one's concessions with its own concessions of comparable value" (p. 154).⁵ Although this qualification resolves the initial problem, it opens up another, as the analyst must then ascertain the sender's estimation, at the time of the influence attempt, of the likelihood that the target will fully reciprocate the sender's concessions. This effort is likely to be complicated by the high probability that senior decisionmakers in the sender state will disagree in their respective estimates. Hawks in the government will likely be pessimistic on this score, whereas doves will probably be optimistic, which, paradoxically, casts hawks (and not doves) as appeasers. In any event, this cal-

4. The 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word "sustained" as "kept up without intermission or flagging; maintained through successive stages or over a long period; kept up or maintained at a uniform (esp. a high) pitch or level." Definition derived from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

5. Absent this qualification, a serious incongruity would exist between the authors' definition of appeasement and the historical case that lies at the heart of their study. One can only retrospectively code Britain's concessions to Germany as asymmetrically favorable to the latter. Specifically, at the September 1938 Munich Conference, which indisputably represented the cornerstone of the appeasement attempt, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain offered up the Sudeten territory of Czechoslovakia to Germany in exchange for Adolf Hitler's pledges to refrain from invading Czechoslovakia and to peacefully resolve all future German disputes with Britain. From Chamberlain's perspective, Hitler's promises greatly exceeded the value of the relatively marginal parcel of land in eastern Europe being transferred to Germany, particularly given that the region in question was predominantly inhabited by ethnic Germans. This attitude was reflected in Chamberlain's exclamation during a national radio address delivered at the height of the war scare that precipitated the Munich summit, "How horrible, fantastic it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know very little." Neville Chamberlain, *The Struggle for Peace* (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1939), pp. 274–276. Had Hitler actually made good on the pledges he rendered at Munich, a strong case could be made that, from Britain's perspective, those concessions would not merely have been symmetrical, but would have actually favored Britain. This interpretation is bolstered by the fact that Hitler viewed the outcome of Munich as a disappointment, given that his preference had been to seize all of Czechoslovakia by force. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), pp. 122–123. Thus, British policy toward Germany during the 1930s qualifies as appeasement according to Ripsman and Levy's definition only if the authors add the qualification that the sender must expect that the target will not fully reciprocate the sender's concessions.

ulation is extremely difficult and highly subjective, as concessions in different domains (e.g., the sender offers \$50 billion in foreign economic aid in exchange for the target's promised shutdown of its nuclear weapons development program) are not easily rendered commensurable for the purpose of assessing whether they are of "comparable value."⁶ This opens up the possibility that the sender state's beliefs on this matter at the time the policy is implemented will subsequently be disputed by scholars employing a different standard (or multiple standards) of measure for comparing the value of both sides' concessions.

In any event, acceptance of Ripsman and Levy's definition necessitates that scholars conceptually distinguish influence attempts in which the sender offers concessions on an ostensibly reciprocal basis to the target but does not expect the target to live up to its end of the deal (i.e., appeasement) from those in which the sender offers concessions on an ostensibly reciprocal basis to the target and does expect the target to live up to its end of the deal (i.e., tit-for-tat). Thus, a scenario in which a target symmetrically reciprocates the concessions of the sender, despite the sender's skepticism that it would do so, would ironically meet the authors' definition of appeasement, even though in practice the exchange epitomizes tit-for-tat. The unwieldiness of this approach is underscored by the fact that, to this author's knowledge, no other tool of statecraft has been conceptually bifurcated according to whether or not the sender expects it to succeed.

PROBLEM #2: SELECTION BIAS

Ripsman and Levy's effort to anchor their definition of appeasement in the expectations of the sender state will inevitably lead to selection bias among scholars who employ the definition to generate a universe of historical cases for testing their theories of appeasement. This is because historical cases in which the sender state provided concessions to a target but expected the target to cheat on its commitments (i.e., cases of appeasement) are likely those in which a policy of concessions was least likely to succeed in the first place. Conversely, cases in which the sender expected the target to fully reciprocate its concessions (i.e., cases of tit-for-tat) will likely be those in which policy success was most likely. Thus, Ripsman and Levy's definition ultimately falls victim to the same flaw of prejudging the likely effectiveness of the policy that the authors claim disqualifies a number of the extant scholarly definitions of appeasement that they seek to replace.

PROBLEM #3: APPEASEMENT VERSUS OTHER POSITIVE SANCTIONS

By broadly characterizing appeasement as "concessions," Ripsman and Levy fail to substantively differentiate appeasement from other positive sanctions, given that all such sanctions involve the provision of some form of concessions. By definition, appeasement differs from other positive sanctions according to the sustained and asymmetrical manner in which the policy is implemented, even if the substance of the policy is otherwise identical. Thus, the only possible alternative instruments of positive sanctions permitted by this definition would be those in which equally nebulous concessions are delivered on a sustained and (expected) symmetrical basis, a nonsustained and (expected) symmetrical basis, or a nonsustained and (expected) asymmetrical ba-

6. On the difficulties of judging whether social exchanges are symmetrical or asymmetrical, see David A. Baldwin, "Power and Social Exchange," in Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power*, pp. 100–128.

sis. This convoluted method of differentiation is acceptable only if it is neither possible nor fruitful to establish meaningful substantive differences between different types of concessions.

In this regard, it is instructive to note that international relations scholars have constructed a highly differentiated typology of alternative options in the realm of negative sanctions.⁷ Although there has been no shortage of disputes among these scholars regarding the proper definition of economic sanctions, coercive diplomacy, power balancing/containment (subdivided into internal and external variants, with the latter in turn subdivided into hard and soft variants), preventive and preemptive war, strategic bombing, covert action, terrorism, state-sponsored terrorism, and deterrence, all of these terms have been defined at a level of nuance and precision that far surpasses what would be the antipode of Ripsman and Levy's conception of appeasement: "a strategy of sustained, asymmetrical punishments in response to a threat." In contrast to Ripsman and Levy's definition of appeasement, each of the aforementioned negative sanctions specifies the substantive character of the punishments being threatened or imposed, which involve distinct sets of endemic risks, costs, and benefits. This glaring disparity in conceptual development can be largely attributed to the fact that political scientists have traditionally concentrated their attention on negative sanctions and have largely ignored positive sanctions.⁸

AN ALTERNATIVE DEFINITION OF APPEASEMENT

In place of Levy and Ripsman's definition of appeasement, I propose another: the attempt to influence the behavior of a state or nonstate actor through the provision of territory or an enlarged sphere of geopolitical influence to that actor.⁹ By defining appeasement in substantive terms, analysts can delineate multiple strategies of appeasement that vary according to the manner in which the policy is implemented (e.g., conditionally or unconditionally, single-shot or iterated series of concessions) and the scale of the objective(s) sought.¹⁰

Importantly, this definition accords with the two historical cases that scholars have most closely associated with appeasement: British policy toward Nazi Germany during the 1930s and Britain's earlier policy toward the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹ Both consisted of British actions that match those identified in my definition. Britain appeased the Third Reich between 1936 and 1939 by acquiescing to that regime's military reoccupation of the Rhineland, annexation of Austria, acquisition of the Sudeten territory from Czechoslovakia, and subsequent annexation of the rest of

7. Baldwin defines "negative sanctions" as "actual or threatened punishments." Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," p. 63.

8. See *ibid.*, pp. 58–59; and Daniel W. Drezner, "The Trouble with Carrots: Transaction Costs, Conflict Expectations, and Economic Inducements," reprinted in Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, Edward D. Mansfield, and Norrin M. Ripsman, eds., *Power and the Purse: Economic Statecraft, Interdependence, and National Security* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 189.

9. This conception of appeasement is also implicitly employed in James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 408–409.

10. Ripsman and Levy divide appeasement into three types or strategies, differentiated solely according to the ends sought by the sender: (1) resolving grievances, (2) diffusing secondary threats, and (3) buying time (pp. 154–158).

11. Ripsman and Levy refer in passing to Britain's successful appeasement of the United States. Ripsman and Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time?" p. 153.

Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile Britain's appeasement of the United States between 1896 and 1903 consisted of the former's submission to Washington's urgings to submit a border dispute between its colony of British Guiana and Venezuela to international arbitration, formal acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine, renunciation of its previous opposition to a U.S.-built and fortified Central American canal, and acquiescence to U.S. claims pertaining to the border between Alaska and the Canadian Yukon.¹²

My definition of appeasement also averts the chief handicaps of Ripsman and Levy's definition. First, it is relatively easy to operationalize. Cases in which states have sought to influence the behavior of another actor through the promise or actual extension of territory or spheres of influence to that actor are readily gleaned from the historical record, are not subject to *ex ante* versus *ex post* differences in interpretation, and do not necessitate scrutinizing the contemporaneous attitudes and beliefs of political leaders in the sender state to judge whether the policy was one of appeasement. Second, the definition does not lead to selection bias; as articulated, it does not prejudge whether the sender's exchange of territory and/or sphere of influence in return for changed behavior by the target is likely to achieve success in any given case. Third, by substantively restricting appeasement to the provision of certain types of concessions, the definition permits the differentiation of multiple instruments of positive sanctions, which consist of identifiably discrete behaviors that differ in key respects.

In particular, this conception of appeasement facilitates the clear differentiation of that policy from another, typically dubbed "constructive engagement," which has occupied the attention of both policymakers and analysts in recent years.¹³ Although the term "constructive engagement" has been invoked by analysts to depict U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union during the early 1970s' period of *détente*, apartheid South Africa and Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the 1980s, and Vietnam, North Korea, Russia, and China in the 1990s, it has been as murkily and inadequately conceptualized as that of appeasement.¹⁴ In each of these cases, U.S. policymakers attempted to influence the political behavior of the target state via the establishment and enhancement of contacts with that state across multiple issue areas (diplomatic, economic, military, and/or cultural), creating an increasingly interdependent relationship between the two states.¹⁵

12. These cases are nicely surveyed in Stephen R. Rock, *Appeasement in International Politics* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), pp. 25–76.

13. The term "constructive engagement" was coined by Chester A. Crocker in "South Africa: Strategy for Change," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Winter 1980/81), pp. 323–351.

14. Illustrative examples include Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, eds., *Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000); Alex Thomson, *Incomplete Engagement: U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Republic of South Africa, 1981–1988* (Aldershot, U.K.: Avebury, 1996); Zachary Karabell, "Backfire: U.S. Policy toward Iraq, 1988–2 August 1990," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 28–47; Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999); David Shambaugh, "Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 180–209; and Paul A. Papayoanou and Scott L. Kastner, "Sleeping with the (Potential) Enemy: Assessing the U.S. Policy of Engagement with China," in Blanchard, Mansfield, and Ripsman, *Power and the Purse*, pp. 157–187. For a critique of scholars' efforts to conceptualize engagement, see Evan N. Resnick, "Defining Engagement," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 551–566.

15. Generally, international relations scholars have construed the term "interdependence" as "re-

Specifically, such contacts included the normalization of diplomatic relations; arms transfers; military aid; intelligence sharing; exchanges of military officials; trade agreements; foreign economic assistance; inauguration of travel and tourism links; and sports, academic, and educational exchanges.¹⁶ In each of these cases, however, even as the United States vigorously engaged the target states in question, it opposed their territorial and geopolitical expansion. Most notably, after Iraq invaded Kuwait in early August 1990, the George H.W. Bush administration immediately severed all remaining bilateral diplomatic, economic, and military contacts with Saddam Hussein's regime; successfully lobbied the United Nations Security Council to impose comprehensive economic sanctions against Iraq; and eventually launched a full-scale war to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.¹⁷

By defining appeasement and constructive engagement in the above manner, it is possible to draw important generic differences between the two policies. For instance, appeasement and engagement pose distinct risks for the sender state. Appeasement is risky because once the territorial concessions in question have been ceded to the target, if the target reneges at any point after the handover, these concessions can usually be recovered only through war.¹⁸ By contrast, the contacts that make up engagement are typically ongoing and can therefore be curtailed or severed unilaterally by the sender in response to unanticipated misbehavior by the target, without necessitating a war.¹⁹ Engagement poses its own risks for the sender, however. It is useful as a tool of statecraft only as long as the sender is less dependent than the target on the bilateral contacts established under its aegis, thereby permitting the sender to exact a behavioral price from the target for the continuation or expansion of the relationship.²⁰ Meanwhile both poli-

lations that would be mutually costly to forego." David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power," in Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 180.

16. For more comprehensive lists of the types of contacts that would broadly fall under the aegis of engagement as defined here, see Haass and O'Sullivan, *Honey and Vinegar*, pp. 5–6; and Deon Geldenhuys, *Isolated States: A Comparative Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 17–18.

17. Meghan L. O'Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), pp. 107, 110.

18. British appeasement failed to reform the behavior of Nazi Germany, and a second world war was required to wrest the territories that Germany had been granted during the late 1930s from Hitler's grip.

19. This is not to deny, however, that the retraction of engagement by the sender might prompt the target to retaliate militarily.

20. According to John J. Mearsheimer, "Although mutual vulnerabilities may arise among states, it is likely that the actual levels of dependence will not be equal. The less vulnerable states would probably have greater bargaining power over the more dependent states and might attempt to coerce them into making extravagant concessions." Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), p. 46. The seminal work on the subject of how states can coerce their trading partners into making political and economic concessions is Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, expanded ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Importantly, Douglas A. Borer's examination of the failed U.S. attempt to reform Iraqi behavior through engagement between 1982 and 1990 suggests that even a less dependent sender can be exploited by a more dependent target if the former is an open democracy and the latter is a closed dictatorship. During the U.S. engagement of Iraq from the early 1980s until Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein managed to offset his country's high economic dependence on the United States by fostering powerful private interest groups that aggressively lobbied the White House and the Congress on behalf of ex-

cies pose distinct risks for the target. For the target of an appeasement attempt, there is a risk that the territory ceded to it by the sender will prove to be more of a liability than a benefit, due to peaceful or violent resistance by the subjugated populace against the foreign occupier, or more benignly, to secular trends in the global economy.²¹ Meanwhile engagement carries the general risk that the target will become increasingly dependent on the sender, thereby rendering it increasingly hostage to the whims of the latter. Further, autocratic target regimes will incur the added risk that expanded contacts and interactions with a liberal democratic sender state will jeopardize their grip on power domestically by undermining their ability to control information and communications flows within their typically closed and opaque polities.²²

CONCLUSION

Ripsman and Levy end their article with the disclaimer that they “leave for future research an assessment of the relative frequency of [the time-buying strategy] of appeasement, its relative utility, and its relation to other policy instruments available to states confronted by a rising power” (p. 181). Their redefinition of appeasement, however, is likely to frustrate, rather than facilitate, scholars’ efforts to acquire a better understanding of this venerable, if much maligned foreign policy instrument. In this letter, I have proposed an alternative conception that not only places the study of appeasement on more solid footing but also firmly differentiates that policy from constructive engagement, another tool of positive sanctions that has been ubiquitously discussed but is just as poorly understood.

—Evan Resnick
New York, New York

Norrin M. Ripsman and Jack S. Levy Reply:

In our recent article, we proposed a new typology of appeasement and argued that the appeasement of Nazi Germany by Britain in the 1930s was driven primarily by the goal

panded bilateral trade relations. Borer, “Inverse Engagement: Lessons from U.S.-Iraq Relations, 1982–1990,” *Parameters*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 51–65.

21. Richard N. Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), pp. 34, 160–162; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 142; Carl Kaysen, “Is War Obsolete? A Review Essay,” *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 1990), pp. 42–64; Klaus Knorr, *The Power of Nations: The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); and Stephen G. Brooks, “The Globalization of Production and the Changing Benefits of Conquest,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (October 1999), pp. 646–670. For a dissenting view, see Peter Liberman, *Does Conquest Pay? The Exploitation of Occupied Industrial Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

22. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 3–30, 129–204; Gordon Tullock, *Autocracy* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987), pp. 17–34; and Robert S. Litwak, *Regime Change: U.S. Strategy through the Prism of 9/11* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007), p. 119. For a fascinating case study of such ambivalence, see M.E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 46–54.

of buying time for rearmament, not by a naïve confidence that appeasement would satisfy Adolf Hitler's grievances and maintain the peace.¹ Evan Resnick questions the conceptual utility of our definition, and Andrew Barros and Talbot Imlay question key aspects of our historical interpretation. Their letters raise important issues, only some of which we have space to address here. We begin with some of Resnick's concerns, and then turn to Barros and Imlay's critique.

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF APPEASEMENT

Conventional definitions of appeasement generally emphasize the use of concessions to satisfy the adversary's grievances, reduce tensions, and avoid war for the foreseeable future. We argued that these definitions narrowly equate appeasement with the dominant interpretation of British and French appeasement of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and neglect other forms of appeasement. They also fail to distinguish appeasement from other influence strategies involving concessions. These concerns led us to propose an alternative definition of appeasement as "a strategy of sustained, asymmetrical concessions in response to a threat, with the aim of avoiding war, at least in the short term" (p. 154).

We then distinguished three different types of appeasement strategies, based on the goals and expectations of the appeaser: (1) "resolving grievances" to create a lasting peace; (2) "diffusing secondary threats" to focus on a primary threat—by conserving resources, denying the primary adversary an important ally, or perhaps redirecting the hostility of the secondary threat toward the primary threat; and (3) "buying time" to prepare for (and perhaps deter) a possible military confrontation by rearming or securing allies. We used this typology to distinguish our buying-time interpretation of British appeasement policy toward Nazi Germany from a standard resolving-grievances interpretation.

We welcome the task of elaborating on our definition of appeasement in response to Resnick's criticisms, as our efforts to construct a typology of appeasement and apply it to the 1930s left too little space for a complete treatment of all conceptual issues in a single article. In his letter, Resnick focuses primarily on our definition of appeasement rather than on our typology. He argues that our definition is "prohibitively difficult to operationalize," that our emphasis on the appeaser's expectations regarding the adversary leads to selection bias in efforts to generate a universe of cases of appeasement, and that it lumps together distinct policies that ought to be differentiated. We consider each of these issues in turn.

Resnick begins his discussion of operationalization by arguing that we fail to specify a threshold for "sustained" concessions, in terms of time or the number of unreciprocated concessions. We agree that operational definitions are desirable, particularly for the purposes of creating a large data set or identifying cases for comparative case-study analysis. Concepts must be theoretically developed before they can be usefully operationalized, however, and the task of constructing quantitative indicators should not take priority over capturing the essence of the phenomenon in question. Our introduc-

1. Norrin Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time? The Logic of British Appeasement in the 1930s," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 148–181. Further references to this article appear parenthetically in the text.

tion of the “sustained” qualifier makes an important distinction between a policy of appeasement and a single concession to the adversary.

Operational definitions must also be guided by the theoretical aims of a particular study and its spatial and temporal domain. Scholars addressing slightly different research questions might want to operationalize the concept differently. “Sustained” might mean something different in the contemporary era of rapid communications than in ancient Greece or early modern Europe. Devising indicators of “sustained” that are transhistorically and transculturally valid is a useful task, but it is an extraordinarily difficult one.

Resnick argues that our requirement that concessions must be asymmetrical is particularly problematic. Our aim in requiring that concessions be asymmetrical as well as sustained was to differentiate appeasement from strategies involving reciprocity, including tit-for-tat, where the first actor begins with a cooperative move and cooperates afterward if and only if the adversary reciprocates. Sustained cooperation in response to comparable levels of cooperation by the adversary is not appeasement.² At the time an actor makes its concession, it does not know whether its adversary will reciprocate, but it does have expectations about the adversary’s intentions. Thus we argue that “a strategy of appeasement is based on the expectation that the adversary will probably not reciprocate one’s concessions with its own concessions of comparable value” (p. 154).

By including the appeaser’s expectations, we avoid the problem of how to classify symmetrical concessions that are followed by the target renegeing on its promises. Resnick concedes that we circumvent this problem, but argues that our emphasis on expectations introduces additional problems. First, expectations are hard to measure, and the assessment of expectations is complicated by disagreements among senior leaders regarding the likely behavior of the adversary. We concede that identifying political leaders’ expectations and intentions is a difficult, data-intensive task. If a variable is theoretically important, however, it needs to be included in the analysis. Any analysis of state’s grand strategies that fails to include the goals, perceptions, and expectations of political leaders is likely to be superficial. A focus on these perceptual variables, as well as on the differences in preferences and expectations among key decisionmakers, is standard in foreign policy analysis.³ We incorporate these differences into our study of British policy in the 1930s.

Resnick also argues that our focus on expectations of adversary behavior raises another problem, one of selection bias for researchers who want to generate a universe of cases to test theories of appeasement. He argues that a policy of concessions is more likely to fail in cases in which the sender expects the target to cheat on its commitments than one in which the sender expects its adversary “to fully reciprocate its concessions (i.e., cases of tit-for-tat).” He concludes that our definition has the problem of “prejudging the likely effectiveness of the policy.”

2. It is important to note that appeasement requires asymmetrical but not necessarily unilateral concessions. Britain and France made extensive concessions at Munich, but not unilateral ones, because they required Hitler to forgo the rest of Czechoslovakia. For a definition of appeasement that requires unilateral concessions, see Daniel Triesman, “Rational Appeasement,” *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 345–373, at p. 345.

3. Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making (Revisited)* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). The focus on actor preferences and the informational environment is also standard in most game-theoretic analyses.

By referring to expectations of full reciprocity and tit-for-tat, Resnick goes beyond appeasement and implicitly refers to a test of the relative effectiveness of policies of appeasement and reciprocity. In our article, we did not engage the question of the effectiveness of alternative strategies, only the question of why British leaders adopted the policies they did. Still, Resnick raises important questions about evaluating effectiveness. His argument is weakened, however, by the fact that he ignores our distinction among different types of appeasement. His comparison of expectations of cheating and full reciprocity, for example, misses a third possibility, one in which the sender expects that concessions will work to satisfy the adversary's grievances even in the absence of reciprocal concessions (our resolving-grievances variant of appeasement). Although Resnick seems to be equating expectations of cheating with appeasement and expectations of the faithful adherence to agreements with a strategy of reciprocity, in fact expectations of the faithful adherence to agreements can be associated with either a strategy of reciprocity or a resolving-grievances strategy of appeasement. In the latter, the appeaser often expects the adversary to honor its limited concessions in response to the appeaser's disproportionate concessions.

Resnick's neglect of our distinction among different types of appeasement also has implications for the evaluation of policy success. Outcomes may be worst when you do not trust the adversary, best when you expect full reciprocity, and somewhere in between when you expect that asymmetric concessions will work to satisfy grievances. We cannot infer the relative success of policy directly from outcomes, however, because outcomes are shaped by underlying conditions and the strategic environment (and by the actions of the adversary), as well as by the policy a state adopts, in response to those conditions, given its expectations and motivations. These factors must be incorporated in any evaluation of policy success.

Consider the buying-time appeasement strategy. If a state expects the adversary to cheat on any promises it makes, and if strategic conditions are unfavorable (and hence not conducive to a confrontational policy) but expected to improve, it may implement a buying-time appeasement strategy. If this strategy works to diffuse threats in the short term and postpone war until the state is better prepared militarily and economically, the policy should presumably be judged a relative success, even if the adversary violates some of its promises and even if the outcome is war.⁴ Thus there is not a one-to-one relationship between expectations of the adversary's response to one's concessions and the evaluation of policy success, and Resnick's charge of selection bias is misplaced. Any discussion of selection bias must recognize the different types of appeasement (or other strategies), the conditions under which they are adopted, and the necessity of applying different criteria of policy effectiveness to each of them.

A third charge raised by Resnick is that we fail to differentiate appeasement from other kinds of positive sanctions. We agree that it would be theoretically useful to construct a more complete conceptual framework that differentiates among various forms of positive sanctions, including constructive engagement. We took a small step in that direction by distinguishing appeasement from reciprocity and other concession-based strategies that do not involve sustained and asymmetrical concessions, and also by distinguishing among different types of appeasement strategies. There is certainly more that could be done to build on the extensive literature on positive sanctions. This was

4. The British appeasement of Germany in the 1930s was based on flawed assessments of the strategic balance and cannot be judged a success.

not our primary aim in suggesting a typology of appeasement and applying it to the 1930s, but we encourage Resnick and others to pursue this line of research.

In the hope of facilitating the construction of a database on appeasement, Resnick defines appeasement as “the attempt to influence the behavior of a state or nonstate actor through the provision of territory or an enlarged sphere of geopolitical influence to that actor.” This definition is problematic on several grounds. In contrast to our definition, which conceives of appeasement as a response to threat, Resnick does not include the perception of threat in his definition. States often act to enlarge the sphere of geopolitical influence of a key ally, but that would generally not constitute appeasement. Thus, for example, the United States’ efforts to build up the strength of its European allies after World War II to facilitate their role in a strategy of containment of the Soviet Union do not constitute appeasement.

We also question the prominent place Resnick gives to the “provision of territory” to another actor. Although it is true that a disproportionate number of wars arise from territorial disputes,⁵ appeasement strategies can be based on other forms of concessions. Resnick’s definition would not incorporate “economic appeasement,” which can have important security externalities.⁶ It would also exclude a state’s attempt to provide greater autonomy to a region within its borders or to a colony in an attempt to head off a rebellion. Our own definition encompasses a broader range of policy instruments that can be included in an appeasement strategy.

Another difference in our respective definitions of appeasement is that we require that concessions be asymmetrical, whereas Resnick does not explicitly include that requirement. Territorial partitions have historically been a common instrument for managing international disputes, but they were often implemented in ways that satisfied the great powers territorially at the expense of weaker states while minimizing the effects on the overall balance of power.⁷ We would exclude cases of “symmetrical” territorial partitions, but it appears that Resnick’s definition might include them as appeasement. Similarly, we would not include the Nazi-Soviet Pact as involving appeasement, even though it enlarged both states’ territorial spheres of influence. Given Resnick’s emphasis on the importance of operationalization, we should note that he fails to specify how much of a provision of territory is necessary for appeasement. Presumably, small adjustments do not qualify.

In conclusion, Resnick’s criticisms of our definition of appeasement are thought-provoking but ultimately not convincing, and his own definition is too restrictive and requires further conceptualization.

CHAMBERLAIN AND APPEASEMENT

Barros and Imlay raise a number of important issues in their critique of our historical interpretation of British appeasement policy. They devote half of their letter to British decisionmaking in 1939, which goes beyond the focus in our article on British strategic calculations and appeasement policies in the 1933–38 period. Although we endorse

5. Paul D. Senese and John A. Vasquez, *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

6. Joanne Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). On economic appeasement, see Steven Lobell, “Economic Appeasement or Realpolitik? Britain’s Trade Concessions to Germany during the 1930s,” paper presented at the conference “Grand Strategy in the Interwar Years,” Salt Lake City, Utah, March 26–27, 2009.

7. Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1955).

Barros and Imlay's implicit use of controlled comparison to provide greater empirical leverage on the analysis of earlier decisions,⁸ and although we plan to examine the 1939 period in a subsequent study, we focus here on their critique of our analysis of Britain's response to the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938.

The core of our disagreement with Barros and Imlay is our divergent interpretations of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his expectations, preferences, and strategic calculations. In particular, Barros and Imlay argue that British decisions in 1938 were driven by British leaders' "assumptions and beliefs about Nazi Germany's aims" rather than by their perceptions of the strategic balance, which they claim was "largely irrelevant" for Chamberlain. To some extent, this is because Barros and Imlay focus on the Munich Conference rather than on the events leading up to it. As we demonstrate in our article, the British Cabinet had decided well in advance of Munich that Czechoslovakia could not be defended, that the strategic balance had already shifted in Germany's favor, and that a military confrontation with Germany would be unwise until the strategic balance was rectified.⁹

The pivotal decision came in March 1938, after the *Anschluss* of Austria made it clear that Sudeten Czechoslovakia would likely be Hitler's next target. The Cabinet decided at its March 22 meeting, six months prior to Chamberlain's meeting with Hitler, that at least until British air defenses were completed and the strength of the Royal Air Force was augmented with additional aircraft, they could not guarantee Czechoslovakia's sovereignty against German aggression or join France in a forceful response to a German challenge.¹⁰ At this juncture, as they had throughout the 1930s, strategic calculations predominated, especially the belief that British disarmament in the 1920s had put the British military services so far behind that they would not be able to contemplate war with Germany until the end of the decade at the earliest.¹¹ We therefore agree with Wesley Wark that Chamberlain and the Cabinet were "undeniably . . . influenced by the pessimism that flowed from intelligence circles. The near and medium-term military balance was presumed to be perilous, a perception that was instrumental in convincing the cabinet to avoid the dangers of any attempt at deterrence, above all during the Munich crisis."¹²

More broadly, however, Barros and Imlay subscribe to a core component of the conventional understanding of Chamberlain—namely that he had underestimated

8. See Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 67–72.

9. In contrast, French leaders did not believe that the deterioration in the strategic balance would be reversed. See Norrin M. Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "The Preventive War That Never Happened: Britain, France, and the Rise of Germany in the 1930s," *Security Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January–March 2007), pp. 32–67.

10. Cabinet 15 (38), March 22, 1938—CAB 23/93, pp. 33–46.

11. Chamberlain reiterated this strategic logic in a letter to his sister Ida shortly before the Munich Conference: "You should never menace unless you are in a position to carry out your threats and although if we have to fight I should hope we should be able to give a good account of ourselves we are certainly not in a position in which our military advisors would feel happy in undertaking to begin hostilities if we were not forced to do so." Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, September 11, 1938—Papers of Neville Chamberlain, University of Birmingham Library, Special Collections, Birmingham, United Kingdom (hereinafter UBL), NC 18/1/1068.

12. Wesley K. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 231. See also John Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace* (London: John Curtis, 1989), p. 65; and Peter Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement: The British Attempt to Prevent the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), pp. 201–202.

Hitler's intentions and was confident that Hitler's ambitions could be satisfied with concessions—although they contend that it was reasonable for him to believe so given insufficient information and the novelty of the Nazi challenge. Based on our reading of Chamberlain's contributions to Cabinet discussions, the Committee on Imperial Defence, and bilateral conferences with French leaders, as well as his private papers and correspondence, we believe that Chamberlain has been misunderstood by many historians, who have portrayed him as excessively naïve about German intentions and ignorant about strategic considerations. To some extent this is a consequence of Chamberlain's death in 1940, which made him a convenient scapegoat for Winston Churchill and others, as he could not defend himself from the grave.¹³ Chamberlain's personality was probably also a contributing factor, however. He had an acid character laden with a misplaced sense of superiority over all others, for whom he had undisguised contempt.¹⁴ This disposition, which won him many enemies, only enhanced his attractiveness as a target. Most of all, though, the frequent vacillations in Chamberlain's writings and statements on Hitler and the prospects for peace enabled historians to find a wealth of quotations to support derogatory interpretations of his strategic understanding, which they portrayed as naïve and economic.

A classic example of his vacillations can be found in Chamberlain's March 1938 letter to his sister Hilda. He began by expressing his frustration with Germany: "Owing to those wretched Germans we were unable to get away until after lunch yesterday. I wished them at the bottom of the sea; instead of which they are at the top of the land, drat 'em!" He continues in despair, "It is perfectly evident surely now that force is the only argument Germany understands and that 'collective security' cannot offer any prospect of preventing such events until it can show a viable force of overwhelming strength backed by determination to use it." Yet, in the same letter he waxed optimistic: "If we can avoid a violent coup in Czecho-Slovakia, which ought to be feasible, it may be possible for Europe to settle down again and some day for us to start peace talks again with the Germans."¹⁵ Similarly, in May 1938 he lamented to Hilda that "the fact is that the Germans who are bullies by nature are too conscious of their strength and our weakness and until we are as strong as they are we shall always be kept in this state of chronic anxiety." Yet he concluded his letter with greater optimism, "But I thank God for a steady unruffled Foreign Secretary who never causes me any worry and perhaps we shall pull through without disaster."¹⁶

We argue that Chamberlain vacillated in his official positions regarding Germany, his behind-the-scenes rationales, and his private correspondence for several reasons. To be-

13. James P. Levy, *Appeasement and Rearmament: Britain, 1936–1939* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), p. xiii.

14. Peter Neville, for example, observes that Chamberlain "had a hard, abrasive edge that antagonized people." Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement*, p. 37. John Colville comments that Chamberlain's "vanity takes the form of resenting any kind of criticism or mockery. . . . He likes to be set on a pedestal and adored, with suitable humility, by unquestioning admirers." Colville, *The Fringes of Power: 10 Downing Street Diaries, 1939–1955* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), p. 79. See also R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 4–6.

15. Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, March 13, 1938—UBL, NC 18/1/1041.

16. Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, May 22, 1938—UBL, NC 18/1/1053. R.A.C. Parker quotes the latter portion of the letter in support of Chamberlain's optimism, but ignores the former portion. See Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, p. 124.

gin with, he was at core a politician and was eager to retain the necessary public, parliamentary, and Cabinet support to remain in control of policy. Therefore, he might represent his views differently to different audiences depending on the interests at stake. This might explain, for example, why he publicly touted the Munich agreement as “peace in our time,” whereas behind closed doors he was more measured.¹⁷ Second, Chamberlain was under enormous stress. He faced a hostile and implacable adversary in Hitler, who was rearming rapidly, escalating the pace of his geopolitical challenges, and appeared to be leading Europe to the brink of war. Chamberlain believed that a war would be economically devastating for Great Britain and, based on British military intelligence, that the air defense gap had not been closed to the point at which he could seriously contemplate war with Germany in 1938. Consistent with cognitive dissonance theory, the stress caused by these dissonant core beliefs caused Chamberlain to vacillate wildly between expressions of hope that Hitler could be bought off with strategic concessions and utter despair that war was inevitable.¹⁸ Finally, it is possible that Chamberlain’s illnesses while he was prime minister might have contributed to his changing views.¹⁹ The inconsistency manifested in Chamberlain’s correspondence has allowed historians, conditioned by the “guilty men” culture advanced by Churchill, Anthony Eden, and others after the war, to cherry-pick from Chamberlain’s writings and significantly exaggerate his confidence that war with Hitler could be avoided with strategic concessions.

We argue that there is no reason to privilege the traditional interpretation, which is based on quotes taken out of context and ignores the evidence of Chamberlain’s skepticism of Hitler, which tended to dominate his vacillating views. Some uncertainty remained, of course, but Chamberlain’s response to this uncertainty was to adopt the cautious policy of trying to appease Hitler in the short term in order to delay a confrontation and buy time for rearmament, which he hoped would deter a future confrontation and prepare Britain for war if deterrence failed. Our interpretation draws support from its consistency with Chamberlain’s attitudes from 1933 to 1938, with official British policy toward Germany from 1933 to 1938, and with British military intelligence throughout the period.

We argue that Chamberlain’s attitude toward Germany in 1938 is fairly consistent with his views throughout the 1930s, which reflected a distrust of the Nazi regime that was deepened with each German challenge and reneged agreement. In July 1933, for example, when the Cabinet was considering accommodating German demands

17. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 78.

18. On cognitive dissonance theory, see Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957). On the effects of stress, see Ole R. Holsti and Alexander L. George, “The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy-Makers,” in C.P. Cotter, ed., *Political Science Annual* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), pp. 255–319.

19. Chamberlain died of stomach cancer in 1940. Although it may not have been diagnosed in 1937 and 1938, this malady develops over several years and causes stomach upset, fatigue, indigestion, and heartburn in its early stages, which could have contributed to Chamberlain’s irritability and vacillations as prime minister. Indeed, Chamberlain’s letters to his sisters reveals that, in his first year-and-a-half as prime minister, he suffered at various times from prolonged bouts of gout-like symptoms, sinus infections, indigestion, nausea, and difficulty sleeping, including a persistent bout in August 1938. See Robert Self, ed., *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, Vol. 4: *The Downing Street Years, 1934–1940* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005), especially 276–280, 323, 338–341.

for equality within the disarmament convention, then-Chancellor of the Exchequer Chamberlain was among the most vocal opponents of pushing the French to make concessions. He argued that it would be a mistake to push France into a position of weakness, "as he felt misgivings about the attitude of Germany."²⁰ In correspondence with the pro-German Lord Lothian in June 1936, Chamberlain indicated that, if an agreement with Germany were possible, he would be willing to go "a long way to get it." Nonetheless, he cautioned, "I have a lurking suspicion that there is no real *bona fides* in Germany, and that she is merely playing for time until she feels herself strong enough to make her next spring."²¹

Thus Chamberlain never had much faith in either the Nazi regime or Hitler's goodwill. Hitler's frequent challenges and flagrant disregard for agreements signed and commitments made only reinforced Chamberlain's mistrust of Hitler and undercut any hope he had that war could be avoided over the long run through accommodation of Nazi Germany. As he indicated to his sister Ida in September 1938, he viewed Hitler as "a lunatic" and "half mad."²² And, as mentioned, he viewed the Germans as "bullies by nature."

Nonetheless, Chamberlain's long-standing concerns about the economic costs of war and the paralyzing effect it could have on British power, the vulnerability of the empire, and the inadequacy of British air and coastal defenses made him seek ways to stall for time both to rearm at a manageable pace and to repair British relations with Italy, if not Germany.²³ He continued to hope that appeasement of Italy could be successful.²⁴ Whether he believed that rearmament combined with prying Italy from within the German orbit would allow Great Britain to prevent a war with Germany through deterrence, or whether he expected these measures to allow Britain to fight Germany on more favorable terms, his actions do not suggest significant optimism that accommodating German demands could avoid war by satisfying Hitler's ambitions.²⁵ Indeed, as Chamberlain explained after stepping down, "The day may come when my much cursed Munich will be *understood*. Neither we nor the French were prepared for war. . . .

20. Cabinet 48 (33), July 26, 1933—CAB 23/76, p. 343.

21. Chamberlain to Lord Lothian, June 10, 1936—UBL, NC 7/7/5.

22. Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, September 3, 1938, and Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, September 11, 1938, in UBL, NC 18/1/1066 and NC 18/1/1068, respectively.

23. Chamberlain's emphasis on appeasing other threats to concentrate more energy on Germany goes back to 1933, when he encouraged the Committee on Imperial Defence (CID) to improve relations with Japan in order to relieve the threat in the Far East (which was then listed as Britain's strategic first priority) and, therefore, make Europe and the potential German threat the priority. Minutes of the 261st meeting of the CID, November 9, 1933—CAB 2/6, p. 52. In February 1938, Chamberlain's dispute with Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, which led to the latter's resignation from Cabinet, centered not on their expectations that Germany could be restrained through concessions, but on Chamberlain's insistence that the British government go out of its way to make concessions to Mussolini to pry Italy away from Germany, as a means of reducing the number of enemies Britain faced and, if possible, deterring Germany from future war. See Cabinet 6 (38), February 19, 1938—CAB 23/92, pp. 179 ff.

24. This fits our "diffusing secondary threats" variation of appeasement.

25. Christopher Layne judges that Chamberlain expected that Germany could be deterred with Italy's support once Great Britain rearmed fully. Layne, "Security Studies and the Use of History: Neville Chamberlain's Grand Strategy Revisited," *Security Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 2008), pp. 397–437. We attach a lower probability to Chamberlain's expectation that it would be possible to deter Germany.

If only we had had another year of preparation, we should have been in a far stronger position and so would the French. But anyway, whatever the outcome it is clear as daylight that if we had had to fight in 1938 the result would have been far worse.”²⁶ We therefore disagree with Barros and Imlay’s assertion that throughout the Munich crisis, “Chamberlain remained convinced that Germany’s aims were limited.”

Furthermore, we argue that our interpretation of Chamberlain’s rationale for appeasement is consistent with the policy preferences of every British government from 1933 to 1938, governments in which Chamberlain played integral roles. As we demonstrate in our article, successive Cabinets judged that a military apparatus that had been systematically underfunded and an arms industry that was not geared to a rapid rearmament process, in Frank McDonough’s words, “threw a heavy burden on diplomacy to buy time and reduce tension.”²⁷ The British response to Hitler’s illegal rearmament in 1933 was to initiate Great Britain’s own rearmament program. The Cabinet’s decision not to oppose Hitler’s 1936 remilitarization of the Rhineland was based on the assumption that the British armed forces were not yet prepared to match the air and naval challenge that Germany could mount, although they expected to be prepared by the end of the decade. Our interpretation of Chamberlain’s motivations is also in step with British military intelligence reports for the period, which consistently warned that British rearmament had not yet reached the point at which the government could contemplate war with Germany.²⁸ Thus the evidence in government documents and Chamberlain’s private papers provides more support for the argument that Chamberlain distrusted Germany but was compelled by his understanding of the strategic balance to stall for time to allow British rearmament than it does for the argument that Chamberlain had an optimistic view of Nazi Germany.

Finally, we take issue with Barros and Imlay’s argument that “given what was and what could be known at the time, it was reasonable to wager that Hitler’s aims were limited.” As we indicated in our article, soon after Hitler’s rise to power, British Cabinet ministers, Foreign Office officials, and military observers recognized that the führer was bent on overturning the Versailles treaty with likely challenges to the demilitarized Rhineland, independent Austria, Sudeten Czechoslovakia, Danzig, Memel, former German colonial possessions, and possibly Alsace-Lorraine. Many acknowledged that, given German ambitions and the bellicose Nazi rhetoric and militarism, it would be difficult to avoid a major European war (pp. 159–160). Given this interpretation of German ambitions, it would have been unreasonable to be overly confident that Hitler would have been satisfied with the return of the Sudetenland. At a minimum, the British should have expected the possibility of further challenges against Poland and, perhaps, France. Moreover, given the insight into Hitler provided by *Mein Kampf* and Nazi rhetoric, which evinced both a strong hatred of Bolshevism and a powerful belief in Aryan supremacy, there is no reason why the British should not have expected broader challenges against the Soviet Union and a possible attempt to assert German

26. Self, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 44 (emphasis in original).

27. Frank McDonough, *Neville Chamberlain, Appeasement, and the British Road to War* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 37.

28. See, for example, “Imperial Defence Policy: Annual Review (1933),” November 9, 1933, C.O.S. 310, reproduced in CAB 24/244, p. 135–142, at p. 139; “Re-orientation of the Air Defence System of Great Britain,” Report by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, May 14, 1935—CAB 3/6, 209, p. 57; and Cabinet 10 (36), February 25, 1936—CAB 23/83, pp. 157–161.

domination over Europe. Thus, we believe that Barros and Imlay overstate both the degree of uncertainty about German motives and the rationality of assuming that conceding Czechoslovakia to Hitler could avoid war over the long run.

CONCLUSION

Our interpretation of British motivations for appeasement highlights deficiencies in both existing historical interpretations of the 1930s and in underlying conceptualizations of appeasement as a strategy. Our efforts to construct a more theoretically differentiated typology of appeasement constitute a significant step forward in the conceptualization of the strategy of appeasement, but we recognize that further refinements are possible, and we welcome Resnick's efforts in that direction. Similarly, we agree with Barros and Imlay's efforts to shed light on British strategy by comparing decisionmaking in 1938 with the decision for war in 1939. We believe, however, that our interpretation of British policy from 1933 to 1938, which emphasizes perceptions of the current and future balance of power, reflects a more accurate view of British motivations than traditional interpretations and, therefore, represents an important contribution to the literature on British appeasement in the 1930s.

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