

Why States Believe Foolish Ideas:  
Non-Self-Evaluation By States And Societies

Stephen Van Evera  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology Political Science Department  
and Security Studies Program  
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## I. SOCIALIZATION AND SELF-EVALUATION

Kenneth Waltz argues that states are socialized to the international system because they will be injured or even destroyed if they fail to adapt to it.<sup>1</sup> I believe this claim is correct but should be qualified. Most states are indeed socialized to the international system, but their socialization is often slow and sometimes minimal because states widely fail to evaluate their own ideas and policies. Organization theorists note that organizations are poor self-evaluators; I argue here that states suffer the same syndrome.

This failure to self-evaluate impedes national learning and allows misperceptions to flourish. Myths, false propaganda, and anachronistic beliefs persist in the absence of strong evaluative institutions to test ideas against logic and evidence, weeding out those that fail. As a result national learning is slow and forgetting is quick. The external environment is perceived only dimly, through a fog of myths and misperceptions.

States that misperceive their environment in this way are bound to fail to adapt to it, even when the penalties of such failure are high. Blind to the incentives they face they will respond inappropriately, even if they accept in principle the need to adapt.

The following two sections frame reasons why self-evaluation is hard for organizations and outline ways that parallel problems inhibit evaluation in governments and whole societies. The next two sections detail tactics used by opponents to inhibit or prevent evaluation and frame conditions that are more and less conducive to self-evaluation. The last two sections look at cases that shed light on this theory and offer concluding thoughts.

## II. WHY ORGANIZATIONS CANNOT SELF-EVALUATE

Aaron Wildavsky contends that organizations poorly evaluate their own policies and beliefs because they often turn against their own evaluative units, attacking or destroying them.<sup>2</sup>

Evaluation promotes innovation and change. This threatens the jobs and status of incumbent members of the organization. Hence incumbents often seek to hamper or prevent evaluation and to punish evaluators. These incumbents tend to dominate the organization's decision making, so evaluation finds itself with stronger enemies than friends within the organization. Hence self-evaluation is often timid and ineffective.<sup>3</sup>

In essence the organization suffers an auto-immune disease of the brain. It attacks its own thinking-learning apparatus if that apparatus does its job. As a result the organization thinks poorly and learns slowly.

Private companies hire outside management consultants to get around this problem. Outside consultants know less about company operations than company insiders but are less inhibited from telling what they know. Companies hire them less for their special expertise than because they can expose problems that members of the organization, if tasked to evaluate, will pretend not to see. Their ability to speak freely is often the main value that outside consultants provide.

The obstruction of evaluation takes several forms. Targets of evaluation may simply move to threaten or destroy the organization's evaluative units. Threats are often enough to inhibit evaluation, making evaluative units into "selective evaluators" that dilute their judgments to avoid making enemies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979): 127-28.

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, "The Self-Evaluating Organization," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 32, No. 5 (September/October 1972): 509-520.

<sup>3</sup> Wildavsky notes that "evaluators must become agents of change acting in favor of programs as yet unborn and clients that are unknown," so their clients are inherently weaker than their opponents. "Self-Evaluating Organization": 510.

<sup>4</sup> Wildavsky, "Self-Evaluating Organization": 516.

Alternately, targets of evaluation can create competing units to produce pseudo-evaluation and disinformation that drowns out the voice of evaluation.<sup>5</sup> Or they can refuse to cooperate with evaluators. Specifically, they can withhold or doctor data that evaluators need for their evaluation, or they can bargain for leniency in exchange for data. Or they can threaten evaluators with social ostracism or coopt them with personal friendship.

**Evaluative units also fail if they lack an evaluative ethos.** This happens if members of the evaluative unit omit evaluation from their own definition of their professional mission, or if they do not recognize the importance of evaluation, or if their emotional loyalties lie with those they assess.

Often these problems cannot be solved without creating others. Outside evaluators may need help from experienced organization insiders to assess competently. If these insiders are excluded the evaluators may make mistakes of ignorance. As a result it may be impossible to exclude insiders from the evaluation team, despite the danger that they will corrupt the evaluation.

Finally, evaluative units themselves may be hard to evaluate. As a result others may not be aware when self-evaluation fails so nothing is done to correct the failure, so it persists. Because non-evaluation is underestimated it is more pervasive.

In short, organizations non-self-evaluate because **obstacles to organizational self-evaluation are formidable.** Wildavsky summarized: "I started out thinking it was bad for organizations not to evaluate, and I ended up wondering why they ever do it. Evaluation and organization, it turns out, are to some extent contradictory terms."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wildavsky, "Self-Evaluating Organization": 514.

<sup>6</sup> Wildavsky, "Self-Evaluating Organization": 509.

Non-self-evaluation is not universal. Organizations that face a competitive environment, such as most private firms, must do some self-evaluation to survive. This puts a minimum limit on how little evaluation the organization can get away with. Those falling below the minimum are destroyed. But non-evaluation can reach extremes if organizations face little market or other environmental discipline--as with most government agencies.

### III. WHY STATES CANNOT SELF-EVALUATE

Most political science literature on national misperception relies heavily on psychological explanations.<sup>7</sup> However, the failure to self-evaluate is a cause of national misperception that arises more from institutional dynamics than human psychology. This highlights the value of adding organization theory to the tools we use to understand national misperception.

Non-self-evaluation explains national misperception in two ways. First, government *bureaucracies* non-self-evaluate. At a minimum, agencies with evaluative responsibilities are not invited to evaluate--they are kept out of the loop, their opinions unsought. At a maximum, government agencies actively suppress their own internal evaluative units and are discouraged from evaluating the beliefs and policies of other agencies. As a result official misperceptions persist that would fall under scrutiny. Thus before World War I German navy chief Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz censured and silenced German naval officers that dared to reassess his

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<sup>7</sup> Prominent examples include Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Irving L. Janis, Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascos, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Deborah Welch Larson, Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Yaacov V.I. Vertzberger, The World In Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Ole R. Holsti, Crisis Escalation War (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1972); and Ralph K. White, Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY:

mistaken strategic calculations,<sup>8</sup> and French army officers were punished or purged for criticizing unwise official offensive doctrines.<sup>9</sup> In the United States General Billy Mitchell was court-martialled for demonstrating the value of air power at sea, and State Department "China Hands" were purged in the 1940's and 1950's for accurately reporting the weakness and corruption of China's Chiang Kai Shek government.<sup>10</sup> During Vietnam the CIA was deterred by the military and White House officials from accurately reporting Vietcong troop strength. (Accurate reports would have raised questions about the military's performance and White House policy.)<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile false evaluators often prosper. Many U.S. officials responsible for corrupting U.S. intelligence--e.g., for the erroneous "bomber gap" estimates of the mid-1950's, for miscalculations about Vietnam, and for politicizing CIA intelligence in the 1980s--were later reappointed or promoted.<sup>12</sup>

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Anchor, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> Holger H. Herwig, "The Failure of German Sea Power, 1914-1945: Mahan, Tirpitz, and Raeder Reconsidered," International History Review, Vol. 10, No. 1 (February 1988): 68-105 at 74, 85, 104.

<sup>9</sup> For examples see B.H. Liddell Hart, "French Military Ideas Before the First World War," in Martin Gilbert, ed., A Century of Conflict, 1850-1950 (London: Hamilton Hamish, 1966): 136, 142-45; and Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977): 187.

<sup>10</sup> See Ross Y. Koen, The China Lobby in American Politics (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 160-193; E.J. Kahn, Jr., The China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them (New York: Penguin, 1976); and David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest, 1973): 462-476. As a result many leading American Asia experts were out of the government or the country when their expertise was needed to assess the situation in Vietnam in the early 1960s. John Paton Davies, among the most knowledgeable of these experts, was living in Peru making furniture. Ibid.: 462.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Powers, The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA (New York: Pocket Books, 1979): 240.

The legion examples of the penalizing or firing of "whistle-blowers" in government also illustrate non-evaluation. On the suppression of whistle-blowers see Myron Peretz Glazer and Penina Migdal Glazer, The Whistleblowers: Exposing Corruption in Government and Industry (New York: Basic Books, 1989). Also relevant is the Bureaucracy Task Force, The Whistle Blowers: A Report on Federal Employees Who Disclose Acts of Government Waste, Abuse and Corruption (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> John Prados, The Soviet Estimate: U.S. Intelligence Analysis and Soviet Strategic Forces (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 49-50; Sam Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up: Playing War With Numbers," Harper's, May 1975: 41-73 at 71 (box, "Moral of the Tale," re: Daniel Graham, Edward Procter, and William Hyland); and Melvin A. Goodman, "Ending the CIA's Cold War Legacy," Foreign Policy, No.



Government organizations suppress inside evaluation partly to protect bureaucratic incumbents and also for other reasons. Inside dissenters can hamper policy implementation by leaking unfavorable information on the policy to outsiders. This breaks the agency's monopoly of information, enabling informed criticism of the policy from observers outside the agency. This can empower external opposition that may kill the policy in the cradle. Fearing such leaks, agency leaders will confine policymaking to "team players" that favor the policy from the outset. Agency leaders will also hesitate to order internal analyses of the policy, fearing that the analysis will be leaked and then taken out of context in public debate. For example, a technical analysis might show curable problems with a policy, but might be used by external policy opponents to suggest that the policy is infeasible. Fearing such a chain of events the agency leader never asks for the technical analysis in the first place. The question "How would that study's results look in the New York Times?" often deters needed internal assessments.

Confining policymaking to team players and limiting internal analysis prevents leaks that could stymie the policy's implementation, but it allows the policy to escape hard questions during its formulation. Thus nonevaluation stems partly from tension between the demands of policy formulation and policy implementation. Sound policy often cannot be made without dissent but cannot be implemented with too much of it.

Second, the *whole society* can also suffer the non-self-evaluation syndrome: the national process of evaluating public policy is damaged by a scaled-up version of the same dynamics that

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106 (Spring 1997): 128-143 at 143.

Counterexamples where evaluation was tolerated or rewarded in government can be found. For example, U.S. General George Marshall bluntly criticized his superiors' policies several times during his long career but nevertheless won promotion. Mark A. Stoler, George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century (Boston: Twayne, 1989): 36-37, 65. More telltale, however, is that Marshall's peers assumed he would be fired after these confrontations. They were wrong in the specific instance but right on the way things usually work.

afflict organizations. Academe, the press, and other non-governmental evaluative institutions often fail to evaluate because evaluation makes enemies that often have the power to defeat or deter it. Government agencies or officials that are targets of evaluation can attack or deter evaluators by finding ways to cut their funding. They can drown out evaluation by setting up sham evaluative units to generate disinformation and pseudo-analysis. They can coopt evaluators with special perquisites. They can domesticate evaluators that need their data by releasing this data only to congenial analysts. They can conceal their strategies and policies, leaving evaluators without a clear target to assess. They can shift rationales and arguments, hoping to exhaust evaluators by presenting a moving target. They can smear the reputations of evaluators by releasing defamatory state-collected information. They can threaten to deny evaluators hoped-for state employment. And in countries where civil liberties are unprotected government agencies can of course use police state measures--prison, torture, murder and the like--to punish and deter evaluators.

Governments are not the only actors that impede or destroy evaluation. Any strong actor or group can do it. Since the 1960s Cuban-American extremists have silenced American voices that questioned their views, often by violence or threat of violence.<sup>13</sup> The American tobacco industry has used the threat of expensive lawsuits to silence critics who point to the industry's many misdeeds.<sup>14</sup> And U.S. business firms often punish Wall Street investment houses whose

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Cynthia Brown, "Strong-Arming the Hispanic Press: Cuban extremists shape the news--with threats and bombs," Contents (July/August 1980): 51-54; Human Rights Watch, "Dangerous Dialogue: Attacks on Freedom of Expression in Miami's Cuban Exile Community," Americas Watch/Fund for Free Expression, Vol. 4, Issue 7 (August 1992); and Human Rights Watch, "Dangerous Dialogue Revisited: Threats to Freedom of Expression Continue in Miami's Cuban Exile Community," HRW/Americas and Free Expression Project, Vol. 6, No. 14 (November 1994).

<sup>14</sup> William Glaberson, "'60 Minutes' Case Illustrates a Trend Born of Corporate Pressure, Some Analysts Say," New York Times, November 17, 1995: B14; and James C. McKinley, Jr., "CBS Said to Fear Unusual Legal Challenge to '60 Minutes' Tobacco Report," *ibid.*

stock analysts rate their stock poorly by moving their underwriting and bond business elsewhere. As a result Wall Street stock analysts glowingly recommend most stocks and almost never name companies they would sell.<sup>15</sup> Like the children in Garrison Keillor's mythical Minnesota town, all stocks are miraculously above average!

However, states are the most important anti-evaluators. States have the greatest power to curb evaluation, and the blunders they make in the absence of evaluation have the greatest consequences.

Thus societies, being very large organizations, suffer the same pathology that damages organizational learning. Non-governmental units that evaluate public policy are usually weaker than those they evaluate. Those they evaluate usually resent and resist evaluation. Hence policy evaluators are often destroyed, deterred, out-shouted, or coopted. The whole society opposes the national thinking and learning apparatus, just as its bureaucratic components oppose their evaluative sub-units.

Moreover, the defects in evaluation of national beliefs and policies are often underestimated by those not close to it. As a result too little is done to compensate for poor evaluation, or to improve it. Academics have a monopoly on academic expertise. As a result outsiders often cannot tell how little evaluation academe actually produces so they fail to criticize academe for its failure to evaluate. Professors are therefore free to immerse themselves in irrelevant research on obscure topics--a common academic pastime, especially in the social sciences--without being criticized for their irrelevance. They can be as irresponsible as they wish, a freedom that many

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Siconolfi, "Incredible 'Buys': Many Companies Press Analysts to Steer Clear of Negative Ratings," Wall Street Journal, July 19, 1995: 1; Diana B. Henriques, "The Pleasure of 'I Told You So'," New York Times, August 8, 1998: E1; and Gretchen Morgenson, "Flying Blind in a Fog of Data," New York Times, June 18, 2000: 3-1.

fully exploit.

In short, impediments to self-evaluation operate on a national as well as organizational scale. Public policy analysis seldom reaches the standards achieved in the professions and natural sciences because policy evaluation is crushed, deterred, or coopted. As a result policy debate often assumes an inane character. Key hypotheses and assumptions are unspecified and untested, and facts are assumed without proof. Charlatans who purvey disinformation on behalf of special interests often have the loudest voice and the last word. Thus Ernst Cassirer once noted the "deep chasm" between the customs of scientific and political inquiry:<sup>16</sup>

When it comes to political action man seems to follow rules quite different from those recognized in all his mere theoretical activities. No one would think of solving a problem of natural science or a technical problem by the methods that are recommended and put into action in the solution of political questions. In the first case we never aim to use anything but rational methods. ... But in man's practical and social life the defeat of rational thought seems to be complete and irrevocable.

In politics, Cassirer notes, "modern man is supposed to forget everything he has learned in the development of his intellectual life. He is admonished to go back to the first rudimentary stages of human culture." In political dialogue "rational and scientific thought openly confess their breakdown."<sup>17</sup>

Evaluation is weak because social knowledge affects the distribution of social and political power. Hence the creation of social knowledge is politicized. Elites suppress evaluation because it often threatens their social or political positions. Society needs evaluation to formulate

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<sup>16</sup> Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1955): 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Myth of the State: 2.

effective state policies but smothers it to protect the social and political order from challenge.

Thus in 1939 the American sociologist Robert Lynd wrote:<sup>18</sup>

A world foundering disastrously because of its inability to make its institutions work is asking the social sciences: "What do you know? What do you propose?" And, unfortunately for the peace of mind of the social scientist, these questions are not asked with complete dispassion; not infrequently they are loaded in the sense of, "Tell us what we want to hear, or else--!" ... The social scientist finds himself caught, therefore, between the rival demands for straight, incisive, and, if need be, radically divergent thinking, and the growingly insistent demand that his thinking shall not be subversive.

... [The university professor] lives in a world which, by and large, is not asking, "Is Smith trying to get at the facts? Is he trying to be fair and constructive at the same time that he is unwilling to pull his punch?" but which asks, "Are you for us, or against us?"

Likewise Hans Morgenthau noted that societies destroy those who question the myths that support the power and authority of dominant groups:<sup>19</sup>

In all societies certain social problems cannot be investigated at all, or only at grave risk to the investigator. The basic philosophic assumptions by which society lives are beyond scientific investigation, for to question them is tantamount to questioning the worth of society itself, its justice, its rationality, its very right to exist. ... [Evaluative social science becomes] a political threat to the defenders or the opponents of the status quo or to both; for the social conventions about power, which political science cannot

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<sup>18</sup> Robert S. Lynd, Knowledge For What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939): 7, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Purpose of Political Science," in James C. Charlesworth, ed., A Design for Political Science: Scope, Objectives, and Methods (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1966): 63-79 at 69, 72.

help subjecting to a critical--and often destructive--examination, are one of the main sources from which the claims to power, and hence power itself, derive.

Evaluation often serves no interest except the general interest. Hence even oppositions and out-groups will not evaluate: instead they, like their opponents, issue self-serving propaganda. As a result the "free marketplace of ideas" often creates a confusion-sowing competition among charlatans that generates more darkness than light. Thus Marxist critics of capitalist foreign policies crafted their criticism less to explain reality than to strengthen the case for socialist rule. For example, in their studies of imperialism V.I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg endorsed the false economic notions of nineteenth-century American and European imperialists because this helped them argue that capitalism fostered imperialism, hence was warlike, and so was inferior to socialism.<sup>20</sup> Their writings were less "evaluation" than self-serving propaganda, crafted to advance socialist claims to power. Finding truth was a secondary concern.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, states misperceive partly because national evaluative machinery is weak or defective, evaluation meets powerful resistance, and it often profits no one capable of doing it. As a result state decisions are often taken without serious analysis, on the basis of simplistic analogies or misinformation. Careful assessment of key ideas is never done.

Non-evaluation is a permissive condition that allows militaristic and nationalistic myths to survive. If evaluation is effective such ideas are challenged and filtered out. More often

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<sup>20</sup> Luxemburg's ideas closely track the nonsense economic arguments advanced by U.S. imperialists during 1899-1900 for annexing the Philippines. Summarizing Luxemburg is Benjamin J. Cohen, The Question of Imperialism: The Political Economy of Dominance and Dependence (New York: Basic Books, 1973): 34-49 especially 43-44. Summarizing the economic ideas of U.S. imperialists is David Healy, U.S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970): 42-46, 159-177.

<sup>21</sup> Another criticism of the "free marketplace of ideas" is Benjamin Ginsberg, The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power (New York: Basic Books, 1986). Ginsberg argues, similarly to the main argument of this chapter, that the ideas "free market" in fact resembles a monopoly because

evaluation is weak; this allows such myths to persist once they gain a footing. Non-evaluation also is a prerequisite for diversionary war--that is, wars begun by elites to stir public support for the regime.<sup>22</sup> This ploy succeeds only because the public is unaware that the war is a political ruse. Better evaluation would unmask the ruse, making it ineffective. Other kinds of war--causing misperception--false optimism, conflict spirals, deterrence failure stemming from acts of appeasement that grow from underestimates of others' hostility, and so forth--are also reduced by strong policy evaluation and thus are fostered by non-evaluation. If misperception is a major cause of war, so also is non-evaluation.

A political science literature has developed on the topic of government learning--that is, of when and how states improve their understanding of the world.<sup>23</sup> The tone of this writing is unduly optimistic about the possibility of government learning because it omits the problem of non-evaluation. Non-evaluation is a powerful retardant to government learning and a powerful cause of government forgetting. It makes states inherently prone to overlook what they once knew; to accept and to act on false and even silly premises; and hence to make policy blunders. It would be good if governments could create and conserve knowledge. But evaluation is a prime engine of learning--perhaps a prerequisite for learning--and governments are reflexively hostile to evaluation. Hence government learning is almost an oxymoron. Governments can learn, but only poorly and unreliably, and they often forget at an even faster rate.

#### IV. TACTICS USED AGAINST EVALUATION

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intellectual resources are heavily skewed, leaving some groups as producers and others as captive consumers of ideas.

<sup>22</sup> On diversionary war see Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., Handbook of War Studies (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989): 259-288.

<sup>23</sup> Reviewing this writing is Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual

What specific mechanics are used to inhibit evaluation?

Evaluation is often suppressed by direct attack on evaluators. Thus before World War I dissident German scholars were disciplined or fired from universities,<sup>24</sup> and critics of official policies were hounded from the German navy.<sup>25</sup> French officers who criticized the French army's doomed offensive war plan saw their writing suppressed and their careers destroyed.<sup>26</sup> In Germany after the war the historian Hermann Kantorowicz was attacked by his colleagues for debunking the myth that Britain had organized an aggressive encirclement of Germany before 1914, and his work was suppressed.<sup>27</sup> Later the historian Fritz Fischer saw his government funding cut and was denounced for "national masochism" in the press after publishing studies that exposed German responsibility for the First World War.<sup>28</sup>

In Japan before World War II government analysts who warned against confrontation with the United States were fired and arrested.<sup>29</sup> Academics who questioned Japan's expansionism were dismissed, and publishers were forbidden to publish authors who failed to tow the official

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Minefield," International Organization, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994): 279-312.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon A. Craig, Germany 1866-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): 203-204. Even the nationalist historian Hans Delbrück was almost fired in 1899 for voicing a difference with the Kaiser's policies. Ibid.: 203.

<sup>25</sup> Herwig, "Failure of German Sea Power": 85.

<sup>26</sup> Liddell Hart, "French Military Ideas Before the First World War": 144-45; Jan Karl Tanenbaum, "French Estimates of Germany's Operational War Plans," in Ernest R. May, ed., Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 150-171 at 164; and Alfred Vagts, A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1959): 222, 352.

<sup>27</sup> Holger H. Herwig, "Clio Deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany After the Great War," International Security, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall 1987): 5-44 at 34-36; Imanuel Geiss, "The Outbreak of the First World War and German War Aims," in Walter Lacqueur and George L. Mosse, eds., 1914: The Coming of the First World War (New York: Harper & Row, 1966): 71-87 at 73; and Jerzy Marczewski, "German Historiography and the Problem of Germany's Responsibility for World War I," Polish Western Affairs, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1971): 289-309 at 301.

<sup>28</sup> James Joll, "The 1914 Debate Continues: Fritz Fischer and His Critics," in H.W. Koch, ed., The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German Aims (London: Macmillan, 1972): 13-29 at 15-16; and Imanuel Geiss, "Origins of the First World War," in Imanuel Geiss, ed., July 1914: The Outbreak of the First World War: Selected Documents (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967): 9-53 at 12.

<sup>29</sup> Michael A. Barnhardt, Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941



line.<sup>30</sup>

During the 1950s American scholars who displeased the Taiwan government were attacked by the China lobby and its U.S. allies. The Lobby forced the Institute of Pacific Relations to close.<sup>31</sup> Prominent China specialists were smeared with false charges of pro-communist sympathy and investigated by Congress.<sup>32</sup> Ross Koen believes that the Lobby achieved "the virtual destruction of the public and governmental reputations and influence of many of the foremost private China specialists in the United States."<sup>33</sup>

French journalists were intimidated, arrested and fined, beaten, or expelled from Algeria if they covered the seamier side of French operations in the Algerian war of independence (1954-62).<sup>34</sup> The French press bent to this pressure, omitting coverage of many ugly stories.<sup>35</sup>

The Indian government purged and replaced Indian military officers who correctly warned in 1961 that China would resist India's incursions in the Himalayas.<sup>36</sup> And after these incursions provoked China to rout India's forces, the Indian government raided the offices of the publisher of Neville Maxwell's India's China War, which had exposed the governments' pre-war

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(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987): 170-71, 199-200, 268.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas R. Havens, Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War II (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978): 23.

<sup>31</sup> Koen, China Lobby: xiv, 133-159.

<sup>32</sup> Koen, China Lobby: 117-131.

<sup>33</sup> China Lobby: 131. Michael Schaller notes that "an entire generation of government China experts was professionally destroyed. The purge of these diplomats ... ensured that a long time would elapse before the next generation of China specialists emerged. Until then the blind would lead the blind." Michael Schaller, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 130.

Remarkably, Ross Koen's own book was also attacked and suppressed, an event that nicely illustrated its argument. His book was first printed in 1960 but the China Lobby, with assistance from allies inside the U.S. government, enjoined its distribution and it was not republished until 1974. See Richard C. Kagan, "Introduction," in Koen, China Lobby: ix-x; and Stanley D. Bachrack, The Committee of One Million: "China Lobby" Politics, 1953-1971 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976): 167-172.

<sup>34</sup> Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1975): 358-369.

<sup>35</sup> Knightley, First Casualty: 358-59.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis (Baltimore: Johns

blundering.<sup>37</sup> A folly caused by attacking evaluators can often be concealed by punishing or deterring later evaluators.

In the U.S. many television journalists lost their jobs during the blacklisting of the McCarthy period. And Congress has investigated the major television networks for airing documentaries that offended powerful special interests.<sup>38</sup>

Needless to say, evaluators in communist dictatorships have fared far worse. Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot and Kim Il-sung routinely jailed, tortured, and murdered critics who questioned their policies until all were terrified into silence.

Evaluators that are not attacked may be ignored. Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab historian of antiquity (1332-1406), was until recently largely forgotten in the Arab world and was only rediscovered by Arabs via Western scholars. Like all great historians Khaldun had sinned by criticizing his own people. After his rediscovery his works were banned in Iraq for their supposed criticism of Arabs.<sup>39</sup> The writings of Karl von Clausewitz have been widely ignored by modern militaries, who find his arguments for defensive tactics and civilian control uncongenial; the less insightful but more agreeable writings of Antoine Jomini are much more widely read at military academies.<sup>40</sup> Historians who deviated from official post-1918 German

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Hopkins University Press, 1981): 166-69.

<sup>37</sup> Neville Maxwell, India's China War (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1972): 480-81.

<sup>38</sup> CBS was investigated after it aired The Selling of the Pentagon and Hunger in America in the 1970s. Herbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time (New York: Vintage, 1980): 261-62. Gans speculates that these investigations "further eroded the enthusiasm of network management for exposé documentaries." Ibid.: 262. Likewise, Howard K. Smith was forced out of CBS in the early 1960s because southern affiliate stations objected to his views on civil rights, and Edward R. Murrow was eased out of CBS in 1961 for stirring controversy. Gans, Deciding What's News: 259; and David Halberstam, The Powers That Be (New York: Dell, 1979): 209-24.

<sup>39</sup> Bernard Lewis, History--Remembered, Recovered, Invented (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975): 78-9. Other examples of ignored evaluation are found in Joel Primack and Frank von Hippel, Advice and Dissent: Scientists in the Political Arena (New York: New American Library, 1974): 10-97.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "A Search for a Science of Strategy: A Review Essay on *Makers of Modern*

innocence propaganda, such as Bernadotte Schmitt, were unread in Germany after World War I.<sup>41</sup> During late 1950 top U.S. policymakers never gave a proper hearing to government analysts who warned that U.S. policies would soon provoke a Chinese attack on U.S. forces in Korea.<sup>42</sup> And during the 1960s the works of renowned Vietnam expert Bernard Fall were unknown to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara for many years; although Fall taught in Washington the Defense Department preferred to import a more congenial expert from England.<sup>43</sup>

Alternately, evaluators may find their message suppressed. Lord Lansdowne, Conservative Party leader in the British House of Lords, had difficulty finding a British newspaper willing to publish his peace proposal in 1916.<sup>44</sup> The 1971 film *The Sorrow and the Pity*, which exploded the treasured French myth of a strong French resistance by showing that many French acquiesced to Germany's World War II occupation, was banned from French television.<sup>45</sup>

Japan's Colonel Iwakuro Hideo returned from a 1941 fact-finding mission to the United States to report that the U.S. had vast industrial superiority over Japan. Japan's chief of staff Sugiyama Gen burned the report, explaining that its conclusions were at variance with the supreme will of the state.<sup>46</sup>

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*Strategy*," *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Summer 1987): 140-165 at 153-54.

<sup>41</sup> H.W. Koch, "Introduction," in Koch, *Origins of the First World War*: 1-12 at 5. Schmitt's important book on World War I origins, *The Coming of the War: 1914* was never even translated into German. Herwig, "Clio Deceived": 26.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander L. George, "Findings and Recommendations," in Alexander L. George, *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991): 545-566 at 555. See also Allen S. Whiting, "The U.S.-China War in Korea," in *ibid.*: 103-125 at 106-107, 113.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973): 214-15. Brodie notes the "one practically unvarying principle" about the use by government of outside expert consultants: "[T]hey must be known to be friendly to that policy on which they are consulted. They may be critical of details or of the current execution of that policy, but not of the fundamentals." *Ibid.*: 214.

<sup>44</sup> Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991): 79.

<sup>45</sup> Anthony P. Adamthwaite, *The Making of the Second World War* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977): 24.

<sup>46</sup> Kimitada Miwa, "Japanese Images of War with the United States," in Akira Iriye, ed., *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975): 125-27.

Saburō Ienaga found that the Japanese education ministry refused to approve his high school history text in 1963 because it was "excessively critical of Japan's position and actions in World War II." Ienaga had sinned by truthfully noting "atrocities by Japanese troops," speaking of the "reckless war," and accurately arguing that "the war was glorified as a 'holy cause'." The ministry claimed this did "not give students a proper understanding of this country's positions and actions in the war."<sup>47</sup>

Evaluation is sometimes defeated by starving it of information. During World War I the British war cabinet was kept in the dark by military leaders; this often made civilian control over war policies impossible. Thus before the disastrous British offensive at Passchendaele in 1917 the Cabinet tried to assess General Douglas Haig's proposed campaign but Haig concealed vital facts, including realities of German strength and the fact that the French and Haig's own Intelligence Staff had advised against his plan.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, in Japan cabinet ministers were denied access to data on Japanese military strength during the 1941 government debate over war with America, so discussion proceeded in a factual vacuum.<sup>49</sup> And once at war the military services kept the Japanese government ignorant of military developments: Prime Minister Tōjō was not even told of the navy's defeat at Midway until a month later.<sup>50</sup>

Post-hoc evaluation is frustrated by concealing archives. For decades the German government hid archives showing that Bismarck had helped to instigate the 1870 Franco-

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<sup>47</sup> Saburō Ienaga, The Pacific War, 1931-1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II (New York: Pantheon, 1978): 255-56.

<sup>48</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, The First World War (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966): 190-91.

<sup>49</sup> Ienaga, Pacific War: 39; and Nobutaka Ike, ed., Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967): 130. Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori later remarked that "I was astonished at our lack of statistical data," and noted the "absurdity of our having to base our deliberations on assumptions, since the high command refused to divulge figures on the numbers of our forces, or any facts relating to operations." Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ienaga, Pacific War: 39.

Prussian war,<sup>51</sup> and the U.S. state department has often withheld documents showing the U.S. in a bad light from its declassified documents series.<sup>52</sup>

Targets of evaluation also starve it of information by concealing their aims and strategies; this leaves evaluators with no target to assess. Thus in August 1914 the German government issued a formal ban on any publication discussing German war aims or peace terms in other than vague and general terms.<sup>53</sup> Those concerned about German policy had no policy to judge.

Opponents of evaluation can disrupt it by proliferating competing pseudo-evaluations. Governments and private interests operate internal propaganda organs and fund friendly external think tanks that publish congenial policy analysis. These institutions clog the debate with disinformation and sow confusion. Often their analysis ignores contrary analysis instead of answering it, so the public debate becomes a contest of volume. As studies pile up outsiders find it harder to intrude because the amount of "literature" to master before one qualifies as an expert becomes unmanageable. Thus Herbert Gans notes how news sources can manipulate the news by "news saturation"--"the proliferation of so much information by the source that some of it cannot help but turn into news, concurrently placing less well organized sources with more accurate information at a disadvantage."<sup>54</sup>

For example, after 1918 the German government funded hundreds of corrupt studies claiming German innocence for World War I that drowned more serious analyses of the war's origins.<sup>55</sup> And in the United States since the 1980s the fossil fuel industries have organized a noisy public relations campaign to obscure the near-consensus among scientists that significant

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<sup>51</sup> William Carr, The Origins of the Wars of German Unification (London: Longman, 1991): 179-80.

<sup>52</sup> For an egregious example see Warren I. Cohen, "At the State Dept., Historygate," New York Times, May 8, 1990: A29.

<sup>53</sup> Imanuel Geiss, German Foreign Policy 1870-1914 (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976): 176.

<sup>54</sup> Gans, Deciding What's News: 121.

human-caused global warming is underway. As a result the U.S. public exaggerates scientific disagreement about the basic facts of the matter.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, **evaluators can be coopted or domesticated**, their evaluation tempered or suppressed with their consent. Thus the famed journalist Walter Lippmann observed that journalists' pursuit of the truth can clash with their "desire to be on good terms with the powerful," who are "dispensers of many kinds of favor, privilege, honor and self-esteem."<sup>57</sup> Joel Primack and Frank von Hippel likewise argue that scientific criticism of U.S. government policies has sometimes been silenced by including scientists on advisory boards whose reports remain confidential. Participating scientists gain access to official secrets and the corridors of power, but lose their right to comment in public. If the government heeds their advice then evaluation has succeeded, but if their views are ignored evaluation has been silenced.

## V. CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO SELF-EVALUATION

What conditions most conduce to policy evaluation, and which are least conducive?

Prospects for evaluation heavily depend on having **a large system of free universities**. These universities must be autonomous from the state and be well protected by traditions of academic freedom. **They must be so numerous that orthodoxies cannot easily gain hegemony in particular disciplines, but instead will always face challenge from dissenting views.** Evaluation will be weak where these conditions are missing--where universities have little autonomy and are few in

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<sup>55</sup> Herwig, "Clio Deceived": 21-23.

<sup>56</sup> Ross Gelbspan, The Heat is On: The High Stakes Battle over Earth's Threatened Climate (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997): 33-62. Allies of these interest groups also pressed the U.S. Congress to defund government research on climate change. Ibid.: 56, 68, 74, 76.

<sup>57</sup> Ronald Steel, Walter Lippmann and the American Century (New York: Vintage, 1981): 572. For example, British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston (1855-1858, 1859-1865) bought favorable press coverage by awarding consular appointments to the sons of friendly journalists. Jack Snyder, Myths of

number. Wilhelmine Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union score badly on these dimensions; modern Britain scores better, and the modern United States--with its huge system of highly independent schools--scores very well.

A large system of free universities is not enough by itself, however. Academics must also have an evaluative ethos--a sense that their duties include evaluating important official or popular beliefs. This ethos is often missing: instead many scholars hold policy-relevant studies in disregard while dwelling on esoterica. In its absence a large university system can become a self-contained community in which academics serve as markets for one another's writings and ideas. If this market is large enough academics can forego the need to address the wider society; their internal market sustains them. Large academic community size then operates to inhibit evaluation by giving scholars a guaranteed audience that tolerates irrelevance and obscurantism. Scholars that seek to avoid addressing reality can retreat by addressing this audience.<sup>58</sup>

Evaluation is better when publics and elites are socialized to value evaluation. Oppositely, a hyper-patriotic public climate can deter evaluation by conditioning potential audiences to condemn evaluators as unpatriotic. Critics of official mistakes become, in the public mind, opponents of flag and country; this deters such critics to begin with.

The effectiveness of evaluation varies with issue area. Evaluation is best when the expertise required to evaluate the policy or belief is grounded on a well-developed science. It is worst if this expertise is grounded on poorly-developed science. Thus in the United States evaluation has been most effective when policies have turned on hard-science issues--for example, the danger that smoking causes cancer, or that chlorofluorocarbons released into the atmosphere will

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Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991): 205.

<sup>58</sup> Observing this dynamic in the United States is Russell Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals: American

destroy the ozone layer.<sup>59</sup> The basic methods of the hard sciences have proven effective and withstood scrutiny. As a result evaluation grounded in hard science is often done well, and its results are hard to ignore because they rest on proven methods. Evaluation grounded on social science stands on a weaker foundation: social science remains a primitive enterprise, lacking proven methods and cumulative traditions. As a result evaluation grounded in social science is often done poorly, and even when done well it lacks the prestige to persuade others to accept its conclusions.

Evaluation is weaker in issue areas where policymakers have a monopoly of information and expertise. For example, evaluation of national defense and security policy is impeded in all societies by barriers of secrecy and classification. Secrecy shields information from hostile powers, but also inhibits evaluation by analysts inside and outside of government by starving them of data. Domestic policies that turn on widely-available information and expertise are evaluated more effectively.

Evaluation is better when evaluation threatens politically weak interests and protects strong interests. Unfortunately this is rarely the case, especially when important policies are evaluated. Important policies tend to affect important interests; these interests can mobilize large resources to defeat evaluation. As a result more important policies are often less well-evaluated. Thus Holger Herwig suggests a perverse law whereby "those events that are most important are hardest to understand because they attract the greatest attention from mythmakers and charlatans."<sup>60</sup>

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*Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books, 1987): 112-237.

<sup>59</sup> Offering examples of successful evaluation in hard-science policy areas is Primack and von Hippel, *Advice and Dissent*: 128-235.

<sup>60</sup> Herwig, "Clio Deceived": 7.



Evaluation is better when evaluators are skilled in political action. Policy evaluation requires academic/scientific ability, but its success depends as well on expertise in political combat and public relations. Evaluative institutions will be subjected to political attack and they must have effective strategies for coping. They must infuse their personnel with an ethos that anticipates and accepts the hardship that these attacks create. They should recognize that the results of evaluation must be publicized effectively; unpublicized studies have no results. This requires a grasp of public relations techniques and willingness to use them. Evaluative institutions perform poorly unless their leaders recognize and address the combat nature and the public nature of the enterprise. (This recognition is often missing among academics, weakening their efficacy as evaluators.)

## VI. EVIDENCE FROM CASES

How common is policy non-self-evaluation? Where does it most thrive, and what conditions produce it? How much national misperception can it explain? Light is shed on these questions by policymaking in Germany, France, Italy, Britain, and the United States in the last century, especially during the two world wars. Wartime is a good venue for study because the stakes of wartime decisions are very high, so evaluation failure cannot be ascribed to the inattention that leaders often give to secondary issues. If we find evaluation failure, therefore, we can infer that a pathology such as nonevaluation--not mere inattention--was at work.

What do we find? Policymaking by the belligerent powers in the two world wars was quite poor despite the gravity of the issues and the high cost of error. The belligerents made large errors without carefully assessing their options. Even rudimentary analysis often would have exposed these errors but was omitted. Governments often later failed to reassess their wartime

decisions in search of lessons. Individuals who did evaluate were often attacked and punished for their trouble. And some who might have evaluated--especially academics--sometimes drifted into dreamy irrelevance, studying questions of no importance while central issues were unaddressed. Things were worst in the more authoritarian states (Germany, Japan, and Italy) and best in the United States, but even there things were not satisfactory.

The German foreign policy debate before World War I saw frivolous arguments pass unchallenged to become the basis for policy, while German scholars further poisoned the debate instead of steering it toward solid ground.<sup>61</sup> The German press was filled with articles that glorified war and offered fatuous but unanswered arguments for empire. The public was assured that war was a fine experience--the "noblest and most sacred manifestation of human activity"<sup>62</sup>--and told that "we Teutons" must "no longer look upon war as our destroyer ... at last we must see it once more as the savior, the physician."<sup>63</sup> Expansionists wrongly warned that without colonies Germany would "suffocate in her small territory."<sup>64</sup> If Germany did not expand, one magazine ludicrously warned, "we shall be so dwarfed that we shall become a second Belgium."<sup>65</sup> Expansionists also exaggerated the value of empire by falsely claiming that conquests could

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<sup>61</sup> On pre-war German thinking see Fritz Fischer, War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914, trans. Marian Jackson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975); idem, Germany's Aims in the First World War (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967); and Geiss, German Foreign Policy 1871-1914.

<sup>62</sup> Otto von Gottberg in Jungdeutschland-Post in January 1913, quoted in Fischer, War of Illusions: 193. Gottberg gushed to readers about the "great and happy hour" when war would erupt, and the "secretly jubilant expectation" that would sweep Germany at that time. Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> The Politisch-Anthropologische Revue in November 1912, quoted in Fischer, War of Illusions: 194.

<sup>64</sup> Nauticus in 1900, quoted in Volker R. Berghahn, Germany and the Approach of War in 1914 (London: Macmillan, 1973): 29. Heinrich von Treitschke wrote that "the question whether we can become an overseas Power involves our existence as a Power of the first rank. If we cannot, we face the horrible prospect that England and Russia will divide the world between them." William Roscoe Thayer, ed., Out Of Their Own Mouths: Utterances of German Rulers, Statesmen, Savants, Publicists, Journalists, Business Men, Party Leaders, and Soldiers (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1917): 46-47.

<sup>65</sup> Die Zukunft, quoted in Harmut Pogge von Strandmann, "Germany and the Coming of War," in R.J.W. Evans and Harmut Pogge von Strandmann, eds., The Coming of the First World War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 87-123 at 109.

serve as markets, fields for investment, and areas for resettlement of German "surplus population." And they purveyed a myth of British geopolitical momentum to highlight the need for a big navy: Germans were warned that Britain and Russia were achieving immense growth, thereby destroying the "balance in the world," which must be checked by a German battle fleet.<sup>66</sup> Germany was portrayed as in relative economic decline<sup>67</sup>--even though Germany actually had Europe's fastest-growing economy.<sup>68</sup>

German scholars were largely silent in response to this nonsense, offering little in the way of answer or assessment. Their silence reflected the fact that scholars who disputed official dogmas risked their careers. As Charles McClelland notes, any scholar "who ran against the current of accepted orthodoxy ... had great difficulties making a good career in Imperial Germany."<sup>69</sup>

In-government policy assessment in Germany was likewise suppressed. Admiral Tirpitz censured critics of his ideas within the Navy and restricted the right of the admiralty staff to discuss strategic planning.<sup>70</sup> German diplomats abroad likewise knew that their careers would suffer if they disputed views that were fashionable in Berlin.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Admiral Tirpitz, quoted in John A. Moses, The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography (London: George Prior Publishers, 1975): 25. The publicist Axel Ripke likewise declared in 1913: "The saying that 'the world is rapidly becoming English' has so far proved true; and it is up to the Germans alone to put a stop to this prophecy." Fischer, War of Illusions: 233.

Paul Kennedy notes that the German naval buildup was "based on premises which sheer commonsense, not to mention a considerable amount of contemporary British and German writings on strategy, contradicted." These premises survived from "the lack of informed civilian probing into strategic matters, such as existed in the English press and parliament." Paul Kennedy, Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945 (Aylesbury: Fontana, 1983): 151-52.

<sup>67</sup> See for example Heinrich Class, summarized in Roger Chickering, We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914 (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984): 215.

<sup>68</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, "The First World War and the International Power System," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984): 7-41 at 12, 14 (tables 4 and 7). Among world powers only the United States economy grew faster than the German economy during 1880-1914. Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Charles E. McClelland, The German Historians and England: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Views (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 195.

<sup>70</sup> Herwig, "Failure of German Sea Power": 74.

<sup>71</sup> Lebow, Between Peace and War: 126-27.

German policy evaluation in wartime was no better, as Germany's crucial 1917 decision to escalate its U-boat campaign illustrates. This decision probably cost Germany the war but German leaders barely looked before they leaped. The German Navy knew that unlimited U-boat warfare would bring the U.S. into the war but argued that this would not matter. Admiral Tirpitz' successor, Eduard von Capelle, preposterously declared that the military significance of American intervention would be "zero, zero, zero!"<sup>72</sup> Even in early 1918 Tirpitz announced that "America's help is a phantom."<sup>73</sup> **In fact U.S. entry on the Allied side probably decided the war for the Allies; without it Germany could well have won.**

The German Navy's rosy hopes for the unlimited U-boat campaign were based on the assumption that Britain would surrender after five months of U-boat blockade. This claim rested in turn on a host of flimsy notions, including: the assumption that Britain would not respond by convoying its merchant fleet (an obvious countermeasure); would fail to requisition neutral shipping; and would be discouraged into surrender although its American ally would shortly come powerfully to its assistance.<sup>74</sup> Advocates of escalation also overlooked possible British food stockpiles, which neutral sources estimated enough for one year. They forgot that Britain could begin importing goods that took less shipping space--flour instead of grain, canned meat instead of livestock. They overlooked that Britain had secured the English Channel from submarines, and thus was no longer really an island--it could import goods by rail through

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<sup>72</sup> Ludwig Reiners, The Lamps Went Out In Europe, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Pantheon, 1955): 218. Finance Minister Hergt explained: "The Americans cannot swim and cannot fly; they will not come." Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Reiners, Lamps Went Out: 218.

<sup>74</sup> Reiners, Lamps Went Out In Europe: 218; and Iklé, Every War Must End: 46-7. In April 1917, after the campaign had been underway for three months, Germany's General Ludendorff thought Germans need not worry about American mobilization potential, since the blockade would force England to make peace within three months. Ibid.: 45.

French, Spanish, Portuguese or Italian ports.<sup>75</sup> They assumed that Britain's decision to surrender would be independent of America's joining the war on her side.<sup>76</sup> Later German historian Gerhard Ritter found it "utterly baffling" that trained naval officers could produce such incompetent analysis.<sup>77</sup>

German leaders accepted these judgments. After the war, the German Secretary of State confessed that the possibility that the war could last two more years despite the U-boat blockade "was not being considered seriously by anyone at that time [of the U-boat decision]."<sup>78</sup> Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg had believed that American entry into the war would mean nothing more than America's "delivering food to England, providing some financial help, and sending some aeroplanes and a corps of volunteers."<sup>79</sup> He never scrutinized the Navy's dubious claims.<sup>80</sup>

Even after the war German naval officers denied that the U-boat campaign was mistaken. In 1919 Admiral Koch argued that the U-boat campaign had failed because doves at home had stabbed it in the back; Britain might have sued for peace had it not been for the peace resolution of the German socialists and British awareness of Austrian peace sentiments.<sup>81</sup> German officials could speak such nonsense because German policy ideas faced no meaningful evaluation, even *post hoc*, from inside or outside of government.

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<sup>75</sup> Reiners, Lamps Went Out In Europe: 218.

<sup>76</sup> Iklé, Every War Must End: 47.

<sup>77</sup> Gerhard Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany, 4 vols. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1969-1973): 3:120.

<sup>78</sup> Iklé, Every War Must End: 44.

<sup>79</sup> Klaus Epstein, "Gerhard Ritter and the First World War," in Koch, Origins of the First World War: 286-306 at 300.

<sup>80</sup> Arthur S. Link, Wilson the Diplomatist (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974): 79. In fact, there was no trace of the famine in England that the German Navy predicted--the British were never even forced to ration food. Meanwhile the United States shipped two million men to France without losing a single soldier at sea during the whole war. Reiners, Lamps Went Out In Europe: 219.

<sup>81</sup> Iklé, Every War Must End: 49.

German academics were cheerleaders for Germany's follies throughout the war. Instead of evaluating official arguments they echoed and amplified them. In October 1914 ninety-three of Germany's leading scholars published a manifesto untruthfully proclaiming German innocence for starting the war, for violating Belgian neutrality, and for committing atrocities in Belgium. In 1915 three hundred and fifty-two professors signed another petition demanding vast annexations and endorsing unlimited submarine warfare.<sup>82</sup> The renowned sociologist Max Weber sang the war's praises.<sup>83</sup> Only a handful of academics raised their voices against German policies, and they were punished for it. One, Prof. Georg Nicolai, finally fled to Denmark fearing for his life. Another, Prof. Georg Mehlis, was drafted and killed in action soon after he published an article against the war.<sup>84</sup>

In allied countries neither war aims nor military tactics were analyzed carefully. Clear war aims were never specified.<sup>85</sup> Critics of French and British offensive tactics were purged from the army,<sup>86</sup> and scapegoats were blamed for successive failures. The reputations of the generals survived successive failures. In France General Joffre kept his command even after France's horrendous defeat in the August 1914 Battle of the Frontiers. The British government put blame for Britain's 1915 defeat at Neuve Chapelle not on its generals--where it belonged--but on British munitions workers, who allegedly spent their days drinking in pubs instead of making shells for

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<sup>82</sup> Willis Rudy, Total War and Twentieth-Century Higher Learning: Universities of the Western World in the First and Second World Wars (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991): 41-43.

<sup>83</sup> Weber extolled the war in 1916: "Had we not been prepared to risk this war, then we should never have bothered to found the Reich and should have continued to exist as a nation of small states." von Strandmann, "Germany and the Coming of War": 87.

<sup>84</sup> Rudy, Total War: 52-54.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, First World War: 62. On allied aims see A.J.P. Taylor, "The War Aims of the Allies in the First World War," in Richard Pares and A.J.P. Taylor, eds. Essays presented to Sir Lewis Namier (London: Macmillan, 1956): 475-505.

<sup>86</sup> On France see note 26, above.

General French's forces.<sup>87</sup>

Those responsible for failure were seldom called to account. A.J.P. Taylor notes that during the war "none of the statesmen who had blundered into war was discredited by his blunders. Asquith, Viviani, Bethmann, remained national leaders. ... The generals who had failed to fulfil their confident promises of victory were discredited even less. ... Those British generals who prolonged the slaughter kept their posts and won promotion; any who protested ran the risk of dismissal."<sup>88</sup>

Nor did the British Army assess its conduct of World War I in retrospect. As Brian Bond notes, there was "no inclination [in the British army] to profit from the dreadful experience by studying [its] lessons," and "virtually no official attempt was made to garner the experience of the First World War while it was still fresh," something Bond finds "astonishing." Only in 1932 was a War Office committee set up to study the lessons of the war.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile General Haig, who led the ruinous British failures at the Somme and Passchendaele, was made an earl and received 100,000 pounds from parliament.<sup>90</sup>

The French also made little effort to learn from their errors after the war. Most striking was their disinterest in assessing the flaws of Plan 17, the French war plan of 1914. That plan was premised on the strange assumption that Germany would lack sufficient troops to move beyond the Meuse river on its advance through Belgium. After the war no French officer or historian

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<sup>87</sup> Taylor, First World War: 83. The government solved the problem by closing pubs in the afternoon-- a custom that lasted seventy years.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, First World War: 61, 84.

<sup>89</sup> Brian Bond, British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): 34, 36.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, First World War: 108. The British official military history of the war, published between 1922 and 1948, heavily whitewashed Haig's mistakes. Its author General James Edmonds baldly admitted that "the whole truth cannot of course be told." Tim Travers, The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987): 221.

even tried to explain this grave intelligence blunder<sup>91</sup>--doubtless from fear of retribution by the still-powerful blunderers.

The myth of the offensive survived the war. In the 1920s many generals still preached the power of the offense, and denied that the defense had actually had the advantage during the war. In his memoirs Germany's General Ludendorff wrongly claimed: "Of the two [policies], the offensive makes less demands on the men and gives no higher losses."<sup>92</sup> In Britain the army's faith in offensive doctrines during the war was not seriously assessed until 1927, when Winston Churchill published data in his World Crisis showing that attackers had taken significantly greater losses than defenders during the war. These facts, noted Churchill, "do not appear to have been at all appreciated in even the most expert circles" even nine years after the war, and "no true impression has ever reached the public."<sup>93</sup> In other words the slaughter at Passchendaele and the Somme went unanalyzed for years after the battles happened.<sup>94</sup> The lives these battles consumed were wasted twice--by the battle and then by the failure to learn from it.

General Alfred von Schlieffen's disastrous 1914 German war plan was celebrated as a brilliant showpiece for decades after World War I, especially in Germany. A generation of Schlieffen's disciples and admirers, and most historians, thought it a clever scheme ruined in

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See also *ibid.*: xxii, 6, 10, 24-26, 203-250, especially 203-4, 215-16.

<sup>91</sup> Hajo Holborn, "Moltke and Schlieffen: The Prussian-German School," in Edward Mead Earle, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971): 172-205 at 200.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis, 1916-1918, Part I (London: Thornton Butterworth Limited, 1927): 49.

<sup>93</sup> Churchill, World Crisis, 1916-1918, Part I: 53, 37.

<sup>94</sup> Churchill's book was attacked by military critics when he finally published in 1927. The British official historian had doctored casualty figures to conceal the catastrophic results of the British offensives. Using this doctored data a group of leading British military officers and experts in 1928 published The World Crisis by Winston Churchill: A Criticism, claiming that Churchill was wrong to claim the attacking allies suffered persistently greater casualties than the defending Germans during the offensives. See Brodie, War and Politics: 19.



execution by others who lacked the courage to carry it through as Schlieffen had conceived it.<sup>95</sup> Schlieffen himself was written up as the supreme German strategist.<sup>96</sup> The Schlieffen myth was not scrutinized until Gerhard Ritter finally published The Schlieffen Plan in 1956, forty-two years after the fact.<sup>97</sup>

Admiral Tirpitz's failed strategic ideas remained popular with interwar German naval leaders<sup>98</sup> and won new fans in the German air force. The Luftwaffe was so taken with Tirpitz's "risk" theory--which held that a large German fleet could intimidate Britain into neutrality, a notion clearly disproven by events during 1898-1914--that it argued for creating a long-range bomber force as an analogue to Tirpitz's "risk" fleet. Luftwaffe chief Herman Goering even termed the proposed bomber force a "risk fleet."<sup>99</sup>

Weimar German scholars made no effort to assess the policies that had led Germany to war and defeat.<sup>100</sup> Instead they parroted the patriotic line--denying German responsibility for the war and repeating the "stab in the back" myth that blamed Germany's defeat on leftists at home.

Conservative German publishers conspired to reinforce these messages, commissioning hundred

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<sup>95</sup> Gerhard Ritter, The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth (London: Oswald Wolff, 1958; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979): 48, also 9; and Brodie, War and Politics: 11-12.

<sup>96</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, "Foreword," in Ritter, Schlieffen Plan: 3-10 at 3.

<sup>97</sup> Ritter, Schlieffen Plan: 4. B.H. Liddell Hart later marvelled: "In light of Schlieffen's papers, and of the lessons of World War I, it is hard to find reason for the way he has so long been regarded as a master mind, and one who would have been victorious if he had lived to conduct his own Plan." "Foreword," in Ritter, Schlieffen Plan: 9.

<sup>98</sup> Herwig, "Failure of German Sea Power": 86-94.

<sup>99</sup> Edward L. Homze, Arming the Luftwaffe: The Reich Air Ministry and the German Aircraft Industry, 1919-39 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976): 55-56.

<sup>100</sup> The spirit behind this silence was expressed by the head of Germany's naval archives, who privately explained that "history is not to be written for the purpose of tearing down but for building up. Therefore, with marked failures, much must be done to cover them with love, because history must be constructive." Keith W. Bird, "The Origins and Role of German Naval History in the Inter-War Period 1918-1939," Naval War College Review (March-April 1979): 42-58 at 47. Such attitudes led to major idiocies in Nazi German naval policy. For example, despite World War I experience showing the great military value of U-boats, Germany entered World War II with only 27 ocean-going U-boats--far too few to wage effective undersea war against Britain. Herwig, "Failure of German Sea Power": 94.

of books that echoed these and other belligerent themes.<sup>101</sup>

The Weimar government hampered evaluation of past German policies by massively concealing or doctoring documents and other records that implicated Germany in 1914 or otherwise made Germany look bad.<sup>102</sup> It also deployed pseudo-evaluation in the form of scholars who appeared to be independent but were in fact paid employees of the German foreign ministry, hired to iterate official arguments.<sup>103</sup>

Britain's appeasement policy in the late 1930s was not informed by an assessment of German intentions or the effect of appeasement on allied continental strategy. **No top British leaders read *Mein Kampf*.**<sup>104</sup> **The British press paid scarcely any heed to Nazi ideology, making little effort to explain it to British readers.**<sup>105</sup> Chamberlain took no brief to Munich that surveyed the Czechoslovak question; nor did he ask if a truncated Czechoslovakia could remain independent, or what the strategic effect would be for the West if Czechoslovakia were lost, or how the national composition of Czechoslovakia could be ascertained.<sup>106</sup> A.L. Rowse concludes of British leaders:<sup>107</sup>

That they did not know what they were dealing with is the most charitable explanation of their failure; but they might at least have taken the trouble to inform themselves. ...

To be so uninstructed ... was itself a kind of dereliction of duty.

The Axis powers scarcely evaluated the policies that brought them to ruin in World War II.

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<sup>101</sup> See Gary D. Stark, Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890-1933 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981): 148-234.

<sup>102</sup> Herwig, "Clio Deceived": 15-18, 29-33, 37-40.

<sup>103</sup> Herwig, "Clio Deceived": 21-22.

<sup>104</sup> A.L. Rowse, Appeasement (New York: Norton, 1961): 116-117, quoted in Klaus Knorr, "Threat Perception," in Klaus Knorr, ed. Historical Dimensions of National Security Policy (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976): 82-83.

<sup>105</sup> Benny Morris, The Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany During the 1930s (London: Frank Cass, 1991): 6.

Hitler never requested an evaluation of how German forces could fight the United States before his disastrous decision to declare war on the U.S. in 1941.<sup>108</sup> By Hitler's own absurd estimate Germany's Luftwaffe and U-boat forces were strong enough to keep any American troops from landing in Europe.<sup>109</sup> Hitler also offered nonsense economics to justify his expansionism--"Our economic situation is such that we cannot hold out more than a few years. ... We have no other choice, we must act."<sup>110</sup>

After Hitler's rise German academics showed little resolve to assess the ideas that shaped Nazi policies. The Nazi regime savagely suppressed criticism, but suppression was barely necessary where German scholars were concerned since they had scant impulse to evaluate. As Oscar Hammen notes, German historians "needed little 'coordination'" under the Nazis--they were quite willing to silence themselves or even to endorse the regime's ideas.<sup>111</sup>

In Japan fatuous analogies instead of analysis governed policy. Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke thought Japan's expansion was "as natural as the growth of a child. Only one thing stops a child from growing:--death."<sup>112</sup> General Satō Kōji explained that Japan was like a tree, and "a tree must have its roots." Britain had roots in Africa, India, Australia and Canada; the U.S. had roots in North, Central and South America. Now Japan must have roots in Asia to

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<sup>106</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War, 2d ed. (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1961): 169.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Knorr, "Threat Perception": 82-3.

<sup>108</sup> Iklé, Every War Must End: 19.

<sup>109</sup> In April 1941, quoted in William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960): 875.

<sup>110</sup> To his generals on August 22 1939, quoted in Shirer, Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: 530.

<sup>111</sup> Oscar J. Hammen, "German Historians and the Advent of the National Socialist State," Journal of Modern History, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1941): 161-188 at 187. Alice Gallin, a student of interwar German academe, argues that German scholars accepted Nazi rule even more supinely than most sectors of German society: "I found cells of resistance [to the Nazis] in the army, the intelligence circles, the labor unions, and the churches, but none in the universities." Midwives to Nazism: University Professors in Weimar Germany 1925-1933 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986): 4.

<sup>112</sup> In October 1937, quoted in R.J.C. Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961): 107.

escape its "potted plant" existence, or it would shrivel and die.<sup>113</sup> That such ideas were vastly wrong was shown by Japan's fabulous post-1945 economic success with no such "roots."

Before Pearl Harbor Japan's government never seriously studied Japan's chances of winning a war against the United States.<sup>114</sup> It made no overall estimate of Japan's power and had no master plan for the conduct of the war.<sup>115</sup> It failed to analyze the likely effect of attacking Pearl Harbor on American will to defeat Japan.<sup>116</sup> The Japanese Navy never seriously discussed the implications of its proposed advance into Southeast Asia--which triggered the war with the United States--with top government officials.<sup>117</sup> The Japanese army made no real effort to assess the military strength of the United States,<sup>118</sup> and suppressed whatever assessment was done.

Robert Butow notes that Tōjō and his colleagues often made decisions without fully exploring their consequences and that "conclusions seem to have been based more on intuition than on reason."<sup>119</sup> Saburō Ienaga notes the decision for war betrayed "casual assumptions," "shoddy analysis," and "extreme lack of objectivity in planning."<sup>120</sup>

This poor thinking developed in a Japanese government that never had to answer critics. Instead it suppressed criticism of its expansionist policies to a point where anti-war criticism

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<sup>113</sup> In 1921, quoted in Butow, Tōjō and the Coming of the War: 24.

<sup>114</sup> Ike, Japan's Decision for War: 130.

<sup>115</sup> Asada Sadao, "The Japanese Navy and the United States," in Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Okamoto with Dale K.A. Finlayson, eds., Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations 1931-1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973): 225-259 at 256.

<sup>116</sup> Bruce M. Russett, No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of United States Entry into World War II (New York: Harper and Row, 1972): 55.

<sup>117</sup> Asada, "Japanese Navy and the United States": 251.

<sup>118</sup> Fujiwara Akira, "The Role of the Japanese Army," in Borg and Okamoto, Pearl Harbor as History: 189-195 at 194.

<sup>119</sup> Butow, Tōjō and the Coming of the War: 155, 315.

<sup>120</sup> Ienaga, Pacific War: 141. Japan's naval planners ignored the navy's lack of transports to carry oil to Japan; its lack of escorts; and its lack of experience in sea-control operations. They failed to consider the scanty fortifications of Japan's South Pacific islands, or its lack of air power to defend them. Nor did Japan's leaders analyze Japan's own role in creating its political encirclement. Charles E. Neu, The Troubled Encounter: The United States and Japan (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1975): 189; and

disappeared from public dialogue.<sup>121</sup> Evaluation became so dangerous that it almost never happened. Fatuous policies--and national ruin--were the result.

In Italy Mussolini's imperial program was barely analyzed and Italian foreign policy ideas bore little relation to reality. The Italian government made little effort to assess Italian military capabilities, or the capabilities of Italy's adversaries, or the value of empire to Italy.

Many of Mussolini's arguments for expansion had been falsified by events even before they were made. Fascist leaders claimed that a wider empire would enrich Italy--even though Italy's existing colonies needed large subsidies.<sup>122</sup> They claimed that millions of Italians could be resettled in the proposed East African colonies--Mussolini talked of sending ten million emigrants to the empire--even as Italian settlers in East Africa fell year by year, from 146,000 workers in 1936, to 23,000 in 1939, to just 854 agricultural families in May 1940.<sup>123</sup>

These errors reflected a total failure to study the situation. The Fascist government never assessed the feasibility of sending settlers to Africa,<sup>124</sup> and it planned the annexation of Albania in 1938 without making any survey of the colony's potential profitability. Denis Mack Smith notes that Mussolini's imperial ideas were "effective as propaganda" but "would not have borne close and serious investigation."<sup>125</sup> They survived because they faced no such investigation.

Italian estimates of national military strength were equally deluded. Italian authorities thought the Italian Air Force was second to none, and that Italy was impregnable. Mussolini claimed the Italian air force was leading the world, and spoke of blacking out the sun with the

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Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War: 315.

<sup>121</sup> Ienaga, Pacific War: 17-18.

<sup>122</sup> Denis Mack Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977): 32.

<sup>123</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 33, 109.

<sup>124</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 109, 33, 150.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 65.

sheer numbers of his aircraft.<sup>126</sup> Fascist propagandists claimed Italy's air force was stronger than the RAF and that one Italian air squadron could destroy any British fleet in the Mediterranean.<sup>127</sup> In 1939 official Italian figures showed Italian air strength at 8,530 planes; in fact Italy had only 583 bombers and fighters, nearly all of which were inferior to British planes.<sup>128</sup>

Fascist writers claimed that Italy had one of the strongest armies in Europe, and a navy and air force that had reached perfection. They boasted that Italy had "little or nothing to learn" from Germany or anyone else in military matters.<sup>129</sup> In fact at the end of World War II Italy still lacked a real tank, and it produced more aircraft in World War I than World War II.<sup>130</sup> Italy's peak artillery production rate in World War II was less than one-sixth its peak rate in World War I.<sup>131</sup> In the 1930s Fascist propagandists claimed Italy could mobilize a 12 million man army: in fact it mobilized only three million men, who carried rifles designed in 1891.<sup>132</sup> As Denis Mack Smith concludes, in Fascist Italy "myth-making became the one essential art of government, more important than statesmanship or farsightedness or even effective administration."<sup>133</sup>

In short, the history of policymaking in the European and Asian belligerent states of the two world wars is a record of recurrent folly. The belligerents repeatedly made blunders that could have been exposed by minimal objective analytic scrutiny, had it been allowed. These blunders were common among the democracies, even more common among the authoritarian states. Thus

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<sup>126</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 174-75.

<sup>127</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 177. In fact the Italian air force was "at the level of a Balkan state," as one Italian air force chief noted. Ibid.: 175.

<sup>128</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 177. In fact, Mussolini did not know how many planes Italy had, nor could he easily find out; in 1939 he had to conduct an inventory by instructing the Fascist prefects of each region to count the aircraft on each military airfield. Ibid.: 197; and Donald Cameron Watt, Too Serious A Business: European Armed Forces and the Approach to the Second World War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975): 117.

<sup>129</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 169-70.

<sup>130</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 172, 178.

<sup>131</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 172.

<sup>132</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 169, 172.

the realist image of these wars--that they grew from collisions among rational-acting states whose misperceptions reflected the opaqueness of the international environment--is incorrect. The belligerents misperceived a rather transparent world because they had no functioning analytic apparatus. This occurred because the belligerent governments and societies punished evaluation, often quite savagely.

If so, these cases indicate that non-evaluation is pervasive. Even the large incentive for rational calculation posed by the perils of total war may be unable to overcome it.

Conditions for evaluation have been better in the United States than elsewhere, and the quality of policy evaluation in the U.S. has accordingly been higher than in the belligerent states discussed above. But measured against an absolute standard it leaves much to be desired. The quality of analysis achieved by the professions or the hard sciences is seldom achieved in evaluation of major public policies, especially foreign and security policies.

Striking instances are found where important U.S. policies were never evaluated. For example, in the 1930s U.S. officials simply assumed the strategic importance of China and Southeast Asia to the United States; no study of their importance was done. On this flimsy basis the U.S. pursued a collision course with Japan.<sup>134</sup> Amazingly, before intervening in Vietnam in 1965 U.S. officials made no systematic assessment of Vietnam's importance to the United States.<sup>135</sup> The Reagan Administration did no careful analysis before announcing its 1983

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<sup>133</sup> Smith, Mussolini's Roman Empire: 94.

<sup>134</sup> John Mueller, "Pearl Harbor: Military Inconvenience, Political Disaster," International Security, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Winter 1991/92): 172-203 at 195.

<sup>135</sup> Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1979): 190. Bernard Brodie writes that "many grave and highly consequential decisions concerning Vietnam were made on the basis of assumptions or premises which would not withstand any kind of logical scrutiny but were simply never challenged!" Brodie, War and Politics: 279.

Strategic Defense Initiative (or SDI, also known as "Star Wars").<sup>136</sup>

Instances of the suppression or deterrence of evaluation in the U.S. are also abundant. During World War I a sizable number of U.S. college teachers were fired for expressing anti-war views; the American Association of University Professors even announced in 1918 that it did not endorse guarantees of freedom of expression on campus "in a time so critical."<sup>137</sup> As noted above, many U.S. government China analysts lost their jobs in the 1940s and 1950s for honestly reporting the corruption of China's Chiang Kai Shek government. Pentagon leaders once fired a budget analyst for informing Congress about defense cost overruns, and another time engineered the firing of a former top official from his private sector job after he criticized current defense budget priorities.<sup>138</sup> Undersecretary of Defense Donald Hicks bluntly threatened in 1986 to deny Defense Department funding "even for basic research" to outside institutions that housed scholars who criticized Defense Department programs--a chilling threat to the many U.S. universities that receive Defense Department research funding.<sup>139</sup> Such stories could be multiplied many times.

Finally, evaluative lassitude is pronounced among American scholars, as observers of academe have often remarked. Thus Hans Morgenthau once lamented that American political science is guilty of a general retreat from evaluation. Instead, he noted, it hides in "the trivial, the formal, the methodological, the purely theoretical, the remotely historical--in short, the

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<sup>136</sup> McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years (New York: Random House, 1988): 570.

<sup>137</sup> Rudy, Total War and Twentieth-Century Higher Learning: 57-59.

<sup>138</sup> The budget analyst was A. Ernest Fitzgerald, fired in 1969; the former Pentagon official was Lawrence Korb, fired by the Raytheon corporation in 1986. A. Ernest Fitzgerald, The Pentagonists: An Insider's View of Waste, Mismanagement, and Fraud in Defense Spending (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989): 1-73; and Walt, "Science of Strategy": 153n.

<sup>139</sup> John P. Holdren and F. Bailey Green, "Military Spending, the SDI, and Government Support of Research and Development," F.A.S. Public Interest Report Vol. 39, No. 7 (September 1986): 15.



politically irrelevant."<sup>140</sup> External hostility would be a badge of achievement for social science--  
 "a political science that is mistreated and persecuted is likely to have earned that enmity because  
 it has put its moral commitment to the truth above social convenience and ambition."<sup>141</sup> Instead  
 political science ducks criticism by producing obscure and irrelevant research. "History and  
 methodology, in particular, become the protective armor which shields political science from  
 contact with ... political reality." Morgenthau observed a "new scholasticism," in academe--the  
 pursuit of an "intellectual exercise, frequently executed with a high degree of acumen and  
 sophistication, that tells us nothing we need to know about the real world." Scholars maintain  
 their reputations by "engaging in activities that can have no relevance for the political problems  
 of the day"; instead they substitute a "fanatical devotion to esoteric terminology and  
 mathematical formulas, equations, and charts, in order to elucidate or obscure the obvious." As a  
 result, in the study of international affairs "prudence and truth are bent to the purposes of power,  
 and ... superstition takes the place of rational knowledge." Social science resembles "a deaf man  
 answering questions which no one has asked him."<sup>142</sup>

Many others have echoed Morgenthau's criticisms. Russell Jacoby laments the retreat  
 toward irrelevance of American social science, despite the infusion of people with background in  
 social criticism into universities.<sup>143</sup> Jacoby observes that even the New Left intellectuals, now  
 ensconced in the academic world they once opposed, produce writing that is "largely technical,  
 unreadable, and--except by specialists--unread."<sup>144</sup> For them professionalized social science has

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<sup>140</sup> "The Purpose of Political Science": 73.

<sup>141</sup> "The Purpose of Political Science": 73.

<sup>142</sup> "The Purpose of Political Science": 73-4; and Hans J. Morgenthau, Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-70 (New York: Praeger, 1970): 246, 261.

<sup>143</sup> Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals.

<sup>144</sup> Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals: 141.

"served as a refuge" from social assessment.<sup>145</sup> Robert McCaughey notes that specialists on international affairs were conspicuously absent during the 1960s Indochina War debate, to which their expertise was highly relevant.<sup>146</sup> David Ricci complains that during 1959-69 only one of the 924 articles that appeared in the three leading political science journals dealt with Vietnam, and only six percent dealt with policy analysis in the broadest terms.<sup>147</sup> Patricia Wilner reports that during 1936-82 only 5.1 percent of articles in the official sociology journal, American Sociological Review, addressed critical political and social events such as the cold war, McCarthyism, and protest movements.<sup>148</sup> Todd Gitlin criticizes his fellow sociologists for expressing themselves in "inward-turning, indecipherable prose" that revealed that they "cannot be bothered to clarify matters for the reader who is not among the adept."<sup>149</sup> David Newsom, a foreign policy practitioner, complains that academics who publish on international relations "disappear behind a curtain of jargon" and "speak to each other rather than to a wider public." As a result "much of today's scholarship is either irrelevant or inaccessible to policymakers."<sup>150</sup> An appalled Martin Anderson notes the "trivial substance of much academic research and its

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<sup>145</sup> Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals: 126.

<sup>146</sup> Robert A. McCaughey, International Studies and Academic Enterprise: A Chapter in the Enclosure of American Learning (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984): 232.

<sup>147</sup> David M. Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984): 197, reporting a study by Lewis Lipsitz.

<sup>148</sup> Patricia Wilner, "The Main Drift of Sociology Between 1936 and 1982," History of Sociology, Vol. 2 (Spring 1985): 1-20. Instead the dynamics of mate selection were the favorite topic of contributors.

<sup>149</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Age of Golden Clarity Bows to Hegemonists," New York Times, August 27, 1988: 7.

<sup>150</sup> David D. Newsom, "Foreign Policy and Academia," Foreign Policy, No. 101 (Winter 1995-96): 52-57 at 62, 64. Parallel criticisms are made of economists. Thus Thomas Vogel writes of the many academic economists who "churn out papers strewn with Greek-letter formulas understood by few and interesting to even fewer." Vogel quotes a Norwest Bank official complaining that "I have tried several times to hire Ph.D. students [in economics]. They knew everything about rational expectations but not about economic forecasting or how the financial system works." Thomas T. Vogel, "Berkeley's Economists Attack Policy Issues With Unusual Gusto," Wall Street Journal, December 1, 1995: 1. Princeton economist Alan Blinder likewise complains that much scholarship by young economists is "theoretical drivel, mathematically elegant but not about anything real." Michael Weinstein, "Students Seek Some Reality Amid the Math of Economics," New York Times, September 18, 1999: A19.

blissful irrelevance to the vital problems of the world."<sup>151</sup> Commenting on scholars of East Asia, Richard Samuels laments "the reluctance of many political scientists with Japanese language expertise to engage in prescriptive research."<sup>152</sup>

This academic lassitude stems partly from fear of punishment for evaluating but more from a lack of evaluative ethos. Far more than non-academics are aware, vast areas of American social science are infused with a contempt for policy assessment.<sup>153</sup> In many university departments those whose research veers into areas of policy importance are viewed as second-rate intellectuals, and those who write for the public are dismissed as mere popularizers.<sup>154</sup> The department majority assumes that these lesser minds address the real world because they lack the brilliance needed to ascend to more lofty theoretical heights. Academic evaluators accordingly find that their work often brings them little respect or reward from colleagues. We can only wonder how the American people would react if they understood the contempt with which their problems and concerns are treated by university faculties who are expensively supported by their tax and tuition dollars.

Nevertheless, evaluation in the United States is better than elsewhere. **This is seen in the confined nature of most large American foreign policy blunders.** Big mistakes have been

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<sup>151</sup> Martin Anderson, Imposters in the Temple (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992): 92. See also *ibid.*: 79-91, 93-102.

<sup>152</sup> Richard J. Samuels, "Japanese Political Studies and the Myth of the Independent Intellectual," in Richard J. Samuels and Myron Weiner, eds., The Political Culture of Foreign Area and International Studies: Essays in Honor of Lucian W. Pye (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1991): 17-56 at 42.

<sup>153</sup> Kenneth Waltz, whose work forms the backdrop to this book, is a striking exception to this dismal tendency. His writing has always dealt with questions relevant to policy and has directly addressed many important policy issues, including the U.S. war in Vietnam, U.S. policy in Europe and the Persian Gulf, U.S. nuclear strategy, and methods of war prevention. His example rubbed off on his students, many of whom have written prominently on a range of important policy matters.

<sup>154</sup> Robert McCaughey notes "the deprecation of popularization [of international relations] as an appropriate activity" by the international studies community, and reports a survey of Asian studies scholars that found they put "public information and public educational activities" as the lowest priority for their professional association. McCaughey, International Studies: 224, 227.

common, but at some point most were recognized and reversed. Thus the U.S. erred by being disengaged from Europe before World Wars I and II, but it reversed the error by joining those wars and by later organizing NATO and deploying troops to Europe during the Cold War. The U.S. erred by attempting to conquer North Korea during the Korean war but it abandoned this goal after China intervened in the war. The U.S. blundered into Vietnam but eventually cut its losses and accepted failure. This record contrasts sharply with the relentless pursuit of error by Germany, Japan and Italy earlier in this century. Once set on a course of folly these powers usually stayed firmly on it. They learned little or nothing from their successive failures. Only total defeat could set the state on a new course.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Inquiry about politics is harder inquiry in the natural sciences because the investigator must overcome both the question and an established order that often fears the answer. As a result, state policies are often adopted on the basis of less careful analysis than their importance warrants, leaving wide room for mistakes and misperceptions. Forces of knowledge destruction are often stronger than those favoring knowledge creation. Hence states have an inherent tendency toward primitive thought, and the conduct of public affairs is often polluted by myth, misinformation, and flimsy analysis.

A major risk of war lies in the tendency of policymakers to underestimate this phenomenon and assume instead that states are intelligent actors. Policymakers are safer to assume that both their own state and their adversaries are prone to folly and to buffer their policies against this fact. They should rarely adopt policies that demand a large measure of sophistication and subtlety because such policies will often exceed their own state's analytic capacity. Adversaries

should be assumed to be slow to learn, blunder-prone, and hard to deter. **Ill-considered actions by adversaries should be anticipated.** Nonevaluation injects folly into the warp and woof of international politics; policymakers should accept this reality and plan accordingly.

Nonevaluation has been noticed before but explained in psychological terms. For example, Irving Janis has argued that the psychology of small-group dynamics, which he labels "groupthink," causes decision-makers to abandon their independence of mind and conform to the dominant view in the group. As a result the dominant view is never carefully examined even if it is woefully flawed.<sup>155</sup> Martha Wolfenstein, addressing another piece of the problem, argues that people who warn of disaster face hostility, even if they are proven right, because those who suffer the disaster interpret it as personal punishment and interpret warnings as threats of punishment.<sup>156</sup> Hence we see the "kill the messenger" syndrome--those who bring useful bad news are punished for it.

Nonevaluation theory differently argues that groupthink dynamics reflect the simple tendency of people, for rational self-serving reasons, to make life hard on those who criticize their performance. Evaluators understand this tendency and are deterred by it--they silence themselves from fear of retribution. And nonevaluation theory explains the kill the messenger syndrome as occurring because warnings of disaster threaten the reputation of leaders or officials who allowed the danger to arise, and may threaten other government incumbents by raising the need to address the disaster by innovation, with its attendant possibility of personnel shakeups. In this view the working out of self-interest in the context of bureaucratic power-politics, not

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<sup>155</sup> Irving L. Janis, Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes 2nd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982): 2-13.

<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Lebow, Between Peace and War: 153-54.

psychological dynamics, explain the nonevaluation phenomenon.<sup>157</sup>

Several prescriptions emerge from the list of conditions conducive to evaluation outlined above. One solution lies in infusing academic professions with a stronger evaluative ethos. At a minimum active hostility toward policy studies should be abandoned. More positively, academic professions could formally recognize and reward evaluative work in hiring, tenuring, salary, and prize-giving decisions. A second solution lies in developing non-academic institutions that assume the mission of encouraging, protecting, and rewarding evaluative work. During the past two decades such a movement has taken hold on a small scale, embodied in the growth in Washington of institutions dedicated offering legal and financial protection for "whistle blowers" in government.<sup>158</sup> The concept behind these organizations could be applied more broadly, and institutions could be developed to serve as counterweights against the pressures that will otherwise operate to still evaluation.

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<sup>157</sup> Three-cornered tests that compared the power of these explanations would be useful. On three-cornered tests see Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970): 91-196 at 115.

<sup>158</sup> These organizations include the Whistleblower Assistance Fund, the Government Accountability Project, and the Project on Military Procurement.