Recent Intl. Relations History

(1) World War I - Root Orgins and Causes

- (A) Started with German policy of "Weltpolitik" in the 1890's

- "Weltpolitik": Started with the decline of free trade and market liberalization
- With more countries enacting "protectionist" trade policies and barriers, Germany could not rely on other countries' exports markets if access to those markets was hindered
- Therefore, Germany embarked on a broad colonial policy calling for the acquisition of colonial territories and the building of an empire
- This meant that only a large continental sphere of influence (a large land army) no longer sufficed
- This led to the push toward building a strong naval presence;
According to predictions, Germany would "suffocate in her small territory or be crushed by the great world powers" by the 20th Century;
- Hence, a strong and dominant navy = a strong and competitive global/colonial standing
- With this, naval expenditures increased significantly huge naval appropriations/spending bills in 1898, 1900, and 1905
- "Weltpolitick" had both domestic and Intl. long-term costs and ramifications for the monarchy
- The Intl. costs began when the other European powers took notice of Germany's expanded naval expenditures
- The British were threatened the most by "Weltpolitik"; Part of the increased German naval expansion was to match the Royal Navy as the world's dominant naval power
- Germany felt that it needed an equally powerful navy to get the British to "play fair" with regard to the U.K.'s colonial acquisitions that Germany was also vying for (a colonial "power vacuum"
- created by the demise of states like Spain and Portugal)
- By 1907, Britain's naval leaders concluded either one of two possible scenarios: (A) Germany sought military hegemony/dominance, which threatened British security, or (B) Germany sought to promote its interests world-wide by way of foreign commerce/economic influence
- Either way, Germany posed a threat to Britain
- This led to the British stepping up and increasing its naval expenditures in an effort to match the Germans
- Led to the British "Two Power Standard"; The Royal Navy must be as strong as the next two great naval powers combined
- Led to the 1908 Enabling Act and other appropriations legislation that saw an equally dramatic increase in the Royal Navy
- Germany thought that Britain would be the only European power hostile to German goals due to Britain's poor relations with both France and Russia
- Therefore, Germany did not feel that Britain, France and Russia would overcome their mutual hostility and form a continental bloc against Germany
- Germany was wrong; Increased German naval power took priority over colonial disputes with France for the British
- Thus, 1904, Britain settled its colonial disputes with France; 1906, Britain reached a settlement with Russia over colonial territories in Central Asia
- Led to the formation of the "Triple Entente" - a reaction to German expansionism
- This new alliance formation created revised thinking and strategy in Germany; to abandon the naval policy of "Weltpolitik" and refocus on a strong army and secure its military superiority on land
- Led to 1912 appropriations bills that expanded the size of the German army; all this caused by the German feeling of "encirclement" by its rivals - a perfect example of the "Security Dilemma"
- Germany countered the "Triple Entente" by forming a "Triple Alliance" with Austria-Hungary and Italy
- Germany also sought to create a huge Central European bloc ("Mitteleuropa") - from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf
- This strategy was also blocked by the Russian formation of the "Balkan League" - an alliance between Russia, Serbia, and Bulgaria
- Also, Russia included Turkey in the bloc so as to give Moscow access to the Mediterranean Sea
- Within the Austro-Hungarian empire (Germany's ally), there were sub-nationalist movements with desire to break away from Austria-Hungary; these independence movements were being supported by Serbia - leading to tensions between Austria-Hungary and Serbia
- Germany also had tensions with Serbia and other Balkan powers with regard to "balance of power" rivalries; Helped explain German alliance with Austria-Hungary
- When the immediate trigger to the war occurred (assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand), tensions and rivalries already existed so that any event would have triggered war - it was nearly an excuse Germany needed to prod Austria-Hungary to going to war
- By this time, Germany felt that war was the only viable option in light of the feeling of "encirclement" Germany felt after neither the Balkan League nor the Triple Entente diminished
(B) **Entangling Alliances and Multi-Polarity**

- Due to the existence of a multiple # of great powers, there were confusions, misperceptions and misunderstandings between the powers
- There were a multiple # of alliance pacts existing that "chain-ganged" the major powers into war
- Austria-Hungary's declaration of war against Serbia led to the activation with Austria's alliance pact with Germany; Hence, Germany was more drawn into war by Austria, than the other way around
- Russia had a similar alliance with Serbia that obliged Russia to enter the war on Serbian behalf
- There was a similar existing Franco-Russo pact that drew France into the war
- There was a similar Franco-Anglo alliance pact that drew Great Britain into war

(C) **Limited Mobilization Capabilities**

- When Austria-Hungary marched into Serbia, Russian forces began to mobilize to defend Serbia
- Czar Nicholas had received a telegram from Kaiser Wilhelm stating German peaceful intentions (evidence that Germany might not have sought war)
- The Czar then ordered a partial mobilization just to show Austria that Russia was prepared to defend Serbia - without intending to actually go to war
- The Czar was the informed that only full mobilization was possible within the Russian military
- Partial mobilization would make full mobilization impossible - this would leave Russia vulnerable to attack or leave Russia without credibility with either Austria or Germany
- Thus, Russia fully mobilized; Germany saw this and countered with its own full mobilization
- Russia then got the impression that Germany was initiating aggression
- Austria-Hungary saw both states mobilizing and then marched into Serbia before Germany could possibly back out on its commitment to Austria
(2) World War II - Root Causes

- (A) Post WWI Versailles Treaty, 1919

- Heart of the treaty was a "war guilt" clause applied to Germany;
- Premise was that Germany was the aggressor for war and was, therefore, punished
- (A) Stripping and severe limiting of German military capability
- (B) De-militarizing of some German territory (Rhineland) and stripping away of other lands to France
- (C) Financial reparations that Germany had to pay to the "winning" powers; caused rampant inflation that eventually reached 1,000% by the mid-1920's!
- This created a reactionary and nationalistic backlash among the German population and several German political interests that gave support to a nationalist, Fascist movement - led by NAZI's
- (D) Led to creation of Weimar Republic (1919) - Germany's first major democracy experiment
- NAZI's got political support from several elite groups and broad-based voter constituency groups, stressing "Anti-Versailles" rhetoric and nationalism during election campaigns
- Irony: What was to be a brutal totalitarian empire took power using legitimate democratic channels and democratic/electoral institutions

- (B) Western Appeasement and Misperception Among Multiple Powers

- "Revisionist" Theory
- 1933, Germany withdraws from both disarmament conference and League of Nations
- Hitler anticipated that France would not respond to these moves without British support
- The British were seen as unlikely to act, given London's support for German re-armament for "defensive" purposes for a trial period of four years
- The Soviet factor: The USSR feared Germany; also expected the Western powers to support Germany against the Soviets due to Britain's pro-German, anti-Communist stance
- Japan began to loom as a threat to the Soviets in the Far East; this led Stalin to become fearful of a two-front war
- Therefore, the USSR started to support France; Soviets perceived the French to have the will to assert status as a major power and confront Germany
- This, of course, was a wrong perception; France was unwilling to balance against Germany due to the French importance in Britain - a pro-German power - as an ally
- Also, France knew that a Franco-Russo alliance would be frowned upon by Britain
- Therefore, the Franco-Russo alliance was really one-sided and it, therefore, lacked security and credibility; Hitler knew this and further assumed that his would-be opponents were divided
- Fearing German expansion from the West and Japanese expansion from the East, the USSR sought to preserve and defend its security and, thus, its territorial integrity
- This was interpreted by Poland as Soviet expansionism; led to German-Polish non-aggression pact, 1934
- Poland, fearing the wrong enemy, was lulled into a false sense of security
- Italy, despite a similar Fascist govt., feared an expansionistic Germany;
- Could not have an alliance with Austria, whose govt. was controlled by a pro-Hitler regime - so Italy looked to France
- Hitler saw this as a bogus alliance - between two pre-destined enemies
- By 1936, Germany had not made its most aggressive moves; Hitler was observing how the other powers were reacting to the moves he did make; concluded that none of the powers would put up any type of resistance or counter balance
- "Revisionist" argument claims that despite Hitler's territorial ambitions and his Fascism, he did not want war - Germany engaged in acts of expansion, assuming there would be no war
- Hossbach Memorandum (1937) - Expressed desire for German "Lebensraum" ("Living Space")
- Meant territorial expansion by way of force; Germany needed to confront "hate-inspired" antagonists - France and Britain; "Germany's problems can only be solved by means of force" - the threat of force