ALLIANCES IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY
Studies in Global Security
Alan Ned Sabrosky, Series Editor
ALLIANCES IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

ISSUES IN THE QUEST FOR COLLECTIVE DEFENSE

edited by
Alan Ned Sabrosky

Foreword by
Charles F. Doran
To Julie—
An Ally of Great Value
CONTENTS

Foreword, Charles F. Doran ix
Preface xv

1 Alliances in U.S. Foreign Policy, Alan Ned Sabrosky 1

2 Extended Deterrence and Alliance Cohesion, Earl C. Ravenal 19

3 Economic Relationships Among the Allies: Sources of Cohesion and Tension, James P. O'Leary 41

4 No Entangling Alliances? The Congress and NATO, Karen A. McPherson 57

5 Public Opinion: The Fulcrum of Alliance Cohesion, Gregory D. Foster 77


7 The Continuing Quest for Collective Defense, Alan Ned Sabrosky 133

About the Contributors 141
Index 143
Analysis contained in these essays requires at the outset twofold comment. First, while policy-oriented and deeply relevant to the ongoing debate concerning alliance relations, these essays are informed both by international political theory and by an empirical familiarity with world and U.S. domestic politics. Although the mix varies from essay to essay, the combination of theory and empirical analysis provides a solid historical base for policy generalization. Policy analysis thus springs from more than the last newspaper account of events, while sacrificing nothing in terms of relevancy.

Second, the authors contributing to this volume represent a new generation of mature scholarship in the United States. Neither the Great Depression nor World War II are events with which many of these authors are personally familiar. The European Community, the great postwar alliance systems, and the Cold War are the givens of world politics which they have known personally and which provide background for their analysis, minus an identification with the turbulence that made the “givens” reality. One event, the Vietnam War, is perhaps freshest in their awareness. Assumptions regarding America’s wealth are also different from the prior generation of writers who believed that demand-led economics could underpin every defense need. Also, unlike some of the writers in the 1970s who feared too much growth, many of these authors fear that there will be too little. Yet these writers are not so much easily categorized ideologically or in partisan terms, as they are pragmatic and prepared to ask questions requiring answers that go to the premises of alliance thought as much as to tactics or to the manner of implementation.

Thus, in approach to analysis and in terms of personal experience and mindset, these authors represent something new in the discussion
of alliance politics. Despite arriving at different conclusions about its impact, these authors are perhaps responding to a common, sometimes implicit theoretical proposition about alliance participation and therefore about the determinants of alliance cohesion. The proposition reads something like this:

To what extent does participation in an alliance increase foreign policy benefits through enhancing one's own security and through reducing one's own probability of getting involved in war, and to what extent does participation decrease those benefits through entanglement in wars, precipitated by allies, that serve to undermine one's own security and increase one's own frequency or intensity of war involvement?

Alliances are therefore seen as manifesting both collective and non-collective goods. Neither peace nor security is seen as totally indivisible. Or, at the least, peace and security are contributed to unevenly and may, in some cases, provide selective benefits and costs. Greece does not contribute the same amount of resources to NATO as Britain. While each may provide a common defense against Soviet aggression, the differential risk that each will drag other alliance members into third-party conflicts may also be a factor that the other alliance members inevitably will use to condition their own participation.

Even the primary alliance focus involving the Soviet threat may be at issue if an alliance member thinks that it somehow could escape the consequences of attack by opting out of the alliance. Or the primary focus may be at issue if the state feels it is likely to gain less in security terms than it risks in associating with another alliance member that acts precipitously toward the Soviet Union and thus invites a challenge to the alliance as a whole. All of these calculations amount to dangerous thinking as regards alliance health. Moreover, it is only the mutuality and magnitude of external threat that prevent such thought from becoming debilitating for an alliance as a whole.

Historical empirical evidence shows, according to Alan Sabrosky, that when faced with the test of war, most alliance members have tended to stand aside or remain neutral. This is one of the most seminal discoveries in the empirical literature for policy. Along with the free rider effect expounded by Olson and Zeckhouser, it is one of the two most pregnant empirical findings to date concerning alliance behavior. Sabrosky also concludes that the "American system of alliances is now more entangling than it is supportive of American interests" and that NATO is "far more precarious than its advocates would have us believe." He thus urges caution when drawing conclusions about the responsiveness of alliance performance.
In a brilliant assessment of the implications for alliance cohesion of changing deterrent policy and the technical response to those changes, Earl Ravenal is not surprised by the questions raised by Europeans about the credibility of extended deterrence nor by the American shift toward defensive doctrine and the Strategic Defense Initiative. He finds the notion that Americans would sacrifice their cities in an attempt to defend Western Europe from Soviet occupation as problematic, just as he views SDI as an attempt to meet the European demand for a more perfect deterrent that would restore the American edge. But SDI, even if operable in some mode and cost-effective, may create problems of its own with respect to technical stability. His doubts regarding the plausibility of extended deterrence are only compounded by his doubts regarding the continuing American economic capacity to pay disproportionate costs of defense under present alliance terms.

Each of these challenges to traditional alliance thought require a far-reaching rebuttal. Some of the responses to these challenges emerge from the other essays appearing in this volume. For example, James O’Leary asserts that new coproduction arrangements between firms on each side of national boundaries are beginning to surmount protectionist pressures, thus reducing friction between allies. The shift of economic power towards Asia is also beginning to integrate U.S. security policy more closely with some of the NICs and Japan and to obtain from them somewhat larger contributions to their own defense. Likewise, according to Karen McPherson, divergent options within NATO are often more the result of differing domestic priorities among the member nations than of “inherent weakness” in the alliance itself. Gregory Foster maintains that public opinion is the fulcrum of alliance cohesion. While he laments the “gulf” that presently separates public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic and among the European allies themselves, he prescribes the formulation of a NATO public opinion strategy of the sort favored by Grethe Vaerno (Norwegian parliamentary member) stressing public diplomacy and employing propaganda, information, and cultural exchange.

But in one of the most informative essays in the volume, Terry Deibel shows that instead of concentrating on the economic underpinning of alliance relations, the coordination of divergent domestic political priorities among governments, and the effort to influence the opinion of mass publics, the United States since the latter years of the Carter presidency has expanded the scope of America’s alliance commitments, especially in the Third World.

Thus we return to the problem noted by Sabrosky at the beginning of the volume, namely that growing obligations through alliance expansion are adding greater alliance burdens without contributing sub-
stantially to American security or quite possibly to the security and
stability of some of the regions affected by these new arrangements.
Similarly, the expansion of alliance commitments does little to solve
the problem stressed by Ravenal concerning the resolution of nuclear
strategic confidence within NATO on the one hand or concerning the
spiraling U.S. Federal and trade deficits on the other.

Still, one wonders whether the strategic predicament of the alliance
is quite so devastating as the sharpness of contemporary debate seems
to reveal. One wonders also whether escape from economic torment
is not possible without destroying the basis for alliance. Finally, one
wonders whether the true source of alliance stability does not lie
elsewhere than with internal strategic and burden-sharing matters, as
it always has.

NATO's strategic predicament has always been latent even when the
United States possessed strategic superiority, a condition that disap-
peared by the late 1960s. The difference is that the predicament is
now discussed in the classrooms and in the streets rather than solely
among a comparatively small circle of strategic analysts. Ravenal has
focussed on one side of the predicament, namely, the possible reluctance
of the United States to use strategic nuclear weapons to defend Western
Europe from overwhelming attack. The other side of the predicament
is that the United States would be too ready, in the eyes of some
Europeans, to use theatre nuclear weapons in Europe to stop an
overwhelming conventional attack in order to keep the war limited to
the European continent. Each side of the predicament existed 20 years
ago and exists today, yet NATO persists. Why?

First, nearly a million Americans, servicemen and families, remain
in Europe as a guarantee not only that the United States would come
to the aid of Europe if under attack but that in doing so the United
States would act prudently and expeditiously. The trip-wire notion is
as valid today as it ever was.

Second, the third leg of the strategic Triad, Submarine-launched
Ballistic Missiles, remains invulnerable to attack and is the key element
of second-strike capability. As long as this invulnerability continues,
and as long as the American will to defend does not falter if deterrence
fails, the Soviet Union would commit suicide by attacking Western
Europe. An attack that could not be repelled by conventional means
would quickly escalate. Escalation that struck the Soviet homeland, as
it surely would, could not be kept European. But a preemptive strategic
nuclear exchange, initiated by the Soviet Union against the U.S. land-
based targets, would unleash the American second-strike against Soviet
cities. In such a total war, American cities would not be spared either.
But the logic of vertical and horizontal escalation is clear enough and
relentless enough to make a Soviet attack on Western Europe of extremely low probability since it would be suicidal. The Kremlin may be tough and even expansionist. It is not suicidal.

Third, what much contemporary deterrence analysis fails to incorporate is an awareness that not only a balance of means is at stake in strategic discussion but a balance of ends as well. This is not to say that a further drift from nuclear parity to Soviet superiority would be inconsequential for NATO strategic policy. What an introduction of ends into foreign policy discussion entails is a recognition that each foreign policy end has a utility, that this utility varies with the identity of each foreign policy objective, and that the utility of an objective has to be very high (e.g., defense of a close ally or defense of one's own territory) to risk loss of many cities through nuclear exchanges. In practical terms, this means that while Henry IV could say that Paris was well worth a mass, could a modern Kremlin leader say that Paris, albeit a Paris in rubble, is worth the loss of most large Soviet cities? The utility of an attack on Western Europe by Soviet forces facing imminent and large-scale escalation, given the continuing reality of second-strike capability on the part of the United States, plus the not inconsiderable nuclear force available to Britain, France, and China, is simply not high enough to justify an attack.

NATO strategic stability is probably a lot more robust than some accounts of the dilemmas of extended deterrence would seem to make it. No deterrent strategy is perfect or free from the anxiety of practical implementation. Second-strike capability, and a proper military balance as well as an equilibrium of interests and means, continues to be essential. But from this analytic perspective, the continuity of NATO strategic policy remains unbroken.

Ravenal is correct regarding the challenge of burden-sharing. Adjustments must occur and soon. They will not leave the distribution of responsibility and affiliation unaffected. But before concluding that NATO will disappear because of this economic challenge, the analyst ought to consider opportunity costs. What are the alternatives? Western Europe has the economic capability to absorb a larger share of the costs. From its perspective, better to pay more of these costs and retain American forces in Europe and the American nuclear guarantee than to attempt to "go it alone." While this is not the place for an extensive defense of the thesis that economic adjustment is possible and advantageous for Western Europe as well as the United States, the thesis needs an airing.

Finally, in considering alliance cohesion, the key factor as always is the nature of the threat and perception of that threat. The Soviet Union has periodically obliged the NATO allies by saving the alliance
through renewal of threat. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the occupation of Afghanistan, and the manipulation of Poland during the solidarity crisis all serve to remind attentive Westerners of the Soviet capacity for and style of domination. Ultimately, it is Soviet power and Soviet actions that determine whether NATO remains alive and healthy or whether it follows the fate of CENTO and, to a lesser extent (because of ASEAN), SEATO. So far the Soviet Union has never disappointed the architects of the principal Western alliance system.

This volume thus poses critical questions about alliance purpose and cohesion that demand a response. The essays remind the reader that U.S. resources are finite and that choices must be made concerning the nature and scope of alliance commitments. The authors probe weak points and offer prescriptions for alliance reform. Sober and articulate, these analysts of Western alliance thought address the type of policy discussion that will preoccupy government decisionmakers throughout the coming decade.
PREFACE

Editing any book is always an interesting and instructive experience. This is certainly the case when the subject being examined is of such significance to the United States. No country truly can do well alone in the modern world, whatever its pretensions to the contrary might be. Choosing good partners, managing alliances well, and avoiding or dispensing with entanglements thus can have a major impact on this country's prospects for success in its endeavors abroad. Included in this volume are original papers addressing a selected set of issues that appear to be especially salient with regard to U.S. alliances in general and to NATO—our most important pact—in particular.

Surprises, of course, come about in any editorial exercise. Good contributors, however, help make those surprises pleasant ones, and I have had the great fortune to have such contributors in this instance. All of the people at Westview Press have smoothed my path as well; special thanks are due to Dean Birkenkamp, Susan McEachern, and Lea Leadbeater, whose advice and assistance were particularly valuable. My friends and colleagues at the Army War College provided a congenial working environment, with Janet Smith laboring mightily to transform my chaotic scribblings into a final typescript. To one and all, my gratitude.

Alan Ned Sabrosky
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
INTRODUCTION

Scarcely a day passes without some reference to "alliances" or "international partnership" appearing in the media. We are told that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is in difficulty because of divisions within it over trade relationships with the Soviet Union. We hear of commitments which the United States has undertaken to safeguard the security of Israel. We recall the uncertainty that appeared in Washington as the South Atlantic War of 1982 pitted two allies, Great Britain and Argentina, against one another over the Falklands (or Malvinas, as the Argentines called them). We may reflect upon various assertions that the United States remains a reliable guarantor of the security of its partners, despite certain misadventures in Southeast Asia in the past decade. And we may view with either chagrin or satisfaction (depending on our politics and the issue at hand) the U.S. Government's decision to forego concluding a formal alliance with South Africa, to speak of Saudi Arabia as an ally, and to warn that the fall of the pro-American government in El Salvador may threaten other U.S. allies in Central America.

What is all too often lost in such considerations, however, is a full understanding of both the diverse character of alliance relationships in the modern world, and the proper role of alliances in U.S. foreign policy. All alliances are not created equal. They do not endow their members with the same degree of safety or influence in world politics, however convenient it may be in some circles to present alliances in such an oversimplified way for public consumption. And they do not play an equally obvious or important role in U.S. foreign policy,
however comfortable we may have become with their presence since the end of the Second World War.

The object of this paper is to bring an added measure of clarity to our understanding of America’s alliances in the contemporary international order. This will be done in four steps. First, I will discuss the concept of alliance in a general sense. Second, the U.S. experience with alliances will be appraised. Third, I will briefly examine one of this country’s most current foreign commitments—NATO—in light of that experience. Fourth, and finally, I will outline the preferred role alliances should play in the years ahead, and how this country might best move in that direction, in order to provide a framework upon which the following chapters may build.

**ALLIANCES IN WORLD POLITICS**

Consensus on anything is rare in world politics. Few, however, disagree with the contention that alliances traditionally have been seen as one of the essential elements of any balance of power system. Within that context, alliances may be seen as a “resource” which nations seek to use to achieve certain objectives. One such objective is to augment implicitly the power a state may bring to the game of nations, giving it more political leverage during peacetime than it would be able to provide for itself alone at the same cost and risk. Another objective is to enhance the stability of the relevant international system by using an alliance either to deter a potential adversary or to restrain a ram-bunctious associate. And a third national objective is to have a wartime partner, augmenting its own capabilities and avoiding a “worst case” outcome of having to fight alone. In all instances, of course, the controlling principle is theoretically straightforward: an alliance must enhance a nation’s security, or at least not undermine it.

A number of factors influence the extent to which an alliance actually gives a nation the potential to attain the aforementioned objectives in accordance with that general principle. These include a nation’s position in the international hierarchy and the distribution of effective power in the world; variations in its definition of national interests and foreign policy goals; and the quality of its leadership, as well as the efficiency of its governmental decisionmaking apparatus. These, and similar, considerations necessarily enter into any assessment of the degree to which alliances in general, or a specific alliance in particular, may actually live up to the expectations of its signatories.

Looking at the domestic and international political context within which alliances must operate, while necessary, is obviously not sufficient. One must also look at the alliances themselves. Alliances may
truly be considered "many-splendored things," at least in the sense that each alliance incorporates some combination of a number of specific attributes. One is the type of bond that defines an alliance commitment. A "formal" or de jure bond exists when all of the participants (described in some instances as "high contracting parties") have ratified the agreement in accordance with their respective constitutional or statutory procedures. This creates a mutual (and supposedly binding) commitment recognizable under international law. An "informal" bond reflects an apparent or de facto commitment on behalf of one party that may or may not be reciprocated by the object of that commitment. Such a bond may be created by executive agreement; it may occur in the context of (e.g.) a series of arms sales or grants; it can arise as an adjunct to a formal alliance which specifies still other countries as "protocol states," protected by the alliance but not obligated to endorse it; or it can obtain in conjunction with a foreign policy doctrine that extended a protective "security umbrella" over some part of the world. The extent to which such informal pacts are considered binding in any sense of the term obviously depends upon the precise combination of circumstances operative in each case.

A second attribute is the membership of the alliance. There are actually two aspects to this attribute: (a) the size of the membership, and (b) the power status of the signatories. In the former case, one speaks of a distinction between "bilateral" alliances (of only two states), and "multilateral" alliances (with three or more states). In the latter instance, the classic distinction is between "major" powers on the one hand, and "minor" powers on the other. Today, a third category—that of "middle" powers (e.g., France and Japan)—is being used with increasing frequency to take account of the more complex character of power and influence relationships that obtains in the modern world.

A third attribute is the class of an alliance commitment. This represents the type of obligation nominally assumed by the signatories to a pact. There are a number of different ways of categorizing alliances in this respect. One commonly used procedure differentiates among: (a) offensive or wartime alliances, in which the signatories band together for the express purpose of waging war against some third party; (b) defensive or mutual security pacts, in which the signatories agree to come to one another's assistance in the event a member of the alliance is attacked; (c) neutrality or nonaggression pacts, whose members agree not to become involved in a war against one another; and (d) what is called an entente, which is an "understanding" that can range from a de facto offensive/defensive pact to an expression of mutual interest in one another's well-being (many informal pacts would necessarily fall into this category).
The fourth and final attribute is the scope of the accord. This involves considerations of: (a) the formal duration of the pact, including the provisions, if any, for renewal; (b) the various obligations or burden-sharing arrangements undertaken by the signatories on their collective behalf; (c) the casus foederis—that is, the conditions under which the alliance commitments assumed by the signatories will be activated; and (d) the decisionmaking process involved in preparing for, or responding to, the contingencies the alliance was designed to meet. The precise scope of an alliance is often extremely sensitive, since it may entail the identification of specific adversaries and specific national objectives that the signatories do not want to become public knowledge. Thus, the public or “open” document defining a pact may be couched in somewhat ambiguous or overly general terms, with those provisions requiring more delicate handling being reserved for secret protocols or informal “memoranda of understanding” among the alliance partners.

In all cases, of course, one must be careful not to ascribe undue significance to the formal terms of a pact. It is always necessary to distinguish the actual character of an alliance relationship from the nominal one contained in the accord itself. World politics and national interests change, and with them the nature of whatever bond might exist between two or more nations. A nominally weak alliance may become stronger in practice over time, even if its “official” character does not change, as in the case of the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale of 1904. On the other hand, putatively binding obligations, such as that which aligned Italy with Germany and Austria-Hungary in the pre-World War I “Triple Alliance,” may turn out to be worthless when put to the test. Formal allies may even attack one another, a fact demonstrated most strikingly when Germany violated its nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1941. There is also some question with regard to the role alliances play in achieving the objectives set out for them. Credible alliances may well lubricate the balance-of-power mechanism in world politics and avert some wars, but it is difficult to demonstrate either point empirically in a conclusive manner. It is equally difficult to refute persuasively contentions that truly binding alliances may actually reduce a nation’s diplomatic freedom of action in peacetime, and encourage the expansion of what might have been a more limited conflict if war occurs. At best, the evidence is mixed in each instance.

These caveats notwithstanding, certain empirical regularities or patterns of performance do appear to exist in the historical record of alliances over the past two centuries. Perhaps the most intriguing conclusion to be drawn from that record is that alliances have not performed nearly so well as the conventional wisdom would have it,
### TABLE 1.1
THE WAR PERFORMANCE OF ALLIANCE PARTNERS, 1816-1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1816-1899</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1965</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1945</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1965</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816-1965</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>(27)%</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>(61)%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(12)%</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>(100)%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*aPercentage of row (time period) total.

bPercentage of all war-performance opportunities (N=177).

cA "war performance opportunity" occurs when a nation with an active formal alliance becomes involved in a war, thus activating the casus foederis.

---


---

at least with regard to the fundamental "fight-the-war" function of reliably binding states to come to one another's assistance in war. As Table 1.1 demonstrates, the most common response of alliance partners when their pacts were put to the test of war was to stand aside and remain neutral. Such behavior could hardly be reassuring to states which believed alliances did represent an added measure of security in war.

To be sure, there are some indications that nations in alliances are more inclined to fight alongside one another than is the case in the absence of such commitments. Some alliances, in some eras, also do better than others in this respect. In general, the most reliable alliances (in the “fight-the-war” sense used above) over time have tended to be formal bilateral defense pacts composed of states of equivalent power.
status, with reasonably well-crafted limitations on the scope of the commitments assumed by the alliance partners. On the other hand, large alliances encompassing states of greatly disparate power that have accepted a broad or open-ended commitment within the alliance, or neutrality and nonaggression pacts of any type, have had a much more checkered past. In an alliance, in short, it seems that diversity and ambiguity are often incompatible with that reliability of performance during wartime that should be the principal test of the worth of an alliance. It seems that there is much to be said for David Fromkin's remark that "Treaties of alliance are overvalued," except, perhaps, in a symbolic sense.

NO ENTANGLING ALLIANCES?
THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE?

This admixture of substantive value and symbolic attachment has been an inherent part in the American experience with alliances, once the United States decided to put aside its long-standing determination to avoid "entangling alliances." Indeed, it is well worth remembering that alliance politics are a relatively new experience for this country. Until the Second World War, the United States simply avoided formal alliances to the point that its entry into the First World War in 1917 saw Washington proclaiming America's status as an associated power free of the obligations and commitments that presumably tied the allied powers to one another. Nor was there anything especially remarkable in the U.S. approach to alliances up to that point. In fact, the United States simply followed a slightly stricter variant of the path taken by Great Britain during the 19th century, recognizing that the absence of formal alliances provided an added degree of diplomatic maneuverability without compromising a security predicated on geography and the limited threat posed by the strategic technology of the era.

All of that changed with the Second World War and the Soviet-American "Cold War" that ensued. Except for the Cold War, it is likely that the United States would have once again foresworn formal military alliances as it had after the First World War, relying on its participation as a leading member of the United Nations to avert the situation that arose in part because of Washington's abstention from the League of Nations. But the onset of the protracted conflict with the Soviet Union made security commitments other than those of the United Nations necessary, while the globalization of the Cold War and the doctrine of containment that accompanied the Communist victory in China (1949) and the armed clashes in Korea (1950–53) and In-
DOCHINA (1946–54) brought with them a globalization of America's security commitments. Throwing aside its earlier disdain for alliances, the United States entered into the quest for alliances with abandon, structuring an extensive system of formal and informal alliances over the next decade. Prominent multilateral pacts included the Rio Pact (1947), which brought together the nations of the Western Hemisphere; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO (1949), which aimed at containing the USSR in Europe; ANZUS (1952), that tied Australia, New Zealand, and the United States to one another; and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO (1955), organized in response to the Communist victory in Indochina in 1954 and including under its wing the so-called “protocol states” of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Bilateral pacts were forged with South Korea, Taiwan (then known as the Republic of China), the Philippines (which was also a member of SEATO), and Japan. And informal arrangements abounded, ranging from the U.S. role as a “silent partner” in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and its avowed commitment to the security of Israel, to American endorsement of various Third World regimes via the medium of security and economic assistance programs. Even the level of “detente” with the Soviet Union espoused in the early 1970s and reflected in the Soviet-American “Declaration of Basic Principles” (1972) represented a de facto nonaggression pact that, in time, might have evolved into an entente with interesting implications for other alliance systems.8

By the mid-1950s, an imposing edifice was in place. The nation which had once declared its intention of staying outside of the balance of power system with its network of alliances found itself at the center of the most extensive system of alliances in the world. More to the point, that system had much to show for its existence, at least in its early years. Western Europe remained outside of the Soviet orbit; containment largely worked; and alliance partners (or at least some of them) did band together on occasion, even if somewhat belatedly as in the case of the Dominican Republic crisis of 1965. But subsequent events have raised a number of disturbing questions about the substantive worth of that alliance system to the United States. Prominent among these events have been the demise of the three Indochinese protocol states in 1975, presaging the demise of SEATO a few years later; the disappearance of CENTO from the contemporary diplomatic lexicon; and the compounding of injury with insult when the United States, in its quest for improved diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), accepted the PRC's position on Taiwan and unilaterally abrogated its defense pact with that country.9 Less terminal, but no less injurious to the reputation of America's alliance system,
have been the continuing uneasiness within NATO on a variety of issues affecting the alliance, and the acrimonious exchanges with Israel.

Although it is possible to exaggerate the individual importance of any of these developments, their combined impact adds credence to the position that the edifice of the U.S. alliance system is considerably more impressive than its substance, given its presumably controlling objectives of adding to, or at least not detracting from, American security and the safeguarding of American interests. On balance, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the American system of alliances is now more entangling than it is supportive of American interests, and that the United States has come to find itself in the company of relatively few genuine allies, many clients, and several obvious encumbrances.

There are three principal reasons why this situation has come to pass. They are: (a) overcommitment, (b) miscommitment, and (c) mismanagement. In the first instance, the United States simply undertook more security commitments than either it or its more active alliance partners possessed the resources to defend if threatened. The resulting overextension produced the mismatch of capabilities and commitments so evident in the existence of multiple contingencies drawing on the same forces, and contributed to the creation of a strategic vacuum in which the United States finds itself today with no national strategy that persuasively links ends and means. In the second place, the United States associated itself with a number of unsavory regimes whose only claim on the United States was a nominal anti-Communism that they espoused in order to obtain American support. That association placed the United States in the uncomfortable position of being unwilling to enforce change in nominal allies when they were not directly threatened for fear of losing influence, and unable to support such states when they were threatened if that required a protracted and costly American commitment on their behalf. And finally, the United States undertook a series of asymmetrical arrangements in which reciprocity from the protected alliance partner was all too often lacking, while the decisionmaking process in the larger alliances gave the weaker members of the pact a disproportionate voice in the management of the alliance. Some tension of this type may be inevitable in alliances involving partners of unequal strength, as it places the principles of sovereign equality (giving each alliance partner an equal voice in decisions) and proportionality of power (in which influence over alliance decisions corresponds to the resources each alliance partner brings with it) in direct conflict with one another. Inevitable or not, however, it has tended to work to the disadvantage of the United States.
It would certainly be unwarranted to assume that all of America's alliances are fatally flawed. But it would be equally unwarranted to assume that the United States could safely ignore the problems described above. A detailed consideration of any U.S. alliance, much less the entire system of alliances, clearly exceeds the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, the basic character of the U.S. dilemma may be ascertained from an assessment of NATO, a formal multilateral alliance that is America's most important formal foreign commitment.

**NATO: A PACT IN PERIL?**

In many respects, NATO is a venerable institution, the contemporary analogue of the pre-1914 Habsburg empire. We have become accustomed to its existence, and we have more than a little difficulty contemplating a security environment in which it did not exist. That fact alone may account for the continuing juxtaposition of publicly expressed official optimism about NATO, coupled with frequent reaffirmations of NATO's enduring importance to the West, on the one hand, against private expressions of concern or outright pessimism on the other.

To understand the state of NATO today, it is important to recognize that a combination of Soviet threat, European weakness, and American ambivalence set the stage for NATO, whose importance to both the United States and Western Europe was undeniable. For the United States, NATO became this country's most significant and most powerful overseas commitment—the classic "Cold War" coalition that has persisted independent of the vicissitudes of Soviet-American (or, more broadly put, East-West) relations. It institutionalized the "Europe First" inclination in American foreign policy which had effectively been formalized by the Truman Doctrine of 1947. NATO became the front line of the original doctrine of containment of the Soviet Union, with Western Europe being a *de facto* buffer zone within whose boundaries the opening stages of an East-West war might be fought, and—from an American point of view—hopefully localized. For Western Europe, NATO provided the shield behind which the economic recovery of the ravaged nations of the continent could proceed, and European institutions such as the EEC and the European Parliament could develop. It staved off the extension of Soviet control into Western Europe. It provided a mechanism for the reintegration of West Germany into the European community of nations in much less time than anyone contemplating the devastation wrought by the Second World War might have thought possible. And, perhaps of greatest importance, its tenure has been associated with peace in Europe for nearly four decades—
something that Europeans of an earlier generation could only have contemplated with envy.\textsuperscript{12}

The relative importance ascribed to these considerations has varied over time, as well as across the membership of NATO. Throughout, however, there has been the acknowledgment (formal or informal) that NATO as an institution rested on four pillars, \textit{all} of which were seen to be essential to its continuation as a viable organization. These were:

- A common perception of a threat posed by the Soviet Union as a great power with expansionist tendencies, reinforced in the eyes of some (but not all) NATO members by concern with Communism as an ideology, that could only be countered by the Western nations acting in concert.
- The recognition that stability and security in Europe, and thus in the West in general, could only be preserved by the maintenance of a "balance of imbalances" in which Soviet conventional (or "theater") superiority in Europe would be offset by an American security guarantee based on the possession by the United States of a credible nuclear \textit{advantage} over the USSR that was meaningful in both a political and (less dramatically) military sense.
- The development in short order of economic cooperation between the United States and Western Europe in the context of European economic recovery and the creation of robust domestic economies capable of meeting the demands of NATO as well as the requirements of their domestic programs.
- The existence of convergent, or at least not overtly conflictful, interests among the members of NATO within the alliance, as well as shared or parallel goals outside of the geographical parameters of NATO, especially with regard to Soviet actions in the Third World (recognizing that the behavior of the USSR in the Third World would not automatically strike all members of NATO as being as much of a concern as the same Soviet action in the vicinity of Europe itself).

An appraisal of the state of NATO today is far from reassuring when seen in the light of the aforementioned pillars of the alliance. Much, of course, \textit{has} been done well, and the fact that NATO has persevered despite past challenges to its integrity (e.g., the stillborn notion of a European Defense Community, the combined crises of Suez and Hungary in 1956, the debate over the Multilateral Force in the early 1960s, and the withdrawal of France from the integrated military structure of the alliance in 1967) says much about its durability under stress.
On the other hand, to acknowledge what has been accomplished without noting changes that have taken place to NATO's disadvantage in the intervening years would only add to the official image so often presented to the public eye. NATO's current assets are clearly impressive, but—those assets notwithstanding—its current state is far more precarious than its advocates would have us believe. Put directly, none of the four pillars of NATO discussed above remains intact today in its original form, if at all, or commands widespread acceptance. Manifestations of this development abound. One need reflect upon only such events as the divergent reactions within NATO to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the unrest in Poland; the seemingly in-terminable debate on the equity of burden-sharing within the alliance; the divisive debate over the deployment of intermediate range nuclear forces in accordance with the NATO decision of December 1979; and the conflicting arguments over the relative strategic importance of domestic economic interests that appeared in the United States (over the lifting of the grain embargo against the USSR) and in Western Europe (over the natural gas pipeline to be constructed with the Soviet Union), to understand that such numerous symptoms suggest that all is far from well with NATO.

Why this should be the case in an alliance whose intrinsic merit has been assumed by so many for so long provides a case study in the politics of misalliance. Its importance to both the United States and to Western Europe notwithstanding, a concatenation of military, economic, political, and institutional developments have gravely weakened the substantive (if not the symbolic) value of NATO as a reliable mechanism for the safeguarding of U.S. interests and the exercise of American influence.13

From a military perspective, the crucial consideration is not simply the undeniable growth in Soviet conventional capabilities in the European theater of operations, or even the failure of arms control negotiations to check the Soviet military buildup. The Soviet Union has always had an advantage in aggregate conventional military power in the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance, and its sustained buildup over the past two decades has increased the extent of that advantage rather than the fact that it existed. Moreover, since any arms control agreement acceptable to the West (i.e., an agreement that would produce verifiable parity at lower force levels than now exist) would require the USSR to give up a prevailing advantage that it considers important for the exercise of influence abroad, it is not surprising that the only arms control agreement (broadly defined) in Europe has been the Helsinki Treaty of 1975, a de facto "confidence building measure" (CBM) which arguably give the USSR far more than it conceded to the West. The
central issue is that the nuclear advantage that gave NATO a measure of escalatory advantage over the USSR passed out of existence as a matter of policy, begun by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara during the Kennedy Administration and continued during the SALT process. It may be, in objective terms, that escalatory dominance embodied in a nuclear NATO advantage has not been an essential component of deterrence in Europe. But the perception exists that it was essential, and the uncertainty over the reliability of the United States and the adequacy of linkage between NATO theater forces and the American strategic deterrent has arisen as that nuclear advantage has waned.

Coupled with that military consideration has been a series of economic developments that have made the United States and its principal Western European NATO partners economic competitors at the same time as they have been military partners and political associates. The varying degrees of robustness of the various national economies, plus the sense of unease associated with living at the end of a precarious energy lifeline that pervades most of NATO Europe, contributes to differences in economic security within the alliance. NATO Europe has also had greater interest in economic exchanges with the Soviet Union and its Eastern European clients than has been the case with the United States, both because of simple geographical proximity and as a function of a less restrictive approach on issues of East-West trade taken by most Western European governments than would be preferred in the United States today. And finally, the European predisposition to allocate more resources to a variety of social welfare programs than to defense, relative to the practice in the United States, has given rise to a debate over the proper allocation of “burden-sharing” within the alliance. Indeed, the uneven execution of the so-called “3% Solution” of 1977, wherein NATO members agreed in principle to allocate sufficient resources to defense to produce a 3 percent real annual increase in defense outlays, is both illustrative of the different economic priorities that obtain within NATO and indicative of the economic divisions within the alliance.

The political problems within NATO are both reflections of the military and economic issues noted above, and divisive factors in their own right. A crucial issue is the misunderstanding of detente that has prevailed for more than a decade, especially in Western Europe. Too many have advocated both detente and arms control (the latter as presumed evidence of either the fact or the progress of detente) as ends worth having on their own terms, rather than as possible means of enhancing national and alliance security. This, of course, is a mistake.
the Soviet Union has not made. But the preoccupation with detente in most of Western Europe, and the occasional quest for detente in the United States, has divided NATO and inhibited enhancing NATO's defense posture. In addition, sharp and growing divisions exist over a variety of so-called "out of area" issues, principally the Middle East, Southwest Asia, and Central America. Put briefly, the U.S. support for Israel, preparations for intervention in Southwest Asia in certain contingencies (highlighted by the institutionalization of the original "rapid deployment force" in the U.S. Central Command), and adamant opposition to Communist-supported insurgencies in Central America run counter to the predominant (but not unanimous) European support for Palestinian self-determination, reluctance to countenance out-of-area military interventions within the context of the NATO charter, and disenchantment with many of the regimes buttressed by the United States in Central America. And here, the relative merits of the contending positions are less important than the fact that their contentiousness weakens NATO cohesion. Finally, it does not help NATO that three of its principal members are viewed with unease by many other members of the alliance. France, albeit no longer part of the military structure of NATO, is sufficiently a part of the Atlantic Alliance that its predisposition to act in an independent and frequently contrary fashion produces almost as much uncertainty within NATO as it must within Soviet councils, to the detriment of effective NATO operational planning. The Federal Republic of Germany, although a staunch member of the alliance that is fully committed to democracy, still labors under the burden of what Germans often call the "historical circumstances" that are the legacy of World War II, restricted both by NATO decisions and its own self-doubt from being as active a member of the alliance as it ought to be. And the United States has simply not demonstrated in recent years the ability to lead the alliance in a confident, informed and decisive manner, contributing to uncertainty in NATO about American steadfastness that cannot but weaken the alliance.

The institutional problems, in the final analysis, are perhaps the most significant, since many of the preceding problems are a function of national policies and governmental styles of leadership that are potentially amenable to change. The basic institutional edifice of NATO, however, cannot be altered appreciably without altering at the same time the fundamental character of the alliance, and perhaps dismantling it. One such problem is the fact that NATO decisions have all too often come to be based on a least common denominator of consensus to produce an outcome acceptable to all. Given the sharply different
capabilities, foreign policy positions, and perceptions of threat that exist within the alliance, that least common denominator can be so low that a member of the alliance may do nothing at all without violating at least the spirit of the decision. The fate of the "3% Solution" mentioned earlier is a case in point. A second problem is that the larger members of the alliance, whose participation essentially determines whether or not NATO would have a chance to prevail if the *casus foederis* came to be invoked, are frequently hamstrung by the weaker members of the alliance, some of whom seem dedicated to the proposition that they are in the alliance to obtain as much security at as little cost to themselves and as much risk to others as possible. The 1979 decision of some NATO members to support the deployment of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF), as long as they were based elsewhere so that others would incur whatever risks attended that deployment, and to make even that commitment hostage to Soviet behavior, reflects both this problem area and the preceding one.

In sum, NATO has become something of a paradox. Some form of a security arrangement in Western Europe is undoubtedly necessary for the United States, given the consequences for American interests of the "finlandization" or absorption of most or all of Western Europe by the Soviet Union. What is not apparent is the long-term ability of NATO to serve that function. The years ahead are going to be even more demanding than those of the 1970s, and the problems that have beset NATO in the 1970s and early 1980s are unlikely to become less troublesome. The United States needs to acknowledge that its NATO allies possess both interests and vulnerabilities that are different from those of the United States; it must be more sensitive to the different political currents that prevail among such different states; and it must avoid sending conflicting signals to its allies, as occurred when the United States sequentially lifted the grain embargo on the USSR and then opposed the European decision to construct a natural gas pipeline in conjunction with the USSR. Europeans, for their part, need to dispense with the habit of criticizing the United States regardless of what the United States does; they must understand that reciprocity is essential, and that they cannot indefinitely demand U.S. assistance in Europe without assisting the United States actively outside of Europe; and they need to make greater efforts in Europe in their own defense than they have done in the past. Whether these things can be accomplished within the context of NATO as it is currently structured and managed, however, is far from certain, and Americans should understand fully the consequences likely to obtain if NATO proves unable to meet that challenge.
THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S ALLIANCES

The preceding discussion of U.S. alliance commitments, with specific reference to NATO, highlights the dilemma with which the United States must come to terms. The United States clearly needs good allies in the modern world; "America alone" has ceased to be a feasible option. On the other hand, the alliances the United States does have, on balance, seem to have become "entangling" in Washington's original use of the term. This is not to attribute any malevolence to America's alliance partners, either in the case discussed in this chapter or in those other pacts not examined here. Most nations do act in accordance with their national interest, or at least seem less vulnerable than the United States to making significant policy commitments on the basis of an ephemeral "moral obligation" or the predisposition of domestic lobbies whose appreciation of the national interest does not seem to be a controlling concern. That the United States does seem to act in such a fashion, and does seem to be vulnerable in that way, says more about the United States than it does about the nations with which the United States has entered into formal or informal alliance commitments. It also lends weight to the argument that "alliances did not entangle us; either life itself did it, or we did it to ourselves."15

What, then, ought the United States do about this situation? There is admittedly relatively little that the United States can do about some of its informal commitments. The absence of a formal commitment means that there is nothing to abrogate, and the existence of strong domestic constituencies in support of some of them makes corrective action difficult. In the case of the informal yet apparently binding tie with Israel, for instance, it is difficult to see what might precipitate a final breach in Israeli-U.S. relations if a deliberate Israeli attack upon an American naval vessel, the de facto dispersal or disenfranchisement of the Palestinians and the invasion of a neighboring Lebanon have not sufficed to bring that about. Perhaps all that can be done in such instances is to limit the damage such commitments cause by working as extensively as possible with other regional states, either directly or through the good offices of third parties.

More, however, can be done with formal commitments. Let me begin by observing that the United States does not need any more formal alliance commitments, especially multilateral ones, that involve states with which the United States does not now have a formal alliance. Let me further observe that the existing system of alliances needs to be subjected to the closest scrutiny in order to distinguish allies from clients, and to separate encumbrances from them both. In all instances, the objective should be to clarify commitments, build in formal rec-
iprocacy, and try to bring America's obligations more into harmony with American capabilities and American interests. This does not mean that the United States should unilaterally abrogate any other bilateral pacts, or withdraw from multilateral alliances. Whatever their objective value to the United States, the image of a United States formally disengaging from still other formal alliance partners could not contribute to international stability or the furtherance of American interests. But specific bilateral pacts can be forged within the parameters of existing multilateral alliances, as was often done by other countries in the past, with the large alliance representing an expression of a general political interest and the bilateral pacts being the operative military alliances. Thus, the United States might retain both NATO and the Rio Pact as regional equivalents of the UN General Assembly, useful for debate but not much else. But it would structure bilateral arrangements with (e.g.) Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and perhaps France on the one hand, and with Brazil on the other, to link the United States with principal regional powers more capable of acting in concert with the United States on matters of mutual interest. And these new pacts should be carefully crafted in accordance with the principles of specificity and reciprocity noted earlier, paying particular attention to limiting the scope of the commitment in keeping with the interests and issues involved. In this way, America may find itself with enough good alliances that are not entangling to permit it to navigate safely in the years ahead. The chapters that follow elaborate upon these and other issues in American alliance politics and their implications for the future.

NOTES

This is an abridged version of a chapter in Power, Principle and Interests, edited by J. Salmon, J. P. O'Leary and R. Shultz (Lexington, MA: Ginn Press, 1985). Copyright 1985 by Alan Ned Sabrosky. It was prepared before the author assumed his current position; the views expressed here are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Government or any of its agencies.

1. For general discussions of alliances in international relations from differing points of view, see R. E. Osgood, Alliances and American Foreign Policy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968); George Liska, Nations in Alliance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968); and O. R. Holsti, P. T. Hopmann, and J. D. Sullivan, Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1973).


3. Singer and Small, "Formal Alliances."

4. Italy chose to remain neutral until 1915, perhaps because it had conflicting alliances with several of the principal warring states in Europe. Its subsequent intervention against Germany and Austria-Hungary in that year represented simultaneously its violation of alliances with those states, and its honoring of alliances with France and Russia.


8. Richard Rosecrance, "Detente or Entente?", *Foreign Affairs* (1975). It is worth noting that in the heyday of detente, both France and the PRC spoke frequently of "a temptation to condominium" or "parallel hegemonism" as a likely outcome of increasingly close Soviet-American relations.

9. Subsequent Congressional reaffirmation of a continuing U.S. interest in the security of Taiwan does not alter the political signal sent by the unilateral abrogation of the alliance with Taiwan by the United States.

10. The U.S. effort to aid Vietnam is the obvious example of this, but ongoing criticism of U.S. ties to (e.g.) South Korea, the Philippines, and various Latin American regimes also comes to mind.


12. The obvious exceptions to a respectable era of European peace (if not complete amity!) are the conflict between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus and the minor "cod war" between Great Britain and Iceland, plus internal conflicts such as that in Northern Ireland.

13. See my "NATO: A House Divided?", *Atlantic Quarterly* (Summer 1984) for a discussion of this alliance.

14. This entailed making deployment contingent on the absence of an arms control agreement, or (informally in the view of some signatories) even the absence of promising negotiations with the USSR.